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Imagining Terrorism: Terrorism and Anti-Terrorism Terrorism, Two Ways of Doing Evil

Jayne Mooney and Jock Young

IMPLICIT IN THE IDEA OF TERRORISM IS THE CONTRAST WITH WHAT IS SEEN AS NORMAL patterns of war hinged with the notion that terrorism itself has become the major justification for war. The conventional notion of terrorism carries with it a simple dualism of violence:

The West	The Other
Rational	Irrational
Justified	Hysterical
Focused	Wanton
Response	Provocation
Defensive	Offensive
Generating Security	Inspiring Terror
Modernity	Anti-Modernity

Such a binary of violence is reminiscent of Edward Said's (2003/1978) notion of Orientalism — and all the more so in the context of the conflicts in the Middle East. In Said's formulation, Orientalism is a discourse about the East that carries with it notions of the chaotic, the violent, the disorderly, the treacherous, and the irrational. It creates an Other in a binary mode that, by contrast, serves to define the West, the Occident. It is an "imaginary geography" wherein "the Orient...seems to be not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theoretical stage affixed to Europe" (*Ibid.*: 63). Such a discourse is a legitimization of power; it can be seen as a rationale for intervention, for resolving the "clash of civilizations" (see Huntington, 1993). Against this, Said (2003: 331) stresses the imaginary notions of the discourse around Orient and Occident, which "correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact. Moreover, all such geographical designations are an odd combination of the empirical and the

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imaginative.” Instead, “rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow” (*Ibid.*: xxix).

It is apparent that the dualistic conception of violence carries with it:

1. A denigration/beatification that ignores blurred lines and similarities in the use of violence;
2. A justification for violence on the part of a counterterrorism, even though this may be wildly disproportionate and mis-targeted; and
3. A rationale for military and/or economic intervention that evokes Western modernity as delivering democracy, rationality, and the rule of law.

When one looks at Western definitions of terrorism, suspicions immediately arise as to their objectivity and the distinctive nature of such violence. Two institutions seek to define terrorism: law and social science. A fairly typical legal definition is that of the U.S. Code and the FBI, in which terrorism is “unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives” (FBI, 1998: ii).

Of course, if one removes the word “unlawful,” such a definition would easily fit, say, Dresden or Hiroshima in the World War II. The word “unlawful” merely allows a tautology to be perpetrated. Social scientific definitions do not come off any better. In search of the positivistic, the scientific, social scientists eschew words like “unlawful,” for they make the pretense of focusing on the “objective,” the behavioral: that to be discovered out there, outside of fiat or law. Thus, in their standard text, *Murder in America*, Holmes and Holmes (1994: 130) define terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence, perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents usually to influence an audience.”

What country does not utilize clandestine state agents, commit premeditated politically motivated violence, and in late 20th-century wars inflict violence on noncombatants (see Kaldor, 2003)? What could be more terrifying than an AC-130 gunship at the siege of Falluja going backwards and forwards in what they call a “lazy arc” with its 105-mm cannons blazing? Is this not wanton in its savagery, collateral in its civilian casualties, let alone property damage, and terrifying in its impact? Here the use of “subnational” in the text facilitates tautology. Or, to take these authors definition of the serial killer: “someone who murders at least three persons in more than a 30-day period” (*Ibid.*: 92). They are surely not talking of a sniper in the Marine Corps on active duty.

In his *War and Genocide* (2003: 23–26), Martin Shaw traces the change in the nature of warfare from the notion of violence being targeted specifically at combatants and the rules of war being applicable in such struggles to what he

calls the “degenerate” warfare of modern times. The latter definition of the enemy broadens from the military to civilians, with the civilian population deliberately targeted, the means of destruction immensely augmented, and killing becoming increasingly indiscriminate. In this light, one might point to one major distinction between conventional warfare and terrorism as being the more limited aspirations of the latter. The truth is that there is little to objectively distinguish between normal warfare and terrorism, except for the level of power and legitimacy that state agents have over their less-powerful opponents: the worry is that it is the imaginary difference that is used to justify “normal” warfare.

