

“As I shall be using the term, ‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism,’ which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory... In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.” Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, p. 9.

Any doubts that imperialism was central to the United States’ understanding of itself were put to rest in the aftermath of September 11 when the operative question was not whether the U.S. was an imperial power, but rather what kind. Repeated invocations of differences between our civilization and their barbarity, entreaties for a “new imperialism,” and calls for reinstating a nineteenth-century type colonialism, now with the U.S. replacing Britain and France, as well as cheers for colonialism circulated almost immediately after 9/11.¹ . The passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the prolonged detention of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and, most importantly, the unilateral invasion of Iraq in 2003 suggest that a new kind of imperialism, though of a particularly insidious kind, requiring disciplining at home and abroad through the inculcation of an imperial culture, might be at hand. And yet, treating September 11 as a watershed moment problematically endorses the justifications of the current Bush regime both for the curtailing of liberties at home and installing repressive measures abroad. Instead, we need to see the tragedy of September 11 as a moment which helped popularize in the public sphere the coveted aims of the neo-cons. What marks

current U.S. imperialism is the punitive, unilateral, militaristic ideology of the neo-cons which was solidified in the 1990s in the aftermath of the Cold War and in opposition to the perceived weakness of the Clinton administration. This ideology, which we argue is a compensatory response to the decline of U.S. economic and political hegemony, found its allies in the Christian Right and among certain segments of the business elite, and gained popular currency through conservative talk shows, Christian TV news channels, and giant media networks such as FOX.² Key liberal commentators also became apologists for U.S. policy in the name of so-called humanitarian interventions.³ This new imperialism has permeated the U.S. cultural imaginary but it has also generated unprecedented levels of resistance. It is this highly contested contemporary imperial culture that we plan to examine.

U.S. Imperial Culture and Politics - A Historical Perspective:

Obviously, imperialism is not new to U.S. politics or culture. The racial coordinates of imperialism were in place from the beginnings of white settlement so that even an anti-colonial rebellion against the British Empire coexisted with a belief in the destiny of settler colonists to expropriate Native Americans and enslave African-Americans. That white hegemony remained a crucial factor in determining the creation of the nation was evident in the Naturalization Law of 1790 in which only free whites had access to citizenship. At the same time, these settlers, going back to John Winthrop, also saw their settlement as the “city on the hill,” as models of idealized decolonization. The paradoxical combination of ferociously anti-colonial as well as acutely imperial attitudes that Edward Said saw as characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. culture thus have earlier precedents.⁴ Imaginings of empire, however, were part of

literary and political culture from the early days of the republic. As early as 1783, Washington used the term “rising empire” to describe the United States while Jefferson later described it as an “empire for liberty” whose “sacred fire of freedom and self-government” were destined to be spread to other regions of the earth.⁵ U.S. imperial expansion as the fulfillment of world historical progress was articulated by political statesman like John Adams and historians such as John Fiske, in visions of the westerly movement of empire, running its course through Europe and culminating in the U.S.⁶

Such conceptions of a rapidly growing empire received impetus from the great imperial expansions of the nineteenth century. These included the incorporation of much of the south and west through war with Mexico, finalized in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and the annexation of the Phillipines, Guam, and Puerto Rico by the U.S. at the end of the Spanish-American war. Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden,” written in response to the takeover of the Philippines, established for many a confirmation of the role of the U.S. as the newest empire with its obligation to liberate its “new-caught, sullen peoples/Half-devil and half-child.” Although bitter differences broke out between supporters of imperialist expansion and the Anti-Imperialist League at the turn of the century, both sides (with the exception of a few idealists) believed in the degeneracy of the natives in the conquered territories. While imperialists felt a moral obligation to take up Kipling’s burden, anti-imperialists, particularly white southerners who were prominent in the movement, feared cultural and physical miscegenation. That the war of 1898 took place in the wake of considerable internal dissent which was violently suppressed as in the Haymarket Riot of 1886, or juridically controlled as with the Dawes Act of 1887, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1881, and Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, suggests an imbrication of internal and external colonialism that continues till today.

1898 marks an important moment for most historians because it exemplifies a shift from continental westward expansion to the control of far-flung territories. It is also seen as an aberration in the history of an otherwise non-imperial U.S. An official rhetoric of anti-imperialism dominated the public sphere during and after World War I. Both progressives and Wilsonian liberals rightly viewed imperialism as the cause of the war and excoriated it. Thus the reluctant entry of the U.S. into World War II and the subsequent rise of U.S. power has been seen by many historians as an ‘empire by invitation’ by western European countries willing to let the U.S. shoulder the burden of fending off the Soviet threat.⁷ U.S. support for and help with installing dictatorial, anti-communist regimes in, among others, Chile, Nicaragua, and Brazil, its training of South Americans in assassination methods at the School of the Americas, and the Vietnam war can all be explained through this call to empire, which is sharply differentiated from the imperial greed of former European powers. This narrative, aptly summed up in Reagan’s credo of combating the “axis of evil,” has been summoned to explain the country’s international role till the end of the Cold War.

However, political analyses alone do not account for the way in which imperial culture works. Foreign policy, for instance, is an integral part of nationhood and becomes part of the way a citizenry imagines itself culturally. In the U.S., colonial narratives of racial uplift and beliefs in Anglo-Saxon supremacy continued, in different ways, to affect policy arguments for both imperialism and anti-imperialism. Thus despite Franklin D. Roosevelt’s strident opposition to European colonialism and his own role in ending U.S. annexation of the Philippines, he had no hesitation in recommending United Nations trusteeships for several nations as yet not ready in the schema of historical evolution, for nationalism. “For a time at least there are many children among the peoples of the world that need trustees.”⁸ Indeed as Michael Hunt has argued, U.S.

foreign policy has been guided by three major principles: a belief in the exceptional greatness of the nation and its promotion of liberty, racial hierarchy; and a distrust of revolution based on the assumption that the American revolution was unique and unrepeatable. These three principles, Hunt argues, assumed the status of a potent ideology that not only directed foreign policy but also significantly defined the substance of American life.⁹ Arguably, these principles continue, in the cultural imaginary, to construct the nation as chosen to make history.

American Studies and Imperial Culture:

The Cold War period saw not only the massive build up of defense against the communist threat but also a concerted attempt to advertise U.S. culture abroad – Hollywood, popular music, even political movements – in order to “foster the desire to emulate the American way.”¹⁰ The Voice of America, established just before the U.S. entry in World War II, and which experienced dwindling support immediately after the war, saw its funds dramatically raised with the beginning of the Cold War. Simultaneously, the Smith-Mundt Act established international U.S. information and cultural programs. As J.W. Fulbright made clear, “Educational exchange is not merely a laudable experiment, but a positive instrument of foreign policy, designed to mobilize human resources just as military and economic policies seek to mobilize physical resources.”¹¹ American Studies was soon internationalized, its export functioning as an instrument of postwar U.S. hegemony.¹²

Thus it is not surprising that when American Studies was consolidated as a discipline after World War II, the major imperative for literary and cultural historians was to offer different paradigms of exceptionalism as maps for reading U.S. culture. The two most dominant models

for U.S. culture were Perry Miller's mappings of Puritan origins exemplified in works such as Errand into the Wilderness (1956), continued in later works such as Sacvan Bercovitch's The Puritan Origins of the American Self (1975) and Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis about the "vacant" frontier as the enabling condition of American democracy which animated studies like R.W. B. Lewis' The American Adam (1955). Ironically, at the very moment that radical anti-colonial treatises questioning the universality of modernity were being written by Franz Fanon, George Lamming and Aimé Césaire, major texts of American studies were consolidating American exceptionalism. We mention these well known facts about American Studies and post-World War II politics in order to make an obvious point: that imperial politics and culture are inextricably linked. Indeed the question of whether culture follows politics or vice versa is based on the questionable premise that the two can be separated. What we can say is that imperial policies are both the consequence and cause of a certain kind of culture.

