introduction

NEOLIBERAL CITIZENSHIP: THE GOVERNMENTALITY OF RIGHTS AND CONSUMER CULTURE

This is a book about the production of middle-class Asian Indian and American subjects in the 1990s. As I seek to understand the changing relationship between politics, culture, and the market, my interest lies in the connections between feminism, new social movements, consumer culture, citizenship, and knowledge formation. In particular, this book focuses on the subjects and identities that grew out of the knowledges produced by feminisms, nationalisms of various sorts, forms of governmentality and disciplinary power, and consumer culture. I approach this set of issues by analyzing the circulations and travels of South Asian Indians between India and the United States, probing how gendered knowledge formations produced nationally and transnationally created identity and subjectivity at the end of the twentieth century. Through these circulations, I explore how gender, ethnicity, and consumer identity became entangled within both national and transnational formations. Within this entanglement, biopolitics and geopolitics came together along with disciplinary and governmental technologies to create neoliberal subjects. It is in this dissemination of neoliberalism, along with its assemblage of disciplinary power and govern-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

mental technologies, that America played a role, as the signifier of both an imperial nation-state and its practices, which could not be limited to the institutions of the state but circulated within what came to be called a "global civil society." The production of knowledges resulting in "global" process and "globalization" as a problem (or solution) by feminists and other scholars also forms part of the argument of this book, as it seeks to direct attention to how cosmopolitan knowledges came to be crucial in this interconnectedness that was (and is) called "globalization."

Rather than see the United States solely as an imperialist nation-state, I understand what is called "America" as a nationalist discourse that produced many kinds of agency and diverse subjects. America functioned as a discourse of neoliberalism making possible struggles for rights through consumerist practices and imaginaries that came to be used both inside and outside the territorial boundaries of the United States. American national identity worked, in a Foucauldian manner, as a mechanism that combined biopower with apparatuses of governmentality to produce discourses and practices of freedom and choice—yet these discourses and practices had older imperial histories and newer disciplinary formations that were also recuperated in new ways. This imperialism not only was a search for markets (though this aspect was also present) but provided the technologies—the strategies, the rationalities, and the subjectivities—contained within networks of deterritorialized and reterritorialized power. America was important to so many across the world because its power enabled the American nation-state to disseminate the promise of democratic citizenship and belonging through consumer practices as well as disciplinary technologies. The biopolitical aspect of neoliberalism was combined with geopolitics in creating America as a powerful nation-state and American national identity as both paradigmatic and exceptional.

To further elaborate on these claims, there are three main theoretical issues that I will address in some depth in the rest of this introduction. The first, about America and migration, examines the question of what America has meant transnationally to immigrants to the United States as well as to those who live outside the United States. I suggest here a theoretical and disciplinary issue: that America cannot be studied only within the territories of the United States and that postcolonial studies provides some useful ways of examining the relation between imperialism and culture. As a super-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

power, America produced subjects outside its territorial boundaries through its ability to disseminate neoliberal technologies through multiple channels. Although the meanings of America cannot be the same everywhere, these meanings have genealogies that need to be contextualized historically. The relevance of America was not solely in the subjects it produced within the United States but in its ability to create networks of knowledge and power, cosmopolitan and "global," that traversed and rearticulated national boundaries. Consequently, even studies of diasporas in the United States must engage with historical studies of the relation between diasporas and the regions to which diasporas are connected, and thus we need an examination of transnational connections linked to diasporas.

The second issue is that of empire and power. Here my interest lies in the conjunction of geopolitics and biopolitics in relation to the production of gendered and racialized bodies and subjects. I describe what I call "transnational connectivities" within which subjects, technologies, and ethical practices were created through transnational networks and connections of many different types and within which the "global" and the "universal" were created as linked and dominant concepts. Appropriation of neoliberal discourses was only possible for particular subjects gendered, classed, and racialized in specific connectivities within which knowledge moved and could be accessed.

The third topic is feminism. While all along my concern has been how gendered subjects were produced in relation to race, class, caste, and other social formations, I want to also examine specific kinds of feminisms that were powerful enough to move along transnational connectivities. My particular focus here is the use of the concept of "choice" as a central ethical framework for feminist as well as neoliberal consumer practices and the imbrication of feminism with consumer culture. The conjunction of biopolitics and geopolitics has historically been made in the modern period through the production of gendered bodies that are differentiated from each other through territorial belonging within which race, class, religion, and nationality become meaningful. The problem therefore lies in what possibilities feminism might have within the neoliberalism in which it is taking shape at different sites and how it produces subjectivities linked to historical genealogies of feminist critique. Thus the question of cosmopolitan knowledges, feminist and progressive, is one that is important in the

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

transnational making of knowledge producers (including academicians and activists or those who combine the two realms of work), who cannot escape neoliberal conditions of possibility but can, as changing, contingent subjects, not be incapacitated by this neoliberalism.

By examining different kinds of transnational movements—of migrants of varied classes, of goods such as Mattel's Barbie or the novel in English, of "global" feminists and asylum seekers, of ideas of cosmopolitanism and human rights—I will probe the connection between postcolonial knowledge production, the subjects produced by older and newer social movements, American nationalism, and the work of the market in producing these transnational connectivities as the social through technologies and rationalities of power.

MIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

In August 2001, holders of H-1B visas in Silicon Valley worried about the downturn in the computer industry and possible layoffs. Some discussed moving to Germany, where there were possibilities of receiving five-year work permits known as "green cards." Others resisted the idea, after hearing about overt anti-immigrant violence, the need to learn German, and the temporary status for immigrants. They considered Germany a less attractive destination than the United States. After all, tech workers everywhere had heard about Silicon Valley and Bill Gates, and they believed that America was a better place for immigrants. As one Indian holder of an H-1B visa said to a reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News*, "I do not know anybody who would prefer to go to another place after living here . . . The American Dream is strong—have you ever heard of a German Dream?"[1]

The discourse of the American dream was clearly well known to this person. How did information about the American dream circulate around the world? What did this idea of an American dream mean to a newly arrived, middle-class, male migrant from India? To this man, it signified a nation as a place—specifically a California city—where racism was less visible than in Germany, where he could earn a living like other Indians who had come to the United States, where he would be allowed to stay more than the five years that he would be allowed in Germany, where he could

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

speak the language he spoke in his workplace in metropolitan India, and where he could afford to buy a house and consumer goods that he had learned about from advertisements, movies from Hollywood and Bombay cinema, cable TV, and returning and visiting migrants. The "American dream" was a search for a future in which the desire for consumption, for liberal citizenship, and for work came together to produce a specific subject of migration. Although this H-1B visa holder may not have called himself an American, he certainly participated in the discourse of the American dream while simultaneously seeing himself as an Indian national. Was his participation in the dream any different from that of people who entered the United States as immigrants or who became citizens? What was the role of the American dream within American nationalism and in the world at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first?[2] In what ways did Indian nationalism and race, gender, and ethnicity come to matter to this migrant? To answer these questions, I will examine how Americanness in the 1990s was mediated among South Asians (specifically Indians) in the United States and in India, and the networks of knowledge and communication that produced information about America and what it meant to participate in the American dream.

