Reading and Thinking with Tickner and Sjoberg

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Enloe: Power, Identity, Gender

• Think back to the Lukes/Foucault notion of power:

  – A “microphysics of power” which goes from how we conceive of ourselves, our bodies and our social roles, and moves all the way up through society, creating a kind of topography for thinking through culture, politics, economics, etc.

  – Forms us; forms our opinions and thus in some sense renders us governable even without any specific force being applied. It is thus best understood kind of cultural or structural power – to use Galtung’s language – rather than a directly-applied form of it.

  – This raises a question: if Foucault and Lukes are right, how do know? If we are made in the image of a structuring power, how can we see it? How should we look for it?
Enloe on Gender

The answer to this question is what we explore this week: we need a means to turn structural and cultural power – often intangible forces under whose sign we are made – into events we can observe and study. This is what the readings this week attempt to do, in a variety of different ways.

If power becomes linked to identity, then identity becomes a lens for understanding how power works, and where it came from.

For Enloe, this involves using gender: social, economic and political identities that have congealed around the biological differences between men and women. By understanding how gendered identities emerge, how fluid they are, and how they are enforced, we learn to see ourselves in a new way.

Carmen Miranda: “Explosion of fantasy,” or Brazilian public enemy #1?
Enloe uses gender roles to create a series of disruptions (or *aporias*, from the Greek ἀπορία, *impasse*) between what we expect to see, and what exists, such that we can begin to gain insights into our own expectations, and our roles in a variety of larger social, economic and political processes.

*Images*: Lila Khaled (T); PFC Jessica Lynch (B-L); Pompeo Batoni’s “Madonna and Child” (B-R)
Enloe on gender (3)

This tactic opens up an extremely wide range of experiences and possible insights.

American tourists and Jamaican chambermaids, British soldiers in brothels, female soldiers and male comic-book heroes, Carmen Miranda, Fawn Hall: all become informants. That is, they become frames or lenses to glimpse at how gender roles inform us, work through us, and constitute us.
We could use race, religion, or ethnicity -- or combinations of these -- to generate these aporias, and many have done so. The key point is that they generate for us new perspectives or points of view. Our own expectations play a role in this.

In this vein, Enloe might even seem dated to many of you. Post Margaret Albright, Condoleezza Rice, and ‘GI Jane’, we may have more expansive vocabularies for gender roles in world politics now. But what new assumptions and reifications have crept in to our visual and political culture? And what inequalities remain?

*Images:* Leonid Brezhnev and Jill St. John (t); a doctored photograph of Henry Kissinger posing nude, from the *Harvard Lampoon* (b)
Thinking with Eichler and Enloe: “Old/Queer” Jewish Bodies…

Paintings by Mozart Rotmann, Lazar Krestin, and Isidor Kaufmann. 
...and “New/Straight” Ones?

Images (L-R): Asi Dayan and Iris Yotvat in “He Walked Through the Fields;” Sabras from the cover of Oz Almog’s book of the same name (California, 2000); Dosh’s ‘Srulik’