Starting in the 1960s, during the period of worldwide decolonization, when Cold War paranoia had paradoxically caused the U.S. to engage in bolstering French colonization in Vietnam, histories of the nation as empire began to be written. Thus R.W. Van Alstyne in The Rising American Empire (1960) demonstrated the centrality of the idea of empire to U.S. history from the revolutionary period; Carl Eblen in The First and Second American Empires (1967) postulated a link between the imperial subjugation of various Others who threatened a singular "American" identity before 1898 and the pacification of overseas populations thereafter.¹³ By 1980, Richard Drinnon had published his landmark literary and cultural study, Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building in which he traced a continuity between the rhetoric of dehumanization of Native-Americans, which was then used as a justification to "subdue" them and the rhetoric mobilized in the Philippines and later in Vietnam.

Yet despite these revisionist analyses, which were centrally dependent upon a continuity between racism at home and imperial racism abroad, much of American studies scholarship marginalized questions of imperialism, even though radical questionings of the singularity of a consensual American identity (by examining the role of raced others in the construction of nation) were being initiated. In this omission, American Studies scholarship replicated the official rhetoric of neo-liberalism which presented its strategy of forcing free-market reforms in other nations without recourse to the word “imperialism.” It is only after the Gulf War that the next major work addressing culture and imperialism, Cultures of United States Imperialism, appeared in 1993.

Although imperialism has now been accepted as central to an understanding of U.S. culture through works such as John Carlos Rowe’s Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II (2000) and Melani McAlister’s Epic Encounters (2001), there is no book-length study analyzing or theorizing contemporary culture through imperialism. Following the implosion of the Soviet Union, numerous political and economic works theorized globalization and imperialism. Foremost among those postulating the end of imperialism was Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s philosophical treatise, Empire (2000) and Thomas Friedman’s more journalistic and economic endorsement of globalization, The Lexus and the Olive Tree (1999). Chalmers Johnson, in Blowback (2000), on the other hand, saw the U.S. in the post-Cold War period as dangerously unilateral and militaristic.

Since 9/11 several works (discussed below) have emerged to theorize what is recognized as U.S. imperialism today including David Harvey’s The New Imperialism (2003), Chalmers Johnson’s The Sorrows of Empire (2004), Michael Mann’s Incoherent Empire (2004) and Noam Chomsky’s Hegemony or Survival (2003). The U.S.’s aggressive stance after 9/11 has also

generated debate in academic journals. For instance, Public Culture, a mouthpiece for globalization, devoted a 2003 issue to debating the issue of contemporary U.S. imperialism, as did Interventions, a prominent journal of postcolonial studies. The focus of all these works, however, is political rather than cultural.

9/11 has also produced a myriad of specifically focused studies analyzing the significance of the event. William Crotty's The Politics of Terror: The U.S. Response to 9/11 (2004), for instance, analyzes surveys of people's attitudes toward patriotism, terrorism, and security after 9/11. However, despite the fact that most of the contributors to the volume are political science scholars, imperialism is not an issue.¹⁴ Unlike most works related to 9/11, Wheeler Dixon's Film and Television after 9/11 (2004) focuses specifically on culture, ranging from analyses of jingoism in films such as 'Black Hawk Down' to assessments of more offbeat works such as 11'09"11 and shows such as West Wing. Yet, although the volume includes analyses of representation of "Others" both within and without the nation, the emphasis is solidly on the reception and effects of media on the U.S. public. Only Dudziak's collection, September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment (2003) includes analyses of contemporary imperialism and culture. Contemporary U.S. Culture and Imperialism builds on the momentum generated by collections such as Dudziak's but departs from the latter in not privileging 9/11 as the single, originary moment for understanding contemporary imperialism. Instead, we stress both the continuities and discontinuities embodied in present day U.S. imperialism, constituted as it is through a nexus of millennialism, exceptionalism, technological might, and visions of world dominance.

Periodizing Contemporary Capitalist Imperialism:

Can contemporary imperialism be explained as a continuation of the political, economic, military and cultural aspects of past imperial culture? The answer is both yes and no. Obviously, contemporary imperialism draws on a legacy of the nation's past. Yet, to posit an unchanging imperialism would be to deny the relevance of world historical events that have direct relevance to imperialism, for instance, the worldwide decolonization movements of the 1950s and '60s. What then are the continuities and changes that describe contemporary imperialism? How do we mark the contemporary imperial moment?

Classic works such as William Appleman Williams' The Tragedy of American Diplomacy can be invoked to demonstrate continuities of imperialism. Williams argued persuasively how U.S. foreign policy since the nineteenth century was driven by an ideology of open door expansionism or an imperialism of free trade which created an informal empire through economic expansion. Tested in China at the turn of the century, it was soon applied globally. U.S. foreign policy thus relied on a longstanding assumption about the world being available to it.¹⁵ Thus many imperial ventures, from David Porter's attempts to annex the Marquesas to the takeover of the Philippines to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, can be seen as open-door imperialism, attempts to control trade routes and markets.¹⁶

Contemporary political and cultural critics also find it important to stress the continuities between contemporary imperialism and that of the past. Political critic Noam Chomsky argues that the unilateralism of the current Bush administration, particularly the philosophy of pre-emptive war, is simply a continuation of the last fifty years of U.S. foreign policy as evidenced by the military's actions in Cuba, Nicaragua, Turkey etc.¹⁷ Gabriel Kolko takes an analogous view, arguing that the military-industrial complex built by the U.S. during the Cold War has

become an unstoppable and dangerously autonomous juggernaut.¹⁸ The permeation of this complex into all facets of life in the U.S. remorselessly pushes the country to substitute militarist adventurism for diplomatic solutions to political crises. For Kolko, the wreckage and bitterness left in the wake of exertions of asymmetrical military power around the world inevitably come back to haunt the U.S.

Similarly, some cultural critics argue for the importance of seeing continuities before and after September 11. Elaine Tyler May, for instance, sees post-9/11 policies and rhetoric as a continuation of Cold War ideologies. Bush's term, "axis of evil" for example combines the language of World War II (axis) and that of Ronald Reagan (evil empire). She also notes a resurgence of the '50s-style emphasis on marriage and family.¹⁹ Others analyze the specificity of new power configurations (such as the racialization of Middle Eastern, Arab or Muslim) within a continuity of old discourses such as Orientalism.²⁰

Yet despite such connections, U.S. unilateralist policies today are clearly being deployed in a significantly different historical context from that of the Cold War or even the 1990s. In order to periodize contemporary imperialism adequately, we need to take a step back to examine the changing economic and political conditions out of which it emerged. The crucial shift in this regard centers on the emergence of neo-liberal doctrines during the 1970s. By the late 1960s, the integrated political and economic system created by the U.S. after World War II began foundering on its own internal contradictions. With Germany and Japan back at full strength and competing economically with the U.S., a classic crisis of over-accumulation developed in the world economy.²¹ When the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 threw the world into recession, these contradictions became insurmountable and a fresh strategy for accumulation and political regulation had to be developed. This new approach involved the rupture of the tri-partite

compact between capital, labor, and government that had characterized the post-war period.²²

U.S. corporations began moving production abroad in order to realize greater surplus value by exploiting cheap labor. In the process, they were able to largely liquidate the power of the organized working class in the U.S. The financial sector also became increasingly powerful within the U.S. and globally, as the OPEC surplus was recycled by U.S. banks in the form of loans to developing countries.²³

Neo-liberalism, based on a revival of nineteenth century market fundamentalism, emerged during the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, as measures to make the global South “consent” (and therefore accept and work with the hegemony of the U.S. and to some extent Britain) to the imperatives of the so-called “free” market through institutions controlled by the U.S. Presented as common sense and the ultimate good for all, neo-liberalism worked through the imperial formula of opening up all markets, and combined deregulating all industries, privatizing government concerns, and minimizing social services for citizens. Associated most closely with the “Washington Consensus” of the 1980s and 1990s, neo-liberalism sought a “centralized multilateralism” through the operation of institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO.²⁴ Although the debt crises of developing countries and the draconian structural adjustment policies administered by such international institutions to deal with debt created significant turmoil during the 1980s, there were no significant challenges to neo-liberal hegemony during this period. Instead, popular unrest and the democratization movements that often developed from such unrest in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and East Asia led ironically to the proliferation of neo-liberal programs.²⁵ When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, the last barrier to the global dissemination of the neo-liberal model was removed and the

U.S. formula of liberal representative democracy twinned with increasingly unrestrained corporate power appeared to many commentators to have triumphed for good.²⁶