The Indian H-1B visa holder's ability to participate in the American dream was made possible by the expansion of "high tech" jobs enabling the United States to import workers from other parts of the world, mainly India, China, and Taiwan.[3] These importations occurred because migrant workers cost less to corporations, since they could be paid lower wages than their domestically based counterparts, requiring no pensions or long-term training or commitment. In understanding such migrations, we need also to probe why certain groups of people rather than others came to constitute these workers. Indian holders of H-1B visas represented a group able to come to the United States because of a number of transnational discourses in which English-speaking, middle- and upper-class Indian immigrants were seen as highly desirable "tech workers" (more recently, this group of Indians has been seen as appropriate for outsourcing work of all kinds). These workers were hired by "body shops," which were employment firms set up to import tech workers for computer firms in the United States. Body shop owners, mostly males of Indian descent, used their contacts in India to find candidates to bring to the United States. Central New Jersey, home

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

to one of the largest Indian communities in the United States, had a high proportion of these employment agencies, creating professional networks that tapped knowledge of and connections to India to bring workers, sometimes called "computer coolies,"[4] to the United States.[5] Similar body shops with connections to South Asia existed in Silicon Valley as well. Body shops were also connected, in the United States, to those Indian students and professionals who came to the United States after the immigration laws were changed in 1965, and who became seminal in the computer and information technology industry. This earlier group of migrants retained ties to India through family, caste and class, schooling, and professional networks that they continued to draw upon. It is these histories, produced out of socioeconomic and cultural formations in both India and the United States, that created some diasporas at the end of the century.

Transnational movements of people were made possible by earlier migrants who became cultural and, in this case, economic mediators, paying the visa and travel fees to import workers, but often also exploiting the workers as well. While Manuel Castells's work on the informational economy and on "network society" discusses the importance of information as a commodity, the idea of information in his work remains bound to the notion of knowledge production within information technology, rather than all the different kinds of information that made capitalism and information technology possible. In fact, professionalized networks were not simply professional.[6] Rather, as in the example of body shops, we see that culture, gender, class, nationality, race, and other factors also enabled the formation and maintenance of these networks. For instance, although the body shop owners, mostly males, were linked to their Indian counterparts, they also used their knowledge of educational systems, the Indian and immigration bureaucracies, family and kinship ties, and the Indian-American community to select and import workers.

Furthermore, information about America reached prospective migrants not only from a globalized media, or through professional and educational connections, but also from contact and communication with family members and neighbors who migrated in earlier periods. The Indian communities in New Jersey, Chicago, and Silicon Valley, to name a few urban centers where Indians formed a presence in the United States, were sites that gave newer immigrants the support they needed and also mediated

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

and materialized new articulations of the American dream. They translated the dream in its ethnic and multicultural version, creating new discourses of success in "America," and thus made it possible to be immigrants, Indians, and ethnic and American subjects at the same time.

These multiple subjects emerged because the American dream, by the end of the twentieth century, linked itself to American discourses of multiculturalism and diversity through proliferating target markets and diverse lifestyles. As social movements created new identities in the United States, marketing practices were designed to understand these communities and to diversify and differentiate them to sell more and different products. While in the early part of the century, a corporatized consumer culture targeted and constructed an American white middle class, thus relegating to the margins all those who could not or did not see themselves within this group,[7] the new consumer culture produced gendered and racially marginalized subjects also as consumers.[8]

Yet these social movements suggest that the American dream and the power of consumer cultures did not mean the end of economic inequalities generated by racial and gendered subordination in the United States. Along with discourses of immigrant mobility, the American dream was a discourse of both whiteness and racism, in which a white identity coexisted in an unstable and changing relationship with heterogeneous notions of being American,[9] within as well as outside the United States. America, at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, came to connote both whiteness and multiculturalism within the framework of an American exceptionalism in which neoliberal discourses provide the possibility of multiple and changing national affiliations. The slippages in meaning of white and middle-class, within which whiteness connoted not only Anglo-America but a more heterogeneous group that passed as "white," were regulated by a discourse of the liberal democratic state and a consumer citizenship seemingly unbound from territories and races and classes which formed the American dream and which created and enabled new American subjects in diverse sites.

The subject of this American dream, sometimes a territorially bounded subject of the U.S. nation-state, sometimes a "global" consumer, or an immigrant subject of other national diasporas, or a national of a distant country, suggested that national subjects coexisted, for some groups and persons, with other national belongings as well. Americanness as a concept

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

shifted by location and place and historical context, as well as factors such as race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, producing different kinds of subjects. This shifting and changing national subject could be, as with immigrants, transnational, moving across nations and national boundaries to produce American identities imbricated within a consumer citizenship that exceeded the bounds of the nation to become transnational. While the American dream has been an essential aspect of consumer culture in twentieth-century America, producing the "American way of life" as a primary component of nationalism formed through a conceptualization of liberal democracy,[10] it came to signify a variety of affiliative practices of belonging on the part of many migrants within the United States by the end of the century.

These affiliative practices enabled the formation of subjects of displacement and of national belonging by enabling them to become provisionally attached to new identities and nation-states and thus to cross nation-state borders. Thus the power of American nationalism was visible in its ability to produce provisional national subjects out of immigrants and refugees. That is, I suggest that becoming "American" had both a hegemonic and a heterogeneous meaning articulated within and through forms of transnational consumption and struggles for rights. Americanness was produced transnationally by cultural, political, and economic practices, so that becoming American did not always or necessarily connote full participation or belonging to a nation-state. However, the process of identification as "becoming American" coexisted, in some conflictual and non-conflictual ways, with multiple other allegiances to other nationalisms, identities, and networks. As identities are always in process rather than fully formed or stable, this "becoming American" could be understood as changeable, contingent, and historical. In addition, since nationalisms were much less territorially bound than at earlier times and connections to multiple institutions were made through technologies that sped up and intensified transnational connections, these allegiances intersected to produce transnational subjects as subjects of a nation-state. For instance, these multiple allegiances enabled America as nation to be imagined within the United States and outside it by migrants and refugees, such as those from India, who were living in the United States as well as by people living in India.

Rather than being only a symbol of "freedom" and democratic rights,

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

"America" was a sign of imperial power that used disciplinary as well as governmental technologies within transnational consumer culture. The conjunction of rights discourses and consumer culture was a central aspect of the connection between liberalism and neoliberalism: that is, groups and individuals who believed that they were disenfranchised used consumer culture's technologies, processes, and subjectivities to attain their goals. These practices were inextricable from articulations of civil society and democratic rights as these were being defined and redefined by the state, in the "international arena," and by divergent and subordinate communities within and across national boundaries. However, the geopolitical discourse of powerful sections of the United States state deployed (and still does) America as a sign of freedom to promote new forms of asymmetrical internationalism, corporate power, and white nationalism. These meanings were also disseminated in the marketing of "global" brands and the creation of "global" consumers. Consumption practices, which were part of the imaginary community formed by "American" nationalism through discourses of the "American way of life," were conveyed through transnational media advertising as a dominant white lifestyle of power and plenty as well as a multicultural and "global" one. These lifestyles were incorporated in partial and particular ways by ethnic groups in the United States, and then by cosmopolitans and others in countries such as India. Transnational practices incorporated struggles for liberal democratic rights as they inserted themselves into consumer culture.

