

The SAGE Handbook of
Feminist Theory

Edited by
Mary Evans, Clare Hemmings
Marsha Henry, Hazel Johnstone
Sumi Madhok, Ania Plomien
and Sadie Wearing



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Introduction

Mary Evans

This *Handbook* attests to the richness, across continents and academic disciplines, of feminist theory in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The five individual sections of this Handbook have been edited by Clare Hemmings, Marsha Henry, Sumi Madhok, Ania Plomien and Sadie Wearing, all colleagues, together with Hazel Johnstone, the editorial manager of the collection, at the Gender Institute of the London School of Economics. The various sections contain essays on diverse subjects from writers across the globe. These essays are brought together by the conviction that feminist theory offers important and radical possibilities for the understanding of many of the major intellectual and social issues of the twenty-first century. Thus a central characteristic of this Handbook is that the authors whose work is presented here all recognize that the concerns of feminist theory reach across subjects, issues and locations. Feminist theory does not exist within narrow perimeters of concern and engagement; the impact of feminist theory has become evident both within and outside the academy. The concerns of feminist theory and its subject matter of gender relations are now an explicit, and pivotal, aspect of the world of the twenty-first century.

But that statement should not be taken to imply that the authors whose work makes up the *Handbook* see the present state of feminist theory in terms of those problematic terms of 'growth' and 'development'. Both these words carry with them implicit assumptions of movement away from some form of infant state towards a desired situation of maturity and adulthood. It would be foolish to deny that there are more people engaged with feminist theory, both within and outside the academy, in the twenty-first century than in the twentieth, but from this we should not assume that feminist theory fits neatly into a chronological intellectual history or that forms of technological and institutional change have rendered certain questions redundant. Hence it is important to establish here that the history of feminist theory is not that of a linear progress from absence to presence and that if we cling to a chronological model of feminist theory we are in danger of situating it within an account of social change that accords too easily with concepts of the 'modern' and 'progress'. In linking the history of feminist theory with these terms, feminist theory is too easily assumed to be a part of those political and ideological aspects of the twenty-first century that in many ways refuse some of the more difficult questions about gender and its social forms. If we argue, for example, that feminist theory is an aspect of the 'emancipation' of women in the global north we marginalize or exclude those aspects of women's agency that exist elsewhere today or have existed in the past. Feminist theory, that general concern with the order of gender relations, invites us to re-think not just the present but also the past; it is at its best when it is not collusive with a particular model of social development or social relations.¹

Thus readers of this *Handbook* should not expect to find within these pages accounts of feminist theory that invoke an intellectual progress narrative from a point in the historical past to a point in the historical present. All academic work builds on existing paradigms but this should not be taken to assume that the issues and the questions that form the core of any subject

matter necessarily change or disappear because the theoretical interventions on those subjects become more sophisticated or part of both academic and more general discussion. Questions of the gender of power, for example, remain as central today as they did in any previous century and the fact of an accumulated literature on this, or any other subject, does not in itself demonstrate the disappearance of a relation of subjection or inequality. A significant body of feminist theory (as the section edited by Ania Plomien makes clear) is engaged with questions of material reality and this case demonstrates to us that we should not confuse changes in the everyday circumstances of our lives with changes in the underlying structure of human relationships. 'Change', in the sense of both material and technological development as well as the re-ordering of social relations consequent upon changing cultures and politics, does not inevitably bring with it changes in the social relations of power, privilege and authority.

Despite this proviso the *Handbook* is also a testament to the liberating intellectual challenges and possibilities of feminist theory, as important now as at any point in the past. Those possibilities take three major forms: of engagement with the various forms of politics of the worlds in which we live, the fusion of academic disciplines and the many possibilities of cross-disciplinary research and – a way in which feminist theory is often particularly liberating – the sense of personal involvement and recognition that working within, and with, feminist theory allows.² All these possibilities cross time and continents: they allow people from diverse personal and social circumstances to work together and feminist theory has, again for longer than is often recognized, created a sense of theoretical community between those with similar commitments and interests. The well-attended conferences organized around feminist theory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are part of a tradition of the making of feminist theory that has its roots in the various meetings of women, across national and racial boundaries, that have met and discussed questions both of specific interest to women and to men and women on subjects such as slavery and disarmament.³ As in all cases where individuals have come together to discuss a particular subject there are implicit, as well as explicit, theories that underlie the meetings: 'theory' is not just a subject for academic debate but also takes the form of that complex mix of the empirically known and the taken-for-granted assumption that makes up the way in which individuals interpret the world.

But over and above these important considerations is the role of feminist theory as a challenge to much of what has existed as knowledge which is supported by the implicit and unspoken authority of men, a form of authority that has existed across time and place. In all societies there is what is described as either a normative order or dominant knowledge, ontologies which carry with them the expectation of social obedience and compliance. Dissent from these assumptions can carry penalties from mortal danger to various forms of more, or less, significant exclusion. Yet what complicates this account, as far as this volume is concerned, is that there is no straightforward alliance between gender and authoritative knowledge: men have dissented against the views of other men, women have maintained, upheld and sanctioned dominant views.⁴ So, again, we cannot write a history of feminism that overlooks the ways in which 'gendered knowledge' has not always taken the form of knowledge that is written by men and for male interests and excludes women and the recognition of the feminine. At the same time, and certainly in the context of western traditions of intellectual life, it is essential to recognize the longstanding identification of the human with the biologically male (and usually white and privileged) human, not least because what has been derived from this are feminist traditions that have been formed through the assertion of the radical relevance of gender difference.

We need, therefore, to both assign 'feminist theory' to a long and complex life and to consider the way in which what we now recognize as 'theory' is part of a tradition and carries with it many of the complexities and the contradictions of the past. In this *Handbook* many of the essays are written by individuals who are employed within the academy, a place of

work that has presented (certainly in the countries of the global north) various obstacles and refusals to the presence of women, as either those studied or those studying. Many of these aspects of the rejection of various forms of the feminine have now disappeared but what has been left are a number of ways in which what is identified (by others and by itself) as 'feminist' theory attracts critiques of, crucially, marginality and partiality. Despite the theoretical pluralism that is a consequence and characteristic of post-modernism there remains a sense in which, however much 'grand narratives' are supposed to have become redundant, the conventional narratives of the western meta-theoretical still have a central symbolic as well as a practical importance and authority.

This issue, of the authority and the meaning of theory, is one that raises two questions which transcend all aspects of feminist theory: the meaning and the status of the term 'theory' and the disciplinary origins of feminist theory. To take the second question first, we should note that from the time of the western Enlightenment the discipline outside the natural sciences which has had the greatest status within universities and public intellectual life has been that of philosophy (a discipline that, we should also note, has aspects of its intellectual heritage in theology, and hence with questions of absolute knowledge). The disciplinary authority of philosophy is important because two of the most influential writers on questions of gender in the twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, have been students and subsequently teachers of that discipline. This is not to say that very powerful interventions by feminists have not been made from and within other disciplines and other forms of social engagement (for example, in fiction and in political organizing) but within the academy both Beauvoir and Butler have inspired work outside the confines of philosophy. This has had interesting and important consequences for the ways in which feminist 'theory' is conceived and these various manifestations of the 'theoretical' are all evident here. This takes us to the first question raised above, that of the definition of 'theory' itself, with the accompanying issues of the tensions between what is defined as theory and what is defined as the 'empirical' or the 'material' and the ways in which it is possible (if at all) to define the distinctive features of feminist theory.

To take the first of these questions: the definition, and the implications of that definition, of the term 'theory', a word so confidently part of the title of this volume. Dictionary definitions aside, the word usually carries with it the expectation that what a theory can do is to explain, to account for, an aspect of the social or the physical world. 'Theories' about the relationship of the earth to the sun, the form of matter and energy or, in another context, the making and the components of the human psyche all figure large in most accounts of the history of the global north. To live in a world without theory is often taken to imply that people live in worlds in which the very possibility of explanation has not been encountered, let alone pursued in that classic form of scientific experiment: thesis, exploration and demonstration, and then conclusion. But this very method, generally referred to as 'scientific', has raised considerable concerns and controversies. The question of 'how do we know' is recognized as important and yet certain disciplines (and philosophy is a particularly good example here) *know* in ways and with different forms of certainty that is sometimes not the case within other disciplines. When Beauvoir wrote that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman' she made an assertion, a form of comment about the world, that could be regarded with scepticism. Beauvoir went on to support her argument with material from both the 'real' and the imagined worlds. In both cases the evidence that she produced is immediately questionable: individual works of literature are produced by authors from specific circumstances and with little allowance that other authors might suggest very different ideas, and her references to the 'real' world were drawn from her own experiences of a limited social context and without any qualifying recognition of those limitations. In all, what might be said of Beauvoir's much repeated remark is that it is an assertion supported by some very partial and limited evidence. Nevertheless, the central argument of *The Second Sex*

(that, in western cultures, women constitute ‘the other’) has come to be accepted as ‘theory’ and as a starting point for subsequent theoretical explorations. As Sonia Kruks writes in an *Introduction* to an essay by Beauvoir entitled *Right Wing Thought Today*:

she (Beauvoir) is highly attuned ... to the Eurocentric and masculinist tones of Western elite thought, describing it as a thought that ‘monopolizes the supreme category – the human’ for itself. (Kruks, 2012: 10)⁵

That comment by Beauvoir – that Western elite thought conflates the human with the masculine – is crucial to both the history and the present of feminist theory. Moreover, unlike the assertion about how women ‘become’ there is, as a glance at any literature of any subject of the past 200 years would suggest, no shortage of corroborative evidence. In the history of feminist theory it has been the starting place for feminist interventions: the starting point that asks the question about the authority of judgements made without the recognition of gender difference. Just as important is the identification of the male with the human today: in the work of Judith Butler we can perceive the way in which the ‘trouble with gender’ became the starting point for Butler’s determination to refuse the resolution of the question by Beauvoir (identification with the male) by constructing an account of gender that disallowed the presence of gender as anything other than a learned (and repeated) performative practice. Indeed, Butler’s account of gender renders it as a fiction in which achieved gender status is a fiction rather than an absolute state supported by fiction, which is the case in the work of Beauvoir.

It is thus that Judith Butler, again a philosopher by education and professional affiliation and again a writer whose work moves (as many of her critics have pointed out) rapidly from theoretical assertion to engagements with the ‘real’ world that various writers have found problematic, suggests a way through the various confines that binary accounts of gender implicitly offer. The punctuation that explicitly challenges straightforward assumptions of the way in which we read ‘the real’ is to indicate an essential part of Butler’s argument: that the real world is no more or less than our capacity to re-affirm or to destabilize it. The many arguments around Butler’s work (arguments which engage with the trajectory of her work from *Gender Trouble* to more recent work on state violence) have been the subject of various volumes but here what is important is to note, as this volume will demonstrate, the range of Butler’s influence. At the same time, both Butler and Beauvoir raise questions for feminist theory that are less about the explanatory authority and vitality of their work and more about the issues presented to feminist theory by writers whose very discipline poses problems about the relationship of theory to practice. Those problems are explicit in the work of both writers: the Simone de Beauvoir who wrote *The Second Sex* would not, at the time of the book’s publication in 1949, have regarded herself as a feminist, in the same way Butler resists the term ‘feminist’ when associated only with women because of the essentialist connotations of the term. This would seem to present feminist theory, in the case of both Beauvoir and Judith Butler, with a theoretical tradition in which two of its most influential writers have complex relationships with that tradition.

At this point it is worth turning to two other great theoretical traditions of the western post-Enlightenment world: Marxism and psychoanalysis. Each tradition is associated with those often abused figures of ‘founding fathers’, and both have long traditions of considerable social engagement and diverse contributors. But what is interesting about these traditions – psychoanalysis scorned by Beauvoir, Marxism largely irrelevant to Butler – is that they are formed around and through intense engagement with the study of the real, material world, be it the means of production in the case of Marx or individual human beings in the case of Freud. Both men too, in common with Butler and Beauvoir, never assumed the human condition to be ‘natural’; the contingent is too powerful a part of social existence for there ever to be a fixed or final state of being human.

Yet what is distinct in the work of Marx and Freud is that in the making of the human both detected patterns in which the individual and the social combined to form connections that were predictable and beyond individual control. The child and the resolution of the Oedipal drama and the person born with only labour to provide for herself or himself constitute the (almost) general condition of human beings; circumstances in which agency may well come to exist but is not absolute or inevitable. Marx, despite the origins of his work in Hegelian idealism (and that particular presence in what has become known as the 'young' Marx), subsequently came to locate the dialectical implications of his account of political economy within precise historical conditions. What remained constant in his work (and in that of Freud) was the recognition of that dialectic between human beings and their circumstances, in which both parties change and are changed through their relationship.

This is arguably not the case for Beauvoir nor, indeed, for Butler. In *The Second Sex* biologically female people may well 'become' women but that becoming is a process in which the female is the made person, never the subject who makes. Indeed, for Beauvoir, it would seem that the only way in which women can acquire agency is through the reproduction of the male, in terms of both social presence and abstract understanding. This binary is not, however, one of a dialectical relationship: there is no mutual change, only a making of 'woman' in terms from which the only escape is that of the masculine. From this, it is possible to surmise that what is arguably the case about Beauvoir's resolution of the apparent theoretical powerlessness of women, a lack of power which arises from the ways in which literal women are seen as passive occupiers of their given social (and epistemological) space, might also be said about feminist theory: that in its identity with the feminine and the female arise questions about the extent to which the epistemological status of feminist theory is that of amendment or addition to theory *per se*. This issue underlies many of the questions raised in the section in the *Handbook* edited by Sumi Madhok and myself on *Epistemology and Marginality*, in which the link between knowledge and marginal status and identity is explored.

In the history of western feminism there are numerous examples of campaigns by women (both with and without the support of men) for access to those institutions from which we have been excluded. At the same time there have also been notable interventions by women about re-thinking the very nature of public life, be it intellectual, institutional or political. All these interventions have been generated by the assumption that the various privileges of the world, not the least of which is power over both the self and others, have been more generally owned and assumed by men. This has placed individuals who wish to challenge and change the gendered distribution of power in the situation of both needing to demonstrate forms of inequality and at the same time account for the differential. The 'natural' as a form of social explanation has largely lost some of its legitimacy in the west, even if neo-liberalism has achieved (and particularly since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991) the feat of establishing the authority of the assumption that the market economy is the 'natural' form of political economy. Yet if relations between human beings other than the economic are in no sense 'natural', feminism has to account for various social differences both between women and men as well as for the meaning of those categories of the masculine and masculinity and the feminine and femininity. It is 'theory', in the most general rather than feminist sense, that has allowed us to consider the ways in which biologically male and female people are 'made'.

But of the theories that most forcefully question the ways in which the human condition is made and reproduced it is Marxism and psychoanalysis that have best retained their relevance through decades of shifts in intellectual paradigms. Marx and Freud were products of nineteenth-century western modernity, their work hugely informed by, and located within, the history of the west and its longstanding cultural traditions. Freud is nothing without Ancient Greek mythology, Marx depends upon an account of history stretching back to the

most technologically simple societies for his vision of the ways in which political economies evolve. Both men have been widely criticized by feminists: Freud for his views on psychosexual development, Marx for what is read as his refusal to consider gender inequality in his account of social inequality.⁶ Yet from the same context – that of feminist theory – there have come important defences and use of the work of both Marx and Freud; many feminist accounts of works of the imagination, as the section edited by Sadie Wearing on *Literary, Visual and Cultural Representation* makes apparent, owe a considerable debt to Freud. That Freudian presence is equally evident in the section on *Sexuality* edited by Clare Hemmings; it is not, in either case, that the various authors are ‘reading’ works of literature or aspects of sexual behaviour through a particular authorial authority but rather through the further exposition of the possibilities of the method, and the intrinsic connections, that Freud explored. Throughout much of the twentieth century both Freud and Marx were interpreted, often with very considerable hostility, as definitive and certain in their conclusions. One of the few (in the view of this writer) positive features of what is described as post-modernism is that it has given a greater status within intellectual life to the ambiguous and the imprecise: in this way the work of both Freud and Marx has regained that element of the speculative that can be detected through a lens which is not distorted by over-determined conclusions about the narratives and circumstances of history.

That space for speculation and ambiguity, a characteristic of the imaginative work of modernism that took some considerable time to manifest itself within formal academic disciplines, was significantly assisted by women and by those men who were not afraid to consider openly the extent of the range and complexity of human emotions and relations. In this context, a context formed by the work of writers such as Virginia Woolf, psychoanalysts such as Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, political figures such as Rosa Luxemburg and artists such as Kathy Kollwitz, the feminine as a collective status was given agency and presence. In the work of the German artist Kathy Kollwitz we see the way in which a perception of the world, inspired by that sense of being an ‘outsider’ that was derived from being a woman in a world dominated by men, brought together both resistance and rejection of aspects of that world together with an assertion of those connections – between violence and sexuality – that inform the section edited by Marsha Henry on *War, Violence and Militarization*. Those forms of violence, as Kollwitz attempted to bring together in her drawings and etchings, were various, from the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht to the ‘everyday’ violence of poverty.⁷

In an early edition of *Feminist Review* an article appeared with the title ‘Wiping the Floor with Theory’ (Kaluzyńska, 1980: 27–54). The essay was a contribution to debates in feminism in the last decades of the twentieth century about questions of feminist politics and feminist theory, many women arguing that the over-theorization of feminism and feminist issues would make feminism a province of the well-educated and privileged. The now considerable presence of feminist scholars in universities throughout much of the world would suggest (while also acknowledging that employment in the academy is a privileged form of work) that some of this prediction has come true. But two arguments also intrude, both of which disturb comfortable assumptions about the meaning of feminism and accusations that suggest its ‘betrayal’. The first is that feminism and feminists were never entirely explicitly hostile to the economic order of industrial capitalism; indeed, for many feminists the crucial engagements were with culture; what Michele Barrett described as the ‘cultural turn’ in sociology was indicative of the way in which there was a considerable consensus in the late twentieth century that what was somewhat euphemistically known as the ‘mixed’ economy was the inevitable form of political economy (Barrett, 1992: 201–19). What disappeared (or became less publicly present) at this time was that tradition in feminism that had linked structural inequality with gender equality.

In an unsigned editorial published in 1982 various writers in *Feminist Review* reflected, with regret, on the erosion of the relationship between feminism and socialism. In a sentence that is as relevant today as it was then they wrote:

The continuing development of multi-national firms answerable to no government is leading to the pauperisation of vast sectors of the globe.⁸

What this comment demonstrates particularly clearly – as well as the ability of writers in *Feminist Review* to define central and ongoing trajectories of social life – is that feminism has never been afraid to engage with issues apart from those of gender difference. The point is crucial for our understanding of feminist theory: it is a theoretical position which casts its remit across diverse contexts of analysis. The analysis may ‘read’ aspects of the social world through the lens of gender but the focus is varied and wide-ranging.

But, to many people (certainly in the global north), the new battleground around gender was that of cultural change, of the ‘empowerment’ of women and the more active integration into the model of actively independent economic individual. Rafts of legislation about gender equality reinforced a sense of progress about the relevance of that model for changes in gender relations. In this, feminists could rightly claim considerable credit for organizing and mobilizing to ensure that these changes took place. However, from this emerged three assumptions, all of them questionable and questioned. First, that the site of feminist intervention should be concentrated rather more in the global south, a view which has attracted considerable criticism and fury from feminists across the planet who see in this a new form of cultural imperialism.⁹ A second assumption was closely aligned to this: the view that feminism in the global north had become redundant; in the face of the brave new world of ‘modern’, ‘emancipated’ women there was no need for further intervention. The third was that feminism, and its principles, had become so structurally engrained in the institutions and institutional practices of the global north that institutions and institutional practice now enshrined feminist principles (Walby, 2011: chs 4 and 5). All these issues have attracted considerable debate. But what remains is the question of the extent to which there are aspects of feminism and feminist theory that are entirely compatible with neo-liberalism (Fraser, 2009: 97–117). Among those points of coincidence are the theoretical validation of the individual and an agenda that legitimates choice. Individual choice is the key ideological and rhetorical formulation for the status of the individual in a neo-liberal market economy just as much as ideas about ‘choice’ have always been, from the Enlightenment onwards, a central part of the vocabulary of feminism.

From this it is possible to visualize feminism, and feminist theory, as part of the flowering of ‘mature’ capitalism, a form of political economy that can allow at least some flowers to bloom. Such a picture, which some might read as evidence of the ultimately positive virtue of the market economy, can, however, also be read as both a detraction and an under-estimation of the potential, both achieved and inherent, of feminist theory. To make one immediate point: the heavy weight of conservatism that sits on all societies will always attempt to minimize what radical visions of the politics of the Left have achieved. The other – but in this case similar – side of this coin is the intense anxiety created about various kinds of possibilities of change in various forms of the gender order: if a government in Saudi Arabia can countenance the idea that women driving cars will undermine an entire social world or if, in the case of some groups in the United States, the view that civil marriages for people of the same biological sex will destroy the very fabric of society can be entertained, it is possible to see how considerable are concerns around the organization of gender.

It is in the light of these – and other – cases where a ‘natural’ order of gender is asserted and legitimated through various forms of quasi-rational argument that the need for feminist theory

is particularly apparent. But it is also in cases such as these that the theoretical acquires its most valuable identity: where it is not an exercise in semantics or an intervention in obscure debate but an exercise that unites passionate and informed rationality with the wish to reach goals other than those which are of immediate value to a particular individual. In this sense, feminist theory (despite attempts to extend the signification of the term ‘feminist’ to contexts of rampant self-enrichment) has at its core a concern with both the identification and the transformation of those ideas which regulate and enforce gender equality. This locates feminist theory as a truly transcendent form of knowledge: one that speaks of individual cases (be they the subjects of development policies or Hollywood films) but does so in the dialectical terms of practice and reflection that unite people, circumstances and understanding.

NOTES

- 1 See the discussion in Hemmings, 2011 and Madhok et al., 2013.
- 2 There are various accounts of the ways in which feminism has become an integral part of individual biographies. See, for example, Segal, 2007; Wilson, 1979 and Rowbotham, 1989.
- 3 See, for example, Midgley, 1992; 2007 and Alonso, 1993; and on more recent protests see Roseneil, 1995; 2000.
- 4 An important account of the various alliances of gender and race is given in Feimster, 2009.
- 5 In that same volume Beauvoir makes a particularly interesting comment about the cultural politics of the west. She writes: ‘The only reality that the bourgeois writer seeks to take into account is the inner life’ (Simons and Timmerman, 2012: 175).
- 6 The attacks – and defences – of Marx and Freud by feminists are legion and there is no single account which adequately represents them. However, important attempts to make the case for the relevance of Freud were Juliet Mitchell’s *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) and the essays by Jacqueline Rose collected in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (1986). Many of the articles published in *Feminist Review* between 1980 and 1990 discussed the question of the relationship between socialism and feminism and important essays were published by (among others) Mary McIntosh, Angela Weir, Anne Phillips and Michelle Barrett. In an editorial of 1982 the editors wrote (of contemporary politics) ‘What can happen to women if our interests are not clearly and explicitly defended in the course of revolutionary struggle?’, a rhetorical question which retains its importance to this day.
- 7 Writing of her 1920 drawing, *The Sick Woman and her Children*, Kollwitz wrote ‘Malnutrition has made this woman very sick. She could be cured with proper care. The food to save her life is available in this country, but she cannot afford the exorbitant prices asked for it. What will become of her children? Every day profiteers are sapping the strength of countless people and preparing them for a premature grave’ (Kearns, 1976: 163).
- 8 Anon., 1982.
- 9 Two of the many important – and now canonical – contributions here are Mohanty, 2003:17–42 and Spivak, 1999.

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Epistemology and Marginality

Sumi Madhok and Mary Evans

For a 'Handbook of Feminist Theory', a section on epistemology is important for several reasons. Forms of epistemological enquiries, their resultant knowledges and the nature of sociality these uphold are central to feminist thinking not only because of their power to define who gets to be a 'subject' and a 'knower' but also which knowledges and phenomena are deemed valid 'objects' of study and consequently worthy of recognition, authority and legitimacy. Epistemological enquiries and processes uphold a particular view of the world, endorse certain forms of gender relations and assume a specific set of hierarchical social and political relations as standard. Therefore, in insisting upon uncovering the identity of the 'knower' and the nature of 'knowing', feminist theory is committed to knowledge as linked both to power and to a certain politics.

In conceiving this section, we focus in particular on the links between epistemology

and marginality. In emphasizing the question of epistemic marginality we encouraged the contributors to conceive their pieces in light of the associations that feminist scholars have drawn between the production of knowledge and continuing social injustices including those resulting from the setting up of epistemic hierarchies and the production of marginal statuses, identities and knowledges and from the societal impact of deep epistemic divides – between those who are designated as 'knowers' and those deemed to be bereft of the capacity to 'know' – on forms of epistemic violence and everyday modes of oppression. Feminist writing about epistemic marginality and exclusion is, of course, not new. In writing about marginality and knowledge-production feminist scholars have reflected on questions of who can be 'Knowers', what is regarded as 'Knowing' and what can be 'Known' (Hawkesworth, 1989), and drawn on their own institutional and epistemic marginality to note at least three things: the

marginal status of feminist epistemology as a legitimate 'field of enquiry'; the marginalization of feminist epistemologists as a group (not least in philosophy departments, where epistemology is a central field of enquiry and curriculum), and the marginal status of feminist and gender studies as knowledge-producing or a 'discipline'. To be sure, while the above can be seen as empirical 'evidence' of the way in which epistemic processes and relations work in the 'academy', feminist scholars use this empirical fact to ask broader questions about marginality that are political, structural and ethical. But why does it matter that the connection between knowledge and marginality – the processes of knowledge-production and legitimation, who produces it, for whom and to what end – be opened up for critical and democratic scrutiny? It matters because feminist epistemology not only concerns itself with critique and producing new forms of knowledge; it is also deeply invested in the transformation of existing inequitable societal relations. And, therefore, it follows that, if theory is both a way of seeing the world and providing a blueprint for political action, then the world it illuminates, acknowledges and seeks to define cannot simply replicate the one that is the already normative, the always already privileged, the powerful and the authoritative. Furthermore, in order for theory to be transformative, including implicitly engaged in the transformation of unequal gender relations, then it must serve up a toolbox for challenging existing exploitative structural logics of the normative order in order to reorient it explicitly towards social justice and an ethical politics.

Overall, the intellectual oeuvre of feminist epistemology includes both modes as well as the processes of knowledge-production, but it is in its continual insistence on 'knowing' the 'knower', on making 'subjectivity' count (Code, 1993 and in this volume) and on unmasking and assessing the epistemic impact of the 'sex of the knower' (Code, 1993; this volume) on the nature of knowing that feminist epistemology has made important

interventions, not least in uncovering the 'politics of epistemic practice' (Fricker, 2007: 2). Consequently, feminist epistemologists have brought under their epistemic scanner processes of knowledge-production such as the 'scientific method' and its accompanying values of objectivity, universality, scientificity and 'value freeness', examined the politics of 'epistemic relations' and 'epistemic conduct' and insisted on discussing 'the political nature of epistemology' (Fricker, 2007; Alcoff, 1993) itself. The essays in this section reflect the concern with both the content and the processes of knowledge-production. The papers also reflect a multidisciplinary interest in epistemological questions among scholars working in feminist and gender studies. However, they neither provide an exhaustive 'coverage' of the field of feminist epistemology nor do they present reviews of all the important interventions; but they do build on the latter and put forward new directions for feminist epistemological work to consider. In this we do not attempt to replicate those important anthologies edited by Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit (1992) and Alcoff and Potter (1993) but, rather, suggest ways of taking forward and developing various debates.

Over the years, feminists have become accustomed to invoking epistemic harms and to reading and writing about 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 2007), 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1988) and 'epistemic scandal' (Chow, 2006). The intellectual potency of this language derives its poignancy and urgency from the structural injustices that order the organization of everyday life. As we write the introduction to this section, aspects of 'epistemic and testimonial injustice' (Fricker, 2007), 'politics of testimony' (Code, this volume), the withholding of 'epistemic agency' and the reinforcing of epistemic marginality, are in operation across the globe in now all-too-familiar revealing and sinister ways, and not least in a courtroom in Sanford, Florida, where the trial of the murdered US black teenager Trayvon Martin has just concluded. We cannot afford

to ignore formations of marginality and the epistemic questions they raise; these have, as feminist scholars have powerfully argued and reminded us, a strong and enduring material basis.

The emergence of the language of epistemic harm, of course, is itself an outcome of a long struggle not only against prevalent epistemological practices and dogmas but also against the reproduction of existing hierarchies and of coloniality within feminist theory itself. The critique of feminism's and of feminist theories' 'internal colonialism' is now strongly registered (Mohanty, 1991; hooks, 2000; Collins, 2000; Lorde, 2001; Rich, 1986; Spivak, 1988; Crenshaw, 1989; Lugones, 2010; Bhavnani, 1993; Chow, 2006), and, as bell hooks notes (2000), the feminist movement is 'the most self-critical' among all movements of social justice, but despite this self-criticism and even self-reflexivity within epistemic practices, it is hardly short of a 'persisting epistemic scandal' that much of feminist epistemology continues to be 'self-referential' and to exhibit a 'strange complacency of its provincial contents' (Chow, 2006: 13), only 'telling feminist stories' (Hemmings, 2005) about particular epistemic histories, cultures and practices. In this respect we acknowledge the limitations of this section – nearly all the essays here focus upon ongoing epistemic debates within feminist epistemology from metropolitan locations and engage epistemic questions and scholarship that are rooted firmly within the 'western canonical' tradition. While this shortcoming of feminist epistemological investigations cannot be understood in isolation from present geopolitical, historical and economic contexts – in fact, knowledge-production, pedagogical, research and institutional priorities and are conditioned by these – an acknowledgement of one's complicity in reproducing and keeping in place intellectual hierarchies, however, can be an important first step. Many essays in this section are deeply troubled by questions of coloniality and critical of 'othering' practices in knowledge-production while also accepting their own structural implication within these. They are

in the best tradition of feminist scholarship – not only reflexive but also concerned with questions of accountability and responsibility. But the difficulty remains nevertheless: how to resolve this 'epistemic scandal'? The reader will, we hope, understand if we refrain from providing simple and ready-to-use solutions here. For we doubt that these exist. One thing we're certain of, though, is that simply resorting to what Sandra Harding referred to in another context as 'add and stir' is not going to do. In other words, to provide spaces for 'other' forms or modes of knowledge-production in a mechanical way, without attempting to show how these either effectively query or even displace the epistemic premises upon which questions of knowledge-production occur, hardly constitutes a 'solution'. In this section, contributors re-examine existing epistemic arguments and recalibrate epistemic questions and materials not by seeking to displace their own privilege (as if they could!) but through acknowledging their epistemic provincialism, their geopolitical and institutional location as also the raced and classed identities of their readings.