Proxy Wars and the Defeat of the Soviet Union

For political reasons during the Cold War, the line between conventional warfare and terrorism was further irrevocably blurred by the advent of proxy wars as a common mode of armed intervention. Rather than face the nuclear dangers of direct confrontation or the political embarrassment of overt intervention, the United States and the Soviet Union funded guerrilla groups in every major conflict zone of the globe. An illustration of this was the covert U.S. funding of the *contras* in Nicaragua to overturn the left-wing administration. Conducted via the Saudis, this led to the well-known Iran-*contra* scandal. Undoubtedly, the climax of proxy warfare was the funding of the Taliban to overthrow the Communist government of Afghanistan. This was the most successful covert program in the CIA’s history. The cost of three billion dollars of U.S. taxpayer’s money and hardly any U.S. casualties made it ridiculously cheap. Such low costs were the great attraction of proxy war — the allure of terrorism to the Western powers. Support for the fundamentalist Mujahideen was intended to overthrow Afghan Communism and, more important, to draw the Soviet Union into the conflict. This would give the Soviets “their Vietnam,” as U.S. national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski put it, and ultimately hasten the disintegration of their empire. By the end of December 1979, the Soviets had taken the bait and the consequences are well-known history. Saudi Arabian funds matched the U.S. contribution dollar for dollar, but the Saudis also provided a stream of recruits to the Mujahideen, including a man of high rank in Saudi society, who soon became their frontline leader, Osama bin Laden. “Those were the prettiest days of our lives,” he wrote. “What I lived in two years there, I could not have lived in a hundred years elsewhere” (cited in Unger, 2004: 106). Again, “one day in Afghanistan counted for more than a thousand days praying in a mosque” (*Ibid.*: 106). Afghanistan hardened bin Laden. At first he praised the Americans for helping “us get rid of the secularist, atheist Soviets” (*Ibid.*: 102), but later the penny must have dropped. For if such methods of unconventional warfare worked at getting rid of the Soviets, could they be used against the other wing of Western modernity, the United States? Armed by the West, the Taliban became the major center for terrorism and began systematically to inspire proxy terrorism in so many countries across the world.

Thus, the line between conventional warfare was blurred, with the similarities outweighing the differences, and terrorism became a very useful adjunct to conventional warfare and politics in the form of proxy wars. Let us note now how the individuals involved in acts of terrorism against the West are far from alien or distant from Western contacts or ideas. Indeed, their very closeness is the wellspring of their repugnance and the psychodynamic of their action.

Of course, there are differences between terrorism and conventional warfare. Much (although not all) terrorism is committed by those who are less powerful than those who conduct conventional warfare. Yet the similarities are much greater, at least from the perspective of the civilian population affected by such activities. That is, what is a world of difference from the point of view of the military and the elites that control them is very similar from the standpoint of the civilian. There can be little doubt as to whose perspective one should rate most highly.

Occidentalism

In *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (2004), Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit point to how the Japanese kamikaze pilots, the first suicide bombers in recent history, were not distant from Western culture and ideas. Indeed, a surprising number were from the humanities departments of top universities. Their letters reveal that they had read widely in German philosophy and French literature; quite a few were Marxists, while Nietzsche and the existentialists were of great interest. They were not distant from Western culture, but immersed in it. This immersion led to the rejection of the West as individualistic, decadent, corrupt, and soft — all of the attributes of Occidentalism. So, as the West creates a discourse of Orientalism to depict the other, those othered create an Occidentalism discourse to reject that which denigrates and humiliates them. Thus, Buruma and Margalit (2004: 36) describe the youth of the Third World:

consumers at the lowest rungs of the new global economy: pirated DVDs showing Hollywood action films, cheap U.S.-style leisure wear, and a twenty-four-hour din of American pop music as its local spin-offs. To idle youths living in these cultural wastelands, globalization, as the closest manifestation of the Western metropole, can be an endless seduction and constant humiliation. To the more highly educated ones, globalization has become a new word for imperialism.

There is a seduction of a culture that both attracts and undermines all sense of one's own worth and identity, and a denigration of being outside the global realm of wealth and opportunity. Thus:

The West in general, and America in particular, provokes envy and resentment more among those who consume its images, and its goods, than among those who can barely imagine what the West is like. The

killers who brought the towers down were well-educated young men who had spent considerable time living in the West, training for their mission. Mohammed Atta received a university degree in architecture in Cairo before writing a thesis on modernism and tradition in city planning at the Technical University in Hamburg. Bin Laden himself was once a civil engineer. If nothing else, the Twin Towers exemplified the technological hubris of modern engineers. Its destruction was plotted by one of their own (*Ibid.*: 15).