Imaginaries of "America" were divergent and various, and this conjunction of consumer cultures and democratic rights cultures traveled to many regions outside the United States as well. For instance, while it is often believed that immigrants learn about "America" after they come to the country, yet transnational media and corporations and geopolitics ensured that many people all around the world have their own ideas about America. To understand what America meant outside the United States, I examine how the term circulated in India within the phase of economic liberalization occurring in the late 1980s and 1990s. I also examine what "America" meant in the United States to ethnic communities such as those formed by immigrants and refugees who had to learn to narrate themselves into the U.S. state and nation. This latter process was not simple, and concepts such as "assimilation" and "acculturation" into American or hyphenated-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

American subjects did not adequately describe immigrant or migrant subjectivity within transnationality.[11] The production of state subjects, ethnic subjects, multicultural subjects, and transnational subjects were processes full of conflict and contradiction, as diasporas, nationalisms, "global" feminisms, and multinational corporations—to name just a few of the key formations through which what is called "global" is being understood in academic work as well as outside it—worked within and against the powerful narratives of the United States nation and state. Rather than simply produce national subjects or citizens, these processes caused the emergence of heterogeneous subjects who created identities in relation to the nation-state as well as to new kinds of internationalisms. These internationalisms did not eliminate nationalism but enabled certain kinds of nationalisms to be mystified and others to constitute primary aspects of an identity.

Given these contingent and shifting affiliations made possible within transnational connectivities, what can be made of the nature of citizenship at the end of the twentieth century? Within liberal political theory, rights, rather than consumption, have been the cornerstone of citizenship. T. H. Marshall and John Rawls considered that equal rights with others implied full citizenship.[12] However, if citizenship is not to be defined through access to rights within a territorially bound nation-state, then how are we to understand this concept? Political theorists pushed to understand the concept in many ways—as something produced by birth, as the responsibility of participation in civil society, as offering access to rights, as territorial belonging, as participation in military service, or even as the freedom to move within a territory. These varied definitions of citizenship also testify to the belief among scholars that we cannot do without this concept. While it is clear that being a citizen for some people at some time may only be part of an identity, for others it may become a matter of great urgency. Sometimes citizenship is linked to nationalism and sometimes it is not. Privileges of citizenship are extended unevenly—to women,[13] minority religious groups, and racial and sexual minorities. For instance, Susan Moller Okin critiqued the lack of rights for women, Carole Pateman's "sexual contract" theory argued that the division between public and private prevented women from accessing rights, and Zillah Eisenstein critiqued the masculine norm of citizenship.[14] These privileges of citizenship are also different from one nation to another.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

In addition, the question of identity and citizenship, historically linked as it is within western theories of the nation-state to questions of rights from a territorially bound state,[15] became even more urgent by the end of the twentieth century, given the increasing number of persons, many of them women and children, who were not citizens of any state, or who saw their identity as connected not to one state but rather to transnational communities, whether these were state-defined, national, or defined by some other group or collective. The binary of mobility and immobility did not remain useful to define the question of belonging, since transnational connectivities suggest that mobility of persons no longer remains the salient issue but rather that moving discourses recast notions of settled and unsettled subjectivity as well. Struggles for rights and citizenship even in the United States resulted not only from social movements concerned with the oppression of and discrimination against persons based on their gender, sexuality, class, or race, but also from those who were dislocated or displaced, as were migrants and immigrants or refugees. In a transnational age, with millions of displaced and migrant subjects, questions of identity and citizenship became both crucial and vexed, since these subjects questioned the legitimacy of the nation-state while also reinforcing its ability to endow rights.

One result of these debates was the claim not simply of rights from a nation-state but also of "universal rights" regardless of national citizenship. This concept of rights as human rights articulated a subject that was both national and international, thus suggesting that the nation-state was powerful but also insufficient. However, this extra-territorial form of citizenship was not produced solely by claims of human rights. Consumer culture produced other transnational identifications and subjects whose desires and fantasies crossed national borders but also remained tied to national imaginaries. New social movements that linked themselves to human rights trafficked with both these subjectivities, creating new identities, desires, and communities that remained national but were also transnational. Rights claims were also produced and consumed within cultural contexts as commodities that circulated, producing different subjects in different locations.

In response to these contexts, political theorists began to address how new forms of nonessential identity and subjectivity within advanced capitalism enabled a critique of ideas of citizenship or identity based on be-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

longing to one nation, state, or even community.[16] Some theorists called for a "radical" democratic citizenship while other claimed new versions of belonging which they call "sexual citizenship," "diasporic citizenship," and "cosmopolitan citizenship."[17] Isin and Wood referred to the impact of new social movements on issues of citizenship as the "new cultural politics" which require us "to imagine a postnational state in which sovereignty is intersecting, multiple and overlapping."[18] They argued that new "global regimes of governance" redefined national belonging and citizenship, so that people came to live with "the tension to which multiple loyalties give rise."[19] While some argued for a multicultural citizenship,[20] albeit one that was territorially bound, others suggested that a "diasporic citizenship" had evolved, transnational and moving away from territorially bound and sedentary versions of citizenship.[21] Aihwa Ong's theorization of "flexible citizenship" was another formulation in which diasporic ideas of multiple belonging were being articulated in relation to transnational movements.[22] Ong's use of "flexible" suggested the ability of some groups to move easily across national boundaries through power within new forms of late capitalism's processes of "flexible accumulation."

Theories of citizenship changed in response to these questions, suggesting that citizenship was no longer perceived to be an exclusionary belonging to one territorially defined nation-state. Scholars such as Isin and Wood argued that citizenship was a "status" rather than an identity; this "status" might not have a legal or juridical basis but could be the subject of legal dispute and struggle.[23] Arguing that citizenship could not be seen as the only identity after the advent of new social movements and forms of globalization and advanced capitalism, or even the primary identity, they explored "claims of a fragmented, decentered subject as well as of shifting group rights and identities without succumbing to either essentialist or constructivist views of identity."[24] Thus they articulated the necessity to understand "sociological issues of belonging, recognition and solidarity" in order to understand political issues of "status, rights and equality," since citizenship was not the only or the primary identity of many persons.[25]

Although Isin and Wood were correct in identifying tension and conflicts as central to issues of identity and citizenship, we need also to remember that tensions of this sort characterized many moments in the past as well. We cannot imagine that people only lived with single loyalties in the

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

past; such a belief might stem more from nostalgia than from historical understandings. The new inequalities of the present led many to create new golden pasts—of the nation, the single identity, the loyalty to place. In some instances, social construction theory also came to have a new temporality—of the time when identities were essential, or even when hybridity was uncontested. Conflicting forms of belonging were also central to modernity rather than being specific to late capitalism. In fact, it was the promise of wholeness for a fragmented self that was at the center of the modern subject and continues to be so.[26] Yet what might be different about the end of the twentieth century was the nature of these tensions and conflicts, the technological and consumerist modes in which citizenship could be imagined, as well as the modernist belief that certain (and not all) group loyalties and loyalties to nation-state were incompatible in ways different from those of the past. What was also different, as this book argues, was the imbrication of changing and contingent nationalist belonging with a transnational consumer culture facilitated by new technologies of communication, production, and consumption.

While questions of citizenship remained important in regard to the techniques of governance created to manage and regulate populations, it was not simply a consumer citizenship that regulated subjects but also consumer nationalisms. Nationalism's ability to move, change, spread across different kinds of boundaries suggests that it remained a powerful imaginary which developed in tandem with changing modes of citizenship and consumer culture. In general, Stuart Hall's theories of identification as "points of temporary attachment" in the process of articulation[27] are a more compelling way to think through the problem of nationalism than the use of what has been called "strategic essentialism."[28] Since identities are always "strategic" we need to examine how "strategic essentialism" addresses either the problem of essentialism or the operations of power upon subjects; furthermore it is not clear what levels of self-consciousness are needed to make essentialism strategic or not and whether assuming a "strategic" consciousness about identity is the only way in which power can be negotiated. Which subject-positions can be invested to produce an identity is a question of power that has to be understood within a force field of regulated subject positions and institutions. Although all identities are formed through strategic essentialism, they are neither stable nor ahistori-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

cal. They exist to enact specific kinds of agency through the exercise of power. If subjects are formed through the work of institutions and discourses, then these subjects become identities only through identification with already constituted or newly perceptible identities and in response to technologies of regulatory power. Thus we need to focus on new assemblages of power to examine the impact of the market on the identities produced by new social movements. Doing so involves an examination therefore of regimes of governmentality and disciplinary power, connected to older regulatory institutions, which were carried within transnational connectivities to enable the production of neoliberal subjects.

TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITIES AND THE "GLOBAL"

✶

In September 2001, the United States began to introduce new cutbacks in immigration and new forms of surveillance of many immigrants from South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The annual number of H-1B visas fell from 195,000 in 2001 to 65,000 in October 2003. In Congress there have been calls to curtail immigration drastically: one bill introduced in 2003 (H.R. 2688) aimed to eliminate the H-1B visa entirely and another would have reduced all immigration into the United States. The number of refugees allowed to enter the country fell by 60 percent from 2001 to 2003, to the lowest number in twenty-five years.[29] Even the bureaucracy of immigration has changed.[30] The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has now been absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which is divided into five "directorates," as they are called, in addition to several other agencies. The directorates are Border and Transportation Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Science and Technology, Information Analysis, and Infrastructure Protection and Management.[31] The directorates are all, except for one that is devoted to managing the rest, focused on security and surveillance, increasing by a tremendous amount the U.S. state's pursuit of security and empire. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS), one agency in DHS, covers part of the mandate of the former INS apart from its customs and border security work, which have now become part of the Border and Transportation Security division. The BCIS processes all immigration and asylum claims, and

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

reports directly to the head of the Homeland Security Department. According to the DHS website, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services "dedicates its full energies to providing efficient immigration services and easing the transition to American citizenship."[32]

The Bush administration believes that this entity will be more efficient than the INS in keeping track of all those who enter the United States, helped by reduced civil liberties for all citizens and non-citizens in the United States and in many other parts of the world where the United States exercises its considerable influence; the discourses of neoliberal market efficiency uneasily combined with those of providing security and the hope of complete surveillance through policing and technology are widespread in the United States. As I argue in chapter 5, increased surveillance, especially of Muslim males, male converts to Islam, and those who "look Muslim" or Middle Eastern at airports within the United States and in communities and streets has become common, showing how racial and gender formations enable the disciplinary and governmental technologies that support neoliberal policies. While the American corporate mantra remains becoming "global," the borders of the United States are being increasingly policed against particular groups of nonwhites; and as has been so often mentioned, the mobility of capital and goods is not matched by the mobility of labor (especially labor that is believed to be "unskilled," which defines the work of so many women and the poor), given the new outsourcing not only of low-wage but also of white-collar and pink-collar work.[33]

The new millennium seems to have, as many in the United States would contend, inaugurated what are called "new" dangers and wars after 9/11, but it is clear that an era of neoliberalism was inaugurated with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and the end of the Soviet Union. This book is about the 1990s, when a new phase of neoliberalism brought together market logics with concerns for reducing welfare and poverty, and in the process rearticulated feminist and postcolonial subjects out of longer colonial histories and epistemologies. While neoliberalism has been debated as a reformulation of policy linked to the expansion of markets within globalization, or as a new form of hegemony that has produced a new kind of consensus,[34] it can also be understood in terms of a variety of formations through which states arrogated welfare to the workings of the market or applied market logics to welfare concerns. Nikolas Rose has examined

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

some of these marketization practices in the context of the technologies and programs of "advanced liberalism" within which the marketization of welfare took place.[35] Foucault, in an essay entitled "The Birth of Biopolitics," describes the "neoliberalism" of the Chicago school that came to fruition around the 1960s as seeking "rather to extend the rationality of the market, the schemes of analysis it proposes, and the decision making criteria it suggests to areas that are not exclusively or primarily economic."[36] However, in this process, which grew in the last decades of the twentieth century, the diminution of power of states has been uneven—some states have been much more reduced than others and some states have become even more powerful.

Foucault's concept of governmentality has been taken up by Rose and others to understand the practices and programs of self-regulation and conduct that came to be central to the various and disparate practices that made up neoliberal political rationalities. This book argues that neoliberalism is a marketization not just of welfare but of an array of social movements; feminist discourses, previously marginal to neoliberal technologies, became incorporated within them by the end of the twentieth century. Consequently, technologies of feminist empowerment and pleasure that were promoted by late capitalist consumer culture became yoked to the promise of new discourses of modern female and feminist subjectivity and citizenship and the removal of violence and poverty for female populations in what were called "developing countries." Empowerment, self-esteem, and self-help through spiritual and new age movements, exercise and health club attendance, and talk shows and books on the topic, along with new manifestations of cosmopolitanisms, became key to dominant feminist practices in the United States. The segmentation of consumer markets producing a multiplicity of lifestyles—feminist, multicultural, ethnic—was linked to the multiplicity of rights-based identity movements that proliferated through the 1990s. Thus lifestyles of empowerment were created through the struggles that were waged around new social movements. Feminist, diasporic, cosmopolitan, and postcolonial subjectivities were made possible through practices of self-regulation promoted through the technologies of consumer culture and its related programs. The privatization of welfare through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the production of cosmopolitan postcolonial subjects, and the creation of differ-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

entiated identities through the segmentation of consumer groups were connected to the self-creation and regulation of individuals through nationalist discourses and state policies and relations with other states, and it is here that we find the link between biopolitics and geopolitics. Caren Kaplan and I have already argued for greater consideration of geopolitics in the histories of feminist and women's movements that arose within colonial discourses in the United States and Europe.[37] While Michael Dillon argues that geopolitics and biopolitics come together in the figure of the terrorist, it can be argued that the question of women has had a long history within the modern conceptualization of national rivalries, wars, and colonial relations.[38] When James Mill in the early nineteenth century supported British colonialism by suggesting that the civilizational superiority of Britain can be seen in the way that it "exalts" its women, unlike those countries such as India where women are "degraded," we see early signs of the use of "the status of women" as a link between geopolitics and biopolitics.[39] For example, participation in "saving" Afghani women from the Taliban was a project taken up in the 1990s not only by many individuals and organizations but also by fashion magazines such as *Elle* and organizations such as the Feminist Majority Foundation.[40] Discourses of individuality yoked freedom to participation in consumer culture and associated political freedoms with self-improvement; biopolitics produced populations seen as "free" compared to populations in the "third world" that were seen as victims of patriarchal cultures. Consumer culture provided the modalities through which national and international belongings could be imagined, and resistant identities recognized. Thus at the end of the twentieth century, neoliberalism enabled the marketization of social movements through the link between biopolitics and geopolitics. Here geopolitics could be understood not only as a matter of state politics and claims of territories but also as a mode of regulation in which discourses of territoriality, space, and nationalism produced forms of subjectivity by differentiating between populations and the needs and welfare of what were seen to be very different and contrasting populations.