By acknowledging that epistemology is political (Alcoff, 1993) and that knowledge is not 'value free' but is always a product of certain forms of political investments, these essays build on what is now a basic building block of feminist epistemological analysis – namely, that gender is not a unitary category of analysis but one that is mediated through the intersection of race, class, sexualities and other forms of marginality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). This epistemic insight, that gender intersects with other forms of marginality, has been heralded as the most 'significant' conceptual contribution of the last twenty years, since it not only uncovered (feminist) epistemology's 'irrepressible connection with social power' (Fricker, 2007: 2) but also dealt a blow to the 'theoretical framework of individualism and compulsory rational idealization' predominantly favoured in epistemic arguments (see also Code in this section). Thinking seriously about marginality has challenged the methodological

individualism as well as the assumptions of 'human homogeneity' that underpin epistemological enquiry and unmasked the processes through which subordinate groups are denied subjectivity and status as 'knowers'. Gayatri Spivak (1988) has written powerfully about the 'epistemic violence' that accompanies the silencing of marginalized groups and Patricia Collins writes evocatively about the denial of subjectivity and the cognitive competence of Black women (Collins, 2000). bell hooks (2000) writes of the need 'to develop feminist theory that emerges from 'individuals who have knowledge of both margin and center' (2000: xvii) and for 'understanding marginality' as a 'position and place of resistance' that is 'crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonised people' (1990: 150–51). Standpoint theorists such as Sandra Harding, for instance, write in favour of a methodology that involves 'starting thought from the lives of marginalised peoples', arguing that this will reveal more of the unexamined assumptions influencing science and generate not only more critical questions but also a 'strong objectivity' that would both recognize the social situatedness of knowledge and also critically evaluate it in order 'to determine which social situations tend to generate the most objective claims'. For standpoint theorists, the key questions that are asked, investigated and indeed addressed by academic disciplines are those which affect the privileged and the powerful. And therefore, by implication, the intellectual investments are those which seek to entrench privilege in place and not displace it. As a corrective, standpoint theorists propose that if we are to challenge privileged views of the world then we will have to start producing knowledge about the world from the standpoint of those who are marginalized. But can the claim to epistemic privilege, which is the claim to speak in an authoritative way by marginalized groups, put forward a distinct and discrete voice of the oppressed, a voice that can challenge the authority of the oppressor? Bar On (1993) cautions that, in fact, it cannot. Although the 'claim to epistemic privilege' may be deployed by the

oppressed as a 'tool', she follows Audre Lorde in arguing that it remains, in the final instance, 'a master's tool ... because when the oppressed feel a need to authorize speech, they are acting on feelings that are a function of their own oppression' (Bar On, 1993: 97). Writing in this volume, Lorraine Code, one of the pioneers of feminist epistemology, encourages us to think of 'multiple marginalities' while also pointing out that not all 'centres' are equally epistemically privileged. Although these 'multiple marginalities', she writes, 'may appear to operate singly in some instances, often they overlap or are interwoven in silencing, ignoring, or discrediting certain voices and points of view'. Readers will recall of course, that Code (1993) had directed one of the early challenges at epistemological thinking when she asked whether the 'sex of the knower' mattered in any epistemic way. For Code, asking this question alone 'gives rise to a range of questions about knowledge and subjectivity ... no longer is the "knower" imaginable as a self contained, infinitely replicable "individual" making universally valid knowledge claims from a "god's eye" position removed from the incidental features and the power and privilege structures of the physical-social world' (Code, this volume: 10). Through her now famous formulation, *S* knows that *P*, Code argued that contemporary epistemologies, particularly their positivist–empiricist varieties, not only insisted on 'value neutrality', 'pure objectivity' and 'perspectiveless' knowing but were also underpinned by the idea of a universal human nature or 'human homogeneity' (Code, this volume). As opposed to the 'hegemonic model of mastery' (Code, this volume) that dominates mainstream Anglo-American epistemology, Code writes that, as most of our knowledge is interactive and dependent on others, 'knowing others' is a much more significant epistemic practice and that 'taking subjectivity into account' would reveal a very different 'geography of the epistemic terrain'. In her contribution, Code, reflects on her seminal essay while casting a theoretically expansive eye over questions of 'centrality

and marginality' within feminist 'cognitive practices' and also those of mainstream epistemic thinking. She writes that subjectivity matters and that 'knowledges are situated', and that acknowledging this fact 'opens up' thinking on the epistemological implications of 'multiple intersecting specificities of subjectivity and positionality' and thereby, into questions about credibility, testimony, marginality and epistemic responsibility

Astrida Neimanis, in this volume, is also concerned with questions of responsibility and accountability. She points out that the 'master model' that informs epistemological thinking is held in place by a conceptual framework organized around the oppositional division between 'nature' and 'culture'. This binary division is not a benign separation but is value-laden, inscribing value to one (i.e., culture) and 'denigrating' the other (i.e., nature). Neimanis writes that this nature/culture distinction is not a reference to discrete entities alone but has come to stand in for a whole host of representational practices and relations whereby associations with 'culture' indicate 'masculinity', 'western' and 'cosmopolitan ways of life', while 'nature' is used to denote associational links with 'femininity', primitiveness and backward, non-progressive world views and life worlds. Neimanis provides a 'schematization' of the 'various feminist positions', outlines a 'detailed evaluation of "new materialist" positions on nature/culture' and argues that if feminist theory is to realize a much more expansive idea of ethical and political accountability then it must bring in as part of its commitment to intersectional analyses not only environmental concerns but also non-human others.

In her contribution Gayle Letherby, following Lorraine Code, argues in favour of foregrounding subjectivity in the research process, or for a 'theorised subjectivity', pointing out that 'political complexities of subjectivities and their inevitable involvement in the research process' render the search for a 'definitive objectivity' ultimately

unsuccessful. Letherby explains 'theorised subjectivity' as one that 'requires the constant, critical interrogation of our personhood – both intellectual and personal – within the production of the knowledge'. As distinct from standpoint theorists, Letherby is not really interested in pursuing 'strong objectivity' or, indeed, in finding more theoretically adequate ways of pursuing objectivity; instead, she argues for starting from the point of making research 'value explicit' rather than 'value free'. Thus, theorized subjectivity starts by recognizing the value (as in worth, rather than moral value) – both positive and negative – of the subjective (Letherby, this volume).

Sabine Grenz's paper also examines the process of knowledge-production. In her contribution she reflects on the flow of power within the research process and, in relationships between the researcher and the researched, in particular. In her research on sexuality and on clients of prostitutes, she writes that although feminist research has demonstrated sensitivity in relation to intersectional workings of power and has paid attention to minimizing power differentials in research relationships, it has not always been successful in negotiating 'reversed power relations' or when the researcher herself is marginalized, for instance, through being subject to racist and sexist behaviour. But, as Grenz argues, a research project should not be seen as sealed from the prevailing power social dynamics but is in fact comprehensively 'integrated' and plugged into the 'surrounding discourses on the topic in question as well as related issues'.

However, there remains at least one prior question to that of making subjectivity matter epistemically and it is this: whose values and experiences are allowed to be brought into the research process? And, relatedly, how do we access these values? Acknowledging the subjectivity of knowers and their different locations means acknowledging that knowers are positioned differently and that their positioning is an outcome of existing social divisions.

Acknowledging differently located knowers and their different subject positionings draws into serious question knowledge accounts that claim not only a universality across time and space but also an unmediated neutrality of knowledge produced from archimedean positions which view the world from 'nowhere' in particular and by extension, therefore, from everywhere and for everyone. The question that begets is: how do we think about difference in ways that are sociologically illuminating, intellectually meaningful and also politically useful? And, furthermore, if identities and oppressions are intersectionally experienced, how do we access and articulate experience? And what sort of epistemic weight do we accord experience? Sharing women's 'lived experience' has been an important feature of feminist consciousness-raising exercises and of building 'sisterhood'. However, questions of whose experience counted soon came to the fore, not least as a result of the emerging debates over intersectionality, race, class and postcoloniality within feminist scholarship. Epistemic claims based on an identitarian reality found themselves under critical scrutiny by several post-structuralist feminist scholars, with Joan Scott's essay titled 'Experience' becoming the most paradigmatic of this critique. In the essay, Scott cautions against using experience as 'foundational', as self-evident and as something authentic always already present and waiting to be tapped into, suggesting instead that we change our object of study from events and 'reality' to discursive systems that shape experience. For example, alongside studying the experience of American slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she writes, we should study the discursive systems of racism and capitalism that produced slavery as an effect. Scott concludes by calling for the study of the processes of subject creation, not just experience itself, and writes, "it is not individuals who have experiences, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (Scott, 1992: 25–6). In her contribution to this section, Sonia Kruks revisits Scott's critique and

reassesses the epistemological role of experience through a phenomenological lens. According to Kruks, the 'lived body' is profoundly imbricated in the 'ethical and political project of feminism' and, in fact, it would be 'hard to imagine feminist political practices in which embodied orientations and affective experience play little part'. However, Kruks cautions against regarding experience as 'natural' or immediate and argues for experience to be explored and theorized through phenomenological inquiry. According to Kruks, phenomenology offers access to significant registers of women's lives and to embodied and affective ways of knowing, judging, and acting that cannot be grasped by discourse analysis, or by other objectivizing approaches to experience. She points to the possibilities for building bridges of solidarity that a recognition of the inter-subjective quality of lived bodies offer, but is equally careful to point out that in a complex and hierarchically organized world, phenomenology also enables an understanding of the limits of empathy and the dangers of over-identification with and objectification of the 'other' that can result from not acknowledging one's own location, 'distance' and privilege.

While problematizing experience is an important aspect of the politics of subjectivity and identity, we are still frequently confronted with the question 'what do women want today?' From the popular media to key psychoanalytic texts, this question occupies our popular and political imaginations. Campbell argues that this question is, in fact, a 'key question for third wave feminisms' and for feminist epistemologies. Engaging with the question of what 'we want today', writes Campbell, means not only asking how we come to 'know ourselves' but also how we know 'our others'. 'Third Wave Epistemologies', writes Campbell, is not meant to indicate a 'fixed referent' or a 'framework' or a 'taxonomy'; it is, rather, a 'collective' project which seeks to examine the intersection between the politics of subjectivity and the politics of knowledge. In her contribution she sets out elements of what she calls a

‘post-Lacanian feminist epistemology’, which, she argues, will help us negotiate the relationship between ‘feminist knowing subjects’, feminist epistemic practices and feminist politics. She writes: ‘A feminist psychoanalytic approach can help to understand the operation of ...social fictions of femininity and the pleasures and pains of these ‘feminine’ desires. However, it also reveals that the operation of feminist knowledges can intervene in these discourses, and how these knowledges can symbolize more liberating forms of what women might want. This symbolization of new social subjects and relations represents both the most radical promise and the most difficult task for third wave feminist epistemologies in these times of neoliberal politics and consumer cultures’

But what if the answer to the question ‘what do women want today?’ is, in effect, that what they really want is religion? How will feminist epistemology respond to such an answer? Not very well, as it happens. Both Sían Hawthorne and Mary Evans examine the fraught history of feminist responses to this answer. Sían Hawthorne writes that, when it comes to religious subjectivities, feminist sensitivity to intersectionally positioned subjects somehow seems to get temporarily abandoned. Feminist scholars are deeply invested in and thereby unable to extricate themselves from the well-entrenched narrative that posits an unquestioned ‘inimical relationship’ between religion and gender oppression; in fact, religion, Hawthorne points out, is never seen in an emancipatory frame, and only always as oppressive – the familiar argument being that the more religious observant societies are, the more observably gender oppressive they are likely to be. The important point that Hawthorne makes is this: religion is not only epistemological but also an ontological marker/maker of difference and, therefore, epistemic judgements on religious subjectivities are not simply epistemological but also carry a civilizational weight. As a consequence, “‘religion’ has become an identity marker as well as an intellectual category’

and, therefore, ‘our focus cannot merely be to be concerned with epistemological reflection; it must also necessarily be directed towards the ontological dimensions of category formation ...’. In her contribution, Mary Evans notes that while debates over social progress measured in the successful mobilizations of secular world views and the consequent rolling back of religious ones have more often than not been played out on the terrain of gender, the ‘negative’ representation of religious socialities within secular, humanist intellectual projects is not without resonances in feminist theory too. In fact, as Saba Mahmood has argued (2005), the normative bias in favour of the secular liberal subject has resulted in the denial of subjecthood to religious women. The epistemic divide between religion and feminist subjectivity, however, writes Evans, has more often than not been overplayed and there are, at least epistemologically speaking, areas of both ‘similarity’ as well as difference between the epistemic structures of both religion and feminism. For both, ‘the transcendence of the limits of the human person’ is an important goal – all world religions ‘encourage the possibility that each human being is malleable into a form’, and feminism, too, demands a future different than one determined by one’s biology. Secondly, Evans points out that both religious and feminist epistemologies begin their enquiry into the world from the starting point of social relations, although, of course, they diverge quite radically both in their analysis of these and also in relation to prescribed paths and goals of emancipation. Feminist theorists, writes Evans, should note that religious discourse is neither stable nor coherent and therefore offers many possibilities for engagement – an engagement that feminists must urgently take up if they are not only to avoid misdescriptions of the relationship between the secular and the modern but also to both ‘recognize’ and actively engage with the growing ‘legitimacy’ that religious discourse is acquiring across the globe.

CONCLUSION

In this section our purpose has been to explore various issues associated with the concept of a 'feminist' epistemology. What emerges from the various papers is both agreement and dissent: agreement that the question of gender and gender relations has to become an issue for the discussion of epistemology, not least because feminist theory has so convincingly demonstrated the presence of gendered relations of power within human interaction. This does not mean, as might once have been understood, that epistemological transformation can be achieved through the challenge to male power, but that the dialectic of human gender relations has to become part of any epistemology. The papers here all suggest ways of considering this impact, not least of which is a critical discussion of the concept of a specific 'feminist' epistemology, one which is somehow divorced from fixed assumptions about the relations of gender. We propose that taking forward the importance of gendered epistemologies is crucial to the development of less partial understandings of human existence.

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Feminist Epistemology and the Politics of Knowledge: Questions of Marginality

Lorraine Code

Epistemology was a late-comer to feminist analysis and critique. Although various explanations for its tardiness might be advanced, central among them must surely be the intransigence of a conviction that, while ethics and politics might well be shaped by gender relations and other human 'differences', knowledge worthy of the (honorific) title must transcend all such specificities. Thus, although feminist ethical and political theory were rapidly growing areas of inquiry during the 1960s and 1970s, only in the 1980s was a set of questions and proposals articulated to address the possibility that there could, after all, be so seemingly oxymoronic an area of inquiry as feminist epistemology. In twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy there were good reasons for such resistance. Epistemologists sought to establish universal, necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of knowledge in general: knowledge that could serve as a model at which knowledge-seeking as such should aim – that could yield empirical certainty, and

silence the sceptic. Any hint of relativism such as is implicit in the suggestion that sex – a non-intellectual, non-rational, individual characteristic of putative knowers – could play a constitutive part in the production of knowledge threatened to undermine the founding principles of 'the epistemological project'. It unsettled taken-for-granted beliefs about human sameness across putatively incidental and inconsequential bodily differences, and thus appeared to contest the very possibility of achieving knowledge worthy of the name. It is no surprise, therefore, that few epistemologists, feminists or other, would have given an affirmative answer to my 1981 question: 'Is the sex of the knower epistemologically significant?' (Code, 1981). Indeed, to some interlocutors the implications of responding in the affirmative seemed, in those early days, to suggest that if indeed the sex of the knower were declared epistemologically significant, then it would be to the detriment of women's aspirations to knowledgeability. It would consolidate the time-worn assumption that women could not

know in the well-established, descriptive and normative, sense of the word.

Yet whether such a confirmation would amount to reaffirming women's epistemic marginality is a more subtle issue. So long as the view prevails that women cannot know according to the highest criteria for establishing knowledge, it seems that they are in fact not just marginalized but excluded, confined somewhere beyond the limits of both marginality and centrality. This way of putting the point may exceed the parameters of an analysis designated specifically to address marginality, but I think it does not stretch the purpose of the discussion to observe that in at least one sense of the word, in one central exclusionary preserve – namely, universities and other institutions of higher education – when women are refused admission then the implication seems to be that they cannot know, that they are incapable of, not marginalized within, the kinds of knowledge disseminated there. So even moving to the fringes in the form of women's colleges, colleges of 'home economics', nursing schools is, in the institutions of knowledge-production and validation, already a move to the margins – if indeed only there. When women are restricted to studying/learning in such institutions, which claim less prestige than universities, they clearly are marginalized, both institutionally and epistemologically (cf. Rossiter, 1982: esp. 65–70, 240).

Nonetheless, with respect to the content and methodology of the empirical knowledge that functions as exemplary for early-to-mid-twentieth-century epistemologists, both descriptively and normatively, the contention that women are marginalized is apt in the sense – and this is no small point – that the subject *S*, in the standard *S*-knows-that-*p* formula in which propositional knowledge claims are ordinarily stated, is presumptively male to the extent that there is no need even to mention his maleness. That he is white and of the privileged classes is also an uncontested given. Thus women enter the philosophical scene as would-be knowers

usually in token substitutions of female for male pronouns: instead of 'Sam knows that the book is green' we read 'Sally knows that the book is green'. Ordinarily, such knowledge claims are made about perceptual 'simples': they refer to medium-sized physical objects that are presumptively part of everyday life in the materially replete societies tacitly taken for granted as the backdrop for references to such knowing. Normally, too, the sex of the knower would in such circumstances be regarded as being of no greater significance than the size of her or his feet, while her or his race, ethnicity, sexuality, age would figure not at all in the analysis. In short, the formal structure of empiricist/post-positivist twentieth-century Anglo-American epistemology prior to the feminist challenges of the 1980s was such as to reinforce settled presumptions of human homogeneity.

The idea that the *sex* of the knower could be epistemologically significant gives rise to a range of questions about knowledge and subjectivity which were just as startling at first posing, but have come to be integral to subsequent feminist inquiry. No longer is 'the knower' imaginable as a self-contained, infinitely replicable 'individual' making universally valid knowledge claims from a 'god's eye' position removed from the incidental features and the power and privilege structures of the physical–social world. Once inquiry shifts to focus (following Haraway, 1988) on 'situated knowledges', it is no longer feasible to assume before the fact which aspects of situatedness will be significant for the production, evaluation and circulation of knowledge. Inquiry opens out into analyses of multiple intersecting specificities of subjectivity and positionality in their social, political and thence epistemological implications for the production of knowledge and knowers; and into questions about credibility, marginality, epistemic responsibility and the politics of testimony, none of which would have been meaningful in the discourse of orthodox epistemology. My analysis in this essay pivots on these questions.

BEGINNINGS

In the mid-1980s Sandra Harding, in *The Science Question in Feminism* (Harding, 1986), began to map the developing theoretical divisions in feminist epistemological inquiry, first distinguishing between feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory. Empiricists, on this analysis, sought to develop a method of evidence-gathering that would be cleansed of androcentrism, paying attention to evidence neglected or discounted as worthy of notice in received theories of knowledge. The idea was that an empiricism committed to objective evidence-gathering and justification, yet informed by feminist ideology, could produce more adequate knowledge than classical empiricism, which is ignorant of its complicity in sustaining a ubiquitous sex/gender system. An enhanced sensitivity to such issues enables feminists to enlist empiricist tools to expose the sexism, racism and other 'isms' that (often silently) inform knowing. Such exposures often depend on examining the so-called 'context of discovery', where aspects of a situation, inquiry or experiment are singled out for investigation, yet where sex/gender specific features may be ignored or deemed irrelevant from the get-go, so to speak. A well-known example from the 1990s is the tardy recognition in cardiac medicine that symptoms signalling heart disease in women commonly failed to show up in standard tests developed from testing male patients alone. Only in consequence of persistent feminist lobbying were testing practices revised to address specifically female manifestations of the disease (Harding, 1984). Investigating assumptions that structure and pervade processes of experimental design – contexts of discovery – often expose limitations whose effects are analogously gender-specific. The 'strong objectivity' feminist empiricists and standpoint theorists demand, if differently, opens the way to generating more inclusive, and hence more just, inquiry than older conceptions of objectivity had allowed (cf. Harding, 1993).

Hence, for example, in Helen Longino's social empiricism (1993), it is communities,

not individuals, who are the knowers: their background assumptions shape knowledge as process and product. In genetic research, Longino shows how assumption-(value-) driven differences in knowledge-production contest the possibility of value-neutrality. Yet she endorses community respect for evidence and accountable, collaborative cognitive agency. Similarly, Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1990) develops from (Quinean) 'naturalised epistemology' a neo-empiricism for which again communities, not individuals, are the primary knowers; and knowers come to evidence through webs of belief, open to communal endorsement and critique. Because those who are socially marginalized cannot realize their emancipatory goals without understanding the intractable aspects and the malleable, contestable features of the world, they have to achieve a fit between knowledge and 'reality', even when 'reality' consists in such social artefacts as racism, power, oppression or pay equity. Because an empiricism alert to gender-specificity (and, latterly, a range of other specificities) is well equipped to achieve just such knowledge, politically informed inquiry, according to Harding, yields a better empiricism than the received view allows, based in what she has called 'strong objectivity'.

Standpoint theorists, by contrast, were turning their attention to the historical-material positioning of women's practices and experiences. For such theorists as Nancy Hartsock (1983) and Hilary Rose (1983), empiricists do not have at their disposal the conceptual tools required to address the historical-material diversity from which people produce knowledge. Standard-setting knowledge in western societies derives from the experiences of white, middle-class, educated men, with women (like the marxian proletariat) occupying underclass epistemic positions. As capitalism 'naturalizes' the subordination of the proletariat, patriarchy 'naturalizes' the subordination of women; and as examining material-social realities from the standpoint of the proletariat denaturalizes these

assumptions, so starting from women's lives denaturalizes the patriarchal order. A feminist standpoint is a hard-won product of consciousness-raising and social-political engagement in which the knowledge that enables the oppressed to survive under oppression becomes a resource for social transformation.

While these two positions seemed to capture the principal differences between feminist approaches to epistemology in the late 1980s, neither empiricist nor standpoint feminism succeeded in resolving all of the issues. Empiricists were unable fully to address the power-saturated circumstances of diversely located knowers or to pose interpretive questions about how evidence is discursively constituted and whose evidence it suppresses in the process. Nor, in the absence of a unified feminism, could standpoint theorists avoid obliterating differences. The theory's 'locatedness' offered a version of social reality as specific and hence as limited as any other, albeit distinguished by its awareness of that specificity. But empiricism's commitment to revealing the concealed effects of gender-specificity in knowledge-production cannot be gainsaid; nor can standpoint theory's production of faithful, critical, analyses of women's experiences, with its focus on how hegemonic values legitimate oppression. Thus, in the years since empiricism and standpoint theory seemed to cover the territory, with postmodernism addressing anti-epistemological challenges to both, feminists have found these alternatives neither mutually exclusive, nor able, separately or together, to explain the sexual politics of knowledge-production and circulation. Indeed, perhaps a more accurate reading of the positioning of all three approaches – feminist empiricism, standpoint theory and postmodernism – would be to emphasize the postmodern implications of all three as they are manifested, for example, in a sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit rejection of the very possibility of dislocated (=un-situated) knowledge, epistemic individualism, perspective-less a-political knowing and top-down positivistic-empiricist

methods of inquiry. Among its commendable aspects are an acknowledgement of the productive, innovatively postmodern implications of feminist inquiry that distances itself from the 'essentialisms' that characterize modernity, with its convictions about the singularity of method, the replicability of knowers, the affect-free nature of knowledge-production and the universality of knowledge worthy of the name.

I have noted that a commitment to 'strong objectivity' seems to inform both feminist empiricism and standpoint theory, albeit differently. Indeed, cross-fertilizations across disciplines and methods have often proven more productive than adherence to any methodological orthodoxy. Nor do all feminists cognizant of the differences that difference makes hope to achieve a unified standpoint, given that it is impossible to aggregate such differences either in their empirical detail or their effects, and imperialistic to attempt to do so. Hence, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) advocated an 'outsider-within' black feminist standpoint: an Afro-centered epistemology which she adduces as exemplary of how knowledge produced in a subordinated and marginalized group can foster resistance to hegemonic norms while producing knowledge good of its kind; and Maria Lugones, writing from within a different difference from an uncontested white-affluent norm advocates 'world travelling and loving perception' (1987) as a practice that can afford a way of escaping too-particular, self-contained and, indeed, self-satisfied locations. Donna Haraway (1991) recasts both the subject and the object of knowledge as radically located and unpredictable, conceiving of knowledge-construction as an ongoing process of learning to see, often from positions discredited or marginalized in dominant accounts of knowledge and reality. Pertinent here is Evelyn Fox Keller's (1983) biography of Nobel laureate geneticist Barbara McClintock, where she shows a hitherto marginalized scientist attuned to unexpected differences and anomalies in her objects of study, dwelling with those differences to initiate a major

theoretical breakthrough. Lorraine Code (1991; 1995) examines how power and privilege yield asymmetrically gendered standards of authority in medical knowledge, in the experiences of welfare recipients, in testimonial credibility and in women's responses to sexist and racist challenges. Her ecological model of knowledge and subjectivity (2006) challenges the hegemony of the model of 'mastery' that governs mainstream Anglo-American epistemology. Taking women's cognitive experiences seriously enables feminists, in these diverse ways, to eschew the individualism and universalism of mainstream theory and to examine specifically located knowing, where theory and practice are reciprocally constitutive and knowers are diversely positioned and active within them.

Conceptions of 'margin' and 'centre' have functioned variously in feminist epistemology, from critical analyses of the situations of putative knowers at the centre or at the margins of the social order to the marginalization of women as philosophers and to the marginalization of feminist epistemology within epistemology as such, to name only the most salient variations. These factors may operate separately or in concert, but either way they work to reinforce a cluster of hierarchical divisions and evaluations whose effects are to sustain patriarchal structures of centre and margin within philosophical practices that mirror those within the larger society in the affluent western-northern world.

In a landmark analysis of the politics of marginality in feminist theories of knowledge, Bat-Ami Bar On engages critically with the contention that living on the social-political margins affords epistemic privilege in the sense that 'subjects located at the social margins have an epistemic advantage over those located at the social center' (1993: 85). The central idea, derived from Marxist theory and endorsed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by such socialist feminists as Nancy Hartsock (1983) and Ann Ferguson (1979), is that people who live at a distance from the social-epistemological centre are epistemically

privileged in the sense that, simply in order to survive, they must know the structures and implications of lives at the centre more accurately than those at the situated at the centre have to know their (=marginalized) lives. Thus, for example, workers have to know how to navigate and negotiate the structures and strictures of the social-political order in which they occupy the underclass positions far better and in greater detail than those at the centre need to know their (=the workers') lives. For those at the centre the workers are mere place-holders, cogs in the wheel: the detail of their situations beyond their place in keeping the machinery, both literal and metaphorical, operating smoothly is of no consequence. Yet standpoint epistemologists, as they came to be called, maintained that starting epistemic inquiry from the position of the workers' lives – and subsequently for feminist epistemologists speaking from within patriarchy, starting epistemic inquiry from the standpoint of women's lives – made it possible to see, understand and ultimately unsettle the structures of centre and margin that had been hitherto invisible in 'one-size-fits-all' epistemological inquiry. Hence Hartsock, for example, maintains: '(L)ike the lives of the proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy ... which can ground a powerful critique of the phallogocratic institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy' (1983: 284). While such claims have not been universally accepted by feminist theorists, they have generated productive debates in the development of a feminist politics of knowledge. Following Marx, Bar On notes the basic idea is that although all knowledge is perspectival, some perspectives 'are more revealing than others ... [especially] the perspectives of [those who] ... are socially marginalized in their relations to dominant groups' (1993: 83). The claim, then, would be that a feminist standpoint gives access to epistemic privilege by virtue of removing the blinkers that inhibit a clear view of the

unnaturalness of the entrenched patriarchal order in knowledge, as elsewhere in gendered social–political–epistemological power–knowledge structures.

These claims are both provocative and contentious in bringing feminist issues into the hitherto putatively neutral domain of epistemology. Noteworthy and in some ways definitive for thinking, now, about standpoint is Alison Wylie's (2003) analysis of 'why standpoint matters', especially in social science. Numerous questions arise, many of which bear on issues of epistemic marginality. Among the most probing is the question of whether standpoint really is a theory, or more properly a methodology. Wylie writes: '[T]o do social science as a standpoint feminist is to approach inquiry from the perspective of insiders rather than impose upon them the external categories of professional social science, a managing bureaucracy, ruling elites' (2003: 27). Here there is no place, and indeed no residual longing, for any idea(l) of a view from nowhere, a god's eye view, as the vantage point from which accurate, neutral vision and hence the best objectivity possible can be achieved, nor can 'the knower' any longer be conceived as a faceless, disembodied place-holder in old and now-tired 'S knows that *p*' formulaic knowledge claims. Taking subjectivity into account becomes a worthy and indeed an urgent practice for feminist epistemologists and moral–political theorists (see Code, 1995).

Noteworthy and initially promising in the 1980s, among attempts to contest the putative neutrality yet tacit masculinity of established conceptions of knowledge worthy of the name, and the consequent invisibility/erasure of female subjectivity and women's experiences, was Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986). In my discussion of the text (Code, 1991) I note its appearance on the epistemological scene as a challenge to established convictions that it is logically possible for every human mind, at least in principle, 'to attain knowledge defined as the ideal product of closely specified reasoning processes'. Yet I also observe that such logical

possibilities 'are of little relevance when practical–political processes ... clearly structure the situations under analysis' (1991: 251). *Women's Ways of Knowing* initially garnered some feminist approval for its careful charting and analyses of women's experiential reports as these had routinely been silenced, marginalized in and indeed excluded from the epistemologies of the mainstream. Ironically, however, the promise of the analysis was truncated in ways that work inadvertently to reproduce women's marginal status even as they endeavour to contest and challenge it. As I have observed, the book 'risks making of experience a tyranny equivalent to the tyranny of the universal, theoretical, and impersonal expertise it seeks to displace' largely in the ways the authors assume that 'autobiographical evidence can be read "straight", unequivocally, without subtexts, hidden agendas, or gaps in the narrative line' (1991: 256). The point is not that women's experiential knowledge claims should not be accorded a fair hearing after all: the purpose of the project was to open spaces for just such a hearing. But overarching assumption of experiential validity refuses to bring those experiences into the kinds of conversation, the debates among putative 'equals', into which experiential claims among colleagues and other interlocutors would ordinarily enter. The idea that no one's experience can be called 'wrong' closes the door on potentially productive discussion: indeed, on the interpretations and debates feminist consciousness-raising practices sought to foster. Such closure counts among the practices a viable standpoint approach aims, I believe, to avoid.

The question remains open, then, as to whether or how speaking and knowing from the social–epistemic margins truly counts as a situation from which epistemic privilege can be claimed. As Bar On rightly notes, 'Both the assumption of a single center from which the epistemically privileged, socially marginalized subjects are distanced and the grounding of their epistemic privilege in their identity and practices are problematic'

(1993: 91). Part of the problem is the presumably guilt-infused view on the part of at least some of ‘the privileged’ that, once those from the margins speak, because they have hitherto been silenced, there is a tacit obligation on the part of the erstwhile silencers to take them at their word, to refrain from critique or challenge. Yet Elizabeth Spelman aptly reminds us that: ‘... white women marginalize women of color as much by the assumption that as women of color they must be right as by the assumption that they must be wrong’ (1988: 182). An analogous assumption restricts the promise of practices that attest to a conviction that ‘granting’ the subaltern a place to speak simultaneously confers a presumption of truth upon her/his every utterance. On such a view she or he remains excluded, if now differently, from full participation in the deliberative spaces where knowledge is made, remade, contested, established, put into circulation.

As I have noted, marginality has many aspects. At the very least, it includes being left out as known or knowable and being left out, side-lined, as a putative knower; being diminished or damaged by/in bodies of knowledge; being denied credibility in testimonial and other epistemic processes and practices; being discredited within a certain hegemonic formula or set of directives for what counts as *bona fide* knowledge. Although these aspects may appear to operate singly in some instances, often they overlap or are interwoven in silencing, ignoring or discrediting certain voices and points of view. In the next section of this essay I endeavour to elaborate these modalities of marginality singly and in some of their intersections.

MULTIPLE MARGINALITIES

Particularly insightful is Rae Langton’s analysis of how ‘when it comes to knowledge’, as she puts it, women get left out, or women get hurt (2000: 129). These are large claims, yet Langton amply illustrates their pervasiveness

in the history of western philosophy, from the writings of Mary Astell in the eighteenth century through to such twentieth-century philosophers and theorists as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Marilyn Frye. Being left out in this respect involves more than a simple (or not so simple) failure to take note of women’s contributions to the philosophical canon: it also, and frequently, involves figuring women as unknowable, mysterious, enigmatic and, hence, located ‘beyond the pale’ of who or what needs to be, or is worthy of being, known, addressed, taken into account. Notable is Beauvoir’s caustic reference in *The Second Sex* to the ‘myth’ of feminine ‘mystery’, whose pervasiveness enables a man who ‘does not “understand” a woman ... instead of admitting his ignorance’ to recognize ‘a mystery exterior to himself’, thus allowing him ‘an excuse that flatters his laziness and vanity at the same time’, offering what, for many men, is ‘a more attractive experience than an authentic relation with a human being’ (2009: 268–9). Variations on such exclusions and ignorings are well documented. Throughout the so-called ‘second wave’, from Genevieve Lloyd’s detailed mappings in *The Man of Reason* (1993) of how ideals of reason and of masculinity have mirrored one another in their historical evolution and consistently defined themselves by exclusion of ‘the feminine’, feminist philosophers have, variously, chronicled women’s absence/exclusion from or denigration within the panoply of reason, rationality and knowledgability. Peculiarly significant, in this regard, has been women’s lack of knowledge of their ‘own lives and experiences as women’ (Langton, 2000: 131). From Betty Friedan’s (1963) reference to ‘the problem that has no name’ to Nancy Tuana’s (2006) analysis of the significance of epistemologies of ignorance for the women’s health movement, startling lacunae have been exposed in women’s knowledge about their lives, bodies, selves and subjectivities: lacunae famously addressed in 1973 in the politically remarkable publication by the Boston Women’s Health Collective of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*

(*OBOS*), since republished numerous times, with 'A New Edition for a New Era' appearing in 2005 (see Davis 2007).