Only one decade later, though, the struggle that had been unfolding in developing countries since the early 1980s reached the U.S. in the “Battle of Seattle.”²⁷ Protestors from the traditional labor union movements joined radical environmentalists, feminists, indigenous people, and anarchists in 1999 to blockade the streets of Seattle, where the World Trade Organization was meeting to pursue its agenda of concentrating power on a supra-national level. In the two preceding years, Asia’s central banks had blown apart their own financial system trying to prop up the dollar in order to finance the U.S.’s unsustainable trade deficit and ensure exports. As a result of these policies, which allowed Americans to keep living beyond their means, there was a run on Asian currencies, leading to the imposition of devastating structural adjustment policies that revealed the fundamental inequalities of the neo-liberal dispensation. The “Washington consensus” was thrown into turmoil, with insiders such as Joseph Stiglitz publishing searing critiques of the policies administered around the globe in the name of trade liberalization.²⁸ An international movement began to coalesce whose slogan, “Another World Is Possible,” was a direct riposte to the dominant “There is No Alternative” ideology of the preceding twenty years. This movement targeted its protests on the privatization of the global commons, or, what David Harvey calls “accumulation by dispossession,” a perspective Harvey derives from anti-globalization activists such as Arundhati Roy and Naomi Klein.²⁹

In tandem with this progressive movement, significant populist reactionary movements began to develop in response to the privations caused by the Washington consensus around the globe. Many of these movements were spawned by reactions against the disruptive impact created by neo-liberalism, which tended to unsettle political and cultural as well as economic

borders. Christian, Hindu, and Muslim fundamentalism, in particular, are now significant forces both within particular states as well as on an international level.³⁰ It is, of course, the latter that has received the most attention in the U.S. in response to the devastating attacks of 9/11, although it should properly be seen as part of a broader anti-systemic reaction. Like so many other aspects of the present crisis, Al Qaeda is a form of blowback from the U.S.'s own superpower politics, in this case the unflinching support lent by successive administrations since 1945 to the corrupt and authoritarian but nonetheless pro-Western Saudi regime.³¹

It is out of this crisis of the doctrines of neo-liberalism and the U.S. hegemony that implemented it that contemporary imperialism has developed. While the U.S.'s aggressive militarism appears to be a sign of its unrivalled power on the world stage, in fact we believe it should be seen as a symptom of its weakness. Commentators such as David Harvey, Emmanuel Todd, Michael Mann, and Immanuel Wallerstein have all argued that, having lost both its economic and financial supremacy, the U.S. is left with only one component of its former hegemony: military power.³² Chalmers Johnson, for example, identifies a post-September 11 imperialism based on militarism and a massive transfer of power from the representatives of the people to the Pentagon. This militarism, going back to the late nineteenth century and continuing with the 1990s interventions in Panama, the Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, witnessed a change after September 11 in that leaders began openly seeing the country as an empire, a new Rome: “. . . since 9/11, our country has undergone a transformation from republic to empire that may well prove irreversible.”³³ What constitutes this new empire are the 725 U.S. military bases, which are all exempt from the laws of home states and which instill youths with the ingredients of racial superiority.³⁴ Johnson, who, like Harvey, views neo-liberal market

fundamentalism/globalization as economic imperialism, sees a shift after 9/11 that marked the end of globalization.³⁵

Although it is impossible to predict precisely how the endgame of U.S. hegemony will play out, it is clear that current policies have only succeeded in intensifying the contradictions bequeathed by twenty years of neo-liberalism. For, while attempting to retain the neo-liberal formula of free markets and free elections, the U.S. has jettisoned the element of international cooperation and consent on which the free circulation of capital depends. In addition, having allowed its industrial base to atrophy, the U.S. is currently in the process of frittering away what remains of its financial power through an extremely costly military occupation in Iraq, which is yoked to the implementation of ideologically driven, regressive domestic tax cuts.³⁶ Like many empires before it, the U.S. seems to have been pushed by its reliance on military might into critical economic and political over-extension.³⁷ Since the U.S. remains the global consumer of last resort, export-oriented countries such as Japan and China have been forced to foot the bill for the U.S.'s unsustainable militarism. Yet U.S. unilateralism and adventurism are likely to produce a defensive response from such lenders, encouraging them to pull the financial plug sooner rather than later. The recent decision by the East Asian nations to begin denominating cross-border debt in the region in Asian currency rather than the dollar is a sign that the U.S. cannot count on other nations to continue financing its mammoth foreign debt (now over \$3 trillion) indefinitely.

Certainly, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' may be seen as the first of the 21st century's resource wars.³⁸ In such a reading, the U.S. is exerting its sole remaining asset – immense military power – in order to gain control of the planet's major petroleum reserves. If it can maintain control of Iraq and Saudi Arabia - the odds do not look good at present -, the U.S. will

be in a position to exercise economic, political, and cultural hegemony over industrialized powers such as the European Union, Japan, and China for the next half century. The U.S. will, in other words, use its military muscle to extract surplus value from the rest of the world in order to continue its own unsustainable levels of consumption. Whether or not such a far-reaching geo-political objective was in the minds of the Bush administration's ideologues, their bellicose actions have ratcheted up the pressure on U.S. hegemony rather than helping consolidate it. The U.S. invasion of Iraq sparked the largest demonstrations of popular discontent in the history of the planet and has managed to alienate even stalwart allies among the elite sectors of the industrialized nations. Thus, in addition to running the danger of over-extension, this unilateralist aggression also threatens to revive the kind of inter-imperialist competition discussed by Lenin, with regional trading blocs such as the EU-Russia and Japan-China-Korea allying to challenge U.S. attempts to exert unilateral control over the world's resources and economic development.³⁹ How will the U.S. react to and cope with the increasing turbulence and resistance that the neo-cons' unilateralist policies are likely to spark?

Ideologies of Contemporary Imperial Culture:

In the summer of 2004, Michael Moore's anti-war documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* opened in theaters around the U.S. after having won great international acclaim and enduring an attention-getting scuffle over censorship with the Disney Corporation. Moore's relatively restrained attack on the U.S.'s belligerent foreign policy immediately shot to number one at the box office.⁴⁰ Yet after one week of such success, *Spider Man 2* replaced Moore's film as the top box-office draw. Despite its apparent disconnection from the political realm, films like *Spider*

Man 2 deliver a powerful counter-narrative to *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Peter Parker, the hero of *Spider Man 2*, has deep misgivings about his superhuman powers. He basically wants nothing more than to lead the life of a normal American college student. Unfortunately for him, the world is populated by vicious people who prey on the weak and innocent. When the monstrous Doctor Octopus threatens his girlfriend, Parker is forced to reassume his guise as Spider Man and do battle with his enemy. *Spider Man 2*, in other words, is a saga of what Richard Slotkin calls “regeneration through violence.”⁴¹ Such narratives typically feature a naive hero whose calm world is turned upside down by a desperado, who usually kidnaps innocent women and menaces helpless average citizens. The violence of the bad guys destroys social order. To restore calm, the hero of these narratives rejects the torturously slow workings of the legal system and resorts to extra-legal justice. In this way, American popular culture recycles the ethos of the lynch mob.

Although regeneration through violence is a staple of U.S. cinema, in recent years Hollywood has churned out scores of films based on vigilantism, most of them far more steeped in patriotic gore than the relatively nuanced tale of Peter Parker. From Quentin Tarantino’s *Kill Bill* to Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*, from *Gladiator* to *The Gangs of New York*, the American appetite for fantasies of revenge has been indulged in virtually every genre and historical period.⁴² Such fantasies are likely to receive increasing plaudits given the ideology of victimization through which US imperialism has been justified since 9/11. It should be no surprise that the other hit movie of 2004 has been Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, essentially an extended allegory of wronged innocence. Gibson’s torturous movie implicitly calls not for the universalistic humanitarianism of the Sermon on the Mount but for the apocalyptic ethnic cleansing of the best-selling fundamentalist Christian *Left Behind* novel series.