In conceptualizing biopolitics, Foucault theorized that the object of government was not the individual body but the social body. When this social body was seen as a population, there emerged ways of understanding, managing, and regulating that were focused on the goal of welfare of the

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

population. Foucault saw that modern regimes of governance created population as the problem to be addressed by a whole new way of conceptualizing the social body as needing to be managed through apparatuses of security. New apparatuses and knowledges enabled this new way of conceptualizing power as government, and this power became, as Foucault says, "pre-eminent." This power was "pre-eminent" because it contained within it a moral and ethical rationale that has been used for power within geopolitics. Yet if we bring in the question of geopolitics in relation to biopolitics, it is difficult to see one kind of power as "pre-eminent" over disciplinary or sovereign power; rather, as Foucault also said, we see that there exists an assemblage of different forms of power that work together: "We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security."[41]

Although Foucault's focus on population makes this juxtaposition important, it also means that the two forms of power cannot always be demarcated spatially (for example, governmentality as a mode of power in the West and disciplinary power as operating in the "developing world") or temporally, and that one power may enable a second form of power to come into existence. We also seek an understanding of how populations are judged in relation to each other—differences are produced between populations on the basis of territory, culture, gender, race, nation—and technologies of governance are devised, applied, adjudicated in relation to these differences. For instance, infant mortality is understood not only in terms of a population as a whole but rather in relation to the difference in mortality between different nation-states, communities, genders, races. Population control policies, in response to governmental mechanisms, were devised to target subaltern groups in Asia and Africa, for the most part, and a host of disciplinary modes of power were used to enforce these policies. Mechanisms of governance of populations are also connected to questions of how nations, peoples, and cultures are demarcated in relation to space and territoriality. Thus geopolitics is not simply a matter of the international conflicts between nation-states but rather must be understood not simply, as Gearóid Ó Tuathail has suggested, in terms of what might be

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

seen as "geo-power" (that is, the "ensemble of technologies or power concerned with the governmental production and management of territorial space") but also in terms of how these technologies produce subjects of these territories and the means to regulate them. Neoliberalism produces its own geopolitics in terms of how market logics could be linked to social concerns for differently located, gendered, and racialized populations.

A general problem for a critique of neoliberalism is that it might lead to a utopian search for the pure, uncommodified self or a modernist longing for the uncontaminated Other. In taking on the problem of the relationship between new social movements and neoliberal politics, my goal is consistent with the argument of Wendy Larner: that neoliberalism can be interrupted by fracturing its assumed coherence by means of a "post-social politics" consisting of "critical responses and interventions" produced by the struggle between social movements and the new right.[42] Thus the question of resistance in this book is to be understood in a Foucauldian way, as encompassing the myriad and multiple ways in which neoliberal technologies produced all kinds of agency, and an understanding that agency based on identities arising from movements that were feminist, or antiracist, for example, moved in all kinds of directions and mechanisms that did not remain pure of their conditions of possibility, but created contradictions, tensions, and struggles. Neoliberalism thus could not prevent possibilities for contradiction to its discourses and practices, so that its traffic with social movements that both used its programs and opposed them was complex and uneven.

In all debates on neoliberalism, the nature of the state at the end of the twentieth century has been a key topic. Some scholars have asked questions about the general demise of all states while others have focused on the imperial and colonial state. As I have stated above, this book argues that no universal claim can be made about the nature of some entity generalized as "the state," since states and their powers have some commonalities but many differences as well; the production of knowledge of a general, universal entity called the "state" needs to be critiqued. While some states became more powerful through neoliberal policies, others became less so. It seems that the states whose powers were reduced were also those where the welfare of the population was marketized to a greater extent than in the more advanced liberal democracies; what is crucial is also where marketization

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

processes were managed and by whom. In general, a focus on governmentality may enable an examination of powers outside those of the state and thus can be taken as a reduction of the powers of the state. However, it is difficult to see how governmental powers exist without a continuity with state practices or outside the "triangle," as Foucault called it, of sovereign and disciplinary power. Governmentality could also suggest, alternatively, an increase in the powers of those states which could offer or control marketization processes in other states, since it may also imply the circulation of state power in many directions.

In this formulation, Foucault's theorization of governmentality has been used to argue that state power is overtaken by a biopolitical power that cannot be thought of as emanating from the state.[43] What is, however, a problem is that Foucault's theories assumed a singularity to the state based on the histories of European liberal states and did not include the question of biopolitics within the relation between uneven, dependent, or colonial states, as scholars have pointed out.[44] All of his theorizations of the state are based on examples from Europe and the advent of modernity in Europe. Questions of the relations between states—between states that are discrepantly modern or were in relations of dependency—were not within his purview. Thus in addressing these considerations, the question of geopolitics must engage with biopolitical technologies, especially in examining the effects of neoliberalism in various nation-states. When this is done, even the separation of the three modes of power needs to be questioned, since it would be difficult to see how the three rely upon or morph into each other at different points within states where the welfare of populations has only sporadically been the rationale of the state and states cannot be seen to be liberal. Achille Mbembe's work has taken on this problematic in relation to the nature of the biopolitical in nonliberal states.[45] At the same time, it cannot be said that neoliberalism did not have a geopolitical context in the same way as did liberalism, since the differential application of these neoliberal programs created new kinds of subjects that became differentiated by class, race, and gender.

At the end of the century, the issue of state power also revolved around the question of the United States and empire. While many scholars have examined the history of American imperialism and the nature of the imperial "American century,"[46] others have argued that the deterritorialization of

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

power at the end of the century was such that we cannot think of any state as remaining powerful. The main exponent of the theorization of deterritorialized power and governance was the book *Empire*, in which American imperialism was said to have been replaced by a new sovereignty produced by decentralized power. *Empire* claims that the new power is global—it extends throughout the world, it is new, it will be challenged by a new "multitude" with the "creative forces . . . capable of autonomously constructing a counter empire"[47]—and that the United States is not a global power in the ways that European powers formerly were:

> Many locate the ultimate authority that rules over the processes of globalization and the new world order in the United States. Proponents praise the United States as the world leader and sole superpower, and detractors denounce it as an imperialist oppressor. Both these views rest on the assumption that the United States has simply donned the mantle of global power that the European nations have now let fall. . . . Our basic hypothesis, however, that a new imperial form of sovereignty has emerged, contradicts both these views. The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over. No nation will be world leader in the way modern European nations were.[48]

In this era of the American empire and renewed American nationalism, it is difficult to agree with many of these ideas about the end of American imperialism and thus about the nature of this singular, global sovereignty even while we see some evidence of the decentralization of forms of regulatory power that produce the social. However, in contradiction to *Empire*, this book will argue that in the decentralization, new centers developed, and deterritorialization was accompanied by reterritorialization; thus, America remained an undiminished source of both decentralized and centralized power through the neoliberal regimes, technologies, and rationalities that I describe in this book, and many of the inequalities generated by an earlier era of colonization were important to understanding the trajectories along which new centers emerged.[49] The United States remained a hegemon, and its source of power was its ability to generate forms of regulation across particular connectivities that emerged as independent as well as to recuperate the historicized inequalities generated by earlier phases of imperialism.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

Again, totalizing theories of power like those set forth in *Empire* misread the concept of network as simply about deterritorialization and diffusion rather than about recreating nodes of power within the network as it spreads in particular directions. Moreover, the United States, in collaboration with other powerful nation-states, still is able to destroy or change the boundaries of other nation-states through a variety of forms of power—cultural, economic, military. It can also produce liberal nationalisms based on rights that become deterritorialized and reterritorialized; we cannot assume that the only effect of deterritorialized power would be the multitude that would rise up against empire, since this multitude's "global" spread is as much a result of cosmopolitan discourses of power as the earlier formations that the book critiques.