According to Tuana, a major task facing women's health activists is still that of showing how women's bodies were ignored and/or their health issues misrepresented, partly in consequence of sedimented androcentric or sexist beliefs about female sexuality, reproductive health issues and/or responsibility for contraception, many of which persist even after *OBOS*. When women are constructed as 'objects of knowledge not as authorized knowers' (2006: 9) the situation is not significantly better, epistemologically, than it is in the passage from *The Second Sex* Langton cites. Here issues of women being left out and women being hurt overlap and reinforce one another: either way, a mode of marginalization is being enacted. Ignorance, as Tuana reminds us, is often constructed, maintained and disseminated. It is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing and uncertainty. But Langton's overarching point also needs to be underscored: 'Women may fail to be counted as knowers ... because of a spurious universality ascribed to a merely partial story of the world as told by men ...' (2000: 132–3). These sins of omission, as Langton calls them, translate or evolve readily into sins of commission, especially when it becomes apparent that traditional 'norms of knowledge' that leave women out can also have the effect of objectifying women simply by assuming that whatever needs to be known about them can be known without their participation or input, or can be derived without remainder from knowledge about or made by men. In this regard, Langton draws the reader's attention to circumstances in which the world can be said to 'arrange itself' to fit what the powerful believe – as, for example, in situations where 'believing women to be subordinate can make women subordinate: thinking so can make it so, when it is backed up by power' (2000: 139). Beauvoir's phenomenological analysis of what we might call the 'making' of woman into/as the second sex is

an elaborated case in point: 'She is determined and differentiated in relation to man ... she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other' (2009: 6). And, in a similar vein, Langton aptly cites Marilyn Frye's powerful image of 'the arrogant eye', where, as she puts it:

the arrogant perceiver ... coerces the objects of his perception into satisfying the conditions his perception imposes. ... How one sees another and how one expects the other to perceive are in tight interdependence, and how one expects the other to behave is a large factor in determining how the other does behave. (Frye, 1983: 67)

Such patterns of conformity to the expectations of the powerful, even when these are not strictly codified or enforced, are apparent throughout the social structures of patriarchal, white, class-based and other power–privilege differentiated societies and social groups, from the family to the wider society. Women, blacks, other non-white persons, children, slaves and servants are enjoined to 'know their place' and to occupy that place as befits one variously subject to the expectations and limitations that infuse the social–political imaginary of a given society or segment thereof. Failing to do so routinely invites censure, or worse. Yet when their place is defined and monitored by others, knowing their place can hurt and diminish women and Others (from the white male norm), truncating their potential for achieving well-realized lives.

The imperative to 'know one's place' operates unevenly and with multiple degrees of hurting and discrediting across western/northern societies. So far, and presumptively, I have referred to 'women' generically in ways that fail to capture the complexity and indeed the epistemic injustice involved in adducing such a unified category. It may indeed be true that women 'as such' are hurt, diminished, left out in the epistemologies of the Anglo-American mainstream and in the knowledge produced under their aegis, but the identity 'woman' is never uninflected: poor women, black women,

old women, Hispanic women, uneducated women, highly educated women, indigenous women, eminent women, to name just the smallest sampling, are hurt and left out differently, required to 'know their place' differently across all known social orders. These so-called 'identities' rarely come singly: they intersect and function in complex intersectional ways across every society however large or small, where the term 'intersectionality' derives from a metaphor coined in the late 1980s by US critical legal theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to explain how race oppression and gender oppression interact in black women's lives (see Crenshaw, 1991). More recently, theorists have expanded and elaborated the term to capture a greater range of the multiple aspects of 'identity' that may operate in diverse social-political-epistemological situations (see, for example, Bailey, 2010; Garry, 2012).

Some or all of these differences will undoubtedly be salient in all of the many situations where women are hurt, discredited, left out, ignored in knowledge and in their knowing practices. Here I will start with one particularly urgent example which brings together questions about knowing, testimony and epistemic agency that cut generically across the category 'woman' and specifically across diverse, intersecting groups of women. The issue is the testimony of female rape victims, which has notoriously and routinely been discounted and discredited universally, but is more viciously and egregiously discounted across certain targeted groups of women, who are exceptionally vulnerable to incredulity, indeed of the crassest kind. All of these practices reflect profoundly sexist assumptions: that rape happens only to sexually 'pure' or 'virtuous' women or that it matters only when it happens to them; that women are likely to lie about having been raped; that women who are raped 'have asked for it'. Demeaning references to a woman's appearance, attire, status, location, sexual history or relationship to the alleged rapist may be cited as evidence of consent, of 'asking for it'. Moreover, in the USA black

women's 'unrapeability' was written into law in a racial ideology that defined them as naturally lascivious and promiscuous; and portrayals of women in pornographic and mainstream media as enjoying, and therefore consenting to, forceful, violent sex reinforces these stereotypical assumptions and tells against according women's testimony the credibility it otherwise merits. Ann Cahill rightly observes: 'rape must be understood fundamentally ... as an affront to the embodied subject ... a sexually specific act that destroys (if only temporarily) the intersubjective, embodied agency and therefore personhood of a woman' (2001: 13). In my view, such a victim's *epistemic* subjectivity and agency is likewise fundamentally destroyed: an extreme form of marginalization in its erasure of a woman's capacity to know her 'own' experiences. (Germane is Wittgenstein's remark: 'If I were contradicted on all sides and told that this person's name is not what I had always known it was (and I use 'know' here intentionally), then in that case the foundation of all judging would be taken away from me' (1969: §614).)

Patterns of incredulity are widespread across social-epistemological exchanges and events: they are especially intransigent blocks to credibility and to claiming epistemic status in the rhetorical spaces of any society. In their intransigence they install and enforce marginal status, and are exceptionally difficult to dislodge. Thus, for example, in *Ecological Thinking* (Code, 2006) I read Rachel Carson's epistemological-scientific practice to show how she, as a knower who did not fit easily within the received scientific orthodoxy of her day, was and continues to be marginalized, discredited within 'normal science' for aspects of her life and work that were open to criticism as variously 'irregular'. That she had no PhD and no accredited academic position clearly counted against her, as did her practice of drawing just as respectfully on testimonial reports from lay people about ecological damage as she drew on reports of laboratory findings. Admittedly, Carson lived and worked at a time and in an epistemic

climate where (prior to the advent of social epistemology) testimony as such counted as a lowly and unreliable source of knowledge by contrast with the putatively greater certainty-achieving perception and memory favoured in empiricist orthodoxy. Many scholars now applaud the place she accords to lay testimony in documenting damaging practices. In her time, Carson was rarely discredited because she was a woman, although subsequent scholars have shown that such forms of denigration hovered just beneath the surface in evaluations of her life and work (Lytle, 2007; Sideris and Moore, 2008; Oreskes and Conway, 2010; Code, 2012a). But the larger point is to confirm what can reasonably be called the methodological tyranny of a scientific orthodoxy that discounts valuable and indeed life-enhancing knowledge claims that have not been derived in purified laboratory conditions. Biologist Karen Messing, whose work I also discuss in *Ecological Thinking*, documents a politics of knowledge and exclusion wherein women's experiential reports of workplace illness, suffering and long-term damage are routinely discounted as anecdotally unreliable by contrast with statistical analyses in which, because of their rarity and idiosyncrasy, the symptoms such women report often fail to register (Messing, 1998). Too briefly summarized, these examples tell of kinds of knowing that are readily sidelined, marginalized in analyses where they simply (or not so simply) fail to fit within an uncontested set of assumptions about how valid knowledge will look. It is by no means fanciful to suppose that some of Messing's subjects were not taken seriously because they were women: many were poor, uneducated, working in jobs that carried little prestige or status and thus, in view of the intellectual climate of the time and place, minimal presumptions of testimonial credibility.

THE POLITICS OF TESTIMONY

Testimony as such, on which both Carson and Messing rely, occupies an unstable and

uneven place in the epistemologies of the mainstream well beyond its egregious discrediting in the politics of rape. That unevenness is exacerbated in places and circumstances where the putative 'knower' can, for a range of personal and situational reasons, be discounted because of who he or she is. Emblematic in this regard is black feminist legal theorist Patricia Williams's response to the incredulity she encountered in response to her attempt to publish an account of a blatantly racist incident at a Benetton's shop in New York City: 'I could not but wonder ... what it would take to make my experience verifiable. The testimony of an independent white bystander? ... The blind application of principles of neutrality ... acted either to make me look crazy or to make the reader participate in old habits of cultural bias' (1991: 47, 48). There can, I suggest, be no contest to the claim that being treated as crazy or viewed through lenses tainted with persistent cultural bias count as forms of blatant social-epistemic marginalization. The incident is continuous with a well-known history of testimonial marginalization in which, in the western world, only men counted as bona fide testifiers and at least in the southern USA blacks could not testify at all, in the sense that their testimony could not claim acknowledgement as evidence. I mention these facts not to ignore or discount the significance of 'taking subjectivity into account' in evaluating testimonial evidence, but to show how recognitions of subjectivity can be misused, can be turned into damaging '*ad feminam*' dismissals and discrediting of a woman's testimony on the basis of her female identity alone. Analogous claims of a black or Hispanic, unemployed or too-old person's evidence (to name just a few of the options) can readily be cited and invoked to justify or excuse acts of epistemic marginalization.

Such practices have acquired a new vocabulary and claimed new rhetorical spaces in consequence of Miranda Fricker's innovative work in introducing into circulation the discourse of epistemic injustice

(Fricker, 2007). The conceptual apparatus Fricker articulates and others have elaborated puts in place new resources for addressing practices of epistemic marginalization as they are enacted in gendered, raced or classed social spaces. Among other examples, Fricker details practices of discounting the testimony of a black witness in a courtroom, of concealment consequent upon the homophobia of a society where a young homosexual man is deterred from acknowledging his nascent sexuality, of perhaps inadvertent silencing when women cannot name behaviours that violate their personal, physical space prior to the conceptual breakthrough effected by inventing the language of sexual harassment.

Traditional adherents to epistemological orthodoxy who were sceptical about testimony from the outset will undoubtedly contend that such unresolvables are inevitable once testimony, with its subject-specific uncertainties, is accorded a respectable place in epistemic inquiry. But feminist and other social-political epistemologists welcome this new focus which, in effect, promises to relocate epistemology down on the ground, in the world, with its inevitable variations, instabilities and diversity. It opens the way to moving subjectivity and questions of credibility, responsibility and trust onto the epistemic terrain. Testimony will, inevitably, be someone's testimony, and will vary qualitatively (as well, perhaps, as quantitatively) according to who that knower is/those knowers are; to how well she, he or they adhere to principles of responsible epistemic inquiry which, variously, go beyond straightforward truth-telling, accuracy, to ensure that the knowledge conveyed is good of its kind (see Code, 1987). None of these admittedly vague requirements can be spelled out in a checklist of rules to be followed and errors to be avoided, but thinking about epistemic responsibility moves close to the realm of virtue epistemology where, indeed, no hard and fast rules are to be found, but where virtues are social attributes realizable by emulation and aspiration in social deliberative practices where the idea of epistemological

individualism recedes from centre stage and knowledge-construction becomes a communal, interpretive and deliberative practice. Developing practices of epistemic responsibility and trust involves moving away from a spectator epistemology to situations where speakers and hearers make, deliberate, take up or contest attempts to know as well as possible within and across situations and populations where knowing takes place. Shifting from a perceptual, top-down model of knowing to a horizontal model of knowledge-making as a communal activity requires rethinking some of the dominant assumptions of Anglo-American epistemology, especially those about the interchangeability of knowers, situations and subject matters. It opens the way to tacit or explicit reconsiderations of centrality and marginality: the issues that concern me here.

Although the language of margin and centre has been the point of entry for some of the issues I have been discussing, especially in its indebtedness to the title of bell hooks's landmark text *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), it is worth reconsidering whether so seemingly linear a formula as the one about the superiority of and the epistemic privilege attached to knowledge from the margins can make sense, without merely replicating or reversing older hierarchical structures. It is with such cautionary thoughts in mind that I turn to revisiting these thoughts about 'the centre', thinking that while there can be little doubt about the centrality claimed for and occupied by white western affluent masculine lives and the knowledge made there, it also needs to be acknowledged that, of the many margins surrounding and excluded by this multifaceted – indeed, oddly shaped – centre, not all are equivalently privileged epistemically, if they are privileged at all; nor are knowers who are indeed commonly privileged by a single distancing-decentering aspect of their 'identity'. In short, it is important to contest the tacit assumption in western societies that there is only one 'centre', since it is clearly apparent that there are multiple forms of marginalization and

oppression that intersect variously and are variously distant from and occluded by the concerns of ‘the centre’.

Given the radical shifts in global politics during the first decades of the twenty-first century, with their exposure of global ignorance, and given the innovatively unsettling developments in feminist theory and practice, the very idea of ‘the centre’ is increasingly troubling, to the point where a new beginning seems to be in order. Such a beginning might be something akin to a quasi-Cartesian radical doubting, a phenomenological bracketing, or what Charles Mills calls ‘an operation of Brechtian defamiliarization, estrangement, on [y]our cognition’ (2005: 169). Mills’s recommendation derives from his distrust of ‘ideal ethical theory’ and the dislocated presuppositions on which it rests, but such a project has as much to recommend it with regard to ideal epistemological theory, in itself and in its uneasy relationship with the ethics and politics of knowledge. The thought is not new to feminist epistemologists, but taking it seriously involves recognizing that a significant component of responsible epistemic agency, now, across a range of issues, is for ‘us’ to come to *know*, responsibly and in its existential–ecological detail, the extent of ‘our’ ignorance. Such ‘estrangement’ – such acknowledgement of ignorance – need not paralyse inquiry. In response to the challenge early naysayers posed to Genevieve Lloyd’s *The Man of Reason*, asking her what she proposed putting in the place of Reason, she observed that it had taken so long to understand the changing historical inter-mappings of reason and masculinity that it would be facile, irresponsible, to offer up a new construct, at once, to take their place. Yet, equipped with the understandings her analysis made available, feminist and other post-colonial philosophy has proceeded with new, provocatively cautionary assessments of its own local character. An analogous situation could evolve from the kind of estrangement Mills proposes, as is evidenced more dramatically in the myriad debates generated out of his pathbreaking publication of *The*

Racial Contract (1998), which has been inspirational in generating creatively innovative feminist and post-colonial work in the new ‘epistemologies of ignorance’ (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007).

An ‘estrangement’ or bracketing project, in my view, amounts, provocatively, to a plea for ignorance: indeed, to an acknowledgement of the need to *know our ignorance* so as to engage well with some of the most urgent conundrums of our time. It could not be addressed in disingenuous disavowals analogous to those white western women, historically, were trained to utter in deference to the superior cognitive powers of the white men of their time and station. Yet it points toward ways of counteracting the arrogance of white western perceptions (thinking of Marilyn Frye, 1983) while proceeding, if the lesson is well learned, with a renewed, but not deferential, humility. (As an aside, it is worth noting that humility is an intellectual virtue often attributed to Rachel Carson.) It is about acknowledging and countering white ignorance but, following Alison Bailey (2007: 81–2), not only about knowing and deploring injustices done but about learning – in her words – from ‘strategic uses of ignorance by people of color’, which is achievable, she maintains, not by moving out from the local with its presuppositions and its logic intact but ‘by learning to think in new logics ... developing (following Maria Lugones) an account of subjectivity that centers on multiplicity’, which turns away from the abstract individual of classical liberal ethics and epistemology, and the punctiform, monological propositional knowledge claim.

Epistemologically, certain narratives evince a capacity to map knowledge-enhancing and knowledge-impeding structures and forces, structures of ignorance and knowing, to derive normative conclusions that – deliberately, negotiably – translate from region to region, not without remainder, but as instructively in the disanalogies they expose as in the analogies they propose. In my essay ‘They Treated Him Well’ (Code, 2012b) I take as

exemplary of an ordinary ignorance that fails to see itself for what it is the situation of a woman named Maureen, the hitherto affluent white South African protagonist of Nadine Gordimer's novel *July's People*. She, in her everyday life, takes universal human sameness for granted: sameness of relationships and feelings, of conjugal arrangements and gendered divisions of labour, of the significance of places and objects. She persists in these assumptions even when she is uprooted from her affluent life to the village of her black African servant, July, and does so despite her avowed commitment to acquiring a sense of how it is for him and the people of his village, where he has provided refuge for her and her family from racial riots in the city. For her, Gordimer writes, 'The human creed depended on validities staked on a belief in the absolute nature of intimate relationships between human beings. If people don't all experience emotional satisfaction and deprivation in the same way, what claim can there be for equality of need?' she wonders (Gordimer, 1981: 64). Even when she is removed from the taken-for-granted certainties of her then-time life she cannot recognize the specificity of her conceptions of sexual loyalty, 'suburban adultery' and love to the white middle-class society where she learned them; cannot wonder self-critically whether these apparently universal verities might not count as universal after all. Such a move is beyond the scope of her imagining. My aim in reading the novel is, in part, to show how little this white woman is able to realize of the sheer *local* character of the local, even in human intimacy: how ill-placed and ill-advised she is to make of that 'local' a touchstone from which to imagine the world from his position, for July, her erstwhile black servant, her 'boy'. (Bailey notes 'Ignorance flourishes when we confine our movements, thoughts, and actions to those worlds, social circles, and logics where we are most comfortable' (2007: 90)). A quasi-Cartesian bracketing might have served this woman well: had she been able to realize how narrow the range of the local

was, she might have been better able to see the presumptuousness of merely stretching its scope and terms of reference to explain the less local, the hitherto more remote, now right before her eyes. She fails to understand the value of engaging with July and with 'his place', of constructing a narrative that would enable her to know how it is for him and his people. That failure to move away from the tenacity of life at 'the centre' is ultimately her undoing.

MARGINALIZATION WITHIN

So far I have been discussing centrality and marginality as they are internally operative in cognitive practices within the feminist epistemologies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. But it is crucial, too, to turn our attention to a quasi-meta-epistemological issue that is also of notable concern: the marginalization of feminist epistemology as such, within the epistemologies of the mainstream. For many feminists and other post-colonial theorists, epistemology is not a self-contained philosophical pursuit engaged in for the sake of resolving perennial intellectual puzzles. Indeed, Heidi Grasswick (2012b) rightly observes that many feminist social epistemologists are committed to establishing connections between knowledge-producing practices and democratic social-political social orders. For my purposes here, one of the most telling implications of such a commitment would be in its (learned) capacity for addressing and countering some of the modalities of marginality I have articulated, with the injustices they produce. Such overarching goals do not dispute the more narrowly epistemological principle that knowledge pursuits have to be evaluated for their empirical-historical-situational adequacy, although they do contest the narrowness with which 'adequacy' has often been conceived. Thoughts such as these prompt my contention in *Ecological Thinking* that 'thinking ecologically carries with it a large measure of responsibility – to know

somehow more *carefully* than single surface readings can allow ... ecological thinking is about imagining, crafting, articulating, endeavouring to enact principles of ideal cohabitation' in epistemic and moral-political deliberation (Code, 2006: 24). Crucial here is the challenge such an exhortation presents to traditional divisions between ethics, politics and epistemology. Many feminist analyses of the social implications of knowing suggest that there are choices to be made in matters of knowledge-production that go beyond simple verification or falsification of *S* knows that *p* claims (and sometimes even there). Eschewing epistemic individualism opens inquiry into larger and arguably more complex questions about credibility, testimony, ignorance and trust where decisions have to be made that are responsible to the subject matters under investigation – be they animate or inanimate – and responsive to the specificities and larger commonalities between and among knowers and known. None of this is easy, but all of it is richly promising and seriously challenging. Such thoughts underscore the imperative of 'taking subjectivity into account' I have referred to earlier: knowing people well, whether singly or in groups, requires knowing them at least in some aspects of their specificity, their distinctness from and their commonalities with others; their circumstances of privilege and/or oppression: knowing what matters to them, the detail of their 'situations'. Epistemologically, once testimony moves onto the epistemic terrain as a recognized source of knowledge, aspects of subjectivity – testifiers' trustworthiness, their credibility, reliability – come to play a part in how their testimony is received, evaluated, acted upon. Such factors pertain variously in specialized scientific and social scientific inquiry, and variously again in a range of everyday circumstances from quotidian to legal to medical exchanges of knowledge and information, and beyond. For feminist epistemology, with its commitment to fostering deliberative democratic knowledge exchanges, it matters to nurture inclusive knowledge-making and respectful

critical-contestatory practices. Hence, for example, when Elizabeth Anderson proposes that justice and equality of respect are crucial for realizing the goals of higher education, in an article entitled 'The Democratic University: The Role of Justice in the Production of Knowledge' (1995), I am proposing that the title can and indeed ought to be read two ways, where the second reading would be 'the role of knowledge in the production of justice', thereby signalling the multiply entangled nature of these issues and the difficulty of determining which of these requirements is fundamental. The inquiry feminist epistemologists are engaged in has to go both ways.

These thoughts refer back to the quasi-meta-epistemological issue I have mentioned. In a sobering and wholly persuasive diagnosis of 'the marginalization of feminist epistemology' Phyllis Rooney observes that, in the eyes of mainstream epistemologists, the conviction persists that feminist epistemology is not epistemology 'proper' (2012: 3). Startling within the body of significant evidence she adduces in support of this claim is the observation that critics of feminist epistemology commonly develop their critiques without adhering to the norms of research, reading and reasoning they would bring to bear on critiques of positions and subject matters they were prepared to take more seriously. Rooney's apt observation conjures up a reversal of Spelman's contention about marginalizing a woman of color by assuming she must be right (cf. *supra*, p. 11): clearly, from such a dismissive point of view feminist epistemology has no claim even to be taken seriously enough to demonstrate why or how it must be wrong. To suggest that this issue is meta-epistemological has a certain plausibility, for the marginalization of feminist epistemology seems to derive from some intransigent assumptions about the 'nature' of epistemology as such, so to speak, in standing above and remaining impervious to issues of human specificity and/or embodiment in an ongoing if tacit commitment to the goal of determining

necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of knowledge ‘as such’. The very attribute ‘feminist’ vitiates the project. But this issue is also, and equally significantly, ‘sub-epistemological’ in a perhaps curious sense, for the very act of ignoring the claims of feminist epistemology to occupy a position on the epistemic terrain seems to rely on certain antiquated and sedimented subterranean convictions about the very possibility of there being, in women (here generically conceived), a capacity for reason, rationality, judgement, objectivity, clarity, discrimination, intellectual authority. Hence Rooney notes that feminist work in epistemology ‘is still regularly framed as an attack or “assault” on reason and objectivity, as something hostile to the very ground of epistemology “proper”’ (2012: 12): a point Carla Fehr underscores in her subtle analysis of diversity in epistemic communities, where she offers impressive arguments in support of her contention that, for women, ‘uptake and equality of intellectual authority prove to be particularly challenging criteria to meet’ (2012: 135). Women, Fehr notes, tend still to be ‘in marginal positions within the academy’ (2012: 151) now, more than three decades since questions about the sex of the knower were first articulated.

Rooney returns to the question of marginality and epistemic privilege with which we began, to contend that ‘being on the margins is not all bad – especially when one has good company there!’ (2012: 14); and she allows that there may indeed be some advantages to this location. Cautioning against the implausibility of claiming that epistemic privilege automatically follows from or counts as an adjunct benefit of marginality, she nonetheless observes ‘the lived experience of marginalization can enable one to see and understand things that are quite ‘invisible’ to those not marginalized’ (2012: 14), here referring again to Patricia Hill Collins’s claims for the value of the ‘doubled consciousness’ available to the ‘outsider within’ with the creative tensions it generates (2012: 14). It would be a mistake to revalue marginality with a ‘sour

grapes’ argument to the effect that the inside is so uncomfortable that no woman would want to be there anyway. But it is important not to undervalue what women – many women, of multiply intersecting colours, races, classes, capacities, nationalities and other Otherings – have achieved in their/our excluded situations.

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Natural Others? On Nature, Culture and Knowledge

Astrida Neimanis

What is the relation between nature and culture? How does the political grammar of these terms inform the concerns of feminist theory – namely sexual difference, gender oppression and its connections with racism, heteronormativity, coloniality and other marginalizations? And how might the nature/culture relation be relevant for feminist knowledge projects? Sherry Ortner's essay 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' (1972) benchmarks a lively and ongoing debate within anthropological scholarship about the limits of an affirmative answer to her question (for example, MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Moore, 1994; Franklin, 2003). Beyond serving as a touchstone for feminist anthropology, the nature/culture debate has also proliferated throughout many strands and schools of feminist thought, arguably constituting a foundational question for feminism more generally.

Charting 'the' genealogy of the nature/culture question within feminism would be impossible: there are many paths along which to trace this debate, and any narrative

of progress would also be one of gathering, subversion, repetition, interruption and anachronism (see Colebrook, 2009; Hemmings, 2011; Bianchi, 2012; Chidgey, 2012). No linear tale will do. The objective of this chapter is instead to interrogate how 'nature' and the 'natural' have been interpreted within feminist theory – as an innate givenness, as a naturalization of what is acceptable, but also as the ecological (and sometimes biological) milieu of the more-than-human. As we shall see, there is no necessary agreement among feminists about what the 'natural' means, or about how such a term might relate to feminist objectives. More specifically, this chapter explores how taking environmental concerns and non-human others into account can intersect with, challenge and expand feminist theory and the ethics and politics it champions. In its (provisional) schematization of various feminist positions, this chapter also provides a more detailed evaluation of 'new materialist' positions on nature/culture. It concludes by sketching some of the epistemological implications of

rethinking nature, culture and their relation in a new materialist vein.

NATURE/CULTURE AND THE 'MASTER MODEL'

The nature/culture dichotomy is a pervasive and enduring aspect of how the world is conceptually organised within 'our European thought system' (MacCormack, 1980: 8). This bifurcation of nature/culture provides the basis for what feminist theorist Val Plumwood calls the 'master' identity or model, whereby the interconnected whole of life is structured and understood instead according to atomistic, dualized pairs (Plumwood, 1993). Within this conceptual framework, not only are 'nature' and 'culture' defined in opposition but other terms such as 'female' and 'male' are understood according to the same oppositional logic – where culture stands in for (active) masculinity and nature for (passive) femininity. This western apparatus is also fraught by racism and coloniality. Culture is primarily aligned with western, cosmopolitan ways of life, while notions of (unspoiled/unformed) Nature and (innocent/primitive) indigeneity are conflated (Strang, 2005; see also Smith, 2005a: 55–78). These conceptual linkages expand to include other pairs as well: mind/body; reason/emotion, production/reproduction and so on, where one side becomes valorized, and the other denigrated.¹

Even as a pervasive worldview in the west, this gendered and racialized bifurcation of nature/culture cannot account for all individual or community values and actions toward nature and those associated therewith, and, as noted below, this value system is hardly universal.² Worldviews are neither static nor impervious, and can change over time. It would be difficult to argue that, today, all women and racialized groups are imprisoned by an association with nature. At the same time, a worldview or conceptual framework establishes a norm that guides orientations toward the real – and, perhaps

even more significantly, can serve as a fall-back position, particularly where the hegemonic social order is challenged. A worldview is thus not 'just' a conceptual apparatus. In the case of the nature/culture bifurcation, the effects extend beyond the theoretical establishment of chains of meaning to guide normative beliefs and behaviours towards those human and more-than-human bodies situated 'on the wrong side' of this framework. Plumwood's work, for example, underlines how this dualistic way of imagining the world leads to at least five concrete orientations towards 'natural others'. These include backgrounding (a 'forgetting' of that which is the condition of possibility of the privileged term – for example, failing to account for the reproductive labour upon which productive labour depends); radical exclusion (positing the chasm between the two sides as absolute – as in the humanist error that does not readily count humans among 'animals'); incorporation (defining the other in terms of and in relation to the self – such as colonial views of the 'noble savage' who 'completes' civilized Man as a foil); instrumentalism (valuing the other only as a resource that can benefit the privileged term – such as valuing a river only for its capacity to produce hydroelectric power for humans); and stereotyping (essentializing so as to deny variation within each pole, or beyond them – as in an exclusive gender binary) (Plumwood, 1993: Ch. 2; see also Gaard, 2001: 159).³ Where valued at all, the denigrated side is never valued for its intrinsic worth.

As a result of these orientations, power is concentrated at the 'intersection of privilege in terms of race/class/gender/species/sexuality' (Gaard, 2001: 158). This way of engaging the world has specific discursive and material effects on all sides, but notably on those deemed 'natural others'. Disparities in economic and health indicators between indigenous and settler populations in colonial nation states, a persistent gender pay gap and devaluation of care work, and the ongoing privatization and commodification of natural resources for the profit of privileged elites

are a few basic examples of these consequences. This conceptual apparatus thus strongly bears upon many feminist projects of liberation and transformation and the theories that support these projects. But what exactly is meant by the concept of ‘natural others’? Who or what does it designate?

Importantly, the idea of ‘natural others’ has multiple, overlapping and mutually reinforcing senses. In the first place, ‘natural others’ brings to mind the historical truism in the West that the subordination of women, people of colour, indigenous people and other marginalized peoples was viewed as entirely ‘natural’ – meaning commonplace and acceptable by virtue of ‘commonsense’ agreement. The closely related and overlapping second meaning of the ‘natural’ implies that the ‘otherness’ of others – be those women or other deviations from the white, straight, able-bodied western standard of subjectivity – stems from those others’ own ‘nature’. Whatever denigrated qualities they might possess are simply ‘the way they are’. ‘Natural’ in this second sense is a synonym for innate, inherent or intrinsic, where such qualities are again assumed to be immutable.

‘Natural’ in both of these senses is closely linked to the concept of naturalization – a process whereby the givenness of certain qualities or associations becomes accepted as innately true, and the mutable premises upon which such a ‘given’ has been established are hidden from view. Because oppositional dualisms are manifest both politically and psychologically, ‘naturalness’ in both of these senses is integrated into psychic structures and resists critical scrutiny. Importantly for feminists, one of the most significant ways in which gender differences have acquired a social meaning has been in the naming of the ‘natural’. This is demonstrated in the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, forms of work and public participation justified by the ‘naturally’ passive or emotional characters of women or the ‘naturally’ intelligent and leadership-oriented characters of men. Claims that the logics of global capitalism and the market economy ‘naturally’ befit

humans – that it is ‘natural’ for people to want to work for themselves, and so forth⁴ – similarly naturalize both personal traits and political and economic orders as either innate or commonsensical. This blinkers public appreciation of the social injustices that accompany these viewpoints and systems, while also depoliticizing and dismissing protest or dissent. Such naturalization describes the ‘tenacious “natural order”’ of things’ to which feminist epistemologist Lorraine Code refers in recalling the entrenched pre-1960s power structures that were at once antifeminist, racist, imperialist and militarist (Code, 2006: 15), and which persist in various guises today. Many feminist theoretical and political interventions have been spurred by the desire to resist such naturalization and to challenge this deployment of the ‘natural’ that has acted as a major force for social differentiation, often in a negative sense.⁵

In these first two senses, then, nature/natural refers to that which is acceptable or which cannot be altered. Both meanings reinforce the power of the other. But Code also explicitly identifies a third meaning of nature/natural in this ‘natural order of things’: natural is a referent for what we call the environment or the (non-human) natural world. Here, nature is aligned with that which is othered (subordinated, oppressed) in relation to a not only colonial or masculinist but also distinctly *human* norm. In Code’s ‘natural order’ and Plumwood’s ‘master model’, racism, sexism and coloniality are intricately bound up with anthropocentric environmental disregard. In its third meaning, then, natural becomes synonymous with the presumably brute matter and non-human life that populates our ‘environment’. Drawing on the Western Enlightenment mind/body dualism that also informs the master model, the third sense of ‘nature’ moreover includes the biological substrata – visceral life, organic life, molecular life and so forth. Not only is nature *non-human* or *more-than-human*, but it is also *less-than-human* (even when literally enclosed *within* the human). Taking this third sense in the light of the first two, we see

that 'nature' becomes ensnared in a circular logic: 'nature' is denigrated because its own 'nature' (essential way of being) is 'naturally' (commonly accepted as) subordinate; there is no room here to define 'nature' in any other way. Caught in such a trap, nature draws all of its associated terms into the same snare of subordination.

The maddening slippage between these three understandings of 'natural' is crucial for keeping in place the hegemony of binary thinking. A chain of meaning is enacted whereby enough reinforcements are ready at hand to maintain the othering effects of this model, even when a single term, meaning or association does not quite fall in line with its logic. The master model is flexible in this way. Rather than a rigorous inquiry into the meaning and content of any one term, the implicated terms of one side of the binary come to stand in as attributes for any other term: 'woman' or 'indigenous' comes to mean irrational, primitive, body, emotion and so on, just as 'body' or 'emotion' equally comes to mean woman, nature, physicality or other denigrated attributes. The only scope for difference is an exclusive opposite. Each side of the master model's binary represents a persistent and convoluted tautological gymnastics: nature is naturally inferior because it is natural, and woman is inferior because she is natural, and the natural is inferior because it is feminine, which is inferior, which is natural ... and so on.⁶ While frustratingly circular, this *modus operandi* also underlines one of the most pressing challenges for feminist theory in these debates: the need to be clear about what exactly we mean by 'nature' and the 'natural'. Interrupting this chain of meaning requires exposing the errors upon which it is based. As we shall see, there is no necessary agreement among feminists about what the 'natural' refers to, or which 'errors' in these meaning-chains require exposure or correction.