The tragic events of 9/11 are all too easy to read according to this retributive narrative. In

fact, the suicide attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon were almost immediately seen by the news media and by politicians as warranting some form of purgative retaliation. Less than two hours after the first plane hit Tower #1 in New York, Peter Jennings of ABC News said that the U.S. would have to strike back with massive force.⁴³ The attacks thus intensified the now-habitual tendency of Americans to see themselves as the dispensers of morally legitimate violence, albeit now as victims. In addition, the carnage of the suicide attacks on 9/11 seemed to demolish all standards of civilization and thereby solicit acts of extra-legal retribution. As in Hollywood revenge fantasies, the brutality of the attacks suggested that modern legal and political institutions were incommensurate with the need for vengeance. Indeed, the Bush administration drew explicitly on the rhetoric of the Western when it promised to “smoke out” Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda like a latter day posse in pursuit of outlaws. This cowboy rhetoric was used to legitimate a form of international vigilantism that swept aside the United Nations and the International Criminal Court in the name of swift retribution.⁴⁴ Concerns about the strategic efficacy and human costs of spectacular asymmetrical violence in Afghanistan and unilateralist preemptive warfare in Iraq were treated with ridicule by an administration whose canny evocations of lynch law won it massive approval ratings from the American public.

But, as events on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated over the past year, these belligerent policies are unlikely to gain favor either with the U.S.’s erstwhile allies or with citizens of Middle Eastern countries. Instead, the Bush administration’s ham-fisted attempts to restore democracy using high altitude bombing and military occupation have offered a perfect recruiting tool to Al-Qaeda throughout the region. On the other hand, the Bush administration’s use of cowboy rhetoric demonstrates that contemporary U.S. imperialism can

only be understood through the conjuncture of the specific imperial politics of the present and the various political, religious, racial, and economic practices and rhetoric that have contributed to imperial culture in the past. Without an understanding of the continuity of American exceptionalism, complexly constituted of religious, economic, cultural, political and racial elements beginning with Puritan theocracy and continuing with the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, for instance, we cannot make sense of the conviction shared by many contemporary politicians and citizens alike that the U.S. has been and will always remain the provider and protector of world freedom. Similarly, the kind of fundamentalist thinking that many recent critics of U.S. imperialism see as peculiar to the present moment is a familiar Calvinist typology revived most demonstrably during the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century. Of particular relevance is the Puritan belief in being divinely ordained or settling a New Israel which later fuelled nineteenth century missionary activity in the Near East. H. Richard Niebuhr famously explained these phenomena as “the kingdom of god in America” in his book bearing that title.⁴⁵

This idea of a self-proclaimed, chosen people, pitting themselves against a myriad of enemies (feminists, homosexuals, blacks, Arabs, Muslims) both within and without the country, thus has a long history in the U.S. However, the contemporary alliance of Christian fundamentalism and military machismo received its impetus and intensity through the particular combination of Reagan’s manichean foreign policy and uncomplicated patriotism, the evangelical renaissance of the 1980s, the unqualified millennial commitment to hardline pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian politics, and the new military technologies through which millennialism could be concretized. The 1980s witnessed a powerful growth of Evangelical Christianity as well as its political legitimation. Groups like Moral Majority and the Christian

Coalition emerged, with the televangelists Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Jimmy Swaggart all using TV, religious programs on radio, as well as religious bookstores to spread their messages. All these groups supported the Reagan agenda of self-help, privatization, his purported restoration of the American psyche after the humiliations of the Vietnam war and the Iran hostage crisis through images of frontier masculinity (Reagan was most often shown horseback riding), and above all his battle against the “evil empire.” Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority registered around two million voters for Reagan both in 1980 and 1984. Currently, millennial fundamentalists, whose leaders are Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Randall Terry, hold sway over about a quarter of the country’s population.⁴⁶ The stridently anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli agenda of these groups today is an updating of the longstanding understanding of the U.S. as a New Israel beginning with the Puritans. Despite the fundamentalists’ deeply conservative criticism of the U.S. taking on imperial ambitions, Melani McAlister’s essay in this volume suggests that the overwhelming popularity of the Left Behind series has placed the evangelicals at the center of the U.S. political map, far from the subcultural status afforded them even in the 1980s. The fundamentalists thus provide the ideological core of a raced, imperial culture even as they criticize imperial politics as a waste of national resources.

Popular Authoritarianism and the Neo-Con Agenda:

The discourse of American exceptionalism lends itself to peculiarly intense forms of what Stuart Hall calls “popular authoritarianism” in times of crisis such as these.⁴⁷ Hall first identified popular authoritarianism during the transition to a post-Fordist economy in the 1970s, when the social compact with the working class was broken in Britain and the U.S. In this incendiary

context, elites sought to head off popular discontent with economic and social breakdown by scapegoating socially marginalized groups such as blacks. The advent of the neo-cons in the U.S. signals an extreme intensification of this strategy. For although the economic policies of neo-liberalism were, to an extent, supported by politicians from both ends of the political spectrum, from Reagan to Clinton, with Clinton in fact decreasing domestic spending by ending welfare schemes for hundreds of thousands of the poor through the ill-advised welfare to work program, signing into law the North American Free Trade Agreement, and presiding over the World Trade Organization (WTO), military spending was not increased and an overt rhetoric of empire was absent amongst policymakers.

The rise of the neo-cons to power in the second Bush administration has signaled a major shift in foreign policy. The neo-cons, whose origins lie in a disaffected liberalism, broke ranks with both liberals and conservatives in advocating direct military confrontation. They comprise a number of people from the military industrial complex of former Reagan and Bush administrations—Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. Others include Defense Policy Board member Richard Perle and cultural conservatives such as William J. Bennett, Francis Fukayama and Norman Podhoretz. Unlike the neo-liberals, the neo-cons want to free the U.S. of encumbering alliances. As the Project for a New American Century's website states, the neo-con worldview centers on "a few fundamental propositions: that American leadership is good both for America and for the world; that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle; and that too few political leaders today are making the case for global leadership."⁴⁸ Central to neo-con thinking is a belief in clear moral principles, the electoral base for which is a special type of Christian fundamentalism as exemplified by Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, who interpreted September 11 as signs of god's

wrath but who denounce imperialism as wasted white energy.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding their qualms about U.S. intervention abroad, these religious leaders have lined up squarely behind President Bush during his campaign for reelection.

A central shift from the neo-liberal agenda to that of the neo-cons is therefore a global intensification of the move from hegemony to dominance, consent to coercion. In addition to privatization and the free market agenda at home and abroad, the neo-cons formulated a vision of U.S. world dominance based on military might and hearkened back to the “Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity,” in contrast to the dilution of power in the Clinton administration.⁵⁰ Key tenets of this contemporary imperialism (including the need to invade Iraq) were formulated by the neo-cons in the 1990s but were put into place following 9/11.⁵¹ The neo-con philosophy hinges on an unquestioned U.S. dominance to achieve and maintain U.S. power over the world, massive technological supremacy particularly in the military, and control over all new commons such as outer space and cyber space. Wolfowitz’s “Defense Planning Guide,” for instance, explicitly proclaims the U.S.’s intention to maintain “full spectrum dominance” over the other nations of the planet.⁵² Much of the philosophy of the neo-cons, such as the use of global missile defenses to secure a basis for “U.S. power projection round the world” and more ominously, their support for Harlan Ullman’s military strategy of annihilative bombardment or “shock and awe,” sounds like a high-tech and more barbaric version of nineteenth century European imperialisms, shorn of any pretence of civilizing missions.⁵³

And yet the cultural components of the neo-con vision are surprisingly familiar. Francis Fukayama’s end of history thesis, which bridges the neo-liberal vision of capitalist imperialism in the guise of world capitalism and the neo-con vision of U.S. dominance, is a contemporary version of American exceptionalism. There are also clear indications that contemporary

imperialism is guided by an old Orientalism that has been revived both in foreign policy and the popular media. Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations," (1991), which formulates clear and absolute cultural distinctions between East and West and articulates the need for the West to make its values prevail, has been an influential document for the neocons; Raphael Patai's The Arab Mind, originally published in 1973 and excoriated by Edward Said as part of quintessential Orientalism, is now the bible of the neo-cons on the Arab world. The book, whose influence Malini Johar Schueller analyzes in her essay in this volume, was reprinted in 2002 and is widely taught at U.S. military institutions.

