

Globalization and its Terrors

Teresa Brennan



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Daily life in the West

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For Columb Henry Brennan:
1913–1998,
Journalist.

This was his book.

Acknowledgments

Toward the end of this book, I note that my mode of research followed a path of hypothetical deduction (and logical speculation) in the first instance. What I mean by this is that I set out from a theory and turned to the facts in the light of it. The theory as such is set out in *History after Lacan* (1993) and *Exhausting Modernity* (2000). This book is their empirical companion. The logic of the theory that pre-existed my research demanded that states committed to economic globalization would *have* to reduce that proportion of income they give to social provision (or human reproduction) as well as environmental protection (the reproduction of nature). Human reproduction includes the education and health of the next generation, as well as the daily regeneration of the current workforce and their families. If I was right in my theoretical deductions, the USA, Britain and other advanced states should be reducing the expenditure on health and education, as well as welfare. As I was working this out in theory, there was a vast array of social scientists demonstrating that it was beginning in fact, while other critical theorists (Shiva, Plumwood, Buck-Morss, Cornell, Derrida, Harvey, Giddens, Jameson, Altvater) argued, as I do, that this new global world demanded a rethinking of space and time as fundamental to modern social analysis. Consequently, the conclusions of this argument intersect frequently with those of others. Where I am aware of an overlap or indebted to a source, of course I have noted this. But where there are overlaps to authors or organizations of which I am unaware, even though my theory suggests that I should be aware, I would be glad if they could be drawn to my attention through <www.whatistobedone.org> (where additions to the Notes at the end of this book can be listed interactively provided a relevant citation is given). Routledge has the option of issuing a new edition of this book with those names and relevant organizations in five years' time.

On the one hand, the theory that follows here is really in the air. On the other hand, what is distinctive in the theory proffered in this book is the idea that environmental degradation is the *inevitable* consequence of the pursuit of profit. One can either side with Mammon, or with the living against the dead. I arrived at this conclusion through recognizing that Marx's theory was wrong in its essential premise ("labour is the source of all exchange value") but correct in insisting that without the raw materials provided by "nature", there is no profit.

This book was written with the aid of a remarkable research team. They were willing to take on counter-intuitive claims arising from my theory, such as: "Blair has to be spending less on health" – "NAFTA has to be against environmental concerns" – when the rhetoric was entirely the other way. The members of that research team were: Peter Arvantely, Sally Aulich, many Brennans, Vanessa Kaplan, Frederic Kiernan, Polly Kiernan, Sandra Hart, Michele Mattisons, Karima Ridgely, Ilaria Sernia, Tanya Soloman, Laurie Tanner, Woden Teachout, Heather Wdowin and Rosslyn Wuchinich. They were witty, intelligent, and superbly resourceful. Rosslyn Wuchinich did so much for this book that at one point I asked her to co-author it. She declined because she did not think she should take credit for my theoretical work, but as I have tried to point out, this theory is in the air. Enough that an initial version of Chapter 5 is being published as a joint article by us both. Thank you Rosslyn. Good luck with the union. Similarly, Heather Wdowin drafted much of the material on the conditions of life in Chapter 4. Thank you Heather. Good luck with the naturopathy PhD.

Heather's and Rosslyn's posts as my research assistants were paid for by the Schmidt Family Foundation bequest attached to my chair at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). Experience at this working-class school (in a rich community) struggling to become a respected university taught me two things. The first is that there really are honest conservatives who put the right to free speech before considerations of finance. The second is that few people live out the process of democratizing intelligence and all it implies. But some do, and I would like to thank my colleagues and the PhD students I advise (and who also advise me) for all their contributions, and for working through many of these issues: in particular, I thank Henry Abramson, Lynn Appleton, Tom Atkins, Jane Caputi, Fran Chelland, Rod Faulds, Paul Forage, Natalia Gianni, Suzanne Kelly and Lorraine Cobb.