If we see *Empire* as a commentary on "globalization," in a way that sutures some critiques of regulatory power to an older Marxist understanding of capital, then this sort of knowledge-formation represents a specific Euro-American cosmopolitan idea of the "global." In contradiction to *Empire*, this book argues that the "global" is not and never was quite global, but that there certainly was a will to globalization that was both profoundly cosmopolitan as well as imperialist, since "global" capitalism did not constitute the totality of economic or social relations that were existent or possible.[50] As Ulf Hannerz has said of the term "globalization": "Many such processes and relationships obviously do not at all extend across the world. The term 'transnational' is in a way more humble, and often a more adequate label for phenomena which can be of variable scale and distribution."[51] In following Hannerz, this book argues that the "global," by the last decade of the twentieth century, was a powerful imaginary produced through knowledges moving along specific transnational connectivities, as I call them, and that these transnational connectivities, a few of which I examine in this book, constituted a web of connections that moved along historicized trajectories.

I will argue that rather than the term globalization, it is more useful to think about the heterogeneous and multiple transnational connectivities that produced various meanings of the term "global." Conceiving of globalization as an object of knowledge involved discursive practices emanating from and producing a cosmopolitan will to power in which so many different kinds of subjects participated. Thus rather than use this term, I hope

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

to trace the trajectories and histories of knowledges that produced discourses of the "global" as that which was believed to be pervasive, all-encompassing. As a cognate of "universal," the "global" became a means to suggest that there was one sole hegemonic mode of power that existed in all places, that was imperial and pervasive simply because it was deterritorialized. The necessity of disaggregating the diverse and uneven phenomena that make up what has been called globalization, and the need to show their genealogies in earlier periods, as well as the incomplete dissemination of global processes, leads me therefore to understand terms such as "global" and "universal" as regimes of truth that traveled transnationally within powerful knowledge connectivities.

As I have said, Ulf Hannerz's term "transnational connections" comes close to describing the myriad connections that characterize the transnational arena; I use the term "connectivities" to suggest the degree and variety of connections that exist. This term suggests, as it does in relation to the internet, that there are strong and weak connectivities, that it is not only the networks, as Manuel Castells calls them,[52] that we need to examine but the discourses that travel through these networks, how some get translated and transcoded, how some are unevenly connected, others strongly connected, and still others incommensurable and untranslatable. Moreover, in recalling the term "collectivities," the term "connectivities" reveals that the transnational connections here produce groups, identities, nationalisms; that the power of many discourses to be understood, translated, used in a variety of sites means that subjects become constituted and connected through these new technologies and rationalities.

The term connectivity itself has come to have multiple meanings. At the simplest level, it refers to accessibility of information technology: whether some people, groups, and communities are able to access information so as to be part of a "global" community and how they access this technology[53] (for example through dial-up service with intermittent or sporadic connection, through twenty-four-hour high-speed lines, or through various kinds of servers), and at what cost. At another level, connectivity refers to the very mode of delivery of digitalized information that one observer sees as the "unbiased transport of packets of information between two end points" and thus simply another utility and commodity like water and electricity.[54] Yet for connectivity to be understood as a commodity suggests the economics

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

of information technologies that are central for access to this new realm of what is seen as deterritorialized power. Thus while the internet is understood as a metaphor and realm of deterritorialized power in which distance and space have been conquered, this technology only connects select groups of people to what is on the web, in selected directions and to particular sites. How these connectivities occur is a matter of the economic, political, and social technologies and their histories. As Vincent Mosco argues, "connectivity does not mean distance is dying. Rather, the architecture of connectivity accentuates the importance of certain nodes in its global networks making particular spaces."[55] Thus rather than a deterritorialization, the metaphor of connectivity suggests that territories and spaces are rearticulated as new centers of power along new and old routes. In addition, connectivity does not imply a complete diffusion of power into the "global" realm; rather it implies that new networks are created within which nodes of power come into existence through relationships created within networks. Thus, Rob Shields suggests, "Networks may be more or less decentralized, but the general notion of connectivity in a net is that each element is interconnected with a multiplicity of other elements. In a network, then, the status of individual elements is determined by their connections. These make some elements into nodal points through which the network itself may be argued to flow onward."[56]

Thus the internet cannot be thought of simply in terms of derritorialization and flows. The conundrum of technological metaphors is that they are always powerful but cannot be used for totalizing theoretical claims. My claims for connectivity as a metaphor, however, provide an argument about its incompleteness, the exclusions produced by it, and thus for a theory in which unevenness, failure, exclusion can be included. This unevenness does not lead to advocating vanguardist resistance but rather foregrounds power relations within different trajectories, translations that go awry, discourses that cannot link agendas as well as powerful connectivities that link, create new nodes, and recuperate the nation and empire.

In particular, my use of connectivity as a metaphor for the links and routes within which cosmopolitan discourses of power constitute the "global" points to the reconstitution of the social that took place at the end of the twentieth century and that built upon older histories of colonialism and modernity. In all of these transnational connectivities, the asymmetries

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

produced by the discourses of difference between the West and the Rest remained formative, even though there were cosmopolitans, wealthy classes and groups, and a number of hierarchies in the West, as there were outside it. These cosmopolitans included those strongly connected to the "global" economy as a masculine realm of economic activity and to histories of internationalism, as well as those who were cosmopolitan only in contingent ways or on the margins of the cosmopolitanism that could think of itself as "global." The strength or weakness of these connectivities could in part be attributed to histories of colonialism but also to many other forms of power that were regionally specific or could grow out of other social movements. Thus the West and the non-West, those divisions produced through European colonialism, were rearticulated continually to inform the inequalities that demarcated the wealthy nations from the "developing" countries, or wealthy cosmopolitans from subalterns. Although the non-West might not exactly define a world of wealthy Asian countries or incorporate the history of Japanese imperialism, the cultural manifestations of imperialism still structured the representational division between the so-called free world and the world believed to be "unfree." The history of modernity, as of postmodernity, was still informed by histories of colonialism.

Despite these links to colonialism, there seems to be no single logic of rule; connectivities brought together multiple logics to create assemblages of rule that governed the demarcation of space. Thus along with the racialized "deathworlds" that Achille Mbembe argues continue to exist,[57] there were also worlds governed by the ethics of humanitarianism and forms of sovereignty that enabled the "powers of freedom"[58] as indexes to both the possibilities of democracy and those histories of European colonization that claimed the superiority of "western civilization." In addition, the phantasmal visual worlds of nostalgia and of possibilities (of class, nationalism, global citizenship) created by consumer culture and transnational media technologies formed new inequalities and recuperated old inequalities to produce identities and differences. Above all, it was the juxtaposition of these multiple logics of rule that created new assemblages of power, and the juxtapositions and assemblages changed with time and place.[59] In addition, one form of power may morph into another kind: for instance, in my chapter on refugees, what is revealed is that a legal discourse of human rights becomes a tool for management of the "refugee problem." Transna-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

tional connectivities made these juxtapositions and changes possible. For example, movements of labor, capital, goods, media, and technologies across national boundaries intensified unevenly and differently from region to region, even while business corporations in the United States and elsewhere incorporated terms such as "global" and "diversity" into their lexicon. Nonprofit organizations and activism became inescapably transnational even while their presence made less of a difference to subalterns in a welfare state than to those in a state without a strong welfare apparatus. Images from across the world flashed on TV screens in the slums of third world cities as much as they did in penthouses in New York or Tokyo or Cairo, even if some of these lifestyles might have been absorbed into fantasy and imagination in different ways. Yet transnational connectivities produced these differences through a variety of mechanisms and assemblages of power.