Indeed, Osama bin Laden is a member of a family that spends much time in the West, owning mansions, staying in the best hotels, and investing widely. He was reputedly at one time something of a playboy. Thus, he is hardly a person to whom the West was unknown, and this knowledge of the West spurred his loathing of it. As Nick Cohen (2003: 3), an English journalist, put it, “the clash of civilizations is inside people as well as between them. Osama bin Laden was as Westernized as Omar Sharif...although bin Laden probably wouldn’t thank you for explaining this to him.” For others living in the West, experiencing cultural denigration, prejudice, and (unlike bin Laden) impoverishment, the experience of alienation must be even greater. If one thinks of the Moroccan group involved in the March 11 Madrid bombing, or the IRA volunteers in the pubs of Kilburn in North London in the 1980s, one can see how such alienation can emerge as well as a level of support from fellow immigrants. Paul Berman (2004: 18) makes a similar point, noting that of the “9/11 terrorists, most of them, likewise, turn out to have been people with claims to both the Arab past and the Western present.”

The Two Contradictions: Inside and Outside the First World

To put the phenomena of Orientalism and Occidentalism in a more systematic sociological context, Young (2003) has argued that the forces of economic and cultural globalization have a very similar impact in the First and Third Worlds. They result in contradictions *within* the First World and *between* the First and Third Worlds.

In the case of the First World, increased levels of income inequality, coupled with job insecurity, breakdown of community, and endemic marital instability, create a society in which there is widespread relative deprivation, a sense of social injustice, as well as ontological insecurity and crises of identity. If relative deprivation generates a diffuse feeling of anger, the crisis of identity focuses it. A common solution to ontological insecurity is to insist on some essential and highly valorized characteristics of oneself (be it through nationalism, religion, ethnicity, or machismo) and to substantiate this by contrasting this with a dehumanized “other” who lacks these qualities. In the First World, this is seen as an othering of those in the lowest part of the social structure — the underclass, single mothers, etc. (see Mooney, 1997) — and hostility and xenophobia abound. In the United States, this

process is visible in widespread religious fundamentalism, excessive patriotism and flag-waving (see Welch, 2000), punitive penal policies and the build up of a Gulag-sized prison population, highly racialized in its focus (see Wacquant, 2000), and support for foreign wars that seek to punish enemies and export “American” values. On this basis, a populist base for Orientalism is generated.

In the Third World, the impact of cultural globalization cannot be overestimated. The Western media, permeating every part of the globe, spread images of the good life, material comfort, and abundance, together with a stress on meritocracy and equality of opportunity that is strikingly absent in reality. Whereas harsh — and increasing — economic differences (half the world lives on less than two dollars a day) can be concealed in a world that is hermetically separated, this is no longer true in a world of cultural globalization. Merton, in his classic 1938 article “Social Structure and Anomie,” sought to explain the reason for the high crime rate in the wealthy United States, in contrast to the low crime rate in Italy. His explanation, known to every sociology student, was that in the U.S. the universalistic, meritocratic cultural ideal of the American Dream contradicted the actual structural limitations of success and generated a situation of anomie, leading, in turn, to crime. Since no such belief systems occurred in Italy at that time, despite widespread grinding poverty, discontent was less than in a much wealthier nation such as the United States.

Nowadays, we may talk of a “Global Merton,” a widespread situation of anomie in which widespread aspirations have been generated by the forces of globalization in tandem with massive relative deprivation in the Third World and a discontent that is unlikely to be allayed. How can one justify on a meritocratic basis such disparities of income that occur merely because of the arbitrary factor of place of birth? Massive movements in immigration spurred on by such concerns serve to magnify this sense of unfairness — as these populations form a large, badly paid service sector at the bottom of the class structure of the West. Relative deprivation alone does not foment discontent; the hubris of Western culture, its world dominance, challenges the traditional and local, while First World political and economic power sidelines and denigrates the “developing” nations. They are portrayed as backward and insignificant, in need of being cajoled by IMF, their markets opened to Western goods and competition, and advised on everything from birth control to criminal justice. In an uncanny echo of the First World’s attitude to its own poor, they are blamed for their poverty: they are poor because they lack the sensibilities and rationalities of the West. Such an Orientalist discourse denigrates at the level of identity and ontology, so that it is not simply injustice experienced in terms of material goods and resources, it is a much more combustible combination of poverty and indignity.