We thus agree with Harvey, Johnson, Mann and others that contemporary U.S. imperialism is marked by a shift from various versions of "benevolent intervention" and economic coercion (combined with covert destabilization of "hostile" governments) to overt dominance through brute military force—the shift from neo-liberal hegemony to neo-con visions of world dominance.⁵⁴ The rise of the neo-cons has made the arguments put forth by theorists such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in Empire that globalization entails a de-centered world without insides and outsides, centers and peripheries, seem particularly myopic. For example, although proponents of neo-liberal policies called these phenomena "globalization," the logic being that all businesses were free to move and that the playing field was leveled, (a phenomenon proved to an extent by US deindustrialization and the outsourcing of information technology jobs), the fact that the IMF and the World Bank, the major institutions dictating policy, are controlled by the U.S. cannot be overlooked. Neo-liberalism/globalization as a late twentieth century version of imperialism was different in that its proponents presented the conscious policies of World Bank and IMF-ordered structural adjustments and the opening up of markets as inevitable. As Manfred Steger points out, globalization theorists have a fondness for

using terms such as “irresistible,” “inevitable,” and “irreversible.”⁵⁵ Putatively critical thinkers such as Hardt and Negri help reproduce this mystificatory rhetoric through their arguments about the transformation of the U.S. state into a deterritorialized network. The rise of the neo-cons has made the folly of their post-structuralist stance all too apparent.⁵⁶

As in the realm of foreign policy, however, the advent of the neo-cons has exacerbated trends towards popular authoritarianism in the U.S. to a significant extent. For 9/11 not only provided the Bush administration with an excuse for unilateral military adventures abroad, but also allowed it to clamp down on civil liberties and dissent at home. Measures such as the USA PATRIOT Act, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s denial of prisoner-of-war status to prisoners held in indefinite detention at Guantánamo Bay, and the Justice Department’s policy of secret detentions and immigration proceedings all harken back to the worst moments of bigotry and authoritarian persecution in U.S. history.⁵⁷ David Cole argues that the U.S. is undergoing a spasm of vengeful zeal that parallels the Palmer Raids following World War I, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the MacCarthy hearings during the Cold War. Although most of these measures were initially targeted at immigrants after the 9/11 attacks, historical precedents suggest that such draconian measures are always a precedent to a clamp down on anyone who questions government power.⁵⁸ Heightened domestic surveillance thus combines with rhetoric concerning soldiers abroad protecting “our” civil liberties, making criticism of the war appear not simply unpatriotic but rather a conscious attack on the security of the U.S.

This suppression of dissent is accompanied by a heavily gendered discourse which represents Americanism as tolerance and liberty as opposed to the repressiveness and intolerance of the Arab world but that is accompanied by a strident celebration of masculinity and

compulsory heterosexuality. The rescue of Jessica Lynch, released to the media through the tightly controlled Central Command's media center in Qatar (Al-Jazeera's Baghdad office having just been strategically bombed) during "Operation Iraqi Freedom," was circulated as two narratives: that of soldier Lynch as female Rambo, fighting to the death; and as the quintessential rescue scene of a captivity narrative in which the superior kind of masculinity prevails.

Although these contrasting images might be taken as symptoms of the mutability of contemporary discourses of gender, the butch but needy Lynch ultimately affirmed the role of masculine military agency. Of course, after the Abu Ghraib photographs became public, standard disciplinary discourses on femininity emerged with the contrasts between the good girl Jessica and the bad girl Lyndie England. Thus, despite seeming contradictions deriving from contemporary masculine anxieties, as both Cynthia Enloe and Malini Johar Schueller point out in this volume, the discourse of contemporary imperialism thrives on relatively traditional gender dichotomies that essentially recycle discourses of the colonial period. Similarly, belief in U.S. technological dominance combines with an anxiety about shadowy terrorists breaking through high tech security systems to legitimate spiraling forms of surveillance such as the Total Information Awareness program.⁵⁹ Popular authoritarianism is, in other words, firmly linked to a formation of intersecting markers of identity whose instability must constantly be repressed by strident evocations of patriotism.

To engage in critique of contemporary U.S. imperialism is therefore to examine and disturb the nexus of raced, gendered, and classed representations of imperial national identity articulated in the current regime. The political implications of such scholarly work are clearer today than ever before. The present administration has explicitly set out to cow critics of its policies by invoking a strident patriotism that sees all dissent as treason. This strategy has been

remarkably effective. Consider the role of the mass media during the run up to the war in Iraq.⁶⁰ There has been little critique of Bush administration policies in the mainstream media, which has repeatedly displayed its unwillingness to challenge popular authoritarian measures such as claims about Saddam Hussein's Weapons of Mass Destruction or the clamp down on civil liberties within the U.S. after 9/11.

In tandem with the right-wing corporate take-over of the press, neo-con ideologues such as Lynn Cheney and Daniel Pipes are engaged in a project to purge U.S. academia of progressive scholars. The group with which the Vice President's wife is associated, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), recently issued a report entitled, "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America, and What Can Be Done About It." In this report, ACTA argues that "college and university faculty have been the weak link in America's response to the attacks" of September 11.⁶¹ Given such strident statements, we believe that we have a responsibility to challenge the seemingly inexorable slide of the U.S. towards belligerence and authoritarianism at home and abroad. Let us be very clear about one thing: current U.S. policies threaten the future of humanity and the planet in the most immediate way. By providing prominent and emerging scholars with a venue to analyze the cultural contradictions of contemporary U.S. imperialism, we intend to highlight and challenge the role of U.S. culture in perpetuating popular authoritarianism. In addition, we believe that Contemporary U.S. Culture and Imperialism contributes to the struggle against the new imperialism by delineating strains of anti-authoritarian culture in the U.S. today that resonate and articulate solidarity with the emerging movement for global social justice. We thus intend our work to provide tools with which to dismantle coercive U.S. power both domestically and internationally. Although the last

thirty years have offered scant hope, we believe that there are viable alternatives to a world of indefinite detentions, preemptive strikes, and perpetual warfare.

Overview of the Essays:

The collection begins with essays that analyze contemporary technologies of imperialism in media, politics, and the military. John Carlos Rowe's, "Culture, U.S. imperialism, Globalization," demonstrates how U.S. cultural production, the work of what Horkheimer and Adorno termed "the culture industry," conditioned American citizens to accept the undisguised militarism and jingoistic nationalism now driving U.S. foreign policy. Rowe argues that U.S. imperialism since the Vietnam War has worked steadily to "import" the world and to render global differences aspects of the U.S. nation – in short, to internalize and "hyper-nationalize" transnational issues. Although this "Vietnam-effect" is a relatively new phenomenon that has gone through several interesting cultural transformations since 1968, it has strong ties with the cultural practices of traditional imperialism, including British and U.S. imperialism in the nineteenth century. Rowe examines several films (*Wag the Dog* and *Three Kings*) and one television program (*Law and Order*) with ostensibly liberal political aims and shows how they represent this tendency toward "Americanization" as a process specific to the post-Vietnam era (and thus U.S. neo-imperialism) and yet still tied to older, more traditional forms of imperialism, especially militarism. He demonstrates how film and television culture has "Americanized" global and international issues (and thus U.S. foreign policy in general) as a means of "normalizing" the nation in response to terrorist threats and as a way of culturally legitimating the Bush Administration's inchoate "war on terror."

Donald Pease turns our attention to parallels between national and international visions.

His essay, “American Studies/Emergency States: U.S. Imperialisms’s Regeneration Through Violence,” demonstrates the continuing significance, both in the national and international arenas, of the mythological themes of nationhood constructed within the field of Cold War American Studies. As a model of civic behavior that it would also bring about, the national meta-narrative underpinned the aesthetic ideology of the centralized nation-state. The themes embedded within this narrative– “Virgin Land,” “Errand into the Wilderness,” “Redeemer Nation,”– supplied the transformational grammar through which the state shaped the U.S. population’s understanding of contemporary political and historical events. This credo of American exceptionalism was used both during the cold war and after 9/11 to transform the state’s production of exceptions within the domestic political sphere into the power to declare exceptional states of emergency worldwide.

While during the Cold War, the national metanarratives supplied the citizenry the fantasy that they participated in the United States’ imperial rule, George Bush’s invocation of the Virgin Land, now violated by foreigners, has justified newly formed structures of governmentality through operatives like Homeland Security and the USA Patriot Act. Pease focuses on two Americanist works that attempted to dismantle the Cold War national imaginary–Annette Kolodny’s The Lay of the Land and Richard Slotkin’s Regeneration Through Violence–in order to demonstrate how the national metanarrative’s justification of the construction of subversives as “exceptions” to the rule of democratic inclusiveness also supplied the grounding rationale for the construction of emergency states within the international arena both during the cold war and after 9/11.