FEMINISMS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY: NEOLIBERALISM AND STRUGGLE

A key aspect of this book is the exploration of the conundrum of neoliberalism, consumer culture, and mobility and the related problem of feminist resistance and opposition produced within transnational connectivities of knowledge production. The relationship between gendered identity, feminism, democratic citizenship, and consumer culture became apparent through the writing of this book as crucial aspects of America in its role as a transnational regulatory apparatus of neoliberalism. There are multiple ways to understand this relationship. For instance, one can argue that the forms of civil society that enable democratic citizenship are the new technologies and new media that are controlled by multinational corporations. In this formulation, we can only imagine having group identities, rights, or responsibilities through lifestyles, modes of communication, desires, and fantasies that are part of a consumer culture crossing many boundaries (though not all of them) very easily. On the other hand, one can also see these formations in constant struggle and negotiation, as feminist movements have become so disseminated and so diverse that some movements disaffiliate from the state and others negotiate with it. Feminists as part of

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

the new informational connectivities of knowledge producers also continue to work on self-critique and remain profoundly self-reflexive, and thus feminism continues to proliferate in many modalities and formations. Foucault's concept of governmentality, as modified to address a transnational arena, provides theoretical insight into understanding some of the problems regarding the separation between civil society and state, and thus makes it possible to address feminism as an ethic and a rationality that generated technologies and strategies capable of being understood as governmental and productive through many kinds of agency. Moreover, the concept of governmentality allowed me to understand feminist action and activism not simply as vanguardist but as a form of power through which gendered subjects were produced, specifically in discourses of welfare, through proper and effective management and in resistance to disciplinary technologies; thus it was necessary, when discussing feminist activism, not to write about an a priori female subject (the woman) but to see feminist activism as constructing a variety of gendered subjects that often refused to remain stable.

This book argues that gender, race, class, and nationalism are produced by contemporary cultures in a transnational framework that is linked to earlier histories of colonization. For example, the interarticulation of rights and consumer cultures means that for feminist scholars interested in social movements, it is important to understand how gender and sex are constructed through what we know as culture, and also how in modernity consumer culture itself produces these categories. Historians of consumer culture in the United States have undertaken work along these lines and produced a formidable literature. This field has most clearly revealed to us the relation between nationalism, gender, and consumer culture, clearing the ground for much theorization of America as a sign of neoliberal consumer culture through concepts such as "the American way of living" and "lifestyle" in the twentieth century, concepts which have moved across many transnational connectivities.

The separation of identity issues and consumer culture as a knowledge formation follows on T. H. Marshall's concept of liberal democracy as an arena separate from the market. If work along these lines is undertaken, as in some work on popular culture, consumer culture is often seen solely as a strategy of resistance in the production of identity. Yet these identity prac-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

tices cannot be seen as totalizing resistance formations. It is only by examining the production and circulation of consumer culture and consumer goods within the context of biopolitics and geopolitics that we can see how identity politics operate at the complex nexus of political economy, national imaginaries, and related mobilizations of desire and individuality within liberal and neoliberal politics. These circulations, productions, and consumptions cannot be understood as a demarcated "local" realm of action, but rather as effective ways to regulate the local and the international. By utilizing a transnational approach, we can examine the interarticulation of consumption and identity formation as caught up within the movements of people, goods, and ideas across national boundaries, and the ways in which nationalism produces subjects in difference from other gendered subjects. Thus the production of feminist and female subjects through discourses of freedom and unfreedom within transnational consumer cultures needs to be interrogated, especially with relation to the concept of "choice" that became a key discourse of neoliberal feminism.

The focus of feminist modernity within the United States on the topic of "choice" brings to the forefront the problem of its liberal conditions of production at the end of the twentieth century. Since the concept of choice is essential to participation in democracy as well as to consumer culture, feminism was engaged in a struggle with neoliberalism but also dependent on it for its existence. Certainly, mainstream, second-wave feminism in the United States critiqued the liberal state for creating a division between public and private, but itself built on "choice" as crucial for its struggles against right-wing attacks on reproductive rights. Other ways of conceptualizing progressive feminism, especially ones that focus on international and "global" issues, used the idea of "having choices" as the opposite of "being oppressed." From activism against domestic violence to activism in favor of reproductive rights, the availability of "choice" was increasingly taken as representing feminist agency. Critiques of these approaches from radical and poststructural feminisms were also raised in the 1990s, although the powerful circulation of this concept continued as well.[60] In this book, I explore this feminist liberal subject as it circulates in trajectories that transnationalized governmental technologies.

New social movements take shape through a process of knowledge-production and identity formation. The consumption, production, and reg-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

ulation of this knowledge is thus important to examine and this book attempts to do so in relation to feminism as one social movement. The pervasiveness of liberal discourses of "choice" within feminism, liberal democracy, and consumer culture suggest that there are connections between these formations that deserve greater scrutiny, especially in the formation of what I have understood as the link between geopolitics and biopolitics. Thus my examination of the novels *Jasmine* and *Mistress of Spices*, of Barbie in India, of the "global" campaigns for women's rights as human rights, suggests means by which gendered subjectivity was produced transnationally through discourses of an unconstrained, unregulated feminist agency, whether through discourses of consumption or by human rights. Consumer culture worked by producing desires and fantasies that could be linked to group as well as to individual identities and were also linked to a consumer citizenship through which liberal equality became possible. This is one way in which we can understand *Elle* magazine's investment in Afghani women and its support of women's rights against the Taliban, as well as its emphasis on beauty and consumer culture as an index of freedom for a post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Yet this link between feminism and consumer culture comes from a longer history in the United States. Margaret Finnegan, in her book *Selling Suffrage*, shows us the many ways in which some groups of women working for suffrage in the late nineteenth century used the tactics and the language of advertising to "sell" the message of suffrage. According to Finnegan, suffragists "compared good voters to comparison shoppers, defined commodity-enhanced lifestyles as a right, spoke in tribute to fashion and mass consumption and emulated the graphic, material and visual cues of modern department stores, advertisers, merchandisers, and magazine publishers."[61] Thus early-twentieth-century feminists in the United States themselves commodified democratic politics by "making the right to vote synonymous with physical possession of the ballot," in the process of which the ballot became a commodity which every woman must have.[62] Nan Ensted argues that women workers in the early twentieth century derived important forms of subjectivity and identity from popular and consumer culture and that the representation of consumption as false consciousness, or of women as the victims of commodity culture, does not bear out in the historical record. As she states, "Consumer culture offered working-class women

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

struggling with extremely difficult material and ideological constraints a new range of representations, symbols, activities, and spaces with which to create class, gender and ethnic identities."[63] Vicki Ruiz argues that consumer culture allowed Mexican-American women to negotiate racialized and gendered inequalities within their communities but also outside them.[64] Within these contexts, the right to consume became an important aspect of the struggle for full citizenship and identity in the United States.[65] Lifestyle, "taste," and fashion become central to producing difference through processes of "branding" in advertising and mass media. These lifestyles created an "American consciousness" in which consumption was linked to democracy and choice.[66]

Within what has been understood as globalization, consumer culture has become a key aspect creating subjectivities at the turn of the century. Arjun Appadurai has called this process the "civilizing work of post industrial society," in which serious labor is put into "producing the conditions of consciousness in which buying can occur."[67] While Appadurai's analysis points to the colonial underpinnings of industrial capitalism under which consumer culture developed, there have been theorizations of consumption that have addressed how the symbolic and specular aspect of consumer culture was linked to a national and imperial identity,[68] and in the case of the United States, to a transnational context[69] as well as to the nation's geographic, economic, and political role as a "superpower."