The response to the predicament of denigration can be manifold and exactly parallels the strategies of subordinate — and other racialized — groups within the First World. The stereotypical other can be accepted, assimilated, and acted

out. But the othering can be met by a counter-essentialization, an elevation of the perceived virtues of the oppressed as a counterpoint to the denigrating stereotypes. To achieve such a construction of a substantial and valued essence, such a tit for tat othering occurs. Thus, in response to Orientalism, a discourse of Occidentalism occurs that defines itself over against the supposed defects of Western culture and behavior. Such a counterpart othering brings about familiar contrasts:

Economic success	Materialism
Individualism	Collectivism
Female emancipation	Female exploitation
Sexual freedom	Decadence
Rule of law	Hypocrisy

Such is the populist basis for Occidentalism. Items that could be part of a reasoned (and reasonable) critique become, instead, understood in terms of essences, of the positing of essential differences between the two worlds. Such differences are constructed on the basis of a parallel process of dehumanization of the other. That is, in Orientalism, the East is the essence lacking in the human virtues of rationality, of controlling the impulse to violence, of orderly social behavior, of dispassionate bureaucracies, whether of politics and business, or civil service relatively immune to corruption and self-serving behavior. Whereas, in contrast, Occidentalism evokes the West as lacking in the most important of human virtues: honor, respect for tradition and community, sexual propriety, and family values. Such essentialism alone, on either side, does not lead inevitably to violence, but it does facilitate it. For, to the extent that dehumanization allows the actor to render the other as outside, or on the periphery of humanity, it *permits* violence. None of this leads immediately to violence, but it sets up its precursor. When dehumanization is linked to some perceived threat of actual harm, when the other is seen as the cause of the problem, essentialization gives place to denigration and outright violence is likely. Of course, when war — whether conventional or terrorist — occurs, a spiral of such demonization occurs and each side experiences clear evidence of the inhumanity of the other. For once the battle is on, the furies of dehumanization are constantly stirred into being and all stereotypes are reinforced. Of all the human institutions, war facilitates dehumanization and, as Chris Hedges (2003) has so brilliantly analyzed, provides the most seductively secure identities and gripping narratives. Hence, the title of his book, *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*.

Finally, in this discussion of the fundamental symmetry of conventional war and terrorism, let us detail the actors themselves. It is an irony that the combatants in such conflicts are strikingly similar in their social characteristics. Young men, the dispossessed, and those at the bottom of the structure provide the recruits for both war and terrorism. In the First World, recruits are disproportionately from ethnic minorities, the lower working class — those who join because of lack of work and a desire for educational advancement.

Symmetry and Differences

We have talked about the symmetry of violence regarding terrorism and “anti-terrorism terrorism,” which is how modern conventional warfare has been recast. Yet there are significant differences, at least in the *imaginaries* that each opponent has of itself. Just as the West’s imaginary of the East (Orientalism) differs from the East’s imaginary of the West (Occidentalism) in the process of othering, the stereotypes of self — particularly in relation to violence — vary.

The recent Western image of warfare, particularly that of the United States, is that it is an instrument of modernity; it brings democracy instead of dictatorship, the rule of law rather than oppression, order rather than chaos, equality rather than ethnic rivalry and female subservience, the free market rather than corruption or state subsidy. Yet if we examine the discourses of terrorism and counterterrorism terrorism, that of the Orient and the Occident, there are clear differences in their declension of the rules of violence.

To do evil, to act with excessive violence toward other human beings, a discourse must be developed that allows for the moral release of the perpetrators from the normal human values that deeply eschew interpersonal violence. We have seen how the process of essentialization of the other can give rise to a dehumanization that permits violence. But violence itself occurs when such dehumanized others are seen as a source of harm to oneself: particularly agents of violence. In this fashion, “illicit” violence begets “legitimate” violence. Furthermore, such a process of othering is mutual; each side generates images of dehumanization and enacts violent acts that confirm the stereotypes of inhumanity. In a war situation, such a process spirals rapidly, mutually reinforcing the discourses of either side. Indeed, the “metaphor of war” *permits* violence.

The Sanitization of Evil

The Western image of its own violence is a process of sanitization. It is a surgical intervention to root out the sources of violence and — in contemporary neoconservative parlance — to bring about a healthy modern society with all the benefits of democracy, the rule of law, and free markets. Violence is not excessive, it is minimal: the “collateral” damage is low, the very use of the word, collateral, of course, shields us from the torment and suffering that occurs. The strikes are “surgical,” the passion of the killing absolutely minimal; it is a video screen with a cross target — on a made image — physically and mentally distant from the combat. The casualties on our side should be nil (surgeons don’t die), and the casualties on the other minimal (a few patients die). There are few bodies in sight: body bags are kept out of media sight, images of coffins returning frowned upon, and even listing the dead is seen as unpatriotic and distasteful. The returning dead and, even more curiously, the returning wounded are rendered invisible.

Overall, this is a remarkably unemotional task, a job to be done. The very dis-

tance from the enemy (with which there is very little contact or even knowledge) underscores this. There is a hint of what Bauman (1995) calls adiaphorization: the stripping of moral evaluation from human actions. Killing by mobilizing the most advanced technology the West can muster and using awesome weaponry designed with scientific and engineering skills at the very edge of human endeavor is to be conducted without passion and with an eye on precision. Such distancing and neutralization permit acts of extreme violence, as if the technical sophistication of the weaponry enables massive acts of violence, while occluding the actual pain and torment of killing (see Shaw, 2003).

The Beatification of Evil

The discourse of terrorism is almost the reverse of sanitization, despite the similarity of the impact. For the suicide bomber, the act of killing is almost intimate; the targets, whether in the bus, the café, the club, or checkpoint are in immediate proximity. The visceral feeling of humiliation propels it, and it is enacted by the near epitome of corporeality: the bomb, together with its shrapnel and detonators, is strapped onto the body. Motivating the suicide bomber and the assailants facing almost certain death is their embrace of martyrdom. Why do so many people volunteer for this? Martyrdom is the greatest reason, but it is also the ideology that facilitates such acts of grievous violence and harm.

Violent Discourses: East and West

	East	West
Violence	Beatification	Sanitization
Locus	Corporeal	Virtual
Enemy	Known	Unknown
Proximity	Immediacy	Distance
Motive	Humiliation	Humanitarian
Collateral Deaths	Maximized	Minimized
Perpetrators	Many Martyrs	Few Heroes
Discourse	Joy of Martyrdom	Unemotional, Banal
Own Casualties	Celebrated	Concealed

The Logic of the West

The material and political background to sanitized evil is considerable: the end of mass conscription in most Western countries means that substantial losses cannot be sustained and mass confrontation is avoided at all costs. An electoral danger is posed by the return of too many body bags and, most important, the public has little stomach for massive casualties, whether of our troops, those of the enemy, or of innocent civilians. Moral changes in public tolerance of violence, evident domestically in the wider society, have been extended to warfare. We

are light years away from the public willingness during World War I to accept massive casualties and the initial tolerance for the slaughter of Vietnam seems of another era. A technical fix exists today in vastly enhanced delivery vehicles and sophisticated computer systems that promise pinpoint targeting and optimum surveillance, epitomized by the futuristic Predator drone — all of which hold the possibility of the surgical attack and sanitized slaughter (see Shaw, 2003).

The Western case for the use of violence is presented as an item of linear logic: it is fair, reasoned, and justifies the unpalatable — a use of state violence that parallels how the liberal state justifies punishment of its citizens. Yet the case for war and its presentation is imaginary. It is how many people fondly imagine warfare today, but it is not what actually happens. Use of force frequently involves extreme and brutal collateral damage. Smart bombs don't work, insufficient care is taken by the military, the use of force is always exceedingly disproportionate to the harm exerted by the enemy, and private vested interests (whether concerning oil or minerals) and public interests (the protection of national strategic interests) are thinly concealed. Furthermore, once troops are on the ground and encounters with the enemy commence, wars become messy, sanitization is virtually impossible, and concealment of civilian deaths and troop losses is impossible, making the brutal reality of war transparent.

As noted in Paul Berman's influential book, *Terrorism and Liberalism* (2004), no linear logic exists in the (often legitimate) grievance of a group of people over resources denied or identity and its expression thwarted. The danger of liberalism, he argues, is that we are looking for a rationality of intention and thus are blind to irrationality, to the distorted logic of the frustrated and the denigrated. Berman's mistake is to assume that the font of irrationality is the East, with the West the vantage point of the rational. This gives way to Orientalism, and nothing underscores this more than the events at Abu Ghraib prison.

The Photographs from Abu Ghraib

Let us look at the pictures from Abu Ghraib. We are immediately struck by their overt nature, their sexuality, the enjoyment on the faces of the guards — the *lack* of furtiveness — the degradation in the corridors, not in the depths of the cell. These pictures are the very epitome of Occidentalism: the sexuality, the decadence, the immorality, the hypocrisy, the blatant sexuality of the woman involved, the degradation of the human body, and a photographic satire on bourgeois individualism worthy of the Marquis de Sade. As Senator Dianne Feinstein remarked to *The New York Times* columnist, Maureen David (2004: A-25): "They're disgusting.... If someone wanted to plan a clash of civilizations, this is how they'd do it. These pictures play into every stereotype of America that Arabs have; America as debauched, America as hypocrites."

So, as they serve to confirm Occidentalism, they wantonly destroy our Orientalist notions of ourselves, for these pictures taken in, of all places, Saddam

Hussein's notorious torture prison, Abu Ghraib, are far from the dispassionate, clean pursuit of progress. Paradoxically, to some extent the pictures are likely to have more effect in the West than in the East. They are a searing commentary on modernity, for it took the most advanced technology in the world, the most sophisticated weaponry, the greatest scientific superiority, to achieve a stunning victory, only to be followed by the long attrition of terrorism and the exposure of decadence and hypocrisy.

The photographs disturbed the West because they violated our conception of ourselves as rational, rule-following, law-abiding, progressive, pursuing a war the purpose of which was to bring democracy, modernity, and law and order, as well as bringing reason to a dictatorial and arbitrary society. They violated our Orientalist sense of ourselves. To the Arab world, as Jonathan Raban (2004: 1–2) has so stridently put it, the pictures are not a surprise, but a confirmation: "To most of the Arab editorial writers, and perhaps to most Arabs, the digital photos merely confirmed what they had been saying since long before the invasion of Iraq took place: America is on an Orientalist rampage in which Arabs are systematically denatured, dehumanized, stripped of all human complexity, reduced to naked babyhood." He adds, "the pictures appear to be so single-minded in their intent, so artfully directed, so relentlessly Orientalist in their conception, that one looks instinctively for a choreographer — a senior intelligence officer perhaps, who keeps Edward Said on his bedside table, and ransacks the book every night for new ideas" (*Ibid.*: 5). Similarly, when on May 31, 2004, the New York *Daily News* greeted the slitting of the throats of hostages by terrorists in Saudi Arabia with the front-page banner headline "BARBARIC," this was an exclamation of shock, but not of surprise. For this was precisely our Orientalist image of them.

Our intent is not to analyze this incident in depth, but rather to note that such regimens of degradation were scarcely limited to Abu Ghraib. They existed in prisons in Afghanistan and at Guantánamo Bay and occurred in the British and U.S. sectors of Iraq. It also resonates at home in the U.S. prison system, where such scandals are frequent and, as in the war abroad, there is the paradox of the proclamation of the rule of law and the incidence of the most extreme lawlessness. As for culpability, a chain of command doubtlessly instigated such humiliation, yet one must also note the level of enjoyment and pleasure on the part of the guards. They were certainly not being forced into this procedure. The seductions of humiliation, particularly by those who have been socially subordinate, have been noted before in wartime, genocidal situations, and in violent crime (see Katz, 1988; Sothcott, 2003).

Conclusion

We have examined two aspects of dehumanization, which are reciprocal perspectives that feed off each other, but facilitate violence against other human beings. Let us conclude with the poignant comments of English novelist Ian

McEwan, written just after September 11. Recalling the last messages made by people in the twin towers or on the planes to their loved ones, he observes, "love was all they had to set against their murderers." McEwan (2001) writes:

If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.

The hijackers used fanatical certainty, misplaced religious faith, and dehumanising hatred to purge themselves of the human instinct for empathy. Among their crimes was a failure of the imagination. As for their victims in the planes and in the towers, in the terror they would not have felt at the time, but those snatched and anguished assertions of love were their defiance.

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