As noted above, the master model logic is rooted in a western cosmology (e.g. MacCormack, 1980; Moore, 1988; 1994). To naturalize and dehistoricize this worldview

as universal is indeed problematic. At the same time, the global survival of western coloniality – in cultural, economic and geopolitical terms – means that the effects of this conceptual bifurcation demand ongoing interrogation not limited to western contexts.⁷ A western conceptual framework becomes part of the project of colonization, determining value and even what counts as 'real' (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 42–57). If we take seriously the master model's chains of mutually reinforcing denigrations (of women, colonized people, non-human animals and other 'natural others'), then any feminist theory would seem incomplete without (at the very least) an acknowledgement of its connection to these other marginalizations. In its recognition of the inseparability of multiple axes of oppressions, a master model analysis shares elements with feminist theories of intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1991). Plumwood's critique identifies the values and behaviours of this model as 'stemming not from a single system such as patriarchy, capitalism, or anthropocentrism – as suggested by the analyses of radical feminism, Marxism, and deep ecology, respectively – but from a system of interlocking, oppressive structures' that are central to western culture (Gaard, 2001: 158). We might also ask what oppressions or marginalizations are unwittingly shored up by feminist theories that do not adequately account for these connections. The work of black feminisms, anti-colonial feminisms and queer feminisms to expand feminist theory beyond a neutralized, narrow vision of 'woman' has been crucial for its continued flourishing and its related ethico-political objectives. Feminist theory has thus taken important strides to address the natural *human* others of the white, straight, western master identity.⁸

At the same time, the species-based privilege of anthropocentrism as one of the master model's axes of oppression is yet to be widely accepted as an intrinsic feminist concern. Why not? Feminism, it seems, in the most universal sense it can muster, is about gendered human bodies. Ongoing and crucial

debates about what feminism is and who it is for (including which women are excluded from feminism's purview, who counts as woman, and the place of men and transgender people in these discussions) all point to a human person with some claim to some gender at their pivot. Questions of coloniality, race, class, sexuality, ability, age and other intersectional axes can all be discussed as facets of feminist concern, and their relative importance, precedence, compatibility, overlap and inextricability in relation to the category 'woman' can all be debated. When we move to the plane of the non-human or more-than-human nature, however, a different sort of conceptual leap is required; the Venn diagram of feminist intersectionality needs another dimension. How, then, should questions about our non-human 'natural others' be included within feminist theories?

The normative claim of this chapter is that feminism should be concerned with anthropocentrism. Earlier ecofeminists such as Plumwood (1993) and Ynestra King (e.g. 1989) argued for the place of environmental degradation alongside other feminist concerns. More recently, Claire Colebrook has made a similar observation, but not from an explicitly ecofeminist perspective. Given feminism's committed exploration of otherness in general, Colebrook notes, an extension of this to the non-human would be 'neither an addition nor supplement' but 'the unfolding of the women's movement's proper potentiality'. At the same time, 'feminists' criticisms of man would not be add-ons to environmentalism but would be crucial to any reconfiguration of ecological thinking' (Colebrook, 2012: 72).

If the anthropocentrism of feminism is to be acknowledged as an inextricable dimension of the master model that helps keep gender and related oppressions in place, a nuanced understanding of what is meant by nature and the natural, and how these are configured in relation to an often implicitly human culture, is required. Despite general feminist agreement that an association of women with a denigrated nature is problematic, feminist theory

provides numerous responses to the nature/culture dilemma, each with different implications. In order to make some sense of this diversity, I propose a four-fold schematization: (1) the 'switching sides' response; (2) the 'revaluing nature' response; (3) the 'repudiating nature/empowering culture' response; and (4) the 'rethinking nature/rethinking culture' response. This categorization inevitably blunts the nuances that characterize the many positions on this question and, moreover, many of the arguments rehearsed below are already well known to feminist theory. Yet, schematizing these arguments in specific relation to the nature/culture debate not only allows us to appreciate the complexity of the 'nature' question for feminists but, looking at the conceptual investments that follow from these arguments, might also better equip us, as feminist theorists, to be accountable for our own orientations and positions within the nature/culture debates.

FEMINIST RESPONSES TO THE NATURE/CULTURE DILEMMA

'Switching Sides'

According to the master model of nature/culture, women are devalued because of their association with nature. One response to this denigrated association is to make room, as it were, within the privileged side of the binary, for women to enjoy its benefits. Here, women 'switch sides'. The idea is that a repudiation of women's necessary association with physical, fleshy, bodily life and reproduction can unencumber them to meet men on equal terms in political and economic arenas. A nuanced version of this position is taken up by Sherry Ortner in her widely cited (and critiqued) essay 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' (1972), mentioned above. Ortner suggests that a pan-cultural (although with various gradations) association of woman with nature is responsible for her oppression. The only way out of a (culturally constructed) circle that keeps women more

closely associated with nature, she contends, ‘involves society’s allowing women to participate in, and women’s actively appropriating, the fullest range of social roles and activities available within the culture. Women and men can, and must, be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence. Only then will women easily be seen as aligned with culture’ (Ortner, 1972: 28).

In the ‘switching sides’ response women are rescued from their association with a devalued ‘nature’, but, importantly, this move only makes sense when the chains of meaning associated with the nature/culture binary are left intact – that is, where culture becomes associated if not synonymous with intellectual, rational and civilized, and nature is left as its subordinated outside. Such a position might be, at best, naive and, at worst, pernicious. For many feminist thinkers, this ‘rescue’ from nature represents a desire to ‘be like’ men and does not tackle the question of how to account for men’s own inevitably biological, fleshy and otherwise ‘natural’ aspects. Moreover, this position maintains a dangerous reliance on a denigrated outside: if women move over to the side of culture, then it is clear that this switch is available to only a limited group of women. The master model logic nonetheless keeps in place other terms – such as black, Third World, indigenous, as oppositional to white, First World and colonizer/settler – as unrecovered, while qualities that had been associated with women (body, spirituality, emotion, passivity, reproduction and so on) are disavowed. Moreover, nature itself remains a foundational term on the denigrated side. In her appraisal of Ortner’s work, Stacy Alaimo writes: ‘If woman’s proximity to nature is responsible for her oppression, then her liberation, it would seem, is contingent on her distance from nature’; Ortner ‘does not argue that we need to reevaluate why cultures debase nature, but instead accepts the nature/culture hierarchy in order to transfer woman to the elevated category’ (Alaimo, 2000: 4). While it is critical to create a conceptual imaginary where

women are not tied to a particular set of terms and values, a response to the nature/culture question that posits the ‘switching sides’ of only some of the model’s operative terms is untenable. Not only are the sticky associations not that easy for women to escape, but, moreover, this response neither acknowledges nor challenges how the exploitation of women and various ‘natural others’ are connected.

‘Revaluing Nature’

A second approach to the nature/culture dilemma has been to reject not the association of the denigrated terms but the denigration itself. In other words, if ‘woman’ is tied to ‘nature’, this should not be understood as imbuing women with negative value. If we revalue nature – if we recognize it as a necessary, positive and valuable element – we might also recuperate the denigrated terms and bodies associated therewith. This position has been primarily associated with ecofeminism, even if this strand of feminist theory is sometimes unjustly caricatured. (Many feminist thinkers who seek to revalue nature explicitly challenge the idea of nature, as well as women’s essential relation to it, as static or inert. This is discussed in more detail below.) Such revaluation also resonates with feminisms that value women rather for their (presumably) non-masculine attributes, or which are broadly concerned with rejecting a liberal model that aims to make women ‘the same’ as men.⁹

‘Revaluing nature’ nonetheless risks another kind of naive naturalization. Many feminists are wary of equating women with nature, invoking notions of Earth Mother, Mother Nature, woman as ‘naturally’ maternal, peace-loving and committed to the preservation of ecological integrity. Such views have been subject to charges of biological essentialism, reductionism and determinism, whereby women’s association with the home and the natural world, and her innate capacities to give birth and nurture life, become the reductively defining features of her ‘essential nature’ and predetermine how she will engage

the world as a social agent. Early ecofeminist works such as Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) and Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) have met with such charges and, despite their radical nature, are connected to what Catriona Sandilands calls a 'neoconservative rhetoric of motherhood environmentalism' (1999: 4).

The debates surrounding whether or not there is any biologically or socially privileged relation between women and nurturing of nature continue, and will probably remain inconclusive (advocates in both camps continue to provide indisputable proof of their position). It nonetheless seems prudent to be sceptical of any formulation that naturalizes a relation between women and the environment (Sandilands, 1999: 4); such associations themselves remain caught up in the very problem of 'natural others' that needs to be challenged. Moreover, as Stacy Alaimo points out, invocations of 'Mother Earth' do not necessarily result in better custodianship of the natural world, but might only serve to reinforce a trope of both woman *and* nature as the beleaguered domestic servant, cleaning up whatever messes we might throw at her. Here, environmental stewardship is depoliticized, domesticated and privatized (Alaimo, 1994: 137).

Nor does nature's recuperation offer a foolproof solution to the discursive and material violences done to all 'natural others'. For example, in her evaluation of the links between environmental degradation and coloniality, Andrea Smith points out that environmentalists are not necessarily supportive of indigenous struggles to exercise treaty rights to their traditional territories. Some environmentalisms, in their calls to limit human presence so that other species can flourish, are also guilty of obfuscating the colonialism and racism attendant in these calls. As Smith underlines, the brunt of such 'limiting' is borne by Native and racialized populations, whose genocide from epidemic diseases or other socially induced crises are too often viewed as 'nature's way' in a social Darwinist sense.¹⁰ While the impulse to

revalue nature in response to the master model logic *should* build solidarities between human and more-than-human others, in this case it is the human 'natural others' who remain instrumentalized and expendable. Meanwhile, Smith notes, the self-removal from 'nature' by settler human populations in order to 'save' it serves to 'reinforce, rather than negate, the duality between humans and nature' (Smith, 2005a: 63; see also Smith, 2005b); humans are still viewed as *outside of* and *separate from* the natural processes that otherwise require conservation.

Citing Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en tribal councillor Marie Wilson, Smith also reminds us that indigenous cosmologies reject the conceptual bifurcation between nature and culture – from this point of view, removing humans to make room for 'nature' is illogical. Donna Haraway puts it similarly thus: 'Efforts to preserve "nature" in parks remain fatally troubled by the ineradicable mark of the founding expulsion of those who used to live there, not as innocents in a garden, but as people for whom the categories of nature and culture were not salient ones' (Haraway, 2008: 158). Addressing the nature/culture problem requires, in this case, not so much a shifting around of terms and values within the bifurcation of nature and culture but a rethinking of the bifurcation itself. The 'revaluing nature' response is problematic primarily when this revaluing is framed as a reversal that maintains the dualism, if not the current hierarchy. Here, revaluation even *depends on* keeping the dualism itself intact. And, like 'switching sides', the 'revaluing nature' response is also inadequate when it recuperates some of the bifurcation's terms at the expense of the continued denigration of others. We need to continue cultivating ways of revaluing nature that do not subscribe to an either/or logic.

'Repudiating Nature/Empowering Culture'

A third response reconfigures the very categories of nature and culture: culture becomes a

powerful agent that shapes and controls what more essentializing views take to be nature's givenness. This response is associated with the 'cultural' or 'linguistic turn' in critical theory and the argument for discourse as a productive and determining phenomenon. Whether or not this 'turn' is a legitimate matter of chronological progression has been debated elsewhere (see, for example, Hemmings, 2011; Colebrook, 2009). Our issue here is not so much the timeline but the substance of this position, and its continued theoretical purchase. In the coarsest of terms, this position would claim that nature exists only to the extent that it has been constructed as such; anything deemed to be 'natural' is in fact a cultural construction. In other words, there is no nature, if what we understand as nature is self-evidently given, replete with an essentialized meaning that is always already there.¹¹

Judith Butler has become widely known for her assertions that not only is gender a cultural construction but sex – often assumed to be a 'natural' or 'biological' fact – is as well. For this reason her work is sometimes seen as emblematic of the 'repudiating nature' position. As Butler so famously argues, the 'production of sex as the pre-discursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*' (Butler, 1990: 7). Karen Barad points out that misleading caricatures of Butler's assertions would have her claim that bodies are constructed from nothing but words, discourses and ideologies – their fleshy matter vanishing into the thin (but immanently textualized) air (Barad, 2007: 192). More accurately, Butler's work can be used to show that 'repudiating nature' in favour of cultural or discursive construction is not necessarily a denial of 'nature' – as physical, fleshy, materiality. The 'nature' of the body in Butler's accounts is certainly material, but this materialization is a 'process' that 'stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface' (Butler, 1993: 9). On Butler's reading, 'male sex' and 'female sex' appear as 'natural' anatomical 'facts' only because we have already

constructed a gender binary into which all bodies must fit. Butler's argument is supported by research in feminist science, such as Anne Fausto-Sterling's work. In terms of the so-called 'naturalness' of a male–female binaristic understanding of biological sex, Fausto-Sterling's research shows that once a predetermining gender binary is bracketed, the biological expression of sex in humans expresses considerable variation (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). For Butler, culture sets limits on what is able to 'matter', where (natural) existence demands intelligibility. The 'natural' attributes and materiality of bodies, Butler proposes, may be just as constructed as their meanings. Here it serves to recall the slippery exchange between various meanings of 'nature' and 'natural' outlined above. What Butler repudiates is not the (natural) material stuff of bodies, but the (natural) accepted view of them as (naturally) innately belonging to one of only two sexual morphologies. These are the 'discursive limits' of bodies to which the subtitle of her book, *Bodies that Matter* (1993), refers. Caricatures of a social constructionist argument that deny the existence of materiality altogether have probably succumbed to the contagion of meaning that circulates between the various senses of the 'natural'.

At the same time, Butler *does* boldly demonstrate that even if the materiality of bodies requires more than discourse to literally bring those bodies into being, their material facticity is *also* profoundly shaped by culture. Culture, in other words, not only plays a serious role in shaping the 'mattering' of nature as intelligible but also intervenes in the very material, physical mattering of 'natural' bodies. This point is illustrated by Butler's ongoing commitment to supporting intersex individuals' demand for cultural intelligibility and their right to be free from unwanted interference in the physical shaping of their flesh. A lack of such recognition, Butler reminds us, can result in a very literal and material construction of sex, through undesired genital reassignment surgery and other medical interventions, in order to fulfil

the (cultural) requirements of a gender binary (Butler, 2004). Butler's insights here resonate across other feminist theories, where sex is not the only 'natural' matter that is literally (re)shaped by culture. In their examinations of medical experimentation, inequitable access to health care and chemical dumping in areas inhabited by poor, indigenous and other marginalized populations, feminist scholars of health and environmental justice underline the ways in which sexist, racist, colonial and disability-phobic ideologies make literal inroads into the flesh of those bodies subordinated according to the master model. Andrea Smith (2005a) notes that colonial ideologies have literally constructed the sterilized bodies of indigenous women; Anne Fausto-Sterling (2008) notes that racist ideologies can literally materialize the bone density of people of colour; Stacy Alaimo (2010a) describes the 'proletarian lung' – a diseased mound of tissue literally fashioned by cultural exploitation of working-class miners in the US. In insisting on the coming to matter of even our fleshy, bodily selves, these and other feminist theorists challenge the notion of 'biological essentialism' where certain bodies are this way or that way naturally. The meaning of bodies, biology or any other purportedly natural process or phenomenon is neither fixed nor immutable. By denaturalizing biology and the natural state of bodies, feminist theories such as these open up nature for a different sort of inscription.

This third response to the nature/culture dilemma thus offers two key and connected insights on nature/culture: first, approaches such as Butler's demonstrate that the *naturalization* of certain constructed meanings of 'nature' (in this example, 'sex') must be questioned. The second insight is potentially more radical in claiming that not only is meaning constructed but matter itself is constructed (shaped, moulded, injured, eradicated) in response to cultural values or pressures. Clearly, then, not all social constructionist positions deny the existence of nature. What we find instead

is an *empowerment* of culture – an instilling of social and cultural processes with a potent agency over nature.

While Butler's theories are careful to resist a complete slide into social determinism, her work (along with other social constructionist positions) has been critiqued for paying too little attention to the agency and limits of *matter*. Karen Barad notes that the most 'crucial limitation' of Butler's theory of materialization is that it limits itself to 'an account of the materialization of human bodies ... through the regulatory action of social forces'. While Barad emphatically supports the need to account for these discursive processes, she remains troubled by the exclusion of matter's limits; of 'how *matter* comes to matter' (Barad, 2007: 192). Physical, biological and chemical limits are also at play in bodies' materializations, just as various material apparatuses of knowledge, such as scientific instruments, also limit how matter makes itself felt (Barad, 2007: 208).

A response to the nature/culture question that emphasizes the agency of culture without recognition of non-human nature's own agency risks, as Stacy Alaimo puts it, a 'flight from nature' in feminist theory (2000: 1). Feminist theory has developed sophisticated theoretical frameworks that include multiple kinds of agency (see Bartky, 1995; Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000). Some theories also expressly challenge notions of humanist agency that are tied to a 'liberal progressive imaginary' (Mahmood, 2005: 155; see also Abu-Lughod, 1993). Agency within most feminist theory is nonetheless conceptualized in terms of human (although not necessarily humanist) agents. The idea that non-human beings might be agential remains at the fringe of feminist thinking.¹² The 'repudiating nature/empowering culture' position risks becoming tainted by a strong anthropocentrism that does not account for meaning and intentionality beyond the human and/or beyond human intelligibility. Again, we see that, rather than moving beyond the nature/culture binary with its associated hierarchies, this response can also unwittingly result in a

reinstatement of, rather than a challenge to, this dichotomous framework.

Understanding the powerful discursive and material impacts of human meaning-making systems has no less than revolutionized critical theory and has been groundbreaking in terms of providing feminist thinkers and activists with tools to contest the ‘naturalness’ of the inferiority of women, people of colour, indigenous people, queer people and other ‘natural others’. Yet – perhaps ironically – it is the insights of such positions that make possible a more radical rethinking of ‘nature’ as an intelligent, social, literate, numerate agent, knower and ‘constructor’, as discussed below. In other words, such empowerment of ‘culture’ should not be rejected, but we need to continue crafting theories that recognize its important insights and temper its potential oversights.

‘Rethinking Nature/Rethinking Culture’

Part of the difficulty with the above responses is that they all reply to the bifurcated dilemma of nature/culture with an ‘either/or’ response (switching, reversing, upending). In each case, the dualism itself is kept more or less in place. As Plumwood notes, the dualist western model of human/nature relations ‘requires anti-dualist remedies’ (Plumwood, 1993: 41). A fourth position attempts to sidestep this dualistic thinking, while nonetheless benefiting from some of the logics and contributions of the responses elaborated above. Here, nature and biological entities are understood as social agents of production and transformation just as much as culture is; culture is not only the purview of the human world but is enacted in and by nature, too.

Within feminist theories, such approaches are sometimes called the new materialisms (for example, van der Tuin, 2011); material feminisms (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008); post-constructionist feminisms (Lykke, 2010); posthuman feminisms (Barad, 2007); or nonhuman feminisms (see Hird and Roberts, 2011). Importantly, the views of the nature/culture relation proposed here are not entirely

‘new’ within feminist theories; Sara Ahmed rightly criticizes the ways in which the founding gestures of ‘new materialism’ do not account for ‘how matter matters, in different ways, for different feminisms, over time’ (Ahmed, 2008: 36; see also Lykke, 2010; Sullivan, 2012). We might instead interpret these new monikers as responding to the desire among some feminist thinkers to find a discursive gathering place for a common theoretical commitment – a gathering of that work which precedes these neologisms, as well as that which is still unfolding. The growing currency of the term ‘new materialism’ perhaps also signals discomfort with the various lacunae in other approaches to the nature/culture dilemma, as well as a mounting interest in exploring what the political and ethical obligations of feminism to other-than-human bodies might be.¹³

Gathering all of the arguments that fall into this category is reductive of their important nuances. These theories nonetheless share a commitment to questioning the bifurcation of nature and culture and, in particular, to challenging a view of nature as brute, inert matter. If what is ‘natural’ is assumed to be passively awaiting cultural inscription, and the subordination of women and other ‘others’ is secured by an insistence on the immutable ‘naturalness’ of their deficiencies, then recasting nature as dynamic, lively, changeable and agential significantly interrupts the logic of this denigration. Yes, this is a recuperation of nature, too – but on very different terms. For example, in a salient twist on the ‘repudiating nature’ position that suggests that nature is a constructed fiction, Vicki Kirby provocatively asks, ‘what if culture was really nature all along?’ (Kirby, 2008). What if nature writes, thinks, is literate and numerate, produces patterns and meanings, expresses sociality, intelligence, changeability, invention? What cultural constructionism positions as the purview of (human) culture is actually always already there in the complex interactions of the non-human ‘natural’ world: neural plasticity in cognitive science; natural selection in evolutionary biology; or the

'code-cracking and encryption capacities of bacteria as they decipher the chemistry of antibiotic data and reinvent themselves accordingly' (Kirby, 2008: 219). These examples all attest to creativity and 'language skills' before or beyond the cultural human. None of these examples evidences a deterministic, causal or 'essential' nature. Instead, each foregrounds the open-ended possibilities that natural matter is constantly taking up and unfolding. Given these complex feats, Kirby muses: 'Should feminism reject the conflation of "woman" with "Nature", or instead, take it as an opportunity ...?' (Kirby, 2008: 234).

Attending to nature's 'cultural' capacities also resonates with arguments for non-human agency. As Donna Haraway noted over three decades ago, 'in some critical sense that is crudely hinted at by the clumsy category of the social or of agency, the world encountered in knowledge projects is an active entity' (Haraway, 1988: 593). In contemporary terms, Karen Barad has most notably developed this idea in her concept of agential realism. According to Barad, 'agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity' (Barad, 2003: 826). The material world is replete with the capacity to enact agency – that is, to affect other entities, or to make and unmake them in the ongoing 'worlding' of the world. No agent – no person, no biological entity, no material artefact – controls the world, but all of these things enter into various relationships with one another: weather and landforms worlding hurricanes; boats and tides, weapons and disease, states and racist ideologies worlding colonization. In such intricate patterns of material relation, agency is dispersed through the material world. This view of agency does not undo feminist theorizations of agency as human power or empowerment to act, change or resist one's circumstances; rather, it situates other kinds of feminist agency within a broader context of the more-than-human world. In this sense, there is no a priori 'cut' between human and non-human, between culture and nature. Instead, there are variations within a broader more-than-human field.

As the work of Elizabeth A. Wilson and others highlights, this nature is also part and parcel of our human being. How can there be any definitive cut between non-human nature and human culture when the human is also significantly a biological and 'natural' entity? Wilson wonders why 'the body' – ostensibly at the centre of so much feminist discourse – has become so 'curiously abiological'; while experience, psychic structures, discourse and culture are all permitted, the influence of brute matter – of 'nature' – is not (Wilson, 1998: 15). Wilson's case is probably overstated (see Sullivan, 2012), but she makes an important point in her examination of biological and neurological processes in various psychological disorders. For example, she seizes on the idea of the 'biological unconscious' – a term coined by Sandor Ferenczi, erstwhile student and penpal of Sigmund Freud – to underline the point that the unconscious is not a disembodied, immaterial phenomenon; rather, it is manifest in our biological matter. Our organs – responding to psychological, social and physical circumstances – are 'knowing things' all the time: 'the [biological] substrata themselves [are] attempting to question, solve, control, calculate, protect, and destroy' (Wilson, 2004: 82). Wilson, for example, investigates 'pharmakinetics' – that is, circuits of sociality that mood disorder pharmaceuticals engage not only between brain and mood, but which also involve the viscera, the liver, food and environmental events such as trauma. Within these circuits, our bodily viscera *participate in* managing mood disorders in depressives (Wilson, 2008). Wilson cautions that in a 'post-Prozac environment', feminist accounts of depression that separate cultural and psychic malleability from biology are problematic (2008: 375). Wilson's work does not posit a mechanistic causality; rather, she traces the ways in which biological matter 'works things out' as they unfold. Wilson demonstrates that feminist work on psychic life can embrace innovative understandings of 'nature' and biological matter in game-changing ways.

'Rethinking nature' has also facilitated important connections between ecologically oriented feminisms and queer feminisms and sexuality studies. Once nature is recognized as continually opening to new iterations and recombinations of life, the nature that emerges is not only far from essentialist but also comes out looking rather queer – and 'all the better' for it (Alaimo, 2010a: 6)! One of the ways in which the nature/culture divide is used against women is an appeal to biological essentialism that destines women for heteronormative servitude. Queer ecological approaches underline that nature rarely follows the straight-and-narrow path. Myra Hird, for example, emphasizes that *schizophyllum* has more than 28,000 sexes (Hird, 2004: 86) and that 'most of the reproduction that we undertake in our lifetimes has nothing to do with "sex"' (2004: 85); Joan Roughgarden (2004) has catalogued the multitudinous ways in which non-human species are far from heteronormative. The point of these and other 'queer ecological' analyses is not to suggest that the lineaments of sociality evidenced in the non-human world are necessarily appropriate for humans. Moreover there is a problem with imposing human logics such as 'queer' onto non-human nature. To reveal these different patterns of sexuality as entirely 'natural' nonetheless challenges a master model view that would insist on a heteronormative 'naturalness' as a measure of acceptable human subjectivity.

In sum, to assume that innovation, agency and linguistic capacity are the purview of human culture alone is both an ignorant and arrogant anthropocentrism. To recuperate or revalue nature and associate that with women (or any other body – men, transgender people, mitochondria, bulrushes) is not biological determinism but an acknowledgement of their changeability, capacity for innovation and continual differentiation. This move also intervenes in the slippage between 'nature' and 'naturalness' upon which the master model depends: if one of the meanings of 'natural' is *that which cannot be altered*, this

corresponds very poorly with what we find in the 'natural' world.

At the same time, the 'rethinking nature' position is not without its own faultlines. In a mode of theory that locates all matter as agential and which intentionally blurs the once seemingly secure boundaries between human and non-human, and life and the non-living, there is a risk of what Stacy Alaimo refers to as a 'flat ontology' (Alaimo, 2012; 2013: 162 n.45). In a flat ontology all material entities are put on a level playing field – everything is an agent, a player. From a theoretical point of view, this is a compelling and even convincing exercise. But from the point of view of feminists concerned with ecological questions, the equation of toasters with tree-frogs or a Rolex with a once-raging river is an ethically and politically dubious move. New materialist feminisms must continue working out justifications – perhaps non-ontological ones – for these differences if this is to be a viable theory for expanding the discussion of feminist obligations in a more-than-human world.

Resonant with concerns over a 'flat ontology' are more general concerns about the borders of feminist theory, concern and obligation. Ecological and new materialist feminisms, in line with Plumwood's challenge to the master model, as described above, argue that in order to dismantle this conceptual logic and its consequences, none of the associated subordinations can be left unaddressed. On this view, the denigration of 'nature' *must* be a feminist issue. Yet not all feminist theories agree that environmentalisms – while espousing otherwise laudable goals – should be an explicitly feminist concern. Some feminist theorists (more so in corridors and conference sessions than in published writings) worry that detracting attention from the human subject of feminism would be a troubling dilution of its most important tasks. These debates are ongoing and point to opportunities, challenges and insecurities within feminist thinking that are not necessarily unproductive. A sustained evaluation of its aims and omissions is one of feminism's most important engines.

Moreover, even as the fourth position perforates the boundary between nature and culture as mutually exclusive terms, it does not eradicate the terms or their tenacious coupledness. Claims about the ‘culture’ of nature, ironically, still cannot entirely let go of a dualism where culture is the elevated term, just as championing the agency of matter still plays off against a (presumably, less appealing) passivity (see Chandler and Neimanis, 2013: 65). Even innovative ways of addressing the nature/culture question cannot do away with some reliance on the binary structure they seek to overhaul – if only as a terminological starting point for common intelligibility. Using either of these words becomes increasingly tricky (it seems that either everything is nature, or nothing is – and the same could be said about culture), but we use them nonetheless. This tenacity underlines the profound way in which these terms saturate our western hegemonic thinking processes. It is unclear whether we will ever be able to rid ourselves of these categories – or whether that would be even necessary, or desirable. In the meantime, innovative reimaginings of both the content of these two categories, and how they relate to each other – in non-bifurcated, non-dualistic ways – are welcome.

NATURE/CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE: FROM EPISTEMOLOGIES OF IGNORANCE TO EPISTEMOLOGIES OF UNKNOWABILITY

Nancy Tuana puts her case plainly: ‘The separation of nature and culture has impoverished our knowledge practices’ (2004: 208). How does a rethinking of nature, culture and their relation to one another matter for questions of epistemology and the business of ‘doing’ feminist knowledge? Some of the ways are already implicit in the discussion above. First, if the limits and agency of non-human nature are to be taken seriously, and if we are going to map the entanglements of humans and non-human nature with rigour,

we are going to require what Stacy Alaimo, drawing on the work of environmental feminist Giovanna Di Chiro, calls ‘syncretic assemblages’ of knowledge (Alaimo, 2010a: 19). Such a syncretism might be understood as a mixing and melding of seemingly incompatible approaches in a courageous but cautious transdisciplinarity. It acknowledges that the complex relations between nature and culture cannot be adequately grasped through one method, or one school of belief, alone. Biology, sociology, philosophy, political science, physics, anthropology and chemistry will not necessarily enjoy the comfort of *corroboration*; rather, a sustained effort will be demanded of feminist theorists to accommodate multiple perspectives on multivalent truths.¹⁴ In more concrete methodological terms, this means continued innovation in mixed methods approaches. In-depth interviews may complement meteorological modelling of weather patterns in analysing low voter turn-out in elections; examining gender subjectivities in environmental hotspots may demand multispecies ethnographies as well as resource management data. Feminist theorists such as Evelyn Fox Keller, Sarah Franklin and Lynda Birke are pioneers in bringing biology together with feminist theory in a productive rather than dismissive dialogue; more recently, Karen Barad has done the same with quantum physics. Nancy Tuana reminds us that such transdisciplinarity is not easy (2008: 209), but challenging and overcoming institutional and systemic disciplinary habits can result in a situation where knowledge is an ongoing conversation rather than a definitive achievement. Genuine transdisciplinarity, moreover, is itself a practical challenge to the nature/culture (natural sciences/humanities) divide.

Epistemologies that challenge the master model bifurcation of nature and culture should also be, in Alaimo’s terms, ‘more capacious’. This means allowing ‘a space-time for unexpected material intra-actions, be they the actions of hawks nesting in high-rises or the effects of genetically modified plants on bees, butterflies, or human populations’ (Alaimo,

2008: 251–2). An epistemology that breaks down the nature/culture divide, and which is concerned for feminism's more-than-human others, is a roomy epistemology where all sorts of agents can thrive. The notion that knowledge should be generated through dispersed conversation is again relevant here: knowledge practices should, according to Alaimo, 'emerge from the multiple entanglements of inter- and intra-connected being/doing/knowings' (2008: 253).

Crucial to this notion of capacious epistemological space is a rejection of mastery. By rethinking the relation between nature and culture as one of co-constituted entanglements we can sidestep what Lorraine Code refers to as an 'epistemological monoculture' – a positivist post-Enlightenment legacy that strives for omniscience and that 'chokes out' any ways of knowing that contest the 'calculability of the world' (Code, 2006: 8–9). Code's call for 'multifaceted analyses' should not lead to the conclusion that with enough transdisciplinarity – with a sufficient number of perspectives or standpoints – the world might finally disclose itself to us. Even the widest array of transdisciplinary methods will not give us mastery. Feminist new materialists generally concur on this point: rethinking the relationship between nature and culture underlines the limits of human knowledge. These limits express themselves in two key ways. First, if nature is not the blank slate that culture reads and inscribes, but is rather entangled with culture (or, in Kirby's terms, actually *is* what we call 'culture') in the ongoing unfolding of the world, then what is to be known is by definition never complete or definitive; 'the material world intra-acts in ways that are too complex to be predicted in advance' (Alaimo, 2008: 259). As Barad puts it, 'the world's effervescence, its exuberant creativeness, can never be contained or suspended. Agency never ends; it can never "run out"' (Barad, 2003: 177). As such, any claim to fully 'know' it is absurd. Secondly, the agency and intelligence of non-human natures reminds us that we never have full access to any 'standpoint'. We can employ Haraway's 'prosthetic vision'

(1988) in accountable ways to cultivate our own situated knowledges, but this vision will only ever be partial. As Haraway argues, this does not make our knowledge any less valuable. Since all knowledge comes from somewhere, only by accounting for these locations – and their limits – could one ever claim objectivity in a feminist sense.