American consumer capitalism, as Ritzer and others have shown, relies on a discourse of rationalization.[70] What he calls the "McDonaldization" thesis states that the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control of human beings through material technologies underlie a globalizing consumer culture. Malcolm Waters suggests that within this culture, "political issues and work can equally become items of consumption." The only political system possible within such a cultural formation might be a "liberal-democratic political system where there is a culture of consumption precisely because it offers the possibility of election,"[71] and thus of choice.

Within consumer culture's primary role of providing "choices" through a process of differentiating, providing symbolic capital, or producing identity,[72] feminist agency through mobility and movements plays a large role. The technological aspects of practices of mobility have become founda-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

tional to the movements of finance capital, laboring bodies, goods, and media. These technologies are crucial to consumer culture and its dissemination through transnational connectivities of many kinds—of people, media, and geopolitics. As Ian Barns has said, technological innovation itself enables an increasing commodification of social life "because of the cultural grammar that technological innovation expresses." It's not just the technologies but also the "deeper cultural transformation" associated with these technologies that make these technologies so crucial to our identities.[73] My interest in this aspect of consumer culture lies not in the technologies themselves, but in how these technologies are both subject-producing and subjectifying. Certainly they produce those gendered mobile and immobile refugees, migrants, activists, writers, and scholars—those uneven participants of what Castells has termed "network society" and Lash and Urry have described as the informational networks crucial to globalization.[74]

Although many agree that consumer culture can be understood as an American phenomenon, the imbrication of the political with consumer culture is not limited to the United States. There is a growing anthropological literature on the relationship between colonialism and consumption in Africa and Asia.[75] Politicians in India, for instance, also rely on spectacle and cinematic technologies for electioneering, to the extent that movie stars have regularly been elected to political office. Consumer culture in many formerly colonized cultures has developed (or underdeveloped) in ways that are varied and important through the process of colonization in the last three centuries. While these forms of consumption have new manifestations, they are also connected to earlier practices of consumption through the inequalities generated by western colonial expansion. Yet late capitalist modernity increasingly brings the discourse of consumer culture to more areas of the world through the self-producing practices of governance enabled by neoliberal democratic regimes. For instance, as my example of Barbie suggests, the current phase of capitalism in India is producing a new kind of popular, cosmopolitan feminism that seems to operate differently than the feminism that many have come to associate with women's movements in India. This feminism constructs women as working professionals at the same time as it commodifies feminism through beauty and fashion culture. The classes and groups that can become neoliberal femi-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

nist subjects through discourses of beauty have some overlap with those subjects produced through older discourses of cosmopolitanism created by colonial histories, visible in the texts that I examine in the first chapter of this book. These subjects, produced by postcolonial cosmopolitanisms that are anti-Eurocentric or anti-American are also different from those subjects produced by discourses of refugee asylum and the state practices and institutions that produce refugees since their utilizations of transnational discourse of America are quite distinct in relation to race, gender, religion, and ethnicity. And finally, after 9/11, as my last chapter suggests, ethnic and racialized and gendered subjects are rearticulated out of older racial and gendered histories into neoliberal practices of self-regulation demanded by keeping secure consumer culture's promises of the American dream.

These questions of subjectivity and identity enable us to understand the interactions between nationalist subjects of many kinds, the practices of nation-states, new social movements, and transnational connectivities of many kinds. For Bharati Mukherjee, as I suggest in chapter 1, to become an American writer required an understanding of Americanness that was linked to hegemonic ideas of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. At the same time, the icon of American white heterosexual femininity, Barbie (the topic of chapter 2), circulated in India only to the extent that economic liberalization policies instituted by the Indian state provided new arenas for work and consumption for middle-class metropolitan Indian women and new transnational nationalisms. In contrast, the female refugee subjects that I discuss in chapter 4 were produced both by powerful discourses of the American nation and by various state institutions in the United States and India as well as by representations of nonwestern women that circulated through many transnational connectivities and created unequal feminist and female subjects. Similarly, the internationalist claims of discourses of "women's rights as human rights," which I discuss in chapter 3, are rooted in a "Western" subjectivity that became universalized through transnational connectivities that produced feminist knowledges. In all of the connectivities, discourses of biopolitics and geopolitics circulated in collaboration to produce modern nationalist subjects of many kinds.

In the process of taking on this tangled topic, through the many years in which I struggled to formulate what resisted a single disciplinary or area approach, my book came to be framed within what Caren Kaplan and I have

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

called a "transnational feminist cultural studies" perspective.[76] It was only by combining a postcolonial perspective with textual literary analysis, social and cultural theory, and feminist and ethnic studies approaches that I could begin to engage with the questions in which I was interested. Since all disciplines respond to needs and agendas in particular historical periods, I do not want to argue for the superiority of one discipline over another, or for one methodology over another. In particular, attacks on cultural studies, ethnic studies, women's studies, or postcolonial studies—all fields that are often identified as interdisciplinary at the present time—seem to me to be produced to defend forms of disciplinarity that are either defensive gate keeping linked to professional networks of power or do not address the changing nature of what are called disciplines at this present time. In this project I use literary analysis, feminist theory, cultural studies, social theory, and what might loosely be called fieldwork to figure out answers to questions that I find compelling and important. Thus my interdisciplinary approach may become more disciplined over time, since disciplines are neither primordial nor ahistorical. However, since this project is also about the formation of particular South Asian Indian and feminist subjects within transnational connectivities, I have found that the division between "area studies" and "U.S. ethnic studies" and divisions between "areas" or "regions" are often not useful. My project does primarily focus on ideas of "America" as they are articulated in the United States and outside it and on a group of people who move between the United States and India. For the most part, I address the subjectivities of middle-class and upper-class Indians, though one chapter does focus on more rural-based groups, in which class is somewhat fuzzy, as refugees. Thus the project is limited to what happens in a postcolonial metropolis that is also diasporic, and it is not a project that is territorially defined by a region outside the United States. However, I am interested in how knowledge about regions and "areas" outside the United States, which have come under the rubric of "area studies" in American academic sites, are produced by scholars whose lives, knowledge production, networks, and travels are inescapably transnational. How these distinct "areas" have been produced by scholars and others who mystify or ignore their own subjectivity forms an important topic that has been discussed well by many but is also often forgotten. I do not mean that all scholars need to write about themselves; however, I do question the

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024

extent to which contexts of production of knowledge are ignored in a great deal of scholarship. For instance, many discussions of fieldwork see the field as distinct from where writing or discussions may occur or from the sources of research funding. I hope to propose a messier world, where writing, researching, objects, and subjects of research refuse to remain neatly within the boundaries that discipline them. Thus I examine a number of sites where I found it possible to move, given my own subjectivity and identity, to literary works, nonprofit organizations, state practices, and scholarly undertakings of many kinds. This may make my book too undisciplined for many, but I hope more interesting for others. Above all, I hope to suggest that academic production is neither an "élite" theory that is disconnected from the "real" world of "real" people, material practices, state connections, and the market, nor a theory that is completely co-opted or emptied of critical possibilities. Rather, it is only by critically engaging with established and traditional disciplinary formations, and critiquing all kinds of knowledge productions in different sites that produce regimes of truth and discourses of power that we will begin to untangle the knot of power and knowledge in a transnational framework.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/chapter-pdf/617954/9780822386544-001.pdf by guest on 18 July 2024