

Women,
War, and
Resistance

Frontline Feminisms

Marguerite R. Waller
and Jennifer Rycenga, editors

FRONTLINE FEMINISMS WOMEN, WAR, AND RESISTANCE

EDITED BY
**MARGUERITE R. WALLER
JENNIFER RYCENGA**

Routledge
NEW YORK / LONDON

To activist women . . . everywhere

Published in 2001 by
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001

Published in Great Britain by
Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.

First hardback edition published in 2000 by Garland Publishing, Inc.

First paperback edition published by Routledge, 2001.

Copyright © 2000 by Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be printed or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Garland edition as follows:

Frontline feminisms : women, war, and resistance / edited by Marguerite R. Waller, Jennifer Rycenga.

p. cm. — (Gender, culture, and global politics ; v. 5)
(Garland reference library of social science ; v. 1436)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8153-3442-7 (alk. paper) ISBN 0-415-93239-4 (pbk.)

1. Women and war. 2. Women and the military. I. Waller, Marguerite R., 1948– . II. Rycenga, Jennifer, 1958– . III. Series. IV. Series ;
Garland reference library of social science ; v. 1436.

HQ1236.F78 2000
305.42—dc21

99-38045
CIP

Series Editor's Foreword

Five years after the United Nations Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing (September 1995), I reflect on what feminists have achieved after more than four decades of organizing around issues of social and economic justice for women. I realize that civil rights are not the same as economic justice. While issues such as health, nutrition, reproductive rights, violence, misogyny, and women's poverty and labor struggles have achieved widespread global recognition, women still constitute the world's poor and the majority of the world's refugees. The so-called structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank continue to have a devastating impact on Third World women. Militarization, environmental degradation, the WTO, heterosexist state practices, religious fundamentalism, and the exploitation of poor women's labor by multinationals all pose profound challenges for feminists as we embark upon the twenty-first century.

While feminists across the globe have been variously successful, we inherit a number of challenges our mothers and grandmothers faced. But there are also new challenges as we attempt to make sense of a world indelibly marked by the failure of postcolonial capitalist and communist nation-states to provide for the social, economic, spiritual, and psychic needs of the majority of the world's population. At the beginning of the Christian millennium (year 2000, also 5760 according to the Hebrew, 4697 according to the Chinese, and 1420 according to the Arabic calendar—"just another day" according to Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onandaga Nation), globalization has come to represent the interests of corporations and the free market rather than self-determination and free-

dom from political, cultural, and economic domination for all the world's peoples.

These are some of the challenges addressed by the series Gender, Culture, and Global Politics. It takes as its fundamental premises (1) the need for feminist engagement with global as well as local ideological, economic, and political processes, and (2) the urgency of transnational dialogue in building an ethical culture capable of withstanding and transforming the commodified and exploitative practices of global culture and economics. The series foregrounds the need for comparative feminist analysis and scholarship and seeks to forge direct links between analysis, (self)-reflection, and organizing. Individual volumes in the series provide systematic and challenging interventions into the (still) largely Eurocentric and Western Women's Studies knowledge base, while simultaneously highlighting the work that can and needs to be done to envision and enact cross-cultural multiracial feminist solidarity.

Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance, the fifth volume in the series, is an important embodiment of the links between analysis, (self)-reflection, and organizing and the enactment of feminist solidarity encouraged by this series. Drawing on work presented at the historic 1997 "Frontline Feminisms" Conference in Riverside, California, Waller and Rycenga have assembled a wide-ranging, eloquent, original critique of global masculinist militarism, foregrounding women's resistance to it. This volume is also a testament to the creativity, resilience, and deeply thoughtful feminist activism engendered by women on the various "frontlines" created by wars around the world.