Next, Christian Parenti moves the focus to the present moment, particularly to the technological methods of imperialism. “Planet America” anatomizes the overblown rhetoric

surrounding the “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). Before the conquest of Iraq and the opening of the current guerrilla war there, intellectual circles in the U.S. military establishment, most notably Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and those around him, were engaged in much frenzied talk about the newest high-tech military methodologies of empire. At the heart of the discussion was the question of replacing military labor - that is, soldiers and politically problematic U.S. casualties - with technology, capital, or “dead labor.” These efforts to re-make the U.S. military into a totally invincible super-force are known among defense geeks and pentagon apparatchiks as the “Revolution in Military Affairs,” or simply “Transformation.” And this military project is part of a larger policy agenda of global domination, an agenda shared by all three post-Cold War U.S. presidents. Within this framework, the RMA envisions a perpetual global war waged not by human beings who die, rebel, or come home wounded and crazy, but a war waged by labor that is already dead, crystallized into machinery. Future wars are to be the work of zombie armies of “swarming” robots, armed aerial drones, super-sophisticated microwave bombs, “over the horizon” smart artillery, ocean-floated “lily pad” military bases and space-orbiting offensive weapon systems using lasers, projectiles and electro-magnetic pulses.

Parenti’s article argues that the RMA is in many ways simply a recapitulation of capitalism's standard technology-fetish; always the basic equation is the same: replace living labor with capital. But somewhere on the way to frictionless global military dominance the U.S. found itself stuck in a radically asymmetrical urban guerilla war, facing exactly the scenario that the Pentagon dissenters from the RMA had warned about for years. Suddenly America's military fantasy had morphed into its military nightmare: a cumbersome high-tech army of soft America kids bogged down in a massive Third World city fighting a low-tech and determined local insurgency. Viewed from among the charred remains of blown up Humvees in the fetid allies of

Baghdad, the RMA looks like the last bubble of the nineties to burst. After all, the transformation debate began in earnest in the early 1990s and ran parallel to the “New Economy” and financialization hype, both of which maintained that “everything had changed.”

Unlike the first three essays, Omar Dahbour takes seriously the arguments for the United States’ leading role in the world. In “Hegemony and Rights: On the Liberal Justification for Empire,” Dahbour posits a connection between recent arguments for the hegemonic role of the U.S. in the international system and advocacy of an international human rights regime. Tracing these arguments back to the liberal paternalistic imperialism of Mill and Acton, Dahbour examines the contemporary rhetoric of humanitarian interventionism. Dahbour concludes that if U.S. hegemony is to be justified in terms other than those of great-power interest and predominance, it has and perhaps must be made in terms of establishment and enforcement of an international regime of human rights. Dahbour’s article examines recent writing by supporters as well as critics of this latter viewpoint such as Lea Brilmayer, Thomas Weiss, and Jack Donnelly. This view is contrasted with the traditional-conservative justification of imperial hegemony in terms of great-power interest and predominance--themselves supposedly guarantors of international peace and stability. The liberal argument views hegemony more as an opportunity for the institutionalization of humanitarian norms at the global level--an institutionalization that, however, requires a strong hegemon for its enactment. Dahbour criticizes such views by emphasizing their philosophically problematic conception of human rights. In addition, Dahbour argues, liberal justifications of U.S. interventionism avoid consideration of the consequences of using hegemonic power to enforce humanitarian norms.

The essays in Part II of the collection are marked (though not exclusively) by their attention to the dynamics of gender and imperialism. Cynthia Enloe’s “Updating the Gendered

Empire: Where are the Women of Occupied Afghanistan and Iraq?" discusses the ways in which militarization continues to operate in what are often thought to be "post-war" or "post-conflict" societies. In particular, Enloe emphasizes the ways that subtle and not-so-subtle militarizing processes (local and international) serve to privilege certain men and certain forms of masculinity. The trope of saving brown women from oppressive brown men, crucial to liberal justifications of British imperialism in Asia during the 19th century, has returned in recent U.S. military adventures in Asia and the Middle East. When no 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' were found in Iraq, the Bush administration quickly seized on the notion of human, and, more specifically, women's rights as justification for American military intervention around the world. Yet, as postcolonial theorists have pointed out, the patriarchal rhetoric implicit in this notion of saving women consigns them to completely passive positions. Enloe's article focuses on the impact of American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq through the lens of women's rights and the militarization of those societies produced by U.S. involvement over the last two decades. In addition to analyzing the impact of U.S. imperial power on these societies, Enloe traces the thinking and strategies of women activists in those societies as they attempt to create cultures and policies that challenge such on-going militarizations.

Malini Johar Schueller's essay, "Techno-Dominance and Torturegate: The Making of U.S. Imperialism," continues Enloe's focus on militarism and masculinity, extending it to an analysis of the contemporary military strategies of the neo-cons and the torture photographs from Abu Ghraib prison. In contrast to Parenti, Schueller suggests that the high-tech militaristic dominance has never been disembodied. Through an examination of Ullman & Wade's military strategy document, Shock & Awe, which became the template for the bombing of Iraq, Schueller demonstrates how techno-dominance is articulated through visions of sexual prowess,

masculinity, power, and hyper-modern precision which, in turn, depend upon producing the Other as abject and emasculated. By analyzing the similarities between the discourses of neo-con techno-dominance and those of modern torture, Schueller argues that the tortures at Abu Ghraib prison, which often take the form of sexual othering, need to be seen as micro versions of neo-con military strategy, cycled through a familiar Orientalism. Denouncing the current reading of the Abu Ghraib photographs as pornography, Schueller suggests that this reading obfuscates the workings of imperial dominance while ironically supporting neo-con imperial visions which often appear as fantasies of D/s. Anticipating Dawson's essay in this volume, Schueller also suggests that despite their seeming inevitability, the very extremes and contradictions of neo-con militarism are producing resistances which are contributing to the unmaking of U.S. imperialism.

Bruce Harvey's "From the Last Queen of Hawaii to Lois-Ann Yamanaka: Being Blue in Post-Imperialized Hawaii," turns our attention to imperialism within the nation and the gendered dynamics of both subjection and resistance. While the current U.S. militancy on the global scene scarcely pays attention to Hawaii, recent separatists strongly urge resistance to U.S. imperialism through specific attention to their hundred and fifty-year trajectory of disenfranchisement. Harvey's essay therefore deals both with this history and the contemporary scene. (George Bush's comparison of the foreign attack on 9/11 to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, when Hawaii was not a state, demonstrates the continuing colonization of the history of Hawaii). Harvey analyzes the present-day political tension between identification with the U.S. mainland and its forces of "progressive" capital and the separatist longing to assert independent nationhood in terms of the masculinist aggressivity of U.S. capitalism and imperialism and the construction of a trans-Pacific, "maternal global."

As Harvey demonstrates, however, current separatist movements seeking to liberate

Hawaii from a postcolonial identity are complex and contradictory. Through analyses of the contemporary Hawaiian literary-cultural scene, with specific readings of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's Blu's Hanging and Kiana Davenport's Song of the Exile in the context of feminist-oriented political texts such as Rona Tamiko Halualani's In the Name of Hawaiians and Haunani-Kay Trask's From a Native Daughter, Harvey teases out the ambivalences that hover around the notion of Hawaiian statehood and sovereignty. Currently, those seeking to liberate Hawaiian postcolonial identity from the imperial state, draw upon at once progressive and regressive fixation of genealogical, sovereign rootedness. Insofar as the latter dialectic is tensely figured in terms of passive/independent corporate and individual bodies, the discourse of Hawaiian statehood, like the discourse of the U.S. imperial state, is very much a heavily gendered one. Weaving throughout his analysis of the condition of the sovereign/statehood divide is a psycho-political analysis on loss and recovery as adumbrated by Freud and Julia Kristeva. Moving from the current immediacy of governmental policy toward Hawaii to more psychoanalytic matters, Harvey relates the macro, geospatial politics to the micro identities of specific, gendered, Hawaiian subjects.