To return to those honest conservatives. Outside the university, in the rich and formerly anthrax-ridden town of Boca Raton, I

came to know Daphne and Gary M'aingot, Maria Sachs, Jennifer Augspurger, Scott Bedell, Sandy, Leslie and Joni, and other women and men outside the university. They and their families introduced me to a world of concerned Republican Catholics, who really are worried about the environment and the children of the future. Different as we are, we agree that the way to have people of different races and classes act on their shared concerns was to draw out the commonalities between us: we are concerned, regardless of race, class or creed, for the future of our common children and concerned that they have an environment they can inhabit. Our health, and that of those we are close to, is already affected by pollution. In our case, although we have yet to see how widespread this is, we do not believe that any human being should work in sweatshop conditions, or work for just enough to stay alive without any breaks in which to live and to educate their children or themselves. We think genetic engineering for food is human hubris at its worst: these newly manufactured organisms are only putting an already endangered ecology further at risk. Given that we agreed as well that communism had been an historical disaster, I was able to talk about the explanatory use of Marx's account of capitalism without setting up a red flag. Daphne M'aingot was able to explain why "small business" was wary of "big government", and so forth. We found our common ground, often beyond right and left. But we also emphasised something which need not be common to right and left, and that is compassion. I had been struck, when I was first at university, how the conservatives were often much kinder to women they knew than the socialists, although the socialists had more concern for women and men they did not know. It seemed as if one either had compassion in a personal context, or in a social one; was either kind to one's spouse or changed the world.

While many women especially may agree on what needs to be stopped, many will not agree with my account of the cause of what needs to be stopped (global capitalism). But unless I and others are prepared to offer such accounts, we cannot have the necessary discussion about what needs to change if we are to do away with allergies and illness contingent on environmental pollution, sweatshop labor, genetic engineering, illness, death, and so forth. But offering accounts is not easy. Simply put, it is easier to say what is wrong with an existing theory than it is to propose a theory oneself. In proposing such a theory, I see it as subject to the classical criteria by which theoretical worth is gauged: internal consistency, consistency with the known facts, explanatory force, parsimony, and refutability.

Susan Buck-Morss, who read the mss twice, and whose solidarity equals her intellect, argues that the notion that social being determines social consciousness is simply wrong. Empirically, too many revolutionaries have left their own class. Whatever it is that leads a person to reason to a conclusion not in their immediate material interests, that quality lies in many of the Republican women who go to church groups and "do good". In many cases they are starved of the information they need to direct their desire to change the world toward the good they wish to do. For this reason, I am glad I have lived in South Florida, and glad to have argued baseline Christianity with women who really believe in it, and social justice. Yet in every case where I argued about the effects of globalization (in for instance destroying small business) with a person prepared to follow an argument in Boca, where I came to grief in seeking shared premises was in discussions of sexual orientation. It may be that, if there is to be an effective resistance to globalization that does not involve more terrors, this will mean suspending discussions of sexual orientation and choice generally, and working together on the things we do agree on. For instance, small farmers in South Dakota in the US are effectively using the state legislature to ban genetic engineering. But suspicion of homosexuals has come between them and their natural allies in various environmental groups, and it works on both sides. My belief is that a diminution in the realm of sexual projections which divide the various groups opposed to globalization will or would occur as one works with them, seeking grounds for unity rather than division, finding out that gays do not eat their young. We will see.

Especial thanks to Martin Jay and Robin Blackburn for comments on the initial (1998) drafts, and Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Linda Alcoff, Chris Rowland, and Val Plumwood, for comments on the more recent ones. Donna Bentolila helped undo the Gordian knot that got in the way of completing this book. Mari Shullaw of Routledge was a great editor (Mari, good luck with the theology degree) and James Cooke of Book Now patient and skilful throughout the production process. As ever, thanks to Alice Jardine, Sue James, Quentin Skinner, and other friends for enduring this process, and just enduring.

I began writing this book when Marilyn Strathern invited me to give a paper on reproduction at Cambridge in March 1998. My father died the weekend I presented the paper, and his journalist's shade haunted its subsequent development into a book. I thank him for teaching me to attend to the empirical state of things, and I

thank my daughter Sangi, for continuing where he left off, with such love. Woden Teachout was there throughout all final writing and editing, arguing, asking questions, making me think. I suppose it is possible that I could have finished this book without her, but I do not see how.

Preface

The critique of judgment

The need for a global economy is producing an ethic appropriate to a global police force (the NATO military alliance) for that economy. It is now permissible to invade another country and destroy its government. What was and is done in Afghanistan and Palestine is planned for Iraq. The question is not whether one likes the government. The issue is the assumption that one country can interfere forcibly with another country's sovereignty, especially when that country resists Northern or Western economic interests, on the grounds that that country *may* be a threat. Aggressors traditionally justify themselves this way. Now that an ongoing economic war on the South by the North is turning into a military war, the search for ideologies of justification is urgent. The war on terrorism is framed by something claiming to be Christian in the North, just as it is by Islam in the South. These are universalist ideologies appropriate to expansion, and to a pan-national resistance to that expansion. Both sides use vocabularies echoing a series of recent movies claiming that judgment is at hand; the apocalypse is now.

One side initially styled its war on terrorism "Operation Infinite Justice." The other calls its enemy the Great Satan. Both sides are supported by so-called religious leaders, drawing attention to the real incidence of the plagues and fires and weather disturbances prophesied in all major religions as the moment of judgment. The collapse of the twin towers (remembering that the biblical tower is the symbol of human hubris) has been remarked on again and again, more so outside the US than within it, although the idea that God has lifted "the veil of protection" from the US is also current here. The disagreement between proselytizers from the North (the United States, Europe, Russia) and the Islamic-identified terrorists of the South is not over the idea that this may be the moment of judgment. It is over the nature of evil and the source of

it. Traditionally, the triumph of evil is followed by its destruction at the moment of the apocalypse, which is also the moment when what has been hidden is revealed. In most religious traditions, the degree of destruction depends on the resistance to evil. That is to say, there is the hope that things will be done differently.

Both sides in this war are quite sure their opponents are evil. But when it comes to saying why they are evil, what it is they do that is evil, and how it can be reversed, their stories diverge on most things. Only on questions of women and sexuality do the fundamentalists of either side begin to converge. Homosexuals and loose women are held responsible for God's turning away from the US, just as they are sometimes blamed for the woes of Islam. After this, agreement comes to an end. President Bush says Iraq, Syria and North Korea are rogue nations, and with al-Qaeda constitute an axis of evil because they destroy innocent life.¹ Al-Qaeda, and the regimes opposed to the US, say it is evil because it destroys innocent life for greed, not only because it supports the state of Israel. The numbers are on their side. When Imams in the South call the United States the Great Satan, they have the support of millions disenfranchised in body and spirit by globalization. For them, the matter is straightforward. The US and Europe exploit the South's labor and resources and in doing so destroy more lives than terrorist attacks can ever destroy. Israel is hated because it took land from the Palestinians more than for any religious reason.²

The common denominator, according to Islam-identified critics, is imperialism, a term which is widely used but much misunderstood. The genesis of the term in the works of Lenin and Luxemburg defined it in relation to markets and capital accumulation; the main debate concerned whether or not capital was self-reproducing (Lenin's strict reading of the labour theory of value) or whether it required new markets to sustain a necessary relation of consumption (Luxemburg). Through Frank's dependency theory, and the subsequent work of Wallerstein, the emphasis shifted toward understanding "imperialism" as unequal exchange and unfair trade practices between the first and third worlds, where the first world grew fat by forcing the South to buy dear and sell cheap. This seemed to fit with the realities of a situation where the center benefits from the periphery, but it is an explanation based in exchange, rather than a consistent theory of exploitation through production, as we will see in the Introduction. The point here is that understanding the issues in terms of imperialism obscures the extent to which some Arab countries have different stakes in globalization, in that they provide oil to fuel the global economy. By

feeding oil to the West, these countries feed globalization, as we will also see in what follows. They perpetuate it though oil politics which return in the form of a depleted environment and women dispossessed of economic rights, whatever their status in Islamic law (and it varies widely, as Susan Buck-Morss shows) throughout Islam.³ Moreover, I will show that the consistent opposition to globalization necessarily means a change in the position of women as mothers which recognizes their pivotal economic position. Of the 1.3 billion living on \$US1.00 or less daily, 1 billion are women.⁴ This book will draw out the structural reason for this, and show that opposing globalization means waging war on terrorism toward those living now in poverty, the great majority of whom are women with children, and all those living in the future.

Globalization, unimpeded, will destroy the climate, hence the lives of billions of humans and thousands of species in their totality. This book demonstrates that fossil fuel emissions are the direct cause not only of climatic crisis but of the increases in numerous diseases in the West (Western Europe, the US, Australasia) and the North (the West, Japan and the erstwhile Soviet world) in other ways, but the tie between fossil-fuel emissions and oil deserves immediate attention, in the context of the present war. The Kyoto Protocol was devised in relation to conservative estimates of the damage done to the future by the present rate of fossil fuel emissions. Conservative as it is, the Protocol is emblematic of an attempt to have human reason overcome human greed. Through the exercise of human judgments, it established a series of deadlines for the reduction in carbon emissions. These deadlines have not been met. *Il Corriere della Sera* puts it this way:

Three years ago, the world gave itself a calendar to reduce carbonic anhydride and other overheating gasses. But since then, the situation has worsened. The government promised to reduce the deadly emissions by an average of 5 percent before 2010 (starting from 1990 figures). Instead, most countries are burning more oil and more fossil combustibles, and blowing out bigger quantities of greenhouse gasses. The US, Japan, Australia and Canada, which together produce two-thirds of the carbonic anhydride of the industrialized countries, have increased it by 10 percent, the EU by 3 percent.⁵

The Kyoto Protocol represents the human response to a projection forward of how far we can go before global warming accelerates so much that the seas no longer subsidize the food chain

as rising heat kills the microorganisms that are the first line of ingestion, while rising sea levels destroy up to a third of the existing land on which human and other species depend for life. This is how things looked in 1997, according to the text of the Protocol:

Global mean surface temperatures are projected to increase by 1.4–5.8°C by 2100, the fastest rate of change since the end of the last ice age. Global mean sea levels are expected to rise by 9–88 cm by 2100, flooding many low-lying coastal areas. Changes in rainfall patterns are also predicted, increasing the threat of drought or floods in many regions. Overall, the climate is expected to become more variable, with a greater threat of extreme weather events, such as intense storms and heatwaves . . . The effects of climate change are already starting to be felt, for example, in the earlier flowering of plants and egg laying in birds . . . Although some people may benefit from climate change, the IPCC warns that more will suffer, with potentially dramatic negative impacts on human health, food security, economic activity, water resources and physical infrastructure. Farming could be seriously disrupted with falling crop yields in many regions, and tropical diseases, such as malaria or dengue fever, are expected to spread into new areas. Fresh water, already in short supply in many arid and semi-arid regions, is likely to become even scarcer in those regions, while sea level rise and changing weather patterns could trigger large-scale migration from more seriously affected areas. While no one will be able to escape from climate change, it is the poorer people and countries who are most vulnerable to its negative impacts.⁶

Since then, we have had the terrible droughts in Africa, Asia and the United States, the worst storms on record, the hottest years on record, the North Pole is melting, tropical diseases are migrating to the warmer West, millions die from air pollution annually, and still the US does not sign the Kyoto Protocol. At the time of going to press, all Europe was united behind its immediate ratification. “But” as one observer sums up, “Kyoto will only become legally binding when it has been ratified by 55 percent of the signatories, representing 55 percent of developed countries’ 1990 carbon dioxide emissions.” As America produces one-third of all emissions, almost all other developed countries must ratify Kyoto if it is to come into legal force, which is why the EU decision was “welcomed by environmental groups, who hope that moral pressure

will force America to reverse its policy. Michel Raquet of Greenpeace said: 'After President Bush slammed the door on the Kyoto Protocol in March 2001, and the very bad joke of the Bush-Exxon climate plan last month, it is now time for the USA to come back to the Kyoto Protocol.'"⁷

At the very moment where it should reverse course by signing the Kyoto Protocol before it ceases having a chance to be effective, the US is escalating a war over and in oil rich regions or nations such as Afghanistan with access to oil rich regions. By this escalation, it is increasing fossil fuel emissions in the present, and attempting to guarantee their continued rate of emission into the future. Here, it is worth remembering that the term, "rogue nation," was also applied to the US in the 1990s with respect to its refusal to sign the Protocol.⁸

Rapid transport from here-to-there is the condition of the global economy and of the proliferation of global pollutants. Today's news (August 15th, 2002) announced that the US President is only one procedural step away from securing fast-track authority to negotiate trade agreements. The consumption of fossil fuels is the condition of rapid transport over global distances. To use less fuel is to use less transport, or less noxious transport. To use less transport means finding raw materials and labour closer to hand. It means turning from a global to a local economy, and hence reversing the logic of the freetrade expansion of the last fifty years. I will try to show in this book that we cannot have it both ways. It is either globalization or the climate, either land use for cashcrops for the North or the subsistence foods of the South, either the decimation of species or their survival. In the West, it is either the short-term benefits of the global market, or a future for those as yet unborn.

This book suggests that, at a certain cumulative point, fossil fuel emissions really will destroy the life of the future. As they do so, aided by other aspects of Western capitalism, they bring into being the blood-red moon, the boiling seas littered with dead fish, the plagues, famine and drought, the people who have to pay for water: all listed in the apocalyptic events of the Book of Revelation.⁹ Global warming, the thing responsible, is mentioned as marking the end-time in Judaism's *Ein Yaakov*, insofar as it warns of great heat. To read Revelation and similar texts as visions of this future, here and soon, is to begin removing prophecy from the sphere of the inexplicable. As Freud noted, there are visions of probable futures in dreams and involuntary conscious images. Einstein added that

everyday life in space and time is in some way a fantasy.* Freud attempted to find a rational line of cause and effect in accounting for premonitions and was unsuccessful. But that does not mean these things lie forever beyond human ken, anymore than the cause and effect leading to environmental disaster is beyond the reasoning of those prepared to read. The coincidence of the Protocol and the texts of apocalypse exists, I suggest, because reason is godlike and because God also works by reason and in fact is reason, even though much of this reason has remained beyond the comprehension of human creatures.

Where rationality could not provide an anchor for faith, the followers of Moses, Christ and Mohammed have accepted that there are reasons that surpass human understanding. They have even gone to war over their faith in credos which their reason could not support. At least, Christianity and Islam have gone to war, seeking to expand their territories in the name of the supremacy of their prophets. Until recently, the followers of Moses did not persecute others of different faiths. I am one of those who believes that after the holocaust, there had to be a state of Israel, but that such a state had to conduct itself in the spirit in which it was established. The role of Freud, Einstein and other secular prophets in taking one closer to understanding the logical relation between prophecy and probability suggests to this writer that the Jews are the chosen of the intellect, not the conquerors of the territories.** Zionist assertions of historical supremacy not only mirror the claims of Aryanism in relation to Poland, and like Nazism, justify grabbing one's neighbours' lands. They also mark the divergence between Judaism as a faith which insisted on memory, reason, argument and deduction as godly things, and Judaism used to

* There is more on this issue in my *Exhausting Modernity*, (London: Routledge, 2000) and the *Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) and in a forthcoming brief book on social pressure, which completes this trilogy. *Globalization and its Terrors* is a maverick in that sequence intended to show that the theory developed in the trilogy is relevant to the present.

** I return to this question briefly in the last chapter (p. 162), having raised the notion that for Jesus, revelation comes through the Jews because it comes through reasoned truth as well as inspiration or spirit (John 4:21-3). In this passage as I read it, spirit (*pneúma*) is a necessary but not sufficient condition of revelation, which also requires truth (*alitheia*). In the Greek philosophical context, *alitheia* is tied to the distinction between *doxa* and *episteme*, especially to *episteme* as the finer, rational or logical form of knowledge. In both Plato's *Theatetus* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* truth lies in judgment; that is to say, the joining together of concepts in relation to sense reality. (See also *De anima* 3, 430a). *Alitheia* in short connotes a process dependant on reason, which suggests Christ is saying that inspiration is not enough. One is also obliged to think.

justify national expansion. Aryan supremacy to this day is asserted in relation to semites, who are Arabs as well as Jews. Allah allocated land through the left-hand line of Hagar and Abraham, as surely as God gave Israel to the right.¹⁰

By following its deductive chain, by reaching the conclusion that the environmental disasters prophesied in various religions are our own work, this book seeks to persuade those whose reason led them from faith that the metaphysical issues of religion are in fact issues for the here and now, and that the coincidence between the prophecies of the religions of the Book (and the West) and the realities of climate change is great enough to require an explanation. This argument also seeks to persuade those whose faith leads them to acts of suicide that they are perpetuating and expanding negative emotions and affects (fear, anger, the anxiety and pain which interfere with thinking) of which they are also victims. But it has begun by drawing attention to the coincidence between the prophecies of Kyoto and those of Revelation, prophecies which are common, with different stresses, to the three religions of the Book. I take the coincidence of human-made catastrophe and revelation as indicative of the way that humans are invested with more decision-making power than customary models of religion allow. If human beings have this much agency in shaping their fate, we should assume that the deadlines we set ourselves for reversing course are judgments whose day has indeed been determined – by ourselves.

The future may invest the timing of the attacks on the US, and the fact that they coincide with the unmet passing of the Kyoto deadlines, with an understanding based on more thoroughgoing awareness of the laws of life and balance, and what happens when toxicity passes a certain limit and the preservation of the future is at stake. It may be that arguments from reason and observation will yield something now that persuades the US to reverse course, and realign its trajectory with the side of life by reducing its fossil-fuel emissions; ex-President Clinton now calls on the US to “lead the world rather than run the world in this century.” Or it may be that the desire for cheap gas and profit will win out over the claims of unborn generations to come and those living in poverty now, in which case the US will continue to attract odium to itself for arrogance; it may defer but not defeat a judgment which will worsen in proportion to the degree it postpones right action. Either way, judgment comes upon us through our own hands.

Eleuthera
August 2002

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