Epistemologies that reject mastery are not only sound and sensible knowledge projects; they are also ethically attuned to the ongoing denigration of 'natural others' – of all kinds. It is therefore telling to note the resonance between new materialist epistemological investments and post-colonial epistemologies, which are also deeply committed to challenging claims to mastery. Both nature and human colonized bodies have been 'thingified'. Haraway notes that, in a master model logic, 'nature is only the raw material of culture, appropriated, preserved, enslaved, exalted or otherwise made flexible for disposal by culture in the logic of capitalist colonialism' (1988: 592). So too does Andrea Smith remind us that 'the colonial/patriarchal mind that seeks to control the sexuality of women and indigenous peoples also seeks to control nature' (2005a: 55). The point here is explicitly *not* to equate the post-colonial marginalized other with a natural (read: less civilized, more pristine) state of being. Indeed, slippage toward these master model chains of meaning is the very trap that must be countered. But if this danger can be thwarted through a rethinking of nature, as proposed above, then post-colonial epistemologies can help clarify a key epistemological question for a rethought nature/culture relation, namely: who can, or should, speak for nature? How should nature/culture debates deal with the question of representation?

Gayatri Spivak (1988) famously asked whether the subaltern could speak as a way of highlighting the fraught nature of a colonial representation of the reality of colonized peoples. In terms that reverberate with Spivak's groundbreaking challenge to feminist theory and beyond, Catriona Sandilands also asks about the possibility of representing nature:

'Nature cannot be entirely spoken as a positive presence by anyone; any claim to speak of or for nonhuman nature is, to some extent, a misrepresentation' (1999: 180). Tellingly, the responses that both Spivak and Sandilands provide assert that this epistemological space is also an ethical one, where representation is sometimes necessary. In equal measures frustrating and illuminating is Spivak's insistence that such representation, including cultural translation, is '(im)possible'. This parenthetical ambiguity signals both the 'must' and the 'can't' inherent in this endeavour. Speaking for, or translating, are for Spivak acts of intimacy that must be done responsibly and that demand that difference – and thus the limits of knowledge – be safeguarded (Spivak, 1993). Similarly, Alaimo, referencing Sandilands' work, notes that environmental politics demands that we speak for nature, not only in spite of but *because* of the impossibility of the task (Alaimo, 2010b: 23). Haraway insists that facile analogies between colonized peoples and non-human nature are risky, as the strategies necessary for anti-colonial and environmental justice will necessarily differ (Haraway, 2008), but, in epistemological terms, both areas of inquiry involve attempts at representation that must acknowledge the drive to mastery. Both must instead seek out better ways to listen. In such cases, accountability for one's position is paramount, just as facilitating opportunities for conversation, rather than representation, need to be actively generated: 'We must find another relationship to nature besides reification, possession, appropriation, and nostalgia. No longer able to sustain the fictions of being either subjects or objects, all the partners in the potent conversations that constitute nature must find a new ground for making meanings together' (Haraway, 2008: 158).

As new materialist perspectives on the nature/culture debates demonstrate, humans are not separate or outside of nature. Humans are also 'natural'. This means that the epistemologies of unknowability demanded by a rethought nature are no less applicable to our own selves, and our human others. Nature is

never separate or distinct from culture (human or otherwise), and we need to recognize our incorporation of and contiguity with natures of all kinds. But even this intimacy does not give us full access, or mastery.

Given the contingent relationship between knowledge and being, where epistemological commitments determine what is real, what can exist and what has value, feminist quests to determine the terms of knowledge have also been a matter of survival (see Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Smith, 2005a). Nancy Tuana proposes that one of feminism's key epistemological tasks is to pay more attention to what is *not* known, and why. Tuana's work on the politics of ignorance is invaluable for attending to the ways in which 'practices of ignorance are often intertwined with practices of oppression and exclusion' (Tuana and Sullivan, 2006: vii). Drawing in part on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), which underlines how ignorance can be 'harnessed' and used as a political implement, Tuana reminds us that ignorance is not simply a lack of knowledge; it is rather 'frequently constructed and actively preserved, and is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing, and uncertainty' (Tuana, 2004: 195). Clearly, there are many things that need to be known and which require a deliberate calling-out as manufactured ignorance. Tuana gives examples of women's health (Tuana and Sullivan, 2006) and female sexuality (2004) to demonstrate how ignorance is political, linked to gender oppression, heteronormativity and erotophobia; we could, similarly, look to politicized lack of knowledge on environmental toxins in our air- and waterways and their effects on indigenous, low-income and racialized communities (see Alaimo, 2010a). These are questions of social justice as much as matters of epistemology, as the costs of ignorance are never distributed equally across bodies. But calling out such ignorance must be tempered by a different sort of epistemological direction – namely, a respect and humility for that which we do not know and cannot know – or perhaps, more precisely,

for that which our knowledge can never fully master. Epistemologies of ignorance meet epistemologies of unknowability in the recognition that any knowledge project is a provisional effort. Truth is partial and unfolding, and perpetually open to contestation.

Grappling with the nature/culture question is an ongoing task for feminist theory. There is unlikely to be a 'right' answer to this problem; as the above inventory underlines, radically divergent approaches can all contribute to providing important conceptual and political tools for feminists seeking to challenge interrelated oppressions, including racism, heteronormativity and coloniality. And, while not all feminist theorists will agree on the urgency of this question, challenging the nature/culture binary also opens opportunities for addressing the oppression not only of human bodies but of the more (or less)-than-human bodies we call 'nature' too. There is no guarantee that conceptual apparatuses that challenge the master model will lead to more equitable gender relations, or more thoughtful environmentalisms (Alaimo, 2010a), for that matter. But as long as nature/culture remains a key issue for feminist theory we should be thoughtfully examining which oppressions we are challenging and which ones we might be shoring up in our own approaches to these questions – lest we be complicit in our own epistemologies of ignorance.

NOTES

- 1 In her lucid summary of Plumwood's position, Gaard suggests a list of the terms that are included in this binary (Gaard, 2001: 158):
 self/other
 culture/nature
 reason/nature
 male/female
 mind/body (nature)
 master/slave
 reason/matter (physicality)
 rationality/animality (nature)
 freedom/necessity (nature)
 universal/particular
 human/nature (nonhuman)
 civilized/primitive (nature)

- production/reproduction (nature)
 public/private
 subject/object
 White/non-White
 financially empowered/financially impoverished
 heterosexual/queer
 reason/the erotic
- 2 Important exceptions to the separation of men from the natural can be found, for example, in the Romantic cult of masculinity of the late 1700s in Europe, as well as in narratives about 'wild nature' as excluding women and fostering an ideal masculinity in colonial North America (Sandilands, 2005). Importantly, though, such exceptions were not available to all men, nor did they mean that women were granted reprieve from their relation to 'the natural' or permitted equal access to economic and political spheres.
 - 3 These examples are provided by Plumwood, Gaard and the author.
 - 4 See, for example, Brodie (2002) for a detailed account of how neoliberal policies of privatization, decentralization and individualization have been naturalized in the Canadian public sphere, to great detriment.
 - 5 As Charis Thompson points out, the politics of naturalization are not unidirectional: 'Sometimes important political and ontological work is done by denaturalizing what has previously been taken to be natural and deterministic; sometimes the reverse is necessary' (2001: 198). Thompson refers to the naturalization of certain kinship arrangements in the context of infertility. The strategic importance of naturalizing the mother-infant bond in order to fight for maternity leave allowances might be another example.
 - 6 These chains of meaning persist despite allocations of cultural meaning that seem to contradict this logic – 'wild' mountain men or 'unnatural' lesbians, for instance. But such examples are also either valorized (men) or denigrated (women) for failing to adhere to 'the natural order of things'.
 - 7 MacCormack (1980) and Moore (1994) both point to the ethnocentric and universalizing slant of Ortner's claim regarding the connection between bifurcated views of female and male as corresponding with nature and culture.
 - 8 Note Jasbir Puar's important critique of how the rise and popularity of intersectionality within feminist theory can also be read as yet another way – ironically – of reserving the 'centre' of feminism for middle-class, white women (Puar, 2012).
 - 9 E.g. Ruddick (1989), Gilligan (1982). Patricia Hill Collins' black feminist thought (2000) demonstrates a similar move, but recuperates a specifically racialized association as well. Each

position resists the naturalization of maternity, femininity and blackness as intrinsically negative.

- 10 On a similar view, the devastation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic particularly among gay men, and more recently, indigenous populations in North America, is seen as a 'natural' way of weeding out undesirable or unfit individuals and populations (Martin, 1994). While vulnerability to disease can certainly be influenced by genetics, gender or geography, such analyses must also consider social inequalities, colonial legacies and racist and homophobic health care and urban planning policies as significant and often determining factors. See also below on environmental justice.
- 11 Such claims also resonate (if somewhat ironically) in scientific and environmentalist discourses with the contemporary naming of the Anthropocene – our current era wherein nothing in Nature is untouched by humans (who are presumably 'non-Nature'). See, for example, 'Welcome to the Anthropocene' at www.anthropocene.info/en/home.
- 12 Feminist Science and Technology Studies is an important exception. Donna Haraway's work is a good example.
- 13 Theoretical concepts always respond to current contexts, events and concerns. A real or perceived increase in feminist thinking about the environment and the non-human – beyond those who call themselves 'ecofeminists' – is certainly connected to an increase in public concern about environmental issues such as climate change, as well as increased public awareness about factory farming and animal rights (Neimanis, 2013).
- 14 While this sounds similar to standpoint epistemologies, it differs importantly in that a privileged perspective from below is not a key element of these syncretic assemblages. While power plays are certainly part of disciplinary territorial battles, there may also be several marginalized knowledges across disciplines that come together to illuminate a multifaceted reality.

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Feminist Auto/Biography

Gayle Letherby

AUTO/BIOGRAPHY AND THEORIZED SUBJECTIVITY

Recognizing the Inevitability of Auto/Biography

My experiences of sociological research over the last twenty-five years have led me to argue that all research is informed by auto/biographical experience and is an intellectual activity that involves a consideration of power, emotion and P/politics. In 1999 the sociologist Liz Stanley described herself as a ‘child of her time’ (see also Stanley, 2005), suggesting that intellectual/academic socialization affects our interests and approaches. I too am a ‘child of my time’, which my research and writing interests demonstrate. Much of my work – the themes and focus of which are also affected by my own intellectual/academic socialization – is explicitly auto/biographical, noting the view of C. Wright Mills (1959: 204) that: ‘The social scientist is not some autonomous

being standing outside society, the question is where he (sic) stands within it’ I agree that we should ‘... learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine it and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship (sic) is the centre of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you work’ (Mills 1959: 216).

John Brewer (2005: 672) suggests that Mills himself practised this when ‘he made his own biography sociological and that his biographical experiences shaped his view about the proper purpose of sociology as a discipline’. Thus:

... Mills turned his own personal troubles into sociology. They were rendered sociological in two ways: by means of his boundless, almost rabid energy that made him a voracious sociological writer; more importantly, by shaping his view that the public role of sociology was to facilitate ordinary people to make sense of the social condition by showing how their personal troubles both impacted on and were impacted by public issues (Brewer 2005: 674)

In proposing that all writing is in some ways auto/biography and that all texts bear traces of the author and are to some extent personal statements (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994) within which the writer works from the self to the other and back again I am also emphasizing that research writings intersect the public/private domains of both the researcher and the researched (Stanley, 1993). As Liz Stanley (1993: 49) points out, the use of 'I' acknowledges that the knowledge we produce 'is contextual, situational, and specific, and that it will differ systematically according to the social location (as a gendered, raced, classed, sexualized person) of the particular knowledge-producer'. This explicitly auto/biographical approach, with its focus on the relationships between the self/other relationship, also encourages reflection on power relationships within research, including the differential status given to different voices and different accounts. Robert Zussman (2000: 6) argues that one aspect of 'the narrative turn in sociology has been preoccupied with "giving voice" to those for whom a voice has been denied', including women.

I agree with all of the above. In writing an autobiography we reflect on our relationship with the biographies of others and when presenting the biographies of others we inevitably refer to and reflect on our own autobiographies. Thus, auto/biography is not, as David Morgan points out,

... simply a shorthand representation of autobiography and/or biography but also [a] recognition of the inter-dependence of the two enterprises In writing another's life we also write or rewrite our own lives; in writing about ourselves we also construct ourselves as some body different from the person who routinely and unproblematically inhabits and moves through social space and time. (1998: 655)

Acknowledging this encourages the academic rigour of our work, as self-conscious auto/biographical writing acknowledges the social location of the writer and makes clear the

author's role in the construction, rather than the discovery, of the story/the knowledge being presented (Letherby, 2000a). Auto/biographical sociological study – either focusing on one, several or many lives – highlights the need to liberate the individual from individualism, to demonstrate how individuals are social selves – which is important, because a focus on the individual can contribute to the understanding of the general (Mills, 1959; Stanley, 1993 Oakely, 1992; Evans, 1997; Erben, 1998).

It has become commonplace for researchers – feminist and otherwise – to acknowledge the significance of their personhood, locate themselves within the research process and produce 'first person' accounts. There is also recognition among social scientists of the need to consider how the researcher as author is positioned in relation to the research process, not least with reference to the choice and design of the research fieldwork and analysis, editorship and presentation (Iles, 1992; Sparkes, 1998; Letherby, 2003a). Research activities tell us things about ourselves as researchers as well as things about those we are researching (Steier, 1991). Feminists researchers often go further in terms of an explicit recognition of the researcher's self and insist that we need to consider how the researcher as author is positioned in relation to the research process and that to ignore the personal involvement of the researcher within research is to downgrade the personal. Thus, feminists are concerned with who has the right to know, the nature and value of knowledge and feminist knowledge within this, the relationship between the methods chosen, how they are used and the 'knowledge' produced (see the Introduction to this Part of the book and also the contribution in this volume by Code). With this in mind I have, in my work, argued for a position I call theorized subjectivity, which both acknowledges and exploits this awareness of the relationship between the process and the product of feminist research and how epistemology becomes translated into practice (Letherby, 2003a; 2004; Letherby et al., 2013). In the remainder of this chapter I

consider this further with specific reference to the methodology of feminist (mostly sociological) auto/biography.

FROM AUTO/BIOGRAPHY TO THEORIZED SUBJECTIVITY

In an article focusing on gendered research philosophies and practices Ann Oakley (1998: 708) argues that the 'critique of the quantitative' overlaps with the 'critique of mainstream/malestream' and thus '[t]o be a feminist social scientist one must have a certain allegiance to the qualitative paradigm'. This situation, Oakley argues, has resulted in a 'paradigm war' in which male researchers are associated with quantitative methods of data collection and women researchers with qualitative methods (especially the in-depth interview), leading to the two approaches being represented as 'mutually exclusive ideal types' (Oakley, 1998: 709). But Oakley was not the first to point this out, nor was she the first (or only) feminist to make use of other methods (for discussion and examples see Reinharz, 1992; Kelly, et al., 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Letherby and Zdrokowski, 1995; Letherby, 2003a; Miner-Rubino et al., 2007; Scott, 2010). Furthermore, an analysis of British authorship in sociology journals suggests that although women have always employed qualitative methods in a majority of their empirical articles, so have men (Platt 2007). My own experience of empirical research has led me to challenge the 'in-depth' interview as inevitably the most appropriate method, not least because there are other ways to give respondents 'a voice' at all stages of the research process and new technologies of communication involve rethinking aspects of research methodology. It is equally important to remember that although, historically, feminists were particularly critical of the survey method it was its epistemological appropriation by those who attempted a 'scientific', 'value-free' approach and the tendency of researchers to concentrate on male issues and

experience that was the concern (Stanley and Wise 1993).

Liz Kelly and colleagues (1994) caution against choosing methods without a proper consideration of research aims. They argue that methods should be chosen to suit research programmes rather than research programmes being chosen to 'fit' favourite techniques. Oakley (2004: 191) agrees and suggests that the most important criteria for choosing a particular research method is its fit with the research question or questions and not its relationship to academic arguments about methods. Jacqueline Scott (2010) details ways in which a mixed method approach can add to our understanding. She suggests that qualitative research enables us to, for example, explore how policy contexts influence the opportunities and constraints that shape people's lives and assist us in understanding people's experiences in particular settings. On the other hand, quantitative research enables us to identify the patterns and processes by which gender inequalities are passed on and/or modified generationally. Such an analysis, Scott (2010) argues, can demonstrate the way that gender intersects with other aspects of our identity that influence (dis)advantage, such as 'race' and age.

As many feminist researchers have argued, 'it is not by looking at research methods that one will be able to identify the distinctive features of the best feminist research' (Harding, 1987: 3; see also, for example, Stanley, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Millen, 1997; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998; Ramazanoglu with Holland, 2002; Letherby, 2002a; 2003a; Hesse-Biber, 2007). There is no such thing as a feminist research method; rather, what is distinctive about feminist research is a sensitivity to the significance of gender within society and a critical approach to the research process and product. Rather than focusing on the methods (tools for gathering evidence/collecting data), feminists are concerned with researchers' methodological reflections. Methodology, concerned as it is with the

'getting of knowledge', is key to understanding the relationship between knowledge and power (Stanley and Wise, 2008: 222) and is thus an essential part of the feminist project, in that it is the focus on the relationship between theory, methods and new knowledge. And yet it is important to remember that the term 'feminist methodology' is also used to describe an ideal approach to doing research, one which is always respectful of respondents and acknowledges the subjective involvement of the researcher. This leads us to the question which Mary Margaret Cook and Judith A. Fonow (1990: 71) first posed a quarter of a century ago: 'is feminist methodology that which feminists *do* or that which we *aim for*?' (original emphasis). In the light of this I dissent from the view that the 'paradigm divide' has been the central concern of feminists and rather suggest that the relationship between the process and the product/the knowing/'doing' relationship has (Letherby, 2003a; 2004; 2010).

There has been, both within the feminist community and outside of it, a longstanding discussion of objectivity and subjectivity in social research. Among others, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Karl Mannheim, Michel Foucault and Howard Becker (see Scott, 2013 for discussion here) all considered the significance and impact of subjectivity. Recently, in challenging the possibility of an objective, value-free approach, a number of authors have attempted to redefine objectivity. Arguing for *situated objectivity*, Malcolm Williams (2005; 2013) claims that objectivity is socially situated and value-laden. Richard Jenkins (2002) argues for *good enough objectivity* and insists that researchers need to keep their hard-won critical distance during research. And Tim May, with Beth Perry (2011), urges us to undertake multi/interdisciplinary research and engage in *corroborative objectivity*. Some of these positions (Williams' in particular) are similar to Sandra Harding's (1993) argument. In her discussion of the value and status of feminist knowledge Harding suggests that knowledge and truth are partial and situated, power-imbued and

relational, and argues for a position she calls *strong objectivity*. Other feminists writing in the 1990s either began with or engaged more with subjectivity. Dorothy Smith (1999), for instance, insists that social science should abandon the 'pretense' of detached, objective knowledge, while Donna Haraway (1991) provides a critique of and challenge to gendered binaries that position masculinity as objective and femininity as subjective. Lorraine Code (1995) argues that most knowledge-production is politically invested and that taking subjectivity into account makes us examine political structures within research.

In my own work I have argued, like Code (1995; this volume) for a position that starts with the subjective. Code's argument focuses on the ways in which women's subjectivity, their 'place', is defined and monitored by others, which means that women (and others) are hurt, diminished and discredited by/in relation to the white, male norm. Thus, women and 'others' experience epistemic marginalization (this volume). Code and others also remind us that while there are experiences that women share there are differences between us (see also Di Stefano, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Kruks, this volume). My argument for theorized subjectivity (see Letherby, 2003a; Letherby, 2013a) involves the constant, critical interrogation of our personhood – both intellectual and personal – within the production of the knowledge. Thus, my concern has been specifically with the significance of subjectivity (including difference) within the research process and product. Rather than attempt to redefine objectivity I (like others) have instead been concerned (and have concerns) with 'the pursuit of objectivity' as the starting point of any discussion of objectivity and subjectivity within the epistemological labour process. I have argued that if instead we start by accepting our subjective position – the significance of our personhood (intellectual and personal) within the research process – and try to understand the complexities and the influence of these, 'this 'super-sensitivity' to

the relevance of the personhood of the researcher could feasibly lead to the conclusion that our work is closer to objectivity, in that our work, if not value-free, is value-explicit' (Letherby, 2003a: 71). Rather than advocating objectivity as an obtainable epistemological virtue or struggling to redefine the term it is better, I think, to begin from a position that acknowledges what reflecting on our subjectivity can do for the research process and product. Thus, theorized subjectivity starts by recognizing the value (as in worth, rather than moral value) – both positive and negative – of the subjective (Letherby, 2003a; Letherby, 2013a). As such it acknowledges both the epistemological advantage of some and the marginalization of others (Code, this volume) and the significance of difference (Kruks, this volume) and applies this methodologically with epistemological consequences.

Many researchers begin their research with experience of what they are studying (see, for example, Wilkinson and Kitlinger, 1996; Katz-Rothman, 1996; 2007; Letherby, 2013b) and/or have views on what they might find as much as respondents do. The researcher/respondent relationship itself impacts on the research process and product. As researchers we become the biographers of our respondents while recognizing that the autobiographies that respondents share with us are influenced by the research relationship. Respondents have their own views of what researchers might like to hear. Moreover, we draw on our own experiences to help us understand those of our respondents, so that respondents 'lives are filtered through us and the filtered stories of our lives are present (whether we admit it or not) in our written accounts' (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993: 74). In addition, all experience is context specific and this affects our engagement with and perception of our own and others' experience (see Kruks, this volume). All of this highlights the need for researchers to be explicit about the significance of their personal, as well as intellectual (Stanley, 1993), autobiography to the 'academic labour process'

(Stanley, 1993: 45). Theorized subjectivity acknowledges that research is an auto/biographical practice in that the relationship between self and other within research is significant; going further, the subjective practice and privilege of the researcher(s) is always under scrutiny. It is a reflexive approach and I believe a 'morally responsible' one (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 200), as it acknowledges the significance of both the intellectual and the personal auto/biography of researchers and of respondents and also highlights the privileged position (for example, in terms of access to resources and numerous accounts – see below) of researchers (Letherby, 2003b; Letherby, 2013a).

My own primary substantive area of interest has always been human reproduction and non/parental identity, by which I mean the status and experience of women (and to a lesser extent men) who do and do not mother (father). My earliest work in this area was my final year undergraduate project, which focused on women's experience of miscarriage (Letherby, 1993), an event I had experienced four years earlier. This was followed by my doctoral research, for which I explored individuals' (predominantly women's) experience of 'infertility' and 'involuntary childlessness' (e.g. Letherby, 1999; 2002a; 2003a; Exley and Letherby, 2001). At the time of the fieldwork stage of this project I fitted the medical definition of 'infertile' and was 'involuntarily childless'. Since then I have experienced social motherhood, which has influenced further work (e.g. Kirkman and Letherby, 2008). Hence, some of my work in this area (on foster caring, teenage pregnancy and young parenthood and in managing long-term conditions in pregnancy and early motherhood) relates to my own autobiography and I continually reflect on the significance of my own experience within my research writings. Throughout my academic career I have also been interested in and researched and written about the experience of working and learning in higher education. One of my published pieces was written jointly with several postgraduate colleagues

(Holliday et al., 1993). We reflected on our position in the academy in order to challenge the commonsense view that the postgraduate experience is inevitably isolating. Since then, alone and with various colleagues, I have written/researched on women's studies students' experience of university life (e.g. Letherby and Marchbank, 2001; Marchbank and Letherby, 2001); gender, respect and emotional labour in the academy (e.g. Barnes-Powell and Letherby, 1998; Letherby, 2000b; Letherby and Shiels, 2001; Marchbank and Letherby, 2001); non/parenthood in the academy (Ramsay and Letherby, 2006; Letherby et al., 2005); 'older' women's experience within the academy (Cotterill et al., 2007a); feminist ways of working (e.g. Cotterill and Letherby, 1998; Cotterill et al., 2007b); and multi-disciplinary collaborative working (Letherby and Stenhouse, 2013).

I start from an epistemological position that rejects a simplistic foundationalist/standpoint position. I do not believe that I am in a position to generate the 'true story' of non/motherhood or academic life but I do believe that 'my story' can stand in opposition to and as a criticism of 'other stories' (both feminist and non-feminist, academic and lay) which I, and many others, see as at worst inaccurate and at best partial. While I agree with Stanley and Wise (1993; 2005) that as researchers we are not intellectually superior to our respondents I do think it is important that we acknowledge our intellectual privileges and the implications of these. I agree that we all 'observe, categorize, analyse, reach conclusions' and that 'people theorize their own experience ... and so researchers of the social are faced with an already "first order" theorized material social reality' (Stanley 1990: 208). So I believe that respondents as well as researchers are reflexive, theorizing individuals. Reflexivity – both descriptive (the description of one's reflection) and analytical (involving comparison and evaluation) – are essential parts of the research process and both researchers and respondents engage in it. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that those of us

who hold the title of researcher and/or writer are in a privileged position, in terms of not only access to multiple accounts but also disciplinary training. This enables us to engage in 'second order theorizing' which involves 'interpretation', not just 'description' of respondents' as well as the researchers' analytical processes (Letherby, 2002b). I accept that not only do most people not have the opportunity or the resources to consider the issues that concern them in this way but that given inequalities within the academy many groups of people remain unrepresented (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996). Thus, 'doing (feminist) methodology' highlights for me the problems in taking an epistemological position. In all of my work I have found myself arguing for an epistemological position somewhere between 'epistemic privilege' and 'post-modernism'/relativism. I do not claim to have found 'the answer' to anything but by starting to ask different questions of different/under-researched groups I believe that my research highlights complexities of differences of experience that have previously not been considered. My presentation is filtered through my understandings, but at the same time I make self-conscious attempts to understand respondents' understandings in their own terms and an attempt to continually reflect on my own position within the knowledge-production process. In accepting the 'job' of researcher/writer I have a responsibility to acknowledge my privileged resources and thus stand by the claims that I make.

Feminists are concerned to undertake research for, rather than about, women. Not surprisingly, because of their open political commitment, feminists are sometimes accused of producing biased rather than valid and authoritative knowledge. One example here is Martyn Hammersley (2011: 39), who believes that objectivity is an epistemological virtue and that any approach that does not accept this is a threat to 'the rational pursuit of inquiry'. In answer to this I again suggest that subjectivity is inevitable within the research process and that reflecting on the

significance of our subjectivity adds to, rather than detracts from, the accountability and authority of our research product. The debate about whether or not research and researchers should have political aims extends beyond the feminist community but specifically here, for many feminists, feminist research is feminist theory in action, making methodological transparency essential so that both our process and our resulting product are clear and thus open to critical scrutiny by others (Stanley, 1984; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Letherby, 2003a; 2013a; Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Reflecting on the status of knowledge and issues of auto/biography within feminist research, Barbara Katz Rothman (1996: 51) suggested that there had been a fundamental shift in methodological thinking where an 'ethic of involvement has replaced an ethic of objectivity'. From this perspective, writing from personal experience rather than from a position of 'detached objectivity' is likely to give the writer 'credentials':

In the circles I travel in now, if you see an article by a colleague on breast cancer you write to see how she is, wonder when she was diagnosed. If you see an article on Alzheimer's you assume someone's got a parent or in-law to help. I can track my colleagues' progression through the life cycle, through crises and passages, by article and book titles. (Rothman, 1996: 51)

However, a decade later she argued:

Whether the stories we use are our own, or those of our informants, or those we cull from tables of statistically organized data, we remain storytellers, narrators, making sense of the world as best we can We owe something ... to our readers and to the larger community to which we offer our work. Among the many things we owe them, is an honesty about ourselves: who we are as characters in our own stories and as actors in our own research. (Rothman, 2007: unpaginated)

Rothman's second position is, I think, more appropriate in that it highlights the need to work towards the production of 'accountable' knowledge (see also Stanley, 1999; Letherby, 2003a) rather than suggesting that researching

those whose experience is close to our own experience an essential requirement. Personal experience is sometimes the motivation for research, and connections and relationships are made between researchers and respondents. But it is not always possible or desirable to research issues close to us (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996). An auto/biographical connection should not be seen as a prerequisite to 'good' research and researchers do not always identify with respondents and vice versa even when they share an experience and/or identity (Letherby and Zdrokowski, 1995). Feminists acknowledge the need to be sensitive to differences between women and to 'the conundrum of how not to undercut, discredit or write-off women's consciousness as different from our own' (Stanley, 1984: 201). On the other hand, although individual (or group) experience cannot be universally generalized it is likely to resonate with the experiences of similar others (Young, 1990; Kruks, this volume). Additionally, as the development and debates surrounding feminist methodology have taken place during a period of increasing inequality for many worldwide, '[f]eminism remains inherently contradictory because gender is only part of people's lives. In order to transform unjust gender relations, more than gender must change' (Ramazanoglu with Holland, 2002: 68).

Acknowledging complex power relationships between self and other feminist researchers are concerned to privilege the voices of those that they research and to equalize the researcher/respondent relationship. Stanley and Wise (2008) report on a number of feminist research projects which foreground the auto/biographical. Frigga Haug and colleagues (1987), in their project focusing on female sexualization, argue that 'the researcher' in this case was a collective group who engaged in the collective co-process of talking, thinking, analysing and writing. They add that the 'collective interrogation, analysis and interpretation' should be as central to emancipatory research as they are

to emancipatory politics (Stanley and Wise, 2008: 233–4). For example, the origins of Rebecca Campbell's (2002) work, which was centrally concerned with the emotional impact of people who work with rape survivors, lay in Campbell's long-term experiences in rape crisis work. Thus, the research was a reflexive project undertaken by someone who was both researcher and worker (Stanley and Wise, 2008: 234–5).

Other feminists have adopted a participatory action-orientated research approach (PAR) following Stringer's (1996) four guiding principles of PAR:

- democratic, enabling participation of all people;
- equitable, acknowledging people's equality of worth;
- liberating, providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions;
- life enhancing, enabling the expression of people's full human potential.

An example of this approach is Maggie O'Neill's (2008) research on violence at work for female sex workers, which combines critical theory, lived experience, creative visual practices and praxis in her usage of PAR. She suggests that researchers and policy makers can use such an approach to address and change social inequalities.

Attention to issues of auto/biography is relevant to the analysis and presentation of data as well as the collection of it. June Purvis (1994: 180) writing about her research on the suffragette movement of Edwardian England, especially the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), insists on the importance of finding women's voices in the past to enable a challenge to the dominant narrative about prison life presented in the majority of secondary sources. She suggests that personal prison testimonies are the most favoured source for historians, as they were written in the time and place of the event. Yet, it is important to acknowledge the constraints surrounding personal prison accounts, as the women were allowed to write and receive letters only to keep in contact with

'respectable friends' and not so that they could keep informed of public events (Purvis 1994: 181). Purvis adds that as most of the women's published autobiographies were written long after the events they were describing it is likely that these were influenced by some loss of memory. With this in mind she used a range of personal documents to explore how central the sense of collectivity and of comradeship was for suffragettes who were sent to prison. However, she remains concerned that she, as any other historian, might be selecting data from the past to 'fit' understandings of the present. This concern resonates with my reflections on some of my own research, in which I have argued:

I am conscious that I 'took away their words' and then analysed the data from my own political, personal and intellectual perspective. As Fine (1994) argues, research involves 'carving out pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit and deploy to border our arguments' (p22). Thus, I am aware that my voice is the loudest. With this in mind I attempted to be sensitive to issues of power and control throughout the whole research process. When writing up my data I highlighted my role in the selection and interpretation of respondents' narratives and in terms of presentation of 'findings'. (Letherby, 2002a: 3.7)

And:

I was aware of the danger of positioning my experience as the norm, against which others would be judged, and agree with Temple (1997) that 'It is by listening and learning from other people's experiences that the researcher can learn that "the truth" is not the same for everyone'. (Letherby, 2002a: 5.2)

Others have encountered the same issues: writing about what she calls 'the crisis of representation in anthropology', Katherine Frank (2000: 482), drawing on the writing of Clifford, argues that the ethnographer is involved in much more than 'translating the reality of others' (Clifford, 1986: 7). Rather, s/he is helping to create that reality in the act of writing, thus actively inventing, not just merely representing, cultures (Clifford,

1986). Frank (2000) supports ethnographically informed fiction as a way of presenting data which 'renders lived experience with more verisimilitude than does the traditional realist text, for it enables the reader to feel that interpretation is never finished or complete (Diversi, 1998: 132). This form of representation is also a way to 'protect' respondents. Kay Inckle (2010:1), reporting on her research on self-injury, suggests that the use of fictional characters and creative writing strategies not only anonymizes respondents and their others but also allows an in-depth representation of the 'real-life' inner worlds, emotions and experiences.

Feminist auto/biographical work then acknowledges the relationship between the self and the other within research and writing. Theorized subjectivity takes this responsibility seriously by not privileging the voice of the researcher/writer over that of respondents, constantly reflecting on the process/product relationship within research and acknowledging and taking responsibility for differential power relations within the research process and in terms of editorship and representation.