The final section in the book deals with political and literary imaginings of "Other" cultures, those envisioned as non-Western, and inimical to U.S. interests. Melani McAlister's "Prophecy, Politics, and the Popular: The Left Behind Series and Christian Fundamentalism's New World Order," examines the cultural and political dynamics of the highly popular Left Behind series published by evangelist Tim LaHaye and writer Jerry Jenkins. The Left Behind novels, imperialist fiction in its apocalyptic mode, centering on the Middle East, were already successful before 9/11 spurred even further interest in the books; Desecration, released six weeks after 9/11, became the bestselling hardback book of the year. While intellectuals rightly debate

whether current U.S. power is imperialist, neo-imperialist, or simply an arrogant exertion of hegemonic power, the *Left Behind* series offers its readers a way of seeing the militant actions of the U.S. as part of a divine plan.

Through readings of several novels of the series, including *Soul Harvest*, *Apollyon*, *The Mark*, and *The Remnant*, McAlister demonstrates the power of the novels as a major cultural phenomenon which has undeniable links with the resurgence of millennialist pro-Israel activism on the Christian right and the dangerous direction taken by the U.S. “war on terrorism” in Iraq. McAlister analyzes the *Left Behind* series as part of a larger project for evangelical mapping, placing evangelicals in the U.S. political map as a modernized political force who have moved beyond the subcultural status that marginalized them even in the heyday of the Moral Majority. By examining the specific ways in which the series maps the Middle East with Israel as the site of God’s action in history, thus rendering Palestine and Palestinians literally invisible, McAlister argues for a congruence in policy between the evangelists and U.S. policymakers, even though the reasons for policies vary considerably from the sacred intent of the series to the secular (military power, oil etc) intents of policymakers.

Although current political attention has been focused on the Middle East, Harilaos Stecopoulos reminds us of the importance of Africa to the U.S. imperial imagination. In “Putting Africa on Our Map: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Victorian Imperial Imaginary,” Stecopoulos explores the role of contemporary American representations of Africa. What distinguishes the recent vogue of neo-Victorian Africana, Stecopoulos suggests, is a notable disinterest in drawing parallels between the imperial behavior of 19th century Britons and new millennium Americans. Conservative intellectuals and pundits such as Thomas Donnelly, Niall Ferguson, and Max Boot may construct historical analogies between the British and American

empires, but most of the neo-Victorian Africanists do not. Instead, these texts focus on the longstanding British investment in the continent (Bergner's account of modern Sierra Leone). The U.S. connection to Africa, indeed, the U.S. connection to empire as such, disappears in the face of a historicist focus on Victorian colonial history.

Stecopoulos argues that these neo-Victorian Africanist texts offer contemporary Americans an opportunity to transform sub-Saharan Africa from a shameful reminder of our participation in slavery and neocolonialism to a sign of our innocence of those "European" crimes: colonialism and imperialism. For all its global power, the U.S. is consequently not viewed as an empire at all but rather as a strong nation eager to foster good throughout the world. In short, historian Niall Ferguson is almost correct when he claims that the United States "is an empire...that dare not speak its name"; the U.S. Empire is more than willing to say the word, it just likes to say it in a British accent that echoes from the past.

The book concludes with a chapter analyzing possibilities for anti-imperialism. The essential task for a literature intent on challenging U.S. hegemony, Ashley Dawson argues in "New Modes of Anti-Imperialism," is to render visible the transnational networks of power that characterize contemporary American imperialism. For Dawson, the defining and distinguishing characteristic of U.S. imperialism is its informal nature. Unlike previous imperial powers such as Britain and France, that is, the United States has not relied predominantly on territorial conquest and political subordination. Instead of developing an extensive colonial apparatus, Dawson argues, the U.S. asserted its imperial sway from the beginning of the 20th century primarily through foreign direct investment and through the modern corporate form, making its power distinct from previous European forms of imperial hegemony. The genius of U.S. policy makers, beginning with Woodrow Wilson, has resided in their corresponding ability to represent

America's informal empire in terms of a framework of universal rights.

The outlines of a contemporary anti-imperial literature are discernable, Dawson argues, in novels such as Robert Newman's The Fountain at the Center of the World (2004) and in social movement manifestos such as the texts published in We Are Everywhere (2003). Newman's epic novel focuses on the impact of what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession," the privatization of the global commons that has been one of the primary facets of the neo-liberal reconstruction of empire over the last twenty years. While offering a critique of the transnational networked power of institutions such as the WTO that underlie imperial power today, Newman's novel also traces the emergence of an anti-capitalist "movement of movements" that links the dispossessed in the capitalist core and periphery. The Fountain at the Center of the World and the movement manifestos discussed by Dawson document the cultural politics of new anti-systemic social movements that over the last decade have come to constitute an important internationalist counter-articulation to global imperial power.

Notes:

¹Paul Johnson for instance sees nineteenth-century European colonialism as necessitated and sparked by the U.S. intervention against the pirate states of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli at the end of the eighteenth century; he commends the colonization of the Philippines as a necessity for pirate hunting and argues that the U.S. and its allies can suppress criminal states by “administering obdurate terrorist states” (22); Edward Rothstein argues that because the destruction of September 11 calls for a transcendent ethical perspective, hopefully the “relativism of pomo and the obsessive focus of poco will be widely seen as ethically perverse (17).” See also Wolf, Martin “The Need for a new Imperialism,” Financial Times, Wednesday October 10, 2001, 21.

²For a discussion of the stakes of different fractions of the U.S. business class in globalization, see William Tabb, Economic Governance in the Age of Globalization (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

³A typical example in this regard would be Michael Ignatieff, professor of political science at Harvard University and frequent contributor to influential publications, although he was joined by other erstwhile Leftists such as Christopher Hitchens. See Michael Ignatieff, “The Year of Living Dangerously: A Liberal Supporter of the War Looks Back,” New York Times Magazine (14 March 2004): pp. 13-18.

⁴Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, pp. 62-63. John Carlos Rowe uses this insight of Said as central to his study, Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵Cited in R.W. Van Alstyne, The Rising American Empire, p. 1. Thomas Jefferson, “To the Citizens of Washington,” March 4, 1809, in The Complete Jefferson ed. Saul K. Padover (New York: Tudor, 1943), p. 552.

⁶In 1807, John Adams wrote, “There is nothing, in my little reading, more ancient in my memory than the observation that arts, sciences, and empire had travelled westward; . . . that their next leap would be over the Atlantic into America.” Cited in Loren Baritz, City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America (New York: Wiley, 1964), p. 107.

⁷Frank Ninkovich, The United States and Imperialism (Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 237-238. Ninkovich writes, “. . . American imperialism was not only a rather frail addition to a family of robust and mature European siblings, but that it died during childhood” (247).

⁸Cited in Ninkovich, p. 235.

⁹Michael Hunt, Ideology and U.S Foreign Policy (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 17-18.

¹⁰David Harvey, The New Imperialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 56.

¹¹J.W. Fulbright, “Foreword,” The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs by Philip H. Coombs (New York: Harper/Council on Foreign Relations, 1964), p. xi

¹²Tim Watson, “Is the ‘Post’ in the Postcolonial the US in American Studies? The US Beginnings of Commonwealth Studies,” ARIEL 31 i (Jan-April 2000), p. 65. Watson’s article is invaluable in tracing the role of American Studies in supporting U.S. hegemony.

¹³ See also William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York: Dell, 1959) and his Empire as a Way of Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Thomas R. Hietala's Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) and V.G. Kiernan, America: The New Imperialism: From White Settlement to World Hegemony (London: Zed Press, 1978)..

¹⁴The cover of the book makes an interesting statement. It depicts the waist to knees body of a brown skinned man clad in a purple combat outfit, hands resting on a Kalashnikov, the side pockets of his pants presumably filled with pistols. The photograph represents graphically the facelessness of terror organizations that the nation has been warned it faces via the "axis of evil." On the other hand, the color of terror is unmistakably brown.

¹⁵William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York: Delta Books, 1962).

¹⁶John Carlos Rowe, Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9. We see Iraq as forming part of the same trajectory. In his contribution to the Public Culture volume on imperialism, John D. Kelly argues that because the US military has organized itself for occasional intervention and because US foreign policy has been about holding the door open for capitalism, it isn't imperialism. Such arguments suffer from a narrow definition of imperialism and ironically buy into the myth of American exceptionalism. See John D. Kelly, "U.S. Power, after 9/11 and before It: If Not an Empire, Then What?" Public Culture 15 (2) (2003), 347-369.

¹⁷Noam Chomsky, Hegemony or Survival (2003). See also Marilyn Young, "Ground Zero: Enduring War" in September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Young argues that different governments have attempted to order the world such that US dominance means limited sovereignty for others. September 11 simply allowed the Bush administration to pursue these policies more aggressively. (P. 21).

¹⁸Gabriel Kolko, Another Century of War? (New York: New Press, 2002), p. 93.

¹⁹Elaine Tyler May "Echoes of the Cold War: The Aftermath of September 11 at Home," in September 11 in History, pp. 42, 45, 50. Frederick Jameson repudiates the innocence to experience narrative that many had used to describe 9/11 and reminds us that similar arguments were made during Watergate. See his "The Dialectics of Disaster," in Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia Eds. Dissent From the Homeland: Essays After September 11 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 57; See also Srinivas Aravamudan's comments about the redeployment of the American jeremiad by the religious right in "Ground Zero; or, The Implosion of Church and State," in Dissent From the Homeland, p. 199.

²⁰Leti Volpp, "The Citizen and the Terrorist," in September 11 in History, p. 147.

²¹ On crises of over-accumulation, see David Harvey, p. 117. Harvey also mentions other ideological contradictions in this stage of U.S. hegemony, such as the tendency to support authoritarian regimes in the name of stability while fostering a rhetoric of democracy to combat Soviet totalitarianism. See Harvey, pp. 58-60.

²² For a political economy of the shift to post-Fordism in the U.S., see Mike Davis, Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class (New York: Verso, 1986).

²³ For a discussion of the redesign of the international financial system after 1973, see Peter Gowan, The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance (New York:

Verso, 1999).

²⁴David Harvey, p. 68.

²⁵ John Walton and David Seddon, Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994).

²⁶ The most extreme of such assessments was Francis Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man (New York: Free Press, 1992).

²⁷ Daniel Burton Rose, George Katsiaficas, and Eddie Yuen, Eds., The Battle of Seattle: the New Challenge to Capitalist Globalization (New York: Soft Skull, 2001).

²⁸ Joseph E. Stiglitz, Globalization and Its Discontents (New York: Norton, 2002).

²⁹ See Harvey, p. 157, Arundhati Roy, Power Politics (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2001), and Naomi Klein, No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies (New York: Picador, 2000).

³⁰ For an excoriating overview of the growth of fundamentalism around the world, see Tariq Ali, Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads, Modernity (New York: Verso, 2002).

³¹ Chalmers Johnson, Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire (New York: Holt, 2000), p. 10.

³² David Harvey, p. 31; Michael Mann, Incoherent Empire (New York: Verso, 2003); Emmanuel Todd, After the Empire: the Breakdown of the American Order (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. xvi-xvii; Immanuel Wallerstein, pp. 24-26.

³³ Chalmers Johnson, The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2004), p. 4. Many other critics also see the shift to explicit imperialism and unilateralism as marking post 9/11 US. See George Steinmetz, "The State of Emergency and the Revival of Imperialism: Toward an Authoritarian Post-Fordism," Public Culture 15 ii (2003), pp. 323-345.

³⁴ Chalmers Johnson, p. 25.

³⁵ Chalmers Johnson, p. 257.

³⁶ For a very clear, if somewhat dated, discussion of the unsustainability of U.S. economic policies, see David Calleo, The Bankrupting of America: How the Federal Budget is Impoverishing the Nation (New York: Morrow, 1992).

³⁷ Over a decade ago, Paul Kennedy was already warning of the perils of such over-extension in The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict (New York: Random House, 1987).

³⁸ Michael T. Klare, Resource Wars: the New Landscape of Global Conflict (NY: Metropolitan Books, 2001).

³⁹ The need for such an autonomous regional stance on the part of the European Union is set out particularly militantly in Emmanuel Todd, pp. 192-202.

⁴⁰ For a critique of *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s residual racism and pandering to American patriotism, see Robert Jensen's "What Michael Moore Misses About the Empire" Common Dreams Newscenter 21 July 2004 <<http://commondreams.org/views04/0706-08.htm>>

⁴¹ Slotkin, Richard, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

⁴² A. O. Scott, "Vengeance is Ours, Says Hollywood" *The New York Times* 2 May 2004. <www.nytimes.com>

⁴³ Robert Jensen, Citizens of Empire: The Struggle to Reclaim Our Humanity (San Francisco: City Lights, 2004), p. xxii.

⁴⁴ The Bush administration's response was also surely affected by Vietnam-revisionist narratives such as *Rambo*, in which the isolated hero must battle not simply foreign foes but also the corrupt and inept forces of the U.S. bureaucracy in order to redeem the nation. See Lynda Boose, "Techno-Muscularity and the 'Boy Eternal': From the Quagmire to the Gulf," in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., Cultures of U.S. Imperialism (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993), 581-609.

⁴⁵ Niebuhr wrote: "As the nineteenth century went on, the note of divine favoritism was increasingly sounded. Christianity, democracy, Americanism, the English language and culture, the growth of industry and science, American institutions— these are all confounded and confused. The contemplation of their own righteousness filled Americans with such lofty and enthusiastic sentiments that they readily identified it with the righteousness of God ... It is in particular the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxon race, which is destined to bring light to the gentiles by means of lamps manufactured in America. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988; orig. pub. 1937), p. 179.

⁴⁶ Lee Quinby, "Women and the Techno-Millennium," The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies 21 iv (1999), p. 284.

⁴⁷ Stuart Hall et. al., Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 217ff.

⁴⁸ Project for a New American Century website, <<http://www.newamericancentury.org/>>

⁴⁹ David Harvey, p. 190

⁵⁰ As David Harvey has noted, the name PNAC is notable both for its reach and for its obfuscation of territorial control. It is temporality, a century that is being named "American," rather than space. See David Harvey, The New Imperialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 91-92

⁵¹ All of this was set out explicitly as long ago as the early 1990s. For a discussion of the history of current national security strategy, see David Armstrong, "Dick Cheney's Song of America: Drafting a Plan for Global Dominance," *Harper's* (October 2002): 76-83.

⁵² In this context, the U.S. has no interest in resolving smoldering conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian one since they legitimate military spending by creating a climate of fear. See Ellen Meiksins Wood, Empire of Capital (New York: Verso, 2003), p. 161.

⁵³ Thomas Donnelly, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," A Report of The Project for the New American Century, September 2000. Donnelly, p. v. Shock & Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance was published by Harlan K Ullman in 1996.

⁵⁴ David Harvey's point that the U.S. has always practiced a mix of coercive and hegemonic practices is useful in this regard. After World War II, Harvey argues, it sought to conceal its imperial ambition in the abstract universalism of rhetoric concerning democracy and development. It is this ideological cloak that has dropped away of late. See David Harvey, p. 50.

⁵⁵ Manfred B. Steger, Globalism: The New Market Ideology (Lanham, MD.: Roman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 54. Cited in Chalmers Johnson, p. 260.

⁵⁶ Of course, even before 9/11 it should have been apparent that state power was not disseminating itself into a transnational network. As the massive intensification of the policing and carceral apparatuses in the U.S. over the last thirty years makes clear, state power was simply being redirected from redistributive to punitive ends during the post-Fordist era. For a wide-ranging analysis and indictment of this trend, see Christian Parenti, Lockdown American:

Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis (New York: Verso, 1999).

⁵⁷ For detailed discussion of these various measures, see Cynthia Brown, ed. Lost Liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom (NY: New Press, 2003).

⁵⁸ David Cole, Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism (NY: New Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ See Reg Whitacker, “After 9/11: A Surveillance State?” in Cynthia Brown, pp. 52-69.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the corporate takeover of the media, see Robert McChesney and John Nichols, Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media (NY: Seven Stories, 2002).

⁶¹ ACTA’s website is <<http://www.goacta.org>>. The extreme Zionist Daniel Pipes is associated with Campus Watch, a group that “monitors” Middle Eastern Studies, and regularly attacks anyone who expresses sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Campus Watch’s website is at <http://www.campus-watch.org>