Palestinian Laila al-Saith says in "Intimations of Anxiety":

*You do not know how hard it is
transfiguring blood into ink—
emerging from one's secret dream
to voicing that dream. . . .
These are the things we must share,
and how the word takes shape within me.
Pulled between a world that created me
and a vaporous world I wish to create,
I begin again. . . . ("Roots that Do Not Depart," 1984)*

In these pages, women transfigure blood into ink, and pain and despair into the courage, creativity, and joy of struggle. In the midst of war, "the frontline"—as a concept, as a span of time, as a place to grow, change, and transform—is known as a gritty, multifaceted reality" (Introduction).

In the context of this very multifaceted reality, women voice the dream and enact the vision of resistance, agency, and justice.

The writings in this collection cover a range of genres from memoir, historical accounts, and critical essays, to an exercise on “art as a healing tool” for adult survivors of domestic violence. What holds the writings together is an urgency to reflect on and analyze women’s activism on the frontlines—from Palestine, Sudan, Iran, Kosova, and rural India to Serbia, Croatia, Okinawa, Israel, U.S. prisons, and the racialized American South. The essays introduce and elaborate upon concepts fundamental to a transnational feminist politic: (1) the “frontlines” of feminist struggle, (2) the masculinist nationalism of the rhetoric and practice of “national security,” (3) the profound links between domestic and public/state violence against women, (4) the role of nonviolent and not-nonviolent action against patriarchy and militarism, and (5) women’s labor militancy as a form of struggle against a racialized, capitalist patriarchy.

This is an important collection, encapsulating transnational feminist thought in the context of war in sharp, finely drawn, intellectually provocative terms. It is a book that illustrates the spirit (and heart) of comparative feminist praxis that the series *Gender, Culture, and Global Politics* is committed to.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty
Ithaca, New York
March 2000

Introduction

*Memory says: Want to do it right? Don't count
on me.*

*I'm a canal in Europe where bodies are floating
I'm a mass grave I'm the life that returns . . .
I'm a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
a river in Mississippi I'm a woman standing
with other women dressed in black
on the streets of Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem
there is spit on my sleeve there are phonecalls in
the night*

I am a woman standing in line for gas masks . . .

—ADRIENNE RICH, "EASTERN WAR TIME"

MANY FRONTS

The levels of explicit militarism in the world have escalated since the contributors to this volume finished writing their chapters. In Kosova, where one-quarter of the population had already been forced out of their homes by Serbian forces as of October 1998, the majority of the inhabitants have now been expelled, including those who were living in the capital, Pristina. The United States is actively fighting on two fronts: the little-reported bombing of Iraq and NATO's bombing of Serbia and Kosova. India and Pakistan, now nuclear powers, are engaging in a fierce conflict in Kashmir, and clashes related to state violence continue in Indonesia. In California more prisons are being built, despite a dramatic decrease in the crime rate, and, within weeks of each other, two African American women, Tyisha Miller and Margaret Laverne Mitchell, were shot dead by the police officers summoned to help them, the former while she was unconscious in her car and the latter, a mentally ill homeless woman, as she tried to protect her few belongings from confiscation. The genocidal wars in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosova have put civilian security much more squarely on the front page, and the war—together with its long prelude—between NATO and Serbia has rekindled and recast questions of violent and nonviolent resistance.

The dramatic rise of women's activism around the world has not been as well documented, despite the unprecedented numbers of women who participated in the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China, and its parallel NGO (Nongovernmental Organization) Forum in Huairou. In June 1998, a reporter asked editor Marguerite Waller whether she agreed with *Time* and other organs of the mainstream U.S. press that "feminism is dead." The occasion of the reporter's interest was the 150th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, at which U.S. women had first publicly and effectively declared their rights as full citizens. Forty-five minutes into the ensuing telephone conversation, the reporter's question had changed: now she wanted to know why she and other educated, news-literate women and men in the United States know so little about the effects on women of the policies of the International Monetary Fund (she had never heard of the IMF), about the women's tribunals backed by the Asian Women's Human Rights Council in Japan, the Philippines, and North Africa, about the Women in Black in the Middle East and Central Europe, about coalitions between Kosovar and Tibetan women, about the energy that has moved from Beijing into connecting women's activism everywhere. This book manifests the energies of the Beijing conference and Huairou Forum as they have moved during the ensuing years into connecting the thousands of groups of women around the world who are redefining the front lines of response to escalating militarizations and their attendant social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics.

Ironically, the *Time* article betrayed its own cause by describing the U.S. end of a particularly effective international collaboration as an example of the simply "mindless sex talk" into which once high-minded feminism had fallen (Bellafante 56). Referring to a benefit performance of Eve Ensler's theater piece "The Vagina Monologues," the *Time* article failed to mention either Ensler's long-standing involvement with Bosnian refugee women, the Women in Black, and the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb, or the fact that money raised by the benefit performance was earmarked for these groups. And it completely missed the relevance of Ensler's reconfiguration of how we think about the female body to questions of militarism. *Time* could not or would not connect Ensler's work with the "mindless sex talk" of the military and paramilitary rapists and torturers in former Yugoslavia, Guatemala, and elsewhere, and/or the generals and heads of state who have collaborated on the construction of prostitution camps around U.S. military bases in countries around the world.

It should not be news that media representation works poorly as a source of information about women's and/or feminist activism. Profoundly implicated in the issues of ideology, policy, and procedure raised by these movements, the mass media are owned by (ever fewer) corporate entities. The so-called "media monopoly" (Bagdikian 1983) means that newspapers, magazines, television networks, radio stations, and publishing houses protect the interests of the handful of financial institutions that own them.

But the conceptual lens or "media frame" through which U.S. news gets filtered exercises a second, more subtle (and related) censorship. It became apparent in the coverage of the U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing that the U.S. press structures news in terms of conflict, problems, crises, and manifestations of state power. This was how the epochal Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum in Huairou passed entirely beneath the radar of U.S. journalists. They had no means of appreciating what the galvanization of thirty thousand grass-roots activists into a "world wide web" of activists might signify. Not representing nation-states, the organizations participating in Huairou, one could argue, better represent the interests of a majority of the world's population than do the world's legislative bodies. Yet, as participants in the NGO Forum learned from the plenary speaker on media, they were being dismissed by mainstream U.S. editors as "wildlife"—a designation that neatly combines disdain for the environment with disdain for anyone outside the managerial classes of the corporate state. Women and "nature" are regarded as jokes, nonstories, by the unaptly named "mass media." Symptomatically, even the ostensibly progressive National Public Radio (NPR) strongly "Othered" the women activists who participated in the Frontline Feminisms Conference; when the Santa Monica NPR affiliate was contacted about publicizing the conference, the call was routed to the station's food editor!

Ironically, the media frame of the tightly controlled, heavily censored Chinese press lent itself far better to reporting the events and the significance of those two weeks. Chinese journalists, allowed to say only positive things and more inclined to focus on "people" than on the state apparatus, were free to go into great detail concerning what was said (virtually none of which was reported in the *New York Times* or the *L.A. Times*). Paradoxically, that is, although there was literally no overlap between the media frame of the purportedly "free" U.S. press and what was said and done at the Forum, the Chinese frame and the Forum were an excellent fit. The Chinese reportage corresponded closely, in fact, with that of the Forum participants' own newspaper, the *Independent Daily*.

Without privileging one media frame over another, we can see in the discrepancy itself a simple example of the kinds of unlikeness, some subtle, some not so subtle, that have made communication among feminist and women activists problematic. Especially across boundaries of ideology, wealth, and power, both the flow of information and the ways that information has been assimilated have been inadequate to the task of opening and sustaining supple, heteroglossic dialogues. As in the media, so in the academy. As Jacqueline Siapno has formulated the problematics of writing about female agency in the kingdom of Aceh on the island of Sumatra, "I face a serious problem in the conceptualization of a feminist analytic of power: the major privileging of secularized rationalism in the production of theories about power in Euro-American academic circles" (7). Angela Davis, in this volume, points out that within the United States structural racism and nineteenth-century historical categories have kept separate the domestic violence and the women's prison movements, camouflaging their historical and philosophical relationship. Currently in the U.S. academy, not only are there remarkably few English-language texts available in the areas of non-Western and Central European feminist discourses, but there are fewer still that open themselves to the logics, strategies, and actual and potential coalitions evolving outside the hegemony of Western industrial ideology (Penezic). The political and epistemological effects of these different histories, economies, and knowledges, these different modalities of religious belief, of constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, to name just a few of the most obvious differences among us, are ultimately incalculable and unpredictable. They are also, the conference organizers and editors maintain, one of the greatest resources currently available to feminist scholars and activists.

The conference "Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance," from which the following essays, reports, interventions, images, and testimonies have been drawn, ambitiously aimed to address the complex communication gaps in U.S. feminisms from several directions at once. Organized around the perception that innovative new feminist praxes were rapidly evolving in the context of militarized situations around the world, the conference brought together activists and academics from over twenty-five countries and from different regions and communities in the United States. Our three primary objectives were (1) to bring new feminisms from elsewhere to the attention of U.S. feminists; (2) to address the strains in U.S. feminism, including the alienation

of academic from activist projects, and racial, ethnic, and class-related conflicts; and (3) to take the achievement of the Beijing conference to the next level of integration, actively encouraging the creation of new collaborations—scholarly, activist, and both—that would further challenge the sociopolitical and the conceptual status quo. The deepest wish of the conference organizers was to create a space and time for the fruitful encounter of heterogeneous feminist discourses, a context in which difference could become a source not of strain but of creativity—a reason to exchange ideas, and a precondition to forging new alliances and identifying new points of departure.

As one participant phrased this principle, “It is so good to be at a meeting like this one that is *not* organized by the U.N.” As editors, we felt it was crucial to maintain this kind of space. Thus, the present volume is not shaped by any single overarching centrist structure, whether institutional or ideological. The greatest challenge facing us has been finding ways to represent the textures, rhythms, and intensities of the conference interactions. Much as we would have liked to, we could not publish all the presentations, some of which, in any case, were delivered as brilliant orations, without the aid of written texts, and some of which featured other media: painting, sculpture, music, film, video, or photo-journalism. We offer a glimpse of the diversity of modes of participation in the volume’s “Inter-Missions,” short breaks that map specific interactive spaces “between” cultures, between individuals, between refugees and relief workers (some of whom are both), between survivors of domestic violence and art instructors (some of whom are both). These are spaces in which the self-expressive possibilities of women contending with the physical and epistemic violences of battering, immigration/emigration, or war can regenerate and metamorphose. The essentials are a medium of expression—film, words, colored chalk—and an interlocutory community—spectators, readers, relief workers, group leaders, and other participants in a group.

The same paradigm realized on a more abstract plane informs the overall organization of the book. Presentations have been selected and sequenced in montages that form communities of expression where texts can “talk” to one another about a common issue. These montage sequences make no pretense to being all-inclusive or definitive. They are designed to evoke the richness of cultural and other kinds of incommensurability, while tracing certain patterns of likeness and interaction across these differences. For us and, we hope, for readers too, the analogues,

complementarities, and contrasts that emerge from this configuration of fields of thought and action make strikingly visible the potential for transformative *interrelationships*.

These interrelationships may be literal ones among individuals, groups, or causes; or they may be the sudden connection a reader makes between two widely separated situations or between one writer's theory and another's experience. It becomes not impossible, for example, to envision a conversation among Acehnese (Siapno), Sudanese (Ibrahim), and Croatian women (Kesic) about how to abrogate state-imposed family roles. Could women in Gaza (el Sarraj) and Aceh (Siapno) sue for reparations for the multiple burdens of violence they have sustained at the hands of occupying forces and their own patriarchal communities? Why not recognize the Iranian (Rajavi), Sudanese (Ibrahim), and Acehnese (Siapno) women described in these pages as highly significant figures in late twentieth-century Islam? What is to prevent rural women (Chatterjee, Eli), from organizing internationally?

One important result of cross-referencing feminist analyses and discourses is a deconstruction of the concept of "national security." Julie Mertus and Jasmina Tesanovic have called attention elsewhere to the startling fact that in contemporary warfare, 95 percent of the casualties are civilians, the majority of them women and children (Mertus and Tesanovic 1997, 4). The lingering impression that the actors in militarized situations are male has meant, however, that military violence against women in a number of struggles has remained relatively invisible (el Sarraj, Mrsevic, Kesic, Siapno, and Rhodes). Not only that, but if only about 5 percent of the dead and wounded in war are combatants, then it would appear that unarmed civilians have become the *preferred* military target. As feminists in the former Yugoslavia have put it, it is far cheaper to kill unarmed civilians than armed military personnel. Margo Okazawa-Rey and Gwyn Kirk point out, additionally, that the presence of armed forces, which is generally portrayed as essential for "national security," is, in practice, anything but a means whereby the safety of the nonmilitary citizens of a particular geographical locale is protected. The 90 percent ethnic Albanian population of Kosova remained committed for ten years to nonviolent resistance to Serbian occupation for precisely this reason. In these instances, it is militarization itself that presents a clear and present danger to civilian life, regardless of which side of the conflict (if either) one is on. Fatima Ibrahim reminds us that, not coincidentally, modern warfare, like global capitalism, serves to consolidate wealth in the hands of the powerful. Thus, contemporary militarization

emerges, perhaps counterintuitively, as more dangerous to civilian women than to armed men, a lesson that makes the decision of the feminist-oriented Iranian Resistance to put women in command in its National Liberation Army seem less paradoxical than it might first appear.

WHAT IS A “FRONTLINE”?

The insight that feminism—born amidst urgency, movement, and contradiction—is always on the “frontline,” forms a starting point for this collection. From the women’s liberation movements of nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, which emerged from Abolitionism and the Civil Rights movements (Rycenga, Green), to the Eritrean and Iranian rethinking of gender relations in the context of national liberation struggles (Hale, Rajavi, Shahri), women’s claiming their own self-determination arises in relation to—and as a catalyst for—other movements. Women’s self-defense, as self-development—whether confronting domestic violence (Mrsevic, el Sarraj) or protesting police brutality (Rhodes, Williams),—is not a stratagem born of leisure.

The concept of the “frontline” itself comes from military parlance but expands through the thought of the contributors to this volume. The frontline is the place where combat and the brunt of the fighting actually occur, and is therefore the location of the greatest carnage. Furthermore, the lived realities of the frontline are usually (and increasingly) distant from the generals, heads of state, and policymakers: the privileged don’t live on the frontlines, nor do they dirty their hands in an era of televised, computerized “precision” bombing sorties.

The forms of feminism chronicled in this book arose on a variety of frontlines, but always they were self-assertive, rather than self-abnegating. Whether pacifist or not, the strategies, activities, and thoughts developed here are not passive or self-sacrificing. These women do not tell sob stories—though there are many horrifying crimes recorded herein—nor do they spin theories of an abstract relationship between women and war. Instead, the frontline—as a place, as a concept, as a span of time, and as a place to grow, change, and transform—is known as a gritty, multifaceted reality.

The frontline is not restricted to military locations: the frontline can be standing in a welfare line or a police line-up, stitching a hemline, or writing a byline. The frontline becomes wherever women know that their lives—“the rich plenty of our existence” (Wolf 85)—is at risk, and wherever women intervene to “make our lives and the lives of our children

richer and more possible" (Lorde 55). The frontlines keep moving and proliferating, ubiquitous whether in war, work, or love.

A distinguishing characteristic of these frontline feminisms, though, is how they are more than chronicles of life-and-death struggles. Even while these women are engaging in battle (Hale, Rajavi) or applying triage (Eli, Salser), they insist on thought, theory, philosophy. However diverse the situations, the analyses, and the strategies put forward in these articles, their authors recognize that the frontline is not only a physical location, but a battlefield for control of the mind. The exploitative "plantation mentality" in the American South (Leachman, Green) or Bengal tea fields (Chatterjee) illustrates one such example.

This "battle for the mind" (Green) reveals the faultlines along the frontlines: how women's voices challenge and enrich simultaneous struggles. One common theme emerges in how these feminists, unlike soldiers on a frontline, refuse to take orders from any imaginary "above." This reflects a further refusal to wait until "after" the war, or "after" the revolution to address gender relations and women's lives. The full vitality of women's lives cannot be a deferred promise pushed into an indefinite future. Acting and thinking on the frontlines are a way to actualize the struggle, or, to quote from Rosa Luxemburg's letter from prison in 1916 (a prison to which she was condemned for opposing the senseless slaughter of World War I): "Being human means joyfully throwing your whole life on 'the scales of destiny' when need be, but all the while rejoicing in every sunny day and every beautiful cloud" (quoted in Dunayevskaya 199, 260).

Vigorous discussions of violence and nonviolence are not unique to feminists, and the authors in this collection can be located along the continuum of those age-old debates. But there is this difference: there is no lusty embrace of violence for its own sake, or concession to its inevitability, or paeans to the power of death-dealing. This is why we have subtitled the third section "Nonviolent and Not-Nonviolent Responses to Patriarchy"—in recognition of the fact that feminist positions that support or enact violence are articulated in relation to nonviolence. That is, they take nonviolence as their point of departure, and presume it as a foundation of sustainable intra- and intercommunity relations.

The Beijing Conference of 1995, wonderfully evoked in Julie Mer-tus's account of "The Restaurant" in Huairou, supplied much of the energy, context, and direction for the writers in this volume. Beijing fueled the need to share stories, to compare organizational forms, to exchange thoughts. The role of religion in women's oppression and women's liber-

ation, as it threads through this volume, provides one such illuminating nexus of comparison. Religious rhetoric has been enlisted to support narrow nationalism (Siapno), to justify structural sexism (Hughes and Mladjenovic, Kesic), and morally to browbeat women into childbearing (Metikos). But religion has also been a source of strength for many women on the frontlines, giving their actions an authority which transcends that of the state or the given social structure (Green, Rycenga, Siapno, Rajavi). Even the institutional forms of religion are seen to carry these contradictions within them, as the experiences of Tibetan nuns (Gould) or the role of the radical clergy within Guatemala (Matthews) reveal.

REPRESENTATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

It is a sign of the robustness of women's and feminist activism worldwide that no book could hope to be inclusive. Nor, we might add, should we take each other to task for not being universal intelligences, a subject position long since discredited as a denial of difference and a cover for political and cultural imperialism. This volume's editors encourage readers to notice what is absent, the better to activate the dialogic possibilities of the spaces created by the texts we have included, and we take the opportunity here to set the ball rolling. The conference itself, for example, included several panels of indigenous North and Central American speakers, voicing their resistance to forms of state violence ranging from nuclear testing and dumping to military brutality and human rights abuses. Carrie Dann of the Western Shoshone Defense Project participated in the plenary panel with speakers from the Sudan, India, Israel, Chile, Kosova, and the state of Tennessee. Maria Patricia Jimenez Ramirez from the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center in Chiapas, Mexico, participated in a panel discussion with representatives of indigenous resistance movements in Guatemala and Baja California. Also represented at the conference were South American feminist initiatives; the cross-cultural work of the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, now active in North Africa as well as in India, Japan, the Philippines, and elsewhere; the worldwide Gabriela and LILA Pilipina networks based in the Philippines; the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region, the Creative Women's Workshop of Belfast, Northern Ireland; Lideras Campesinas based in Pomona, California; representatives of the resurgent union movement in Los Angeles; and many other initiatives and organizations. Under- or unrepresented, either at the conference or in

this volume, are West European feminisms and women's movements in sub-Saharan Africa, China, the countries of the former Soviet Union, and Australia.

"Representation," we would also point out, is itself a hotly contested concept with a problematic history. Mulling over the slipperiness of Marx's terms *vertretung* and *darstellung*, Gayatri Spivak, explains that the terms can refer to a range of relationships, including having authority over, standing in for, and appropriating, that neither the conference nor these proceedings would support (Spivak 1985). Even to represent "one-self" is by no means a straightforward proposition, as Shashwati Talukdar's brilliant film *My Life as a Poster* and her essay "You Have a Voice Now: Resistance Is Futile" cannily demonstrate. French feminists have persuasively argued that representation is irretrievably implicated in the patriarchal regime of Western metaphysics known as "phallogentrism," which is predicated upon the privileging of a transcendental signified (the "phallus") to which all signifiers sooner or later refer. It is this logic, for example, that underwrites the otherwise illogical and materially unsupported notion that female citizenship has the same sense that male citizenship does in, say, the United States, when the wealth, power, and gendering of the state are, symbolically and empirically, conspicuously male.

A more useful metaphor for this volume than representation, then, might be "translation." This term, too, has many senses. For the antifascist German Jewish theorist Walter Benjamin, the task of the translator is to manifest the process of moving between incommensurate languages, revealing the limits and possibilities of each (Benjamin 1969). Trinh T. Minh-ha, in her film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, takes this principle one step further. She chose to have ordinary Vietnamese women living in the United States speak the lines of Vietnamese women in Vietnam whose monologues had already been translated, first into French and then into English (Trinh 1992). The "actresses" themselves have difficulty speaking English, and the labor they put into giving life to the voices from Vietnam is palpable. What results from this relay of interviews, translations, and performances, though, is an extraordinary community—not an "imagined" community of citizens, unknown to each other, who identify with a hegemonic nation-state (Anderson 1983, 37–46), but a diasporic community of women dedicated to being each other's links across the heterogeneous spaces and times of (at least) three "nations," two wars, and myriad histories. Similarly, here, the essays might best be seen as

linking to and for one another—readers, in turn, empowered to include the work of these communities in their own relays of translation.

Conversations and Interrelations

Frontline Feminisms is divided into four thematic sections: “Domestic and Public Violence”; “Gender, Militarism, and Sexuality”; “Nonviolent and Not-Nonviolent Action Against Patriarchy”; and “Where are the Frontlines?”

In the first section on “Domestic and Public Violence,” Angela Davis singles out the gender assumptions behind the growth in imprisonment of women in the United States. She points out that women’s punishment includes a heavy dose of female socialization, meant to tame and control women who challenge the status quo. She sees this as a socially mandated violence that is hidden away from view. Shadia el Sarraj similarly traces the ripple effects of public violence in Palestine. Noting that almost two-thirds of adult Palestinians report being publicly humiliated and harassed by Israeli forces, she shows how this leads to an increase in domestic violence and stress within families. Vesna Kesic, offering a crucial perspective from Croatia, points out another dynamic in domestic and public violence: how “ethnic and national exclusivity” often leads to a simultaneous rehabilitation of “the traditional patriarchal stereotypes embodying the traditional roles of woman as mother, wife, nurturer.” But once women (and ethnic “Others”) have been dehumanized, these same valorized stereotypes easily slip into the degradation of women. In the short report she wrote with Lepa Mladjenovic of Serbia, they discuss the myriad ways in which women in former Yugoslavia tried to short-circuit this propaganda machinery through open dialogue with each other. Zorica Mrsevic’s piece, also from Serbia, provides additional theorizing and personal narratives about the relation between the public violence of war and domestic violence, while she provocatively includes burnt-out frontline feminists themselves among the casualties. Lucinda Joy Peach examines structural connections between gender and violence, specifically in U.S. law, which, she contends “itself understands violence as male” and so is ineffective in dealing with either women who are victims of domestic violence, or women who kill their batterers.

Opening the next section, “Gender, Militarism, and Sexuality,” Irene Matthews’ powerful presentation of the feminist dimensions of *I, Rigoberta Menchu* analyzes why the Guatemalan military uses rape and torture,