FEMINIST AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL LIFE WRITINGS

Traditionally, autobiographers typically regarded themselves as autonomous individuals in control of themselves, their lives and their stories (Watson and Kimmich, 1999: 1). Increasingly, however, just as those researching the lives of others recognize the interplay between the self and the other in auto/biographical writing, so do those writing about themselves:

... 'autobiography[ical],' writing mediates the space between 'self' and 'life'. One definition suggests that autobiography is an effort to recapture the self ... This claim presumes that there is such a thing as the 'self' and that it is 'knowable'. This coming-to-knowledge of the self constitutes both the desire that initiates the autobiographical act and the goal toward which

autobiography directs itself. Thus the place to begin our investigation of autobiography might be at the crossroads of 'writing' and 'selfhood'. (Benstock, 1999: 7)

At the same time feminist auto/biographers (and others) acknowledge that identity is multi-dimensional. For example, Martine Watson and Allison Kimmich (1999: xii-xiii) argue that the concept of multiple selves has been liberating for many feminists as this challenges traditional ideas of selfhood where the notion of a unified, essential self has historically been more appropriate for and relevant to a man's life than a woman's. Autobiographical accounts by women highlight the fragmentation of women's lives in their challenge to meet the expectations of others as well as their challenge to these expectations and their search for a positive, coherent sense of self. As Stanley (1993) notes, memory is always and inevitably involved when writing about the self 'after the event', even if aids to memory (such as letters, notes, photographs etc.) are available. This means that life writing is inevitably 'highly selective and highly interpretive' (1993: 49). Stanley adds that even the more immediate diary writing is, similarly, a combination of both selectivity and interpretation.

There are many examples of feminist auto-biographical pieces that confirm this type of writing as complex representations of the self and the other. Among the best known is Carolyn Steedman's (1986) *Landscape for a Good Woman*, which is concerned with 'disruptive narratives' told by her mother. In focusing on two generations of working-class women, Steedman provides an in-depth focus on different lives in order to tell an analytically and politically informed story about the lives of working-class women (Stanley and Wise, 2008). As she herself writes:

This book, then, is about interpretations, about the places where we rework what has already happened to give current events meaning. It is about the stories we make for ourselves, and the social specificity of our understanding of those stories. (Steedman, 1986: 11)

Some of the complexities of the idea of ‘stories we make for ourselves’ are apparent in the work of Simone de Beauvoir, who wrote six volumes of autobiography in all. In the first she wrote that she wanted her life ‘to be a beautiful story’, and her autobiography did leave a largely positive and fulfilled account of her life, a life focused on aiming for and achieving literary and intellectual success. However, Mary Evans (1993) encourages us to look closer at these works as well as at others’ writings of de Beauvoir (and others interested in her life) and suggests that the version of her life presented by de Beauvoir represents the fiction, fantasy and motivation of her life, whereas in reality her life was more complex and less flattering (Evans, 1993: 11).

The tension between fiction and fact is also evident in Jeanette Winterson’s (2011) autobiography *Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?* In it she reflects on her auto/biographically informed novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, published in 1985. The novel tells the story of a girl, adopted by Pentecostal parents, who disappoints her parents by not becoming a missionary and by falling in love with a woman. Winterson writes (2011: 2–6):

I told my version – faithful and invented, accurate and misremembered, shuffled in time. I told myself as hero like any shipwreck story And I suppose the saddest thing for me, thinking about the cover version that is *Oranges*, is that I wrote a story I could live with. The other one was too painful. I could not live with it.

In writing her autobiography Oakley (1984) uses a mixture of fact and fiction. She begins the book by acknowledging the relationship between her own life experience and those of others (both known to her and not): ‘I have ... tried self-consciously to draw together in this book some of the connecting threads between my life and the lives of others, between the issues that concern me and those that are of general concern to others’ (Oakley, 1984: 2–3).

All of the examples I give here demonstrate the need for reflexivity within life writings

and are further evidence of how personal and intellectual auto/biography/theorized subjectivity should be central to all our work and how such work demonstrates critical, analytic practice (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Stanley, 1993; Letherby, 2003a; 2013a).

Life writing includes pieces about particular events and experiences as well as those focusing on a life as a whole. Feminist examples, focusing on women’s experience, include (but are definitely not limited too) writings on experiences of illness (e.g. Ettorre, 2005; Oakley, 2007), non/motherhood (e.g. Kirkman and Letherby, 2008; Rogers, 2009; Murray, 2010) and work and education life (e.g. Kennedy et al., 1993; Malina and Maslin-Prothero, 1998). Some of these pieces also draw on biographical data from research, whereas in some the primary focus is the life and experience of the writer.

From the beginning of my own publishing career I have written autobiographically. The following are two extracts from recent publications, which are reproduced here in order to emphasize the often problematic relationship between the self and the other in research relationships and writings and the ways in which our own experiences and their counter meanings offer possibilities for theoretical explanation.

In my first job I was employed as a nursery nurse in the postnatal ward of a large hospital and in the next as deputy manager in a university day nursery. My NNEB training and these early jobs felt like preparation for my inevitable role as *earth mother*. I felt smugly prepared for parenthood, and argued that all parents would benefit from the training and experience that I had gained. In addition I was sure that I was a ‘natural’ and a couple of years into marriage I was more than ready to start ‘trying for a family’

It was fifteen months before I became pregnant and I still remember the feelings of desperation and helplessness and the growing sense of grief and loss month after month. In March 1984 I achieved pregnancy. The first hospital scan took place in week fifteen. The baby was only of nine weeks’ gestation and wasn’t growing but as I’d lost a little blood at weeks four and eight we were told not to worry too much: ‘maybe your dates are different than you think’. I was sent away and told

to come back a week later but a couple of days later I started to bleed and experience cramps in my lower back. In bed that night, sleeping lightly against the pain, I woke needing to go to the toilet. As I stood what seemed to me and to my husband like gallons of bloodied water gushed from me. Once in the bathroom I felt the urge to push, and when I stood up a tiny foetus, my baby, our child, was in the toilet. I wrapped him or her (we never found out the sex) in a towel and called for the doctor.

There followed patchy and often insensitive medical care and months of despair and depression. Eventually, largely because of the constant, patient support of my mother I began to recover emotionally. My husband and I decided against pursuing infertility treatment. We divorced early in the 1990s and although I married again to my knowledge I have never been pregnant since (Letherby and Stenhouse, 2013: 186).

And what about the ambivalence of my own identity? If good motherhood is synonymous with good womanhood (e.g. Ruddick, 1980; Letherby, 1994; Liamputtong, 2006) surely this impacts on my status not only as mother but also as woman?

But if motherhood is really about nurturing and not merely (even) about biological and kinship connections surely I am a mother, no need for the word step. **But when I came** into their lives my stepsons already had a mother, something I never denied. So although I cared and cooked, provided financial support and affection, I was always Gayle, never mum. This has struck me even more in recent years because as my husband's sons became estranged from him they have become estranged from me also. **But even if mother** is just about biology and biological connections I am a mother in that I carried a child for sixteen weeks. **But I was never** able to name my biological child or hold it (you see it doesn't even have a sex) or play with it. So in both these cases, then, am I nearly a mother but not quite, not really? Certainly this was the view of the editor of a feminist journal who changed my reference to a 'parenting relationship with my partner's two sons' to 'a kind of parenting relationship ...'.

my desires and intentions have been subject to change and I have shifted my position on what James H. Monach (1993) calls the 'voluntarily/'involuntary' childless continuum. I appreciate that my choices are constrained – i.e. made within circumstances not of my own making – but of course this is not unusual and indeed is relevant of the reproductive 'choices' that all women make (Petchesky, 1980). So, even though I am aware of the constraints on my 'choice' it feels like a choice nevertheless. Twenty-six

years ago, when I had my miscarriage, my central aim was to be a mother, and I felt that I was only half a woman without a child. Any doubts or ambivalences I had about becoming a mother I denied. Now I feel very different. I no longer feel a lesser woman (or less than adult) for not mothering children. I am also able to accept the equivocal nature of my desires – that is, a part of me enjoys the freedom that I have had and have because of my biologically childless state. If I had become a biological mother I know that I would have felt opposing emotions in relation to that experience also (Letherby, 2010: 266) (original emphasis).

In including my own experience in my writing I hope to make clear not only the influence my autobiography has on the work that I do but how, in turn, that work influences my autobiography.

SOME REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Auto/biographical work for feminists and for others is not without its challengers, not least because of its challenge to the traditional academic orthodoxy of both writing and reading (e.g. Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Temple, 1997; Sparkes, 2002; Davies, 2012). Those of us who do write auto/biographically have been criticized by some for being self-indulgent, for producing weak intellectual work (for details see Katz-Rothman, 1986; Scott, 1998; Letherby, 2000a; Sparkes, 2002). Sara Delamont (2009) differentiates between work that she identifies as autobiographical ethnography and autobiographical reflexivity. For Delamont the latter is beneficial, even essential, whereas the former is 'the narcissistic substitution of autoethnography for research' (Delamont, 2007: 3).

The potential (and sometimes real) threat of professional, intellectual and emotional attack explains why sometimes researchers and writers write about 'the personal' outside of the main report of a study, or not at all (McMahon, 1996). So, researching and writing auto/biographically is not without its problems. But a reflexive critical auto/biographical approach is not (as is sometimes

suggested) ‘navel gazing’ and ‘self absorption’ (Okely and Callaway, 1992: 2). Indeed, those who do not engage in such self-reflection and instead protect the self from scrutiny presume inaccurately that their presence and relations with others are unproblematic. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that auto/biographical ‘voices’ within academia remain predominantly white, educated, middle-class and Western (Bertram, 1998). Thus, not everyone has equal access to the public articulation of the auto/biographical. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, auto/biography is always partial, in that the writer has the power to edit the final account and that silences, hidden selves and shadows of others are present in all our writing (e.g. Iles, 1992; McMahon, 1996; Letherby, 2003a; 2013a). As Steph Lawler argues:

... the relationship between identity and autobiography is not that autobiography (the telling of a life) *reflects* a pre-given identity: rather, identities are *produced* through the autobiographical work in which all of us engage every day, even though few of us will formally write an ‘autobiography’. The narratives we produce in this context are stories of how we come to be the way we are. But it is *through* the narratives themselves that we produce our identities in this way. (2008: 13)

Recent and current changes in the academy and externally have determined ‘relevance’ and ‘usefulness’ as increasingly important in defining what research should be done, what knowledge should be produced and how that knowledge will be assessed. This, I think, makes the case for ‘theorized subjectivity’ even stronger. The influences on research funding and the expectations of research in terms of impact alongside the motivation of many researchers to make a positive difference to the lives of real people all strongly imply the need for critical scrutiny of the relationship between the self and the other and the acknowledgement of researcher/writer privilege within the research process and product. Yet, although encouraging to those who argue for research praxis (practice

informed by research and theory), this approach does raise concerns, not least in terms of the fact that it can distract us from actually doing the research and making an impact in its generation of another layer of research and debate concerned with how best to improve research impact. Another concern for some is just whose interests are being served. If we only do research and write about things that focus on government priorities this makes for a very narrow agenda (Letherby and Bywaters 2007). Adopting a position of ‘theorized subjectivity’ ensures that differentials of power and privilege are explicit within the research and writing process, which, in turn, highlights in/equalities and in/exclusion in terms of research and writing agendas and products.

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Power in Feminist Research Processes¹

Sabine Grenz

INTRODUCTION

Power is a major concern for feminist research as well as for feminist activism. In terms of academic research power has an impact on the conditions in which a project is initiated and produced (Stanley and Wise, 1993). This question – of the conditions through which research is produced – involves further issues: the relatively few women at senior levels in academia compared to men, the commonplace marginalization of research on gender, whether conducted by men or women, and the increasing levels of precarious employment, limited access to funding and increased workload within academia (Gill, 2010).

These are aspects of power that operate on research projects from the outside, all of which are important to discuss. However, in this article I will focus on power operating within research processes. These power workings on the micro level of academic research are not isolated from either social power relations on the macro level of academia or society, on the

whole. Instead, from a Foucauldian perspective power is capillary and hence, more comprehensive power structures are reproduced in concrete research settings.

At the basis of feminist reflections on power within research processes we can identify a critique of social hierarchies as well as of the marginalization of women and their realms of life in mainstream research practices. As a result, one of the foremost intentions of feminist researchers of many disciplines has been to include women and their perspectives into scientific research. It would thus bring them ‘from the margins to the centre’ (Harding, 1993), to make them visible and show that they provide valuable knowledge about the functioning of social worlds (Harding, 1993). The aim was to develop ‘a sociology for women’ (Finch, 1993) instead of a sociology that would either exclude or instrumentalize them. As a consequence, feminist researchers have designed research projects that support that goal. Furthermore, they have developed a shared set of epistemological assumptions

and methodological tools. Within this process, they have scrutinized the relationship between themselves as researchers and their participants in order to transform the inherent power relation of expert and lay knowledge that regularly shapes social research projects and to meet respondents on a more equal basis.

Since the question of power between a researcher and her participants is most central in research projects where other persons are involved as research objects, most methodological reflections stem from feminist social research projects. Two texts on how to practise feminist social research are foundational – those of Maria Mies (1978) and Ann Oakley (1981). In both, the authors reflected upon their research practice and through it suggested innovative and challenging research practices.

Ann Oakley argued that the usual style of interviewing in sociology establishes a hierarchy between a researcher and their respondents, and suggested that, instead, interviewing should not be a one-way process. Interviewees' questions and needs should be taken seriously and answered. This is particularly necessary if a researcher aims to make women's voices heard and their subjective experiences visible to others. Maria Mies described several *methodological postulates*, all of which are related to power relations between researcher and researched. The overall tone, as well as some of her postulates, resonate in Ann Oakley's article (and those of many other feminists as well). The postulates were: firstly, a conscious partial identification with research participants instead of a value-free and neutral research position. This was because neutral and objective research tools do not necessarily serve the goal of women's emancipation (Mies, 1978; Oakley, 1981). Researchers such as Maria Mies and Ann Oakley argued that – even though they did not deny class differences and hierarchies – as a woman they were in the same position as their research participants. The second postulate concerned the use of the perspective 'from below' in

order to make power relations visible. This resonates with Harding's (1993) formulation of standpoint theory in which the marginalized and their perspectives were privileged because this bears the promise of providing knowledge that brings about social change (Haraway, 1990). Although there also is a warning against romanticizing the voices of the marginalized (Thürmer-Rohr, 1984; Haraway, 1990), this reflection also sensitizes the interviewer to the needs of participants. Furthermore, Mies suggested participatory action research in order to avoid doing research only for others instead of being personally involved as a woman. This should also serve the goal of initiating change as a tool to gain knowledge – not only a change within academia but also a social change. Mies also argued that research projects should be designed and chosen to accord with what she defined as 'liberating' goals, a concept also articulated as 'research for women, not just on women' (Kirsch, 2005). As a result, research ought to raise the awareness of oppression as well as the historical progress that has already been reached because of feminist activism. Finally, Mies argued for the development of feminist theory derived from the experience of activism. Overall one can agree with Carol Smart who states that: 'In critiquing classical sociological approaches feminist work challenged the distinctions between researcher and researched, incorporated narrative and literary genres, championed qualitative work, and promoted reflexive standpoint research' (Smart, 2009: 296).

Feminist and pro-feminist researchers have widely accepted these postulates and applied them to other contexts. By doing this they discovered dilemmas as well as new creative ways of dealing with them. Power dilemmas arise, for instance, in thinking through the representation of the marginalized *Other* (see Gibson-Graham, 1994; Taylor and Rupp, 2005), while others include the fact that participants are not innocent (Haraway, 1990). Research may include male participants or participants of higher social

ranks – a circumstance that creates another set of questions because power relations between a researcher and the researched are altered through other social inequalities (e.g. Scott, 1984; Smart, 1984; Lee, 1997; Willott, 1998; Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001). Yet another set of problematic power relations arises in research on sexualities – mostly related to research of so-called sexual deviancy (Taylor and Rupp, 2005; Sanchez Taylor and O’Connell Davidson, 2010). Furthermore, sexism and racism, as well as physical dangers, were issues feminist researchers faced in research situations (Scott, 1984; Phoenix, 1994; 2010). As a consequence, postulates such as those mentioned above proved to be problematic. Subsequently, the category ‘women’ has been widely questioned. As a result, ‘feminist research was its own most trenchant critic; it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that feminist methodologies existed then in a state of constant challenge and continual reformulation. Feminist methodology could not, of course, stand still’ (Smart, 2009: 296 fn).

Even though feminists scrutinized feminist methodological positions, early postulates of feminist research still serve as reference points. Interestingly, in terms of methodology it is hard to find the same criticism or dismissal that has been formulated elsewhere against earlier feminisms and feminist theories of the 1970s and 1980s (Hark, 2005; Hemmings, 2011). Instead, the discussion and further development of this basis continues without cutting off these research roots (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 1994; Grenz, 2005; Presser, 2005; Taylor and Rupp, 2005; Markussen, 2012). However, extending those roots has been suggested by, for example, Lois Presser (2005), who conducted interviews with male sex offenders. She argues for a widening of feminist methodology for her male respondents, who have been, at times, demonized by feminist researchers. From her perspective, this renders their humanity, regret and confession invisible. One of the results of this ongoing debate is a differentiated perspective including post-structural

theorization on power as dynamic, fluid and also symbolic in the research situation. Nevertheless, feminists still hold on to the goal of doing research for marginalized people and to initiate or support social transformation (see Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010; Markussen, 2012). The following discussion of research on sexuality will illustrate the working of these aspirations in the research practice.

CONFIDENTIALITY, SECRECY AND PERFORMATIVITY IN RESEARCH ON SEXUALITIES

In the social sciences it is common sense that the interview situation ought to be ‘as confidential as possible’ (Lamnek, 1989: 67; my translation). Respondents need to trust that their stories will be treated with respect by the interviewer. This respect is crucial in research on sexualities. For instance, even though prostitution is not illegal in European countries such as Britain and Germany, confidentiality is an important issue for each side of the commercial sex encounter – for sex-workers as well as for their clients (O’Connell Davidson, 1998). Kleiber and Velten (1994) recognized in their research on heterosexual clients that ‘prostitution is still a sensitive social taboo area’ and that participants were ‘anxious about being able to preserve their anonymity’ (Kleiber and Velten, 1994: 46; my translation). Rothe (1997), too, was told by participants how important anonymity is. Similarly, they as well as other researchers recognized that only few of their participants had talked with others about their experiences with prostitutes before (Hydra, 1991; Kleiber and Velten, 1994; Grenz, 2005; Gerheim, 2012). Commercial sexuality is mostly a lonely business. Neither group identity of clients nor public campaigning for them has been fully developed, even though clients nowadays have their own websites in order to support the development of a sexual identity as a consumer of sexual services.

The need for confidentiality and trust also applies to sexually minoritized groups such

as LGBTI-people or people who favour sexual practices such as SM or foot fetishism. As a consequence, it can be difficult to gain access to sexual minority groups. Furthermore, interviewees might observe and question the interviewer from a distrustful position, and interviewers might have to undergo a series of tests to gain access. This is also true for research related to other topics. For instance, at the beginning of her fieldwork on secrecy cultures in contemporary Guatemala Silvia Posocco (2004) recorded a feeling of being interrogated instead of interviewing people. Her account questions the assumption of a powerful researcher, since interviewees decide how much they will disclose.

Other researchers have pointed out that access is easier on the basis of sameness rather than difference (Ryan-Flood, 2009; Johnston, 2010). Roísín Ryan-Flood (2010) interpreted her being 'out' as a lesbian as an advantage in finding participants and reassuring them. Lynda Johnston (2010) voiced similar experiences in research projects on lesbian women. However, she problematizes this basis as possibly essentialist, since her similar sexual lifestyle marginalized other differences between her and her research participants. Nevertheless, when she started a project on heterosexual marriage tourism to New Zealand, she acted as straight in order not to be marginalized in a setting that is dominated by conservative imaginations of heterosexual relationships (Johnston, 2010). Yet in relation to research on commercial sexuality the assumption of sameness as a basis to find participants has proved to be wrong. Female as well as male researchers who did not identify (or act) as clients or sex-workers themselves were able to find sufficient participants (Velten, 1994; Grenz, 2005; Sanders, 2005; Walby, 2010; Gerheim, 2012) and to gather valuable data. However, it might be that participants would have been more open to fellow prostitutes' clients. This research has yet to be done. Interviews with clients of commercial sex also conducted by sex-workers,

however, did not disclose any more or deeper knowledge (Hydra, 1991).

In summary, one can argue that both positions potentially create silences. Whereas the outsider position can cause feelings of insecurity and create difficulties of speaking or unwillingness to disclose, the insider position can also produce omissions such as assumptions that the interviewer already knows. These omissions are marked by utterances such as 'you know what I mean' (Egeberg-Holmgren, 2011). This is an example of the way in which interviewees hold the power to choose what they want to disclose and what they want to withhold. They may be distrustful, not as open as a researcher wishes them to be, and conceal things intentionally. Furthermore, as Christina Scharff notes, silences on either side of the research encounter can be a way of negotiating classed relationships (Scharff, 2010: 91). Apart from this problematic, certain details might remain undisclosed during interviews simply because participants tell their stories according to what they believe is relevant information. As Georg Simmel pointed out in his sociology of secret societies (Simmel, 1908), we do not give a complete account of what is happening in our consciousness when we tell each other something. He argues that we communicate only the 'useful bits' that we know will be understood.

All these aspects point to the interactive character of storytelling, which is one of the reasons for feminists' and (pro)feminists' preference of qualitative methods. The intention of the perspective on interviews as interaction is to establish more egalitarian relationships between a researcher and their researched (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1993). Ken Plummer (1995: 20) for instance, looks at the stories told as 'joint actions' – one actor is the storyteller; the other is the coaxer who '[brings] people to the edge of telling a story they might never have told before'. Thus, there is always a danger of being seduced into saying something one wished to withhold or 'mistak[ing] a good interview for a therapeutic situation', with potential later

regret (Kirsch, 2005: 2164). As a consequence, feminist researchers have repeatedly criticized this assumption of a more egalitarian relationship (Kirsch, 2005; Ryan-Flood, 2010). After all, there is an 'implicit social contract' (Kirsch, 2005: 2165) and it is the researcher who decides what is going to be published. Since there is no obligation to participate in any research project, 'participants agree to answer truthfully' (Kirsch, 2005: 2165). In the end, researchers give less information and 'interviews are likely to be asymmetrical interactions' (Kirsch, 2005: 2165). This is obvious in Oakley's (1981) research as well: she answered women's questions, but she did not give the same amount of information to the women that she collected from them. So, on the one hand, interviews are a 'positive sanction', as Andrea Rothe (1997) noticed during her fieldwork on sex tourism. On the other, there remains the danger of exploitation, because participants can no longer control what happens with what they have said.

It is here that the need for confidentiality goes beyond the actual interview situation. Being able to write up a research report is a power position involving ethical considerations. For instance, Taylor and Rupp (2005), who did research on drag queens, noticed that researchers did harm to participants by publishing certain details of their life because the community was so small that their anonymity could not be fully preserved. Dentith et al. (2009) experienced damage to their ongoing research because it happened that certain aspects became known via newspapers. Researchers may, therefore, take responsibility beyond the individual participant in order to be politically active for minoritized sexual groups or at least in order to avoid political damage. For instance, Meg Barker and Darren Lagdridge (2010) discussed whether they should include passages about unprotected sex among gay men or therapeutic experiences of people practising SM because that might enhance existing stereotypes. Another example of the omission of confidential knowledge is Roisín Ryan-Flood's research

on lesbian mothers in Ireland and Sweden (2009). She silenced, for example, what was then illegal in Sweden, namely that lesbian women acted as heterosexual in order to get access to fertility technologies such as artificial insemination or IVF. Her intention was not to alert the authorities (Ryan-Flood, 2010).

Of course, stories are not only told for the listener but also for one's own 'self-assertion' (Schütze, 1987: 39). Sexual stories in particular are at once informative for the listener and a relief for the storyteller. Plummer concludes that 'people may tell their sexual stories as a relief from tension' (1995: 34). Andrea Rothe (1997), who studied sex tourism in Thailand, also notes that after the interview participants appeared to be calm and relaxed. Interviewees made use of the interview process 'as part of a therapeutic encounter for "redemption and social reincorporation", through a desire for help science' (Plummer, 1995: 34). They might tell their tales 'through a desire for immortality, a desire for order, as special pleading or simple exhibitionism' (1995: 34). And do not forget that 'for many the telling of a tale comes as a major way of "discovering" who one really is' (1995: 34). The fact that telling one's sexual story can serve as 'a voyage to explore the self' (1995: 34) may be an especially important incentive. However, many researchers do agree that life stories and identities are social constructions. As Byrne (2003) points out: 'Nor is this ethics [of the self] about discovering a true essence – there is no self waiting to be discovered – but it's a process of creation and re-invention out of available resources. One important resource is that of narrative.' However, narratives include not only text but also silences. For instance, Ann Phoenix (2010) reflects on silences in two interviews, when her respondents were about to talk about sexual abuse. Neither of them said explicitly what happened. Instead both made their silence explicit by indicating that they were able to tell a story but that they would not do it. It is only from the context that it appears as if they cannot mean anything else. Phoenix

(2010) relates their behaviour to studies on the ability to keep secrets and the importance of the construction of a 'self', of identity.

In such circumstances, Plummer suggests that 'Coaxers can play a crucial role in shifting the nature of the stories that are told' (Plummer, 1995: 21). As a consequence, in any research project one has to consider the further meaning of interaction: namely, that interviews are performances (Egeberg-Holmgren, 2011). Interviewers influence the story and participants alter their stories according to what they think the interviewer expects to or can bear to hear, according to how they believe (s)he is going to interpret what is said and according to how what is said will be perceived by the wider public when the study is published. Plummer continues:

No longer do people simply tell their sexual stories to reveal the truth of their sexual lives; instead they turn themselves into *socially organised biographical objects*. They construct ... tales of the intimate self, which may or may not bear a relationship to a truth. Are their stories really to be seen as the simple unfolding of some inner truth? *Or are their very stories something they are brought to say in a particular way through a particular time and place?* And if so, where do they get their stories from? Once posed this way, the sexual stories can no longer be seen simply as the harbingers of a relatively unproblematic truth. (1995: 34, emphasis in the original)

As a consequence neither sexual nor gender identity is to be seen as the 'real' or 'inner' truth of interviewees but as something constantly reproduced in the interview setting through the content of their stories, their silences and the interaction between researcher and researched.

THE HISTORICITY OF RESEARCH ON SEXUALITIES

The individual topicality of an interview as well as the construction of an inner self to be revealed both point to the mode of confession (Egeberg-Holmgren, 2011; Harvey,

2011) as a particular feature of research on sexuality and forms of so-called 'deviant' behaviour. For example, Linn Egeberg-Holmgren conducted interviews with (pro) feminist men. She experienced her interviewees trying to 'come clean' (2011: 370) of not doing enough as (pro)feminists. Kevin Walby, in his study on male escorts, finds that the confessional comes true not only for participants but also for researchers. When he met his respondents most of them asked him first whether he was gay or not (Walby, 2010). Another example is Laura Harvey, who studied condom use in Britain. Together with interviews she made use of diaries that her participants kept for a month during her research in order to report sexual encounters, fantasies or thoughts. Since the diary has a tradition of being private and intimate, this practice resonates with Foucault's technologies of the self and his theory on the production of sexual discourses (Harvey, 2011).

In an earlier article on my research on heterosexual clients of female prostitutes (Grenz, 2005) I also saw the need to relate the occurrence of the confessional back to its historical context that inevitably influences research on sexualities today (and particularly, silenced or marginalized sexualities), namely the development of sexual sciences that led to a culture of constant public as well as private confession (Plummer, 1995). In *The History of Sexuality* Michel Foucault argues that *scientia sexualis*, which was developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, refused to speak 'of sex itself' (Foucault, 1990: 53). It 'concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements and morbid aggravations' (1990: 53). It was not concerned with intensifying pleasure, with drawing 'truth ... from pleasure itself' (1990: 57) but with finding the truth about sex. As such, *scientia sexualis* was 'subordinated in the main to the imperatives of a morality whose divisions it reiterated under the guise of a medical norm' (1990: 53); it 'declared the furtive customs of the timid, and the most solitary of petty manias, dangerous for the whole society'

(1990: 53f.). In order to find these ‘dangerous’ sexual practices, *scientia sexualis* used a secularized version of confession. According to Foucault, confession is one of the major tools of power, since ‘the truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power’ (1990: 58f.). This indicates that confession has become an everyday and compelling cultural practice that ‘has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships and love relations’ (1990: 59). Furthermore, it is so common that it is no longer regarded as a tool of power:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, ‘demands’ only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of some kind of liberation. (1990: 60)

In this sense, concealment is not only a means of disclosure but also the necessary condition for confession. The scientific frame, with its anonymity, supposed neutrality and contact with experts, holds the potential of ritualization (Grenz, 2005; Walby, 2010).

But it is also the case that this scientific frame holds sexuality in opposition, an object to research, never perceived as a tool to gain knowledge. Within this theoretical framework, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (1990) idea of the closet provides a slightly different perspective. For Sedgwick, the problem with sexuality is that it is so consistently examined through *scientia sexualis* that in daily life it is impossible to address sexuality in an ‘ordinary way’. If a person discloses his or her sexuality, it is immediately turned into an identity. This can silence people who do not completely follow what is widely seen as the heterosexual norm because they are aware of the inquisitory power potentially waiting to interrogate and judge them as either immoral

or ethical, normal or deviant. People who are ‘deviant’ are often denied the opportunity to talk casually about their sexuality without explaining and justifying it. This situation is part of a secretive culture that creates the need for confession. Confession does not happen only as the result of an outside force such as an interviewer. It also arises from an internal wish to speak, to articulate feelings, deeds and so on, in order to reinvent one’s own identity, of which sexuality has become an important aspect.

One important question is whether this compulsion to confess to oneself and others in order to find one’s inner sexual ‘truth’ gives power to the researcher. On the one hand, the answer would be yes, since interviewees come to the interview with an emotional need. On the other hand, one needs to distinguish different groups of participants. The important question is whether concealment in a particular case is about being minoritized or about the privilege of having a position that basically allows one to be silent about one’s ‘deviant’ sexual position. For example, commercial sexuality takes a special position. It is pursued mostly secretly, yet is not silenced but rather very much discussed. Additionally, narratives about sexual practices are always related to sexual feelings and, hence, mixed with eroticism. As a result, concealment can also add to the thrill.

GENDER PERFORMANCES AND RESEARCH ON SEXUALITIES

Feminist and (pro)feminist scholarship has queried the gendered, classed and racialized character of research situations (Phoenix, 1994; Willott, 1998; Lewis, 2010; Phoenix, 2010; Scharff, 2010). Christina Scharff, for instance, reflects on the impact of her being middle-class on her participants: young working-class women. She recognized that often she reacted with silence to what her participants said in order not to overrule or

lecture them. This was also done in order not to risk losing rapport.

The gendered dynamics of interviews about sexuality have been discussed by a number of writers. Linn Egeberg Holmgren interprets the female-to-male interview setting in her research on (pro)feminist men in itself as gendered. She argues 'that in the situated interview interaction, the interviewees are actually encouraged to take theoretical authority (i.e. doing masculinity), to "talk first" (i.e. doing masculinity) and to define the situation (i.e. doing masculinity) in their performance and presentation of self as (pro) feminist.' (Egeberg Holmgren, 2011: 373). In a similar vein, Carol Smart argues that 'the job of an interviewer is intrinsically feminine because the interviewer's job is to facilitate speech and not to interrupt it' (Smart, 1984: 155). Hence, interviewers 'perform' femininity by silently listening to interviewees on the basis of the widespread assumption (often resulting in empirical factuality) that women are better listeners than men, leaving more space for men to talk (Scott, 1984; Finch, 1993). Like Smart, Scott, in her research on the situations of postgraduates in sociology, often experienced that male respondents who were in higher professional positions than her own made use of their status 'to deny me interviews or to control the interview' (Scott, 1984: 171).

Michael Schwalbe and Michelle Wolkomir (2001) analysed men's behaviour in interview situations and concluded that for male participants an interview is not only 'an opportunity for signifying masculinity' but also 'a peculiar type of encounter in which masculinity is threatened' because a stranger asks questions (2001: 92). By *threatened masculinity* they do not mean a challenge to an 'inner' masculine self but rather the ability to perform masculinity. They observed that men make use of certain mechanisms, such as sexualization, giving only short answers (minimizing) or expanding unnecessarily (maximizing) and 'exaggerating rationality, autonomy and control' in order to reproduce their concept of masculinity. As a

result, in interviews the socially dominant perception of masculinity is threatened.

Being looked at, investigated, can make individuals potentially feel uncomfortable. One suddenly becomes different, special. Hence, in my own research (Grenz, 2005), in the constellation of men being interviewed by a woman, I experienced a subversion of both the still culturally embedded notion of a male looker versus a female looked-at and the related notion of active versus passive. This was intensified because the research was about their sexuality. Women who were diagnosed as 'hysterics' were seen as merely exaggerating typical female characteristics and have frequently been the research objects of men, particularly in terms of their sexuality (Braun, 1999). Unlike the 'pervert', who was frequently interrogated (Foucault, 1990), the 'normal' heterosexual man was described (or prescribed) by philosophers as well as by physicians working on hygiene (Sarasin, 2001). Additionally, in Western (knowledge) societies expert knowledge has a much bigger weight than lay knowledge. Thus, even though a woman interviews men, they are the informants whereas she remains the expert. But Kevin Walby, in his study on male-for-male internet escorts, did not see that his respondents 'were trying to position as autonomous, in control or rational during interviews' (Walby, 2010: 654). As a result, he was critical of research on the reproduction of masculinity that has so far only investigated hegemonic and heteronormative masculinity:

While we can assume that interviews provide an opportunity for both the researcher and the respondent to fashion a sense of self through their talk and gestures, we should not assume that men are always in pursuit of hegemonic masculinity. (2010: 654)

Similarly, Egeberg Holmgren (2011) found that her (pro)feminist participants were not necessarily keen on reproducing hegemonic masculinity, but also questioned this position during interviews. Indeed, the 'sexuality of men cannot be treated as an extension of

gender' (Walby, 2010: 654). Neither of these categories can be assumed to be fixed, 'as sexuality is produced in encounters through interaction' (2010: 654). As a result, in recognizing the perspective on interviews as interactive processes, 'interviewers can no longer be regarded as passive listeners and neutral recorders' (2010: 654), but are part of the interaction as well (Grenz, 2005).

That researchers are involved in the interaction becomes even more salient if one considers reflections on sexist or racist utterances in interviews. Feminist and (pro)feminist researchers who did research on persons in more privileged social positions frequently discuss the occurrence of discrimination. Discrimination is not necessarily directed towards the interviewer themselves but is articulated rather indirectly by talking about the sexed, classed or racialized *Other*. They are an extension of the gendered character of interview situations. In such passages the gendered and racialized setting becomes virulent. For instance, Kathy Davis (2010) describes how she and her respondents in her study on the founders of Boston Women's Health Book Collective – all of whom are white – reproduced racism in the interview. Her respondents were aware of racism in general but nevertheless blind to their implicit racism towards their black employees. Through their neglect of their own implicit racism, and Davis' silencing of such moments in the interviews, they reproduced whiteness as a social category, and hence sameness (by excluding the 'Other').

Davis thus became a silent witness of racism without being on the side of those who were discriminated against. Apart from this, researchers can be in a more vulnerable position or directly become objects of racism and sexism. For instance, when I did my study on clients of prostitutes (Grenz, 2005; 2007), respondents would not only tell me about their experiences but in their narratives they rationalized their being a prostitutes' client by 'theorizing' about gender. The men would frequently air their views about gender relations with no reference to forms of gendered

social inequality, an experience also recorded by Carol Smart in her interviews with solicitors. She even became subject of sexist remarks (Smart, 1984).

Deborah Lee (1997) writes about her puzzling over how to treat sexist jokes (should one laugh in order not to threaten the established research relationship?) and Carol Smart (1984) wonders whether by being silent she became an accomplice of sexism. Similarly, Kathy Davis argues: 'The interviewer cannot disassociate herself from what is happening in the interviews. By keeping quiet, she is not simply passively listening to her informants but she is actively involved in the construction of meaning, including meanings that remain implicit or silent' (2010: 156).

On the basis of such considerations, Sara Willott, who worked on 'two research projects exploring the relationships between unemployment, crime and male identity' (Willott, 1998: 174) experienced a contradiction between her as feminist and her as researcher. As a feminist she worked for changes in gender relation, but as researcher she was anxious not to threaten the trust of her male research participants. However, as Ann Phoenix points out, 'rapport established in the interview situation may well have a direct impact on how forthcoming respondents are and hence the quantity (if not quality) of the data collected' (1994: 50). Thus, from her point of view a researcher has to try to develop and establish rapport as a basis of interaction and the interactive construction of reality. Without rapport a respondent might stop the interview or not turn up for a second appointment. Phoenix also recognized that the racist comments or reactions of her interviewees were part of the discourse she was researching and tried to distance herself emotionally from them:

the whole point of interviews is to evoke respondents' accounts rather than to hear one's own discourses reflected back, I would argue that this is usually interesting data rather than upsetting and that it is manageable within the interview context. (1994: 56)

Julia O'Connell Davidson (O'Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994), in her discussion of this ethical dilemma, reaches the same conclusion: in order to sustain the discourse, one has to sanction sexism positively to a certain degree to make interviewees feel comfortable, a possibility that represents a considerable challenge for many researchers.

One important aspect of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity is homophobia, 'a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men' (Kimmel, 2001: 277). Whereas sexuality between men emasculates from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, sexuality with and sexual desire for women fits into the scheme of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity. This clearly influenced interviews on heterosexuality with heterosexual men in existing studies. For instance, Udo Gerheim's (2007; 2012) study on clients of prostitutes does not include a discussion on sexualization of the male interviewer. Instead, clients made utterances of male homosocial bonding by explicitly addressing him as male in sexual relation to women (Gerheim, 2007; Grenz, 2010). This is in sharp contrast to the experiences I had during my study (Grenz, 2007) on heterosexual male clients of prostitutes: I was addressed as the *Other* and, thus, as a potential sexual partner, as a caring woman listening to them or as a researcher. In addition, in my research homosexual emotions were constantly neglected; however, I experienced situations of sexualization by the interviewees (Grenz, 2005). Just to give a few examples: one man asked me on the phone if he could show me his penis in the interview, another asked me beforehand if I would wear a skirt that showed my legs and yet another asked me after the interview if I would allow him to kiss my feet. Similar cases are mentioned in the study on clients by Hydra (a German prostitutes' rights organization) (1991).

As mentioned earlier, Schwalbe and Wolkomir interpret the sexualization of the

woman-to-man interview situation as an attempt by the man to exercise control. It can take different forms: 'flirting, sexual innuendo, touching, and remarks on appearance' (2001: 94). All of them may appear innocent, but they point to gendered power relations (2001: 94). This is particularly the case because in the heterosexual context women frequently operate as sexual objects. Representations – as well as acceptance – of women as sexual subjects are still exceptions (Ussher, 1997). However, sexualization also happened in research on drag queens (Taylor and Rupp, 2005) and male-to-male escorts (Walby, 2010). In this research the meaning is slightly altered. During their research Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp (2005) were constantly addressed as 'the lesbians' by their drag queens (2005: 2123). Additionally, they were dragged on stage and then partly undressed by their participants. They were also touched sexually by them. However, they interpret this moment of sexualization as part of a negotiation of power rather than a mere exercise of control: the economic security and middle-class status of the researcher against a gendered social position of men over women. Kevin Walby, in his research on male-for-male internet escorts, brings in yet another perspective. He recognizes that 'sexualization in the encounter is a sort of clout respondents can introduce at any moment' (2010: 649). Thus, sexualization can be an expression of control by male interviewees. It is certainly a sign of a privileged sexual position that men so openly show their desire. However, in the interview it can also be interpreted as an answer to the perceived powerlessness as interviewee or the expression of power negotiations between social classes and not only as an expression of men exercising control over women. As a consequence, at this point more research and more reflection on research on sexualities is needed to explore the nuances of this encounter as well as the power relations it entails.

This is particularly important because sexualization stands between the two persons in the interview setting. The mere possibility of

becoming sexualized hinders what has been considered as one of the most important aspects of a research relationship: rapport, which is hugely problematic in research on sexuality. As a consequence, Schwalbe and Wolkomir advise interviewers not to use flirting as a strategy to establish rapport because this may include 'the distinct disadvantage of encouraging a participant to try to create an impression of himself as sexually desirable' (2001: 94). However, as Walby (2010) and also I (Grenz, 2005) experienced, the researcher does not necessarily control the way in which respondents interpret their behaviour. Thus, they may well interpret a researcher's body language as sexual and flirtatious without that being the intention of the researcher. As a result, experiences of sexualization point to potentially dangerous situations. This danger contradicts the preference of feminists such as Finch (1993), who argued that the best solution to conduct interviews was seeing respondents in their private homes. As Deborah Lee points out: 'caution is especially salient, when an interview juxtaposes privacy of setting with an agenda specifying discussion of sex' (1997: 555f.).

Deborah Lee explored the issue of the security of the interviewer in more detail. She conducted research on sexual harassment and included a discussion of 'certain, previously unexplored dynamics of woman-to-man interviewing'. She elaborates on why 'interviewer vulnerability might have a central place in discussions of woman-to-man interviewing' (Lee 1997: 554), finding that 'this potential vulnerability might affect features of interviewing like control, rapport, and reciprocity' (1997: 555). She points to the fact that an interview situation might be dangerous because the interviewer does not know whom she is going to meet. Hence, even though it is unlikely to meet a person dangerous for oneself, the possibility can never be excluded, especially in research projects on sexual harassment. She cites many other research projects in which women researchers were in danger, such as those that involved being involuntarily stuck

in a car or a closed room alone with an unknown man, and detects a tendency to minimize the danger in the account and rather tell such stories as adventures. In order to minimize these risks, Lee (1997) developed security mechanisms such as meeting her respondents in public places whenever possible. Nevertheless, she experienced transgressions, such as interviewees holding her hands for too long when saying goodbye. However, she also met gender considerate respondents. When I (Grenz, 2005) did my research on heterosexual prostitutes' clients I also took precautions. Even though I do not assume prostitutes' clients to be violent per se, I did not know beforehand who would turn up as my participant. Furthermore, going to their home could have been understood as sexual availability. Simultaneously, I was aware that public places might make them feel uncomfortable and hinder them from talking freely about their experiences. Fortunately, I was able to use private offices of friends who were at the same time around in neighbouring rooms.

In a male-to-male context, Kevin Walby made use of a similar strategy. He avoided seeing his respondents (male internet escorts) in private. Similarly, researchers on other subjects than sexuality considered aspects of danger and security. For instance, Ann Phoenix (1994) gives the example of women interviewers feeling unsafe in some council housing areas and another of a Jewish interviewer coming into a flat decorated with swastikas.

MULTIPLE POWER AXES IN RESEARCH RELATIONS

In summary, feminist and (pro)feminists have made considerable advances in the discussion and scrutiny of power relations in research relationships. They began by acknowledging the power of the researcher to decide which questions will be asked, how one behaves towards one's respondents and how the data is treated. Depending on how

one answers these points the relationship is structured either in hierarchical terms or through a commitment to research for women instead of about them.

This research attitude is still alive in feminist research in general as well as in sexualities research. Simultaneously, feminist researchers saw that the idea of an egalitarian relationship between researcher and researched is an illusion, since the researcher is always in the position of writing about (and thus representing) their respondents (Ryan-Flood, 2010). This final power relation demands ethical considerations about how one represents one's participants.

Subsequently, feminist researchers have probed this attitude in research projects where they could not meet their participants on the basis of sameness (Smart, 1984). Instead, their respondents had a privileged position in terms of gender or social hierarchy. In such situations they felt powerless because they became the object of sexist comments and were unable to ask appropriate questions (or to receive answers).

Similar experiences were made in terms of racism and sexism (Phoenix, 1994) but at the same time it was acknowledged that these possibilities were not essentialist: not all men exercised hegemonic masculinity (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001; Walby, 2010).

Finally, feminists discovered the intersection of different axes of power. They observed, for instance, how gendered power relations intersected with the relationship between an expert and a lay person, a conductor and a participant. They saw how confession operated as a power tool to make people speak because of the assumption that our 'self' develops when our real inner truth comes out, even though this is a construction of this very moment, the interaction between a researcher and an interviewee. They also recognized the intersection of racialized and classed relationships as well as gendered and classed ones (Willott, 1998).

As a result different strands of power are interwoven with one another (Willott, 1998;

Grenz, 2005). Power is not a unified phenomenon that is owned either by the researcher or the researched. If all these aspects of power are summarized – the constraint to confess, the inquisitory power of science, the relations between men and women concerning the right of speech and the right to have sexual desire – it becomes evident that there is not an either/or power relation between the researcher and the researched but that in the interview situation a 'multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate' surfaced (Foucault, 1990: 92). The sphere in which power operates in interviews is no neutral sphere somewhere outside of social space and merely reflecting it. A research project is not isolated but instead integrated into more comprehensive power structures, in the surrounding discourses on the topic in question as well as related issues. This is most prevalent with research on sexuality and so-called sexual deviance. Instead of simply giving the opportunity to talk about one's sexuality or other sensitive issues, an interview provides space to discursively reproduce sexual, racialized, gendered and classed identity. This happens on both levels, through the actual content of interviewees' stories as well as through the interaction. This leads to a perspective on fluid and dynamic power relations. The positionalities of both parties alter according to the topics the narration entails and the way it touches either the researcher or the respondent.

NOTES

- 1 This paper is the further development of an earlier reflection on the interview process in my research on clients of prostitutes (Grenz 2005).

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Women's 'Lived Experience': Feminism and Phenomenology from Simone de Beauvoir to the Present

Sonia Kruks

'Experience' has long been a central and also a much-contested concept in feminist theory. Early second wave feminism regarded the 'bringing to voice' and sharing of women's experiences as key to developing 'sisterhood' and to building women's collective resistance to their subordination. For example, the 1969 'Manifesto of the Redstockings' declared: 'We regard our personal experiences and feelings about experience as the basis for an analysis of our common situation Our chief task at present is to develop female class consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our situations' (Redstockings, 1970: 113). However, by the 1980s an insistent critique developed that 'women's experience' de facto stood for the experiences of only a certain subgroup of privileged (white, middle class, heterosexual) women. Additionally, poststructuralist feminists began to insist on the discursively constituted character of women's subordination and the essentializing nature of unified identity claims: the

appeal to experience was increasingly dismissed as both politically dangerous and methodologically naïve. There are, however, diverse ways of theorizing experience, and not all of them are either dangerous or naïve. To the contrary, this chapter argues that the phenomenological tradition provides invaluable resources for understanding women's experiences and can make an important contribution to feminist politics.

Phenomenology emerged in the early twentieth century as a critique of then-dominant objectivizing and rationalist epistemologies. According to its main founder, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the aim of phenomenology is to 'bracket,' or suspend, our already-conceptualized accounts of human experiences in order to describe how phenomena appear to us as they are 'lived': it aims to grasp them not as objects of contemplation, divorced from and exterior to us, but as we engage with them as embodied agents in the world. Consciousness, says Husserl, is always 'intentional'. This is to say, it is always 'consciousness of' something, an

engaged relation with the things of the world, and not a detached faculty. Phenomenology thus endeavors to grasp experiences prior to both an objectivizing 'scientific' attitude and to the taken-for-granted, common-sense, conceptual framings that Husserl calls the 'natural attitude'. Accordingly, Husserl also develops the distinction, which will be crucial for later feminist phenomenology, between bodies as objects for (allegedly) detached scrutiny or investigation (*Körper*) and bodies as we 'live' them as sites of embodied subjectivity (*Lieb*) (Husserl, 1989).

Phenomenology thus potentially offers an epistemology and a descriptive method that resonate with many central feminist theoretical concerns: it eschews rationalism and objectifying mind-body dualism, and instead invites a focus on embodied, situated, immediate and often more affective forms of experience. By endeavoring to suspend the 'natural attitude' – that is, to defamiliarize conceptual frameworks that we 'normally' inhabit – it also has an affinity with feminist projects to unmask the masculinist ideology that inheres in daily life and practices. However, the principle figures in the phenomenological tradition (Husserl himself, followed by Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and various others) described lived experience in a manner that took masculine experience as the norm. Husserl's *Lieb* – the generic 'lived body' that is the site of experience – was presumptively male.¹

Thus it was only with Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* [1949] that phenomenology was brought directly to bear on the specificities of women's experiences. Beauvoir explicitly identified herself as working in the tradition of Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre (2010: 46) and her thinking also has strong affinities with that of Merleau-Ponty, whose work on embodied perception she knew well.² Creatively melding her own original appropriations of phenomenological method with structural and discourse analysis Beauvoir brought the resources of this philosophical approach to bear on women's 'lived experience' in a manner that

was far from naïve. More recent work in feminist phenomenology, most of which takes inspiration from Beauvoir, as well as from Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied subjectivity, has explored aspects of women's experience in ways that are attentive to difference. It has also absorbed poststructuralist critiques of the earlier invocations of 'experience' and creatively moved feminist theory beyond them.

THE CRITIQUE OF 'EXPERIENCE'

The poststructuralist, 'discursive turn' in feminist theory spawned numerous critiques of 'experience'. These included, among others, the objection that experience (as in 'The Redstocking Manifesto') is problematically presumed already to be 'there' just waiting to be brought to voice, rather than itself being constituted as an *effect* of discourse; that experience is presumed to be 'authentic' and thus to possess a self-evident truthfulness, so that considerations of how it is ideologically constituted within hegemonic gender norms are precluded; and that accounts of 'women's experience' erroneously presume it to have universal qualities and fail to address how bringing some women's experiences 'to voice' may mute others.

Joan Scott's essay, simply entitled 'Experience', (1992), rapidly became the *locus classicus* for such critiques. Scott's essay was most directly addressed to historians. 'Experience', she argued, functions as a 'foundational' category for many historians: it is taken to be the unquestioned 'bedrock of evidence' upon which history should be written. However, these historians fail to ask necessary questions about 'the constructed nature of experience'. Thus their project of 'making experience visible' precludes analyzing the ideological systems that create experiencing selves (1992: 25), and it essentializes group experience and identity.³ The wider epistemological and, indeed, ontological implications for feminist theory of Scott's critique were rapidly picked up and became

gospel for many. For if experience cannot be treated as the 'origin' of explanations because it is 'that which we want to explain' (1992: 38) then it also follows that the nature of the experiencing self, or 'subject', becomes what needs explaining. In strong nominalist vein, Scott claims that 'subjects are constituted discursively', and that we must 'refuse a separation between "experience" and language' (1992: 34). Thus, she insists: 'It is not individuals who have experiences, but subjects who are constituted through experience' (1992: 25–6).

As a critique of the untheorized presumptions about the nature of experience that underpinned much early second wave feminism, Scott's poststructuralist arguments had a certain persuasiveness. They bore not only on 'mainstream' feminism but also applied to black and lesbian feminisms that began to bring 'other' kinds of experience 'to voice' in the 1980s. However, her critique bore its own difficulties. For while she was correct to draw attention to the role of ideology in shaping experience and to point to the dangers of assuming that voiced experiences provide 'authentic' truths, she ended by establishing a problematic new 'foundationalism': that of discourse. When taken literally her claims, both that subjects are 'constituted' through and through and that what does the constituting is 'discourse', are profoundly reductive, indeed, essentialist. They narrow feminist analysis and the scope of feminist practice to the examination and contestation of discourse, whereas power and resistance also take place at diverse other sites. Her claim for the constituted nature of the subject sets up a rigid – and unsustainable – dichotomy: either we embrace the erroneous idea of an autonomous 'constituting consciousness', fundamental to the Western idealist tradition since Descartes, or else we accept her alternative account of the subject as but an 'effect' of discourse. Scott's approach, and that of similarly-minded theorists, is not only reductionist but also troublingly objectifying. For in discourse analysis experience becomes not

more than 'data' for the detached historian (or the feminist theorist) to analyze.

What is striking, however, is that Scott does not – and surely cannot if she wants to advocate a feminist politics – strictly follow through the implications of her own argument. For, toward the end of the essay, she suddenly finds it necessary to insist that her analysis does not, after all, 'deprive subjects of agency'. She abruptly asserts that 'subjects have agency', continuing: 'They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them.' Being a subject means being 'subject to definite conditions of existence, conditions of endowment of agents and conditions of exercise.' *These conditions enable choices*, although they are not unlimited' (1992: 34; emphasis added). However, if this is the case, then we must inquire further about the nature of such a subject: a subject that remains capable of making 'choices' even as it is constrained by its situation and status. For this cannot be a subject that is fully 'constituted' from elsewhere, whether it be by discourse or by anything else.⁴

Scott thus implicitly calls for an account of the subject as being at once constituted *and* self-constituting, and such a subject cannot be brought into being by discourse alone. Unwittingly, she points us back toward the theoretically informed account of the subject as at once embodied and situated yet also free that Simone de Beauvoir had elaborated in her account of women's 'lived experience' in *The Second Sex*. It is to Beauvoir that I now turn.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF WOMEN'S 'LIVED EXPERIENCE'

Beauvoir opens *The Second Sex* by asking the question 'what is a woman?' (2010: 3). The answer, she immediately states, cannot be that a 'woman' is a person defined by certain biological characteristics, for not all

biologically female individuals are deemed to be 'women'. However, this is not to say that the production of the category of 'woman', or of an individual's identity as a woman, is uniquely discursive. For our bodies are the site of what Beauvoir calls the *facticités* of human existence: those contingent but objective facts about our lives that we do not choose and yet that profoundly shape us. They will include such physical 'givens' as our biological sex characteristics or our skin pigmentation, as well as where, when and in what kind of social milieu we chance to have been born and to live. But contingent though they may be, this is not how we *experience* such facticities. Rather, we encounter them as integral to who we are, and so they take on a certain kind of experiential 'necessity' for us. They are aspects of our lives that we do not choose, that we cannot alter, and yet which we cannot refuse to recognize as 'our own'. To use Beauvoir's concept, we cannot refuse to *assume* them, be it in one way or another.

Rejecting what she refers to as the 'nominalism' of those who assert that 'women are, among human beings, merely those who are arbitrarily designated by the word "woman"' (2010: 4), Beauvoir thus insists on the *experiential* realities of sexual difference. For, she writes, 'one has only to go for a walk with one's eyes open to observe that humanity is divided into two categories of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, movements, interests, and occupations are manifestly different' (2010: 4; translation altered [henceforth TA]). These differences, Beauvoir argues, are not *essential* and they could, perhaps, one day disappear. However, 'for the moment they exist in a strikingly obvious way' and, while not determinant, biological differences are far from irrelevant to them (2010: 4).

Here Beauvoir poses, perhaps for the first time, the knot of problems that continues to beset feminist theory concerning how far sexual difference is a biological, or even an ontological, 'given' that is integral to women's condition and how far this condition is a

matter of those mutable social constructions that have since come to be called 'gender'. The idea of a 'sex/gender system', as Gayle Rubin called it, was central to early second wave feminist theory: 'Every society also has a sex/gender system – a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner' (1975: 165). However, since the 1990s the concept of a sex/gender system has come under attack from post-structuralist theorists, often influenced by Foucault, who argue that 'sex' itself is as discursively constructed as gender (notably Butler, 1990; 1993). In the thick of such heated debates some read Beauvoir as a sexual difference theorist for whom the overwhelming problem for women is their reproductive biology; others view her as a staunch social constructionist, and even as the initiator of 'gender' analysis.⁵ Beauvoir's multifaceted text can be selectively read in numerous and divergent ways and, indeed, much ink has been spilled over what Penelope Deutscher has called 'the notorious contradictions of Simone de Beauvoir' (1997; 2008). However, what makes Beauvoir's phenomenological account of the body as *lived* so important is that it offers a non-reductive alternative to the objectivistic notion of sex as 'raw biological material' without, in an equally reductive vein, flattening sexual difference into a discursive effect. Eschewing the one-sidedness of either materialism or nominalism tout court, Beauvoir insists on addressing women's embodied experience as is it lived anterior to such categorizations. The lived body is experienced neither as simply matter nor as the site of discursive inscription. Rather, says Beauvoir, the body is lived as one's *situation*.

To state that the body is lived as one's 'situation' is to claim far more than that it is one's point of inherence in the physical and social world, and in time and space, although it does involve all of these. For it is also to say that it is *who I am*: my 'lived body' *is* myself. It is at once my fleshly and my

subjective existence. 'I am my body', Beauvoir writes, citing Merleau-Ponty, and 'if the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: It is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects' (2010: 46). Two important points follow. First, how I see the world will depend on how I engage myself with it: my body orients me to the world and 'because the body is the instrument of our grasp on the world, the world appears different to us depending on how it is seized' (2010: 44; TA). It follows, second, that we must say that consciousness and subjectivity inhere in the body and cannot be severed from the particularities of one's embodiment. As Toril Moi has put it, for Beauvoir subjectivity is not 'an inner emotional world; it is rather our way of being in the world' (1999: 81). Thus one cannot leap, transcendent, out of one's skin: the body as situation is the site of experiences and meanings that far exceed discursive constitution.

To illustrate these points more clearly I take a recent example. In *Waist-High in the World*, Nancy Mairs, who is wheel-chair bound with multiple sclerosis and who lives in a world that is possible for her only from within her chair, describes how her embodied situation shapes her orientation to the world: to objects and people, to space and time. Mairs also describes how her situation *is* herself. She writes: 'Who would I be if I didn't have MS? Literally nobody. I am not "Nancy + MS," and no simple subtraction can render me whole. Nor do I contain MS like a tumor that might be sliced out.... It can't be stripped away without mutilating the being who bears it' (1996: 8, 10). Thus fundamental elements of Mairs' lived experience are not *reducible* to the discursive, since they arise from her angle of vision at 'waist high', her particular ways of moving and so forth.

Bodies are, of course, also the bearers of social identities that must be assumed irrespective of the degree to which they are, or are not, self-chosen. Being identified medically as a person with MS and socially as a 'person with a disability' (as a 'cripple', as

she chooses specifically to call herself) are also key constituent elements of Mairs' situated self. For to be 'disabled' – or to be a 'woman' or a 'man' – is to be the bearer of certain characteristics that will self-evidently categorize one as such *in the eyes of others*, whether or not one wishes it.

Thus, to return to Beauvoir, insofar as the norm of 'the human' remains male, people with biologically female bodies are perceived in particular ways. Whether or not she wishes it, a woman is more strongly identified with her physical sex characteristics than a man, and these characteristics mark her as men's 'Other': she fails to conform to the norm of the fully human. 'She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her. He is the subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other' (2010: 6). Accordingly, when Beauvoir cites Merleau-Ponty's phrase 'I am my body' she also asserts: 'woman, like man *is* her body, but her body is something other than herself' (2010: 41; TA).

But how does a woman live her body as 'something other than herself'? Beauvoir makes this claim in the chapter on 'biology' when discussing the process of menstruation. However, a woman's body is lived as 'other' in a double sense: as both a set of often intrusive physiological processes and, at the same time, as her subjection to her societal designation as the Other. The physiological processes of menstruation, pregnancy, birth, lactation and menopause are, indeed, often experienced by a woman as physical alienations. She may encounter her body as prey to uncontrollable, and often uncomfortable or painful, processes that hinder her active orientation to the world. Beauvoir describes puberty as a 'crisis' in which the demands of the species first assert themselves; during menstruation, she says, a woman feels her body to be 'an obscure and alien thing'; pregnancy drains her body and brings her 'no benefit'; nursing is but 'an exhausting servitude'; menopause yet another crisis. Thus, a woman's body is experienced as 'other than herself' insofar as its uncomfortable and

irksome biological processes frequently impinge, unasked for, on her existence. Many have argued that Beauvoir evinces a deep personal hostility to the female body (for example, O'Brien, 1981; Evans, 1985; Moi, 1994). Yet, irrespective of her personal psychological tendencies, Beauvoir's claims ring true. For such physiological processes are often experienced as undesired intrusions of the body on the self, even though many women may also assume them more positively than she allows.⁶ But the main point that Beauvoir wants to make is that this kind of otherness, while real, cannot in itself account for how a woman becomes the Other.

Indeed, Beauvoir's goal in the chapter of *The Second Sex* on biology is to set out the physiological aspects of female existence and to grant their significance as a prolegomenon to showing that these *cannot* in themselves account for women's 'destiny', for a woman's physiology would not constitute an *oppression* if it were not that men seek to reduce her to these bodily attributes. Most women menstruate for much of their adult lives, and although this physiological process is uncomfortable and inconvenient what makes it so burdensome is that it is treated as shameful. Menstruation is a pollution that sets women apart and must be hidden (2010: 323 ff).

Beauvoir uncritically accepts much rather problematic 'data' from her era concerning sexual physiology, but she is also acutely aware of the manner in which biological discourse is used ideologically in order to affirm woman's destiny as the 'inessential Other'. She points out that sexual differentiation is itself less clear-cut, more contingent, than biologists frequently assume, since 'in nature nothing is ever completely clear: the two types, male and female, are not always sharply distinguished' (2010: 38). Moreover, biologists falsely attribute normative meanings and values to what are merely descriptive facts about life (2010: 26). 'Biology alone cannot provide us with an answer to the question that concerns us: why is woman

the Other?' she writes (2010: 48). Biological 'facts' both are facts and yet are never only that. For *as one lives it*, one's body is not a factual or material object: 'it is not the body-object described by scientists that exists concretely but the body lived by the subject' (2010: 49).⁷

Thus what constitutes the oppression of women is that they live in a world in which they are perceived and treated – and are obliged to varying extents to perceive and treat themselves – above all as objects, as female bodies. When regarded as male property, a woman's 'flesh is present in pure facticity. Her body is not grasped as a radiation of subjectivity, but as a thing solidified in its immanence' (2010: 176; TA). In a masculinist world a woman is designated as immanence as opposed to (male) freedom; she is body, matter, nature, as opposed to (male) consciousness. Here, indeed, lies the power of discourse! For a woman is obliged to live in a world in which masculinist myths are woven into the very fabric of the institutions and practices that affirm her lacks.

Like all human beings [a woman is] an autonomous freedom, She finds and chooses herself in a world where men force her to assume herself as Other; an attempt is made to freeze her as an object and to doom her to immanence Woman's drama lies in the conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject, which always posits itself as essential and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as the inessential. (2010: 17; TA)

No full escape from such a situation is possible, since 'no woman can claim without bad faith to be situated beyond her sex' (2010: 4).⁸ Even so, it is generally possible to assume one's situation in diverse ways, and these will involve varying choices, resulting in varying degrees of compliance or resistance.

Thus, to return to Scott, Beauvoir would have agreed with her assertion that 'subjects have agency', and also with the caveat that they do so 'subject to definite conditions of existence, conditions of endowment of agents and conditions of exercise'. Such conditions both enable and constrain 'choices' and they

do so differently for situated groups and individuals. However, unlike Scott, Beauvoir insists that these conditions are *not* independent of certain objective givens of our bodily characteristics. On the contrary, our bodies are integral to who we are: to our 'endowments' and to how we may 'exercise' them; to our range of possible actions and so also to our freedom. Societal discourses, practices, institutions and so forth invest our embodied existence, yet this existence still retains certain 'given' physical characteristics that matter. A feminism that ignores the specificities of sexual difference will not adequately grasp women's oppressive existence – or their agency and possibilities for resistance – any more than will one that focuses on them too exclusively.

When Beauvoir famously writes that 'one is not born a woman one becomes one' (2010: 283), 'becoming' has a twofold sense. It refers not only to how one is 'constituted,' both physiologically and societally, but also to a process of self-constitution: to how one constitutes *oneself* as a woman. It refers, that is, to how one *chooses* to take up one's situation; to how one assumes and lives as one's own the irreducible amalgam of physical and societal characteristics that one both is and is not. How a woman is at once constituted by, and yet also has a degree of freedom to constitute herself within, her situation is what Beauvoir sets out to portray at length in the second volume of *The Second Sex*. She titled this volume 'Lived Experience'. It is here, in depicting at length how, from early childhood to old age, one variably but continuously 'becomes a woman', that Beauvoir extensively employs phenomenology. It is important, however, to note the caveat with which she ends the Introduction to this volume. She writes:

When I use the words 'woman' or 'feminine,' after most of my statements one must understand 'in the present state of upbringing and mores.' There is no question here of pronouncing eternal truths, but of describing the common basis upon which all individual feminine existence arises. (2010: 279; TA)

Phenomenology, as developed by Husserl, aimed through the 'bracketing' of dominant conceptual frameworks (which, today, we might call discursive regimes) to grasp what he presumed to be the existence of universal and 'essential' structures of human experience in their immediacy. In order to reveal these structures he developed a method that involved 'variation': the examination of many different instances of, for example, our experience of time, or perspective, in order to reveal what is universal, and thus 'essential', among them. However, his later French existential followers, including Beauvoir as well as Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, moderated Husserl's universalizing ambitions. Merleau-Ponty, for example, talked of the necessarily 'unfinished nature of phenomenology' (1962: xxi). In Beauvoir's hands phenomenology becomes a means also to explore what commonalities may persist among the many particular and highly diverse experiences of 'becoming a woman'. Although one may become a woman in a multitude of ways, there are also certain generalities (she does not claim universals) that shape women's experiences. Some of these generalities, as we have seen, emanate from the female body itself; others emerge also from the persistence of social structures and practices that give rise to a generalized situation of inferiority for women. However, this situation will be assumed by particular women in different ways.

Beauvoir presents what often seems an inordinate number of examples in *The Second Sex*, and we can now understand why. Directly using the voices of women themselves, as well as drawing extensively on her own personal experiences, she aims to reveal certain common structures of experience that are typical and persist throughout their manifold variations. For example, the numerous experiences of women's heterosexual sexual initiation that Beauvoir describes are both general and yet particular (2010: 383–416). They are general because the social norms that invoke masculine agency and feminine passivity structure the 'taking' of virginity on

each occasion. They are also normatively linked (still today) to marriage, and to all that accompanies it for women: their socio-economic and other structural dependencies, their expected reproductive, maternal and domestic roles, and so forth. They are also general as instances of the 'normal' bio-physical mechanics of heterosexual vaginal penetration. Yet, at the same time, each initiation is a particular encounter of two embodied subjectivities, each of whom brings their own (already gendered) desires, fears, dispositions, dreams, to the moment. For it is only in light of social practices and values, as well as the individual existential choices through which these are assumed, that sexuality takes on its meanings.

How we experience ourselves as sexual beings, what values we affirm through our sexuality, thus will be at once idiosyncratic and socially structured. In an important passage Beauvoir writes:

Across the separation of existents existence is one: it becomes manifest in analogous organisms; thus there will be constants in the relation between the ontological and the sexual. *At a given epoch, the technologies, the economic and social structure of a collectivity reveal an identical world to all its members.* There will also be a constant relation of sexuality to social forms; analogous individuals, located in analogous conditions, will grasp analogous significations from the given. This analogy does not ground a rigorous universality, but it does enable us to rediscover *general types within individual histories* (2010: 56; TA; emphases added).

Sexuality, then, is at once general and particular. Epoch-wide technologies and economic and social structures will be assumed as integral to particular experiences. Without asserting any essentialist claims, we may still delineate *general* descriptions of how sexuality – and femininity more broadly – is constitutive of objectifying and oppressive situations for women.⁹ There are 'individual histories' and each woman's lived experience is particular, but women are also members of what Beauvoir calls a 'collectivity'. This is to say that, even if

unaware of this, they are members of 'a general type', emerging from the common aspects of their situatedness within the same set of norms, practices, social structures and institutions (economic, legal, religious, medical, familial and so forth). Thus, even if they endeavor in various ways to alter their situation, they will discover themselves to belong to – and to be constrained by – an 'identical world'; indeed, the contradictions and double binds encountered by the would-be 'independent woman' are perhaps what most sharply reveal the constitutive power of this world (2010: 721ff).

For Beauvoir the identical world whose 'constants' informed women's diverse experiences was her own, and she claimed to speak as a woman and from within it (2010: 5, 15–16). This world was that of early and mid-twentieth-century European (especially French) and predominantly literate, bourgeois women like herself. Since, at that time, such women provided virtually all the published sources upon which Beauvoir could draw it is not surprising that she was not as attentive to how women's experiences are inflected by race or ethnic identities, by social class, or by their privileged Western global location, as some more recent feminist thinkers think she should have been. But, even so, we must examine some of the implications of her localism.

Where, we might ask, are the edges of a 'world'? And how far beyond Beauvoir's own world can her account of women's lived experience 'travel'? Phenomenologically speaking, 'a world' is a pre-conceptual, or taken-for-granted, context-giving horizon from within and against which our particular lived experiences emerge. As such, it is shifting and has no determinate boundary; it has no firm edges. Yet, it is also clear that what presents itself to some as their 'world' will not present itself identically, or perhaps not present itself at all, to others. For, as Beauvoir observes in the passage quoted above, worlds are not *only* phenomenological; they are also suffused with social substance. Worlds pertain to 'epochs' and to other temporalities.

Lived experiences of time may be variable, yet time is still lived within an epoch that historians and social scientists approximately demarcate by such characteristics as its technology or its economic and social structures. Likewise, social worlds, and thus individual worlds, are spatially located, shaped by such factors as their place within global and national economies. Thus it is within a particular temporal and socio-spatial world – her own – that Beauvoir explores the generalities of women's lived experience. Accordingly, we must ask about the extensiveness of the 'collectivity' of 'women' here. Is Beauvoir imperialistically claiming to speak for women whose worlds are very different from her own? How far beyond Beauvoir's own world may her account of women's lived experience travel?

Beauvoir's focus on white, Western, middle-class women and her inattention to differences among women has been criticized. Elizabeth Spelman, for example, argues that by identifying 'woman' primarily with women who are white, European and middle class, like herself, Beauvoir is guilty of the same erasure of women of color of which white American feminists have later been accused. Beauvoir 'takes the story of "woman" to be that provided by the examination of the lives of women not subject to racism, classism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, and so forth', she writes (1988: 71). In a somewhat different vein, Sally Markowitz (2009) has argued that Beauvoir's Western, white, bourgeois focus expresses strong 'Orientalist' proclivities which are rooted in her Hegelian view of history as the advance of the West over the East. Markowitz cites a footnote in the first volume of *The Second Sex* where Beauvoir says she will study the evolution of woman's situation in the West since 'the history of woman in the East, in India, in China, has indeed been one of long and immutable slavery' (2010: 89; TA).¹⁰

This and a few other passages in the 'History' chapter of Volume One ('Fact and Myths') are highly problematic, although it is hardly surprising that Beauvoir uncritically

absorbed the Orientalism that pervaded the writing of history in early twentieth-century Europe. However, critics such as Spelman and Markowitz badly misunderstand Beauvoir's project with regard to the phenomenological second volume, entitled 'Lived Experience'. For here her focus is explicitly on the women of her own 'world' and she does not claim that the general physical characteristics of the female body, significant though they be, will be identically lived by women elsewhere. The issue, then, is not one of imperialism or exclusion, but of whether or not the localism of Beauvoir's phenomenology renders it rather inconsequential, a book of interest only to women 'like herself' in an era now long gone.

What is so remarkable is that, its localism notwithstanding, the book has travelled so very widely. Like any work of theory it has, of necessity, travelled mainly among readers who are educated, and thus middle or upper class. It was, of course, an inspirational work for such women in early 'second wave' Western feminism. But it has also been translated into an astounding number of languages and it continues to speak to women in radically different worlds, from China and Japan to Argentina and Iran.¹¹ For example, an Iranian feminist review published between 1998 and 2001 actually called itself *The Second Sex*. The first issue discussed Beauvoir's book and carried a picture of her. The women's rights 'campaign for a million signatures', which began in 2006, also refers in its founding statement to women as 'the second sex', and the translation of *The Second Sex* into Persian in the same year has since been reprinted several times (Chafiq, 2008).

How are we to account for the remarkable ability of this book to speak to women in such very different worlds when its phenomenological descriptions do indeed pertain to such a very circumscribed one? Here, what Beauvoir later had to say about the role of literature may be helpful. Literature, she said, enables one to enter another 'world', even as one knows that one remains within one's own. What distinguishes literature

from other genres of writing is that ‘another truth becomes mine without ceasing to be other. I resign my own “I” in favor of the speaker’s; and yet I remain myself’ (Beauvoir, 1965: 82). Like the good novelist she also was, Beauvoir enables this complex dynamic of simultaneous identification and differentiation to take place for her readers through the multitude of vivid phenomenological descriptions she offers.

However, *The Second Sex* is not a work of fiction. By evoking women’s experiences as lived within her own particular world, Beauvoir invites her readers not only to engage in a partial identification with this world but also perhaps to discover some affinities with their own world. Beauvoir does not speak *for* women of other worlds. Rather, she speaks *to* them, not to exhort but to invite them to discover resonances between their own world and hers. Critical reflection, perhaps even personal or collective action, may follow, but that will be up to her readers. Although, as Beauvoir herself later said, *The Second Sex* is not a militant book, it has certainly helped to inspire militancy.

The issue of Beauvoir’s localism also points us toward a difficulty that besets feminist (and other critical) theory more widely. For there is an irresolvable tension between developing a powerful, expressive phenomenology of concrete lived experience and trying to present women’s experiences more globally. Feminist research can and should examine the large-scale, structural and discursive aspects of the oppression of women, and it should do so with regard to their global dimensions (such as the gendering of the international division of labor, or the world-wide flows of the sex trade). But how these macro processes come to shape experience, what they mean for the daily lives of individuals, how they come to be accepted or resisted, may be grasped only by focusing on how women at local and particular sites assume them. The virtues of Beauvoir’s account of lived experience lie in its very specificity. Its ‘exclusions’ are not only its defects but, paradoxically, also sources of its great strength.

Indeed, Beauvoir’s attention to variation, to showing how even within the confines of her own world general phenomena suffuse particular women’s lives in different ways, offers feminist theory a powerful methodology that can be applied elsewhere. Accordingly, in the next section I turn to some more recent works that take up phenomenology as a resource for feminism. These examine modalities of women’s experience in the contemporary Western world with an attentiveness both to its generalities and also to some of the ways experience may be differentiated by, for example, race or sexual orientation.

CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY

The work of Iris Marion Young has been central to the recent blossoming of feminist phenomenology. Young’s work spans some fifteen years, from the publication in 1990 of a group of essays in the collection, *Throwing Like a Girl and other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, to their republication in 2005, along with the addition of important new work, in *On Female Body Experience*. In these volumes Young explicitly locates herself as working within a style of phenomenology indebted to both Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. She offers contemporary phenomenological descriptions of such female embodied experiences as pregnancy, menstruation and being breastfed, and she also reflects theoretically on why phenomenology is still important for feminism in the wake of the discursive, poststructuralist turn that Scott epitomizes.

After poststructuralism, Young writes, ‘we cannot be so innocent as to believe that phenomenology can discover a “pure” embodied experience prior to ideology and science’ (2005: 7, 8). To the contrary, she argues, phenomenology *complements* poststructuralist critiques of earlier, naïve notions of experience, offering needed tools to apprehend experience from the point of view of a subject that is also constituted. However, she

also insists, the body is not *only* a text or a site of discursive inscription, for one's body is also one's mode of 'being-in-the-world': it is the site of both one's lived experience and one's particular style of acting, and of expressing and communicating who one is.

But sexed body characteristics do inform both the style and experience of the self. There are 'nearly universal' aspects to female embodiment, such as menstruation or being breasted,¹² although these are always experienced 'in historically, culturally, and individually variable ways' (2005: 10). For 'the body as lived is always layered with social and historical meaning and is not some primitive matter prior to or underlying economic and political relations or cultural meanings' (2005: 7). Thus, although Young chooses to refer to *female* body experience in the title to her later volume, and to address experiences that emanate from the facticities of female physiology, how these experiences come to be lived is inseparable from 'gender' – that is, from how the 'feminine' is socially constituted through large-scale structures of constraint.¹³ Young characterizes 'the feminine' as: 'a set of normatively disciplined expectations imposed on female-bodies by male-dominated society' (2005: 5). This 'normative femininity', she further observes, 'detaches persons who fall under its disciplines from expressions or enactments of power and authority' (2005: 5).

In her most recent essay, 'Menstrual Meditations', Young begins from Beauvoir's account of how menstruation is experienced by women as the mark of their defectiveness: a dirty secret that evokes shame and self-disgust and that must, at all costs, be concealed. Drawing on her own experiences and discussing a body of recent research on women's attitudes to menstruation, Young shows that menstruation still, today, evokes the kind of responses Beauvoir had described in the 1940s. Much has since changed, and women now engage in activities and enter public spaces previously reserved for men. Yet the norm for the human body remains male, and the menstruating female body (one could also add the pregnant or lactating

body) grossly violates this norm. Accordingly (while also noting important dissimilarities), Young uses the metaphor of 'the closet', drawn from queer theory, to characterize menstruation:

The message that a menstruating woman is perfectly normal *entails* that she hide the signs of her menstruation. The normal body, the default body, the body that every body is assumed to be, is a body not bleeding from the vagina The message that the menstruating woman is normal makes her deviant, a deviance that each month puts her on the wrong side of fear and disorder, or the subversion of what is right proper. It seems apt, then, in this normatively masculine supposedly gender-egalitarian society, to say that the menstruating woman is queer. As with other queers, the price of a woman's acceptance as normal is that she stay in the closet as a menstruator. (2005: 107)

Young describes the difficulties that women's closeting so often entails: frequently schools and workplaces do not permit sufficient trips to the toilet for tampons to be changed as needed; time taken away from work during menstruation is punished, sometimes even by loss of employment, and so forth. Thus Young uses her phenomenology also to support a feminist politics, and she calls not only for practical changes that would better accommodate women's menstrual needs but also for attitudinal changes that will acknowledge that women's bodies are merely different from men's and not 'abject or monstrous' (2005: 117).

Menstruation is a female biological process upon which feminine inferiority has become constituted. However, women's bodies also become 'feminized' in ways that have no biological basis at all. In her earlier essay 'Throwing Like a Girl', Young describes the constrained comportment and motility that, while having no necessary physiological basis, still remain typical for girls. When throwing, girls and women typically refrain from moving their bodies fully into the motion and they walk less openly than men. Sitting, they occupy space in a constrained way, legs usually closed. They 'tend not to

put their whole bodies into such physical task as lifting, or carrying a heavy load' (1990: 145). Indeed, young girls engage in the paradoxical task of *actively* learning to be passive. In becoming 'feminine' (becoming 'women', as Beauvoir had put it) they teach themselves to restrict their movements, to make themselves helpless, and Young describes how she herself carefully practiced acquiring such comportment as a teenager (1990: 154). But such acquisitions come at a price, for these constrained modalities of bodily comportment are expressive of what Young calls women's 'inhibited intentionality' (1990: 148). In taking up their objectified 'feminine' status women become divided against themselves; they see themselves through masculine eyes, passive and object-like, even as they know they are active subjects. 'The source of this objectified bodily existence is in the attitude of others regarding her, but the woman herself often actively takes up her body as a mere thing' (1990: 155).

In a recent revisiting of Young's essay, Bonnie Mann describes teaching a group of eight-year-olds of both sexes to play volleyball. She observes of the girls that: 'Those who were most stereotypically feminine in their body movements seemed to have a set of invisible walls around them. If my toss required even a step or two, they watched the ball fall, as if it simply *had nothing to do with them*,' and she comments: 'Yet the space of my little volleyball players, feet rooted to the floor, was not really restricted in any way. I had no doubt at all that they were physically capable of getting to the ball. But neither were they "making up" the restriction; it bound them physically' (Mann, 2009: 85–6). Here, we again see exemplified the embodied production of powerlessness that Young describes as accompanying normative femininity; it is production that is lived deep in the body.

As with Beauvoir, we must ask how local, or how extensive, the purchase of such phenomenologies may be. Theorists such as Mann and Young are rightly cautious. Young frequently opens her essays by using her own personal experiences as exemplars. Since

there are omnipresent norms of femininity in late capitalist society that all women have to address in one way or another, she suggests that her experiences may be 'typical' for those who exist within these gendered 'structures of constraint' (2005: 21ff). However, this is not to claim universality. Instead, she presents her work as an invitation to conversations among women in which differences may also be articulated. Between purely idiosyncratic reportage and claims for the universality of experience there lies a space where she hopes her descriptions may 'resonate' with the experiences of others. But they also may not. She writes:

My own experience is particular and limited, and it is possible that it most resonates among white, middle class, professional women in late capitalist society. At least I can claim to speak only for the experience of women like me. *I believe some of the experience I express resonates with that of other women, but that is for them to say.* The differences among women do not circumscribe us within exclusive categories, but *the only way we can know our similarities and differences is by each of us expressing our particular experience.* (1990: 182; emphases added)

Since Young began her path-breaking work, feminist phenomenology has extended its applications in various directions. Some scholars continue to explore aspects of specifically female lived experience, such as pregnancy and giving birth (Scarth, 2004: ch. 5; Shabot, 2012), or breast feeding (Butterfield, 2010; Fischer, 2012). Others discuss the meaning of bodily integrity following the 'disfigurement' of mastectomy (Slatman, 2012), or reflect on how Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied subjectivity may fruitfully be brought to bear on transsexual experience (Salamon, 2011). Yet others explore shame as a pervasive and disciplining modality of women's lived experience (Bartky, 1990; 2002 Kruks, 2001: ch. 2); Recent work has also addressed gender-specific experiences of lived time (Schües et al., 2011), while Linda Alcoff and Sara Ahmed, to whom I now turn, have more directly taken up Young's invitation to

address striking variations in the experiences of different groups of contemporary Western women.

In *Visible Identities* (2006) Alcoff employs phenomenology to grasp the nature of sexed and racialized identities. For, she insists, although profoundly social, such identities are also 'most definitely physical, marked on and through the body, lived as material experience' (2006: 102). Like Beauvoir she rejects nominalism, insisting that racialized, as well as gendered, lived experience has a reality that is more than a discursive effect. 'Lived experience is open-ended, multilayered, fragmented and shifting not because of the play of language, but because of the nature of embodied, temporal existence', she writes (2006: 109–10). At the same time, however, Alcoff agrees with poststructuralist theorists that there cannot be an 'I' that stands clear of its identities, or that can completely negate them (2006: 112). For how one is perceived and treated by others, how one is situated, also becomes (as Beauvoir had shown for women) constitutive of the self. Thus, although race, unlike sex, lacks a biological basis (2006: 198–9), it is, says Alcoff, still 'real': that is, it is a powerful, visible phenomenon that is constitutive of lives.

Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and others, Alcoff develops an account of how bodily and perceptual orientations become central to the racialization of identities. Perception, as Merleau-Ponty argues, is not objective but rather is expressive of one's entire orientation to the world, of one's 'being-in-the-world' (1962). However, perception often become so habitual that it forms a taken-for-granted background against which one 'sees' particular phenomena. Thus, Alcoff writes: 'If race is a structure of contemporary perception, then it helps to constitute the necessary background from which I know myself. It makes up a part of what appears to me as the natural setting of all my thoughts. It is the field rather than what stands out.' She continues: 'What Merleau-Ponty calls "perceptual habits" ... explain both why racializing attributions are nearly impossible to

discern and why they are resistant to alteration or erasure' (2006: 188).

Perceptual habits are integral to what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'habitual body'. This is the body that (as Young also describes) pre-reflectively moves, occupies space, speaks, and so forth with a particular 'style' that expresses a certain way of being in the world (see also Weiss, 1999; Heinämaa, 2003). The idea of the habitual body may help us to understand 'how individuals fall into race-conscious habitual postures in cross-racial encounters' – for example, how they greet, shake hands, their tone of voice (Alcoff, 2006: 184).

But if racialized (and gendered) ways of being in the world are so profoundly embodied and appear so 'natural' that they become invisible, are they alterable? Alcoff considers whether phenomenological practices might not have the effect of merely reaffirming the 'depth and impermeability' of racial identities, but she argues that, to the contrary, a 'critical' phenomenology may significantly disrupt them. For, by unveiling what is habitual, it also reveals our agency to reconfigure it. 'Noticing the way in which meanings are located on the body has at least the potential to disrupt current racializing processes' (2006: 194). Alcoff, like Young, is far from claiming that a phenomenological approach alone is sufficient to unpack the workings of contemporary racism or sexism. However, phenomenology provides valuable resources for disclosing – and perhaps reorienting – the pre-conceptual, the embodied-yet-social, qualities of racialized and gendered existence today.

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), Sara Ahmed also takes up the phenomenological notion of 'orientation', here to explore queer as well as non-white experience. Merleau-Ponty describes how, in acting toward, or 'intending', objects and other people, the body is 'normally' oriented in a vertical direction: it is 'straight' as it moves towards its object. However, Ahmed points out, we may also be *disoriented* – and then we perceive the world

in a 'slanted', or 'oblique', manner. Here, Ahmed plays with two meanings of 'queer'. For queer both (and at once) describes what is disturbingly 'oblique', 'off line', or 'out of line' (which may also include how non-white bodies may seem out of place, off line, in white spaces) and refers to 'those who practice nonnormative sexualities ... which as we know involves a personal and social commitment to living in an oblique world, or in a world that has an oblique angle in relation to that which is given' (2006: 161).

'Straight' and 'queer', then, are not only sexual orientations: they are ways of being in the world. Discussing 'the body in its sexual being', Merleau-Ponty had argued that a man's sexuality is his 'projected manner of being toward the world' (cited Ahmed, 2006: 67). Merleau-Ponty presumes a heterosexual male body, but Ahmed (as she puts it, also 'queering phenomenology' as well as bringing phenomenology to bear on queer experience) draws on Merleau-Ponty to argue that sexuality is far more than the orientation of desire towards particular kinds of sex objects. For it involves 'one's very relation to the world – that is, how one "faces" the world or is directed toward it' (2006: 68). But to be queer in a world that is normatively straight is often to be *disoriented* toward it – and also to be perceived as *disorienting*.

Ahmed gives, as an example, the experience of entering a hotel dining room with her lesbian partner only to see ranged before her table after table at which heterosexual couples are seated. She writes:

I am shocked by the sheer force of the regularity of that which is familiar: how each table presents the same form of sociality as the form of the heterosexual couple We sit down. I look down, acutely aware of inhabiting a form that is not the same as that repeated along the line of tables Being out of line can be uncomfortable. (2006: 82)

Ahmed uses this moment of disorientation to reflect on how the extensive, intergenerational workings of compulsory heterosexuality have made heterosexuality become so normal. 'It is crucial that we understand the historicity that

is both concealed and revealed by the repetition of this couple form as that which gathers round the table' (2006: 84). Like Young and Alcoff, Ahmed here uses a phenomenological example to open up a wider inquiry into the production of certain kinds of worlds that advantage some and disadvantage others.

At the end of her book Ahmed also makes an explicit ethical and, indeed, political turn. For she attaches a positive normative value to the disorientation that may accompany being queer in a straight world. A political commitment to being queer, she argues, means refusing to make of queer a clear alternative orientation. Queerness should celebrate proliferation and it should not seek to become *itself* a defined 'line', for 'if we took such a line we would perform a certain injustice' to other queers. A queer phenomenology, rather, suggests 'a way of inhabiting the world by giving "support" to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place' (2006: 179).

What emerges clearly from all the works discussed above is that phenomenology offers important ethical and political resources to feminist practices. However, I conclude by briefly discussing some works that direct their attention yet more explicitly to this matter. Maurice Hamington, for example, draws on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to ground feminist 'care ethics'. He argues that the lived body offers certain kinds of pre-discursive 'knowing' that enable (although they do not assure) the emergence of feelings of empathy and compassion. Such feelings provide an epistemological foundation for what he calls 'an embodied ethic of care'. For, however socially different from myself another may be, as Merleau-Ponty argues, there is 'still a fundamental connection and understanding in the flesh'. Thus if a knife cuts into another's body 'I do not have to ask whether pain was felt ... [for] an affective or felt response precedes any reflective consideration of the circumstances ... Corporeal knowledge creates the potential of sympathetic perception that makes care possible' (Hamington, 2008: 213). 'Care' initially arises, then, not as an abstract moral

obligation but because of an immediate, affective responsiveness to pain, suffering or need, that emerges from aspects of our common corporeality (see also Weiss, 1999: ch. 7; Arp, 2000; Brubaker, 2006).

Given that profound differences and conflicts frequently divide women, a pressing question for feminist politics concerns whether potential sources for solidarity among them also may exist. Here again phenomenologies of lived body experience offer an important resource. The political importance of embodied responsiveness to the suffering of others has been explored by Sandra Bartky. If, as Bartky puts it, 'feminism is primarily addressed to the suffering of women' (2002: 87) then an investigation of the ways in which we may experience the suffering of others is important. Bartky examines the twin perils of, on the one hand, a condescending 'sympathy' from on high that reduces the one who suffers to a passive object and, on the other, an 'empathy' in which over-identification with the sufferer dissolves the empathizer's own subjective boundaries and obliterates respect for differences. Drawing on the less-known phenomenology of Max Scheler (1874–1928), and using the example of her own reading of Nawal El Sadawi's account of her violent subjection to clitoridectomy as a young child (El Sadawi, 1980), Bartky elucidates a third mode of experiencing the suffering of others that (with Scheler) she calls 'feeling-with'. Here neither objectification nor over-identification takes place. Experiencing pain and terror and feeling-with the one who does so are not to be confused, and feeling-with, as she quotes Scheler as saying, "'presupposes that awareness of distance between selves which is eliminated by identification'" (2002: 77). Bartky knows she is not actually feeling El Sadawi's pain, even as she imaginatively enters into it as she reads. However, this work of imaginative feeling-with, which is not just 'an internal seeing' but a 'feeling', also requires commitment on our part. For we need sufficient 'background information' to be able to key into and make sense of

another's experience, and so it is incumbent on feminists to learn as much as possible about the worlds of others to whom they wish to offer solidarity.

One can, of course, think of many instances in which women refuse, or fail, to feel-with other women. For the common characteristics of women's embodiment do not in themselves ensure sentient and affective bonds among them, or (as early second wave feminists often naïvely assumed) automatically lead to feminist solidarity. Even so, those embodied experiences that are specific to women may facilitate a more immediate feeling-with other women's suffering. Thus it is not surprising that issues such as sexualized violence against women or compulsory motherhood have been key sites for western feminist organizing for the last fifty years (Kruks, 2001: ch. 6).

Others have argued that a potential for more joyful, sensuous bonds lies in the intersubjective qualities of our lived bodies. Debra Bergoffen, for example, argues that, in their eroticism (broadly construed), our bodies also offer the possibility (though never the assurance) of an opening, of a warmth, towards others. She draws from Beauvoir's work an 'ethic of generosity' (the obverse of the making 'Other' of others) that celebrates the joys of giving and of sustaining human bonds. Pointing to Irigaray as Beauvoir's 'unlikely ally', Bergoffen also suggests that we consider the maternal body as a site for an ethic of generosity. For 'maternal generosity, like the lover's erotic generosity, is the gift one makes of oneself to the other for the sake of the relationship which reveals us to each other in the intimacies of our fleshed being' (1997: 209). Fredrika Scarth adds a further dimension by considering the broader implications of generosity for a feminist politics of difference. Scarth draws from Beauvoir a warning about 'the dangers of a liberationist politics that, finding the self in the other, effaces difference in the name of equality and freedom and assimilates the other' (2004: 166), and she also finds an alternative vision for an ethical political community in

Beauvoir. This is a community in which ‘receptive generosity – an openness to the foreignness of the other – [is] the guiding principle of our encounters with others’ (2004: 171).

All of the works discussed in this chapter, some more obliquely, others more directly, reveal the ways in which the lived body is profoundly enmeshed in the ethical and political project of feminism. For our embodied orientations and our affective experiences strongly predispose us to act towards others (as well as ourselves) in certain ways. As Ahmed, for example, makes clear, how we are oriented to the world and what values we affirm are deeply implicated in each other. Indeed, it is hard to imagine feminist political practices in which embodied orientations and affective experiences play little part. This is not, of course, to say that orientations and affects are ‘natural’ or independent of cultural norms. However, it is to say that they involve *sui generis* modes of knowing and acting in the world and that these may best be explored through phenomenological inquiry. For phenomenology offers us access to significant registers of women’s lives, to embodied and affective ways of knowing, judging and acting that cannot be grasped by discourse analysis or by other objectivizing approaches to ‘experience’.

NOTES

- 1 Accordingly, in spite of the strong affinities between the theoretical concerns of phenomenology and those of feminist theory, many feminist thinkers have been dismissive of phenomenology, arguing that its inattention to sexual difference is not a matter of mere omission but is indicative of essentializing and universalizing flaws that lie at its very heart. See Fisher (2000) for an excellent overview and discussion of such critiques. However, a growing body of scholarship challenges such readings, especially with regard to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. With regard to Husserl see in particular Heinämaa (2003). See also essays in Fisher and Embree (2000) and Heinämaa and Rodemeyer (2010).
See also, for more positive readings and feminist appropriations of various of the phenomenological ‘fathers’, Grosz (1994); Murphy (1999); Weiss (1999); Alcoff (2000); Kruks (2001); Diprose (2002); and Olkowski and Weiss (2006), as well as other works discussed in more detail later in this chapter. All these works demonstrate that important resources for feminist theorizing are to be found in the classic works of phenomenology, although they are to be used selectively.
- 2 Beauvoir wrote an extensive review of his major work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, when it appeared in 1945 (Beauvoir, 2004: 159–64). See Kruks (1991; 2001: ch. 1) for discussions of Beauvoir’s strong philosophical affinities with Merleau-Ponty.
- 3 This is the core of Scott’s critique of E.P. Thompson’s path-breaking *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Thompson sought to contest structuralist Marxist theory by showing how collective class identity emerged primarily from the experiences of working-class lives. Scott criticizes his account as essentializing. For Thompson, she objects, ‘Working-class “experience” is now the ontological foundation of working-class identity, politics and history.’ She immediately adds that ‘The use of experience has the same foundational status if we substitute women or African-American or lesbian or homosexual for working-class in the previous sentence’ (Scott, 1992: 30).
- 4 Discourse theory is hardly original in asserting the constituted nature of the subject. Other theoretical orientations that make this claim have included structuralist versions of Marxism, some psychoanalytic theories and Durkheimian sociology.
- 5 Although the development of gender theory may be imputed to Beauvoir she did not – indeed, could not – use the concept of ‘gender’ in its later Anglophone feminist sense. For the equivalent French word, *genre*, refers to what in English we call a genre (for example, a genre of painting), or else it refers to the gender of a noun.
- 6 However, one should note that, in commenting on her claim that pregnancy is draining and detrimental to women, Beauvoir also remarks: ‘I am taking here an exclusively physiological viewpoint. It is evident that maternity can be very advantageous psychologically for a woman, just as it can also be a disaster’ (2010: 42, n.8).
- 7 In Husserlian terms, it is not *Körper* but *Lieb*.
- 8 Today, of course, medical interventions may enable a few physically to alter their sexual designation. This was not an option that was available in Beauvoir’s day and it is still not an easily available option for many who might desire it.
- 9 For example, the prohibition of abortion and contraception in France in the 1940s profoundly suffused the sexual experiences of the majority of women, as well as shaping the meanings of motherhood (2010: 524 ff). Beauvoir infamously begins the chapter of *The Second Sex* on ‘The Mother’ with a discussion of abortion, the prohibition of which

- made (and, for many, still makes) a free choice of maternity virtually impossible.
- 10 However, interestingly, in another passage, Beauvoir actually aligns oriental ('Yellow') peoples (as well as 'Black' peoples) with oppressed (presumably white) European women: opacity or 'Mystery' is, she says, attributed to all of them 'insofar as they are considered absolutely as the inessential Other' (2010: 271).
 - 11 The range of translations, some of them strikingly recent, is an indication of how effectively the book speaks to diverse audiences. As well as translations into many European languages, the book was first translated into Japanese in 1953–54 and was retranslated in 1997 (Inoué, 2002). A translation was begun in Russia in 1989 but appeared finally only in 1998 (Aïvazova, 2002). A full translation first became available in mainland China in 2004 (Miao, 2008).
 - 12 Young also devotes an essay to 'pregnant embodiment,' a less universal experience but still one shared by about 80 per cent of Western women.
 - 13 Thus Young says she agrees with Toril Moi, who argues that Beauvoir's notion of the 'lived body' does effectively overcome the difficulties of the sex/gender distinction in grasping women's subjective experience. However, Young argues that feminism still needs to retain the concept of 'gender' to refer to the 'macro-level' social structures that constrain women – feminism must do more than explore subjectivity and identity (2005: 12–26).

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What do Women Want? Feminist Epistemology and Psychoanalytic Theory

Kirsten Campbell

All she ever wanted was a little credit ...

Confessions of A Shopaholic (2009)

What do women want today? In the romantic comedy *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, the heroine Rebecca Bloomwood ‘nurtures her shopping addiction and falls for a wealthy entrepreneur’, Luke Brandon.¹ By the end of the film, Rebecca discovers that her desire for Brandon and romance replaces her ‘lust for things you never even knew you needed’ (*Confessions*, 2009). Despite critical reviews, the film made over US \$108 million gross in international markets.² The film was adapted from the immensely successful ‘shopaholic’ book series by the British author Sophie Kinsella. As the marketing materials describe, these books offer stories of ‘shopping and life’. The series follows their heroine from her first compulsive purchases of rugs, underwear and wine to the birth of her daughter, her ‘shopping friend for life’.³ Disney has optioned the books for further film sequels. *Confessions* is part of a new genre of ‘neo-feminist cinema’ in which the

question of what women want is central to the filmic narrative (Radner, 2011). It tells a story of feminine consumption, desire, and empowerment.

This chapter explores how ‘what women want’ is still a key political question for third wave feminisms. It asks how an engagement with feminist theories of knowledge and psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity might offer new approaches to this political problem. It begins by examining how contemporary feminist thought still confronts ‘femininity’ and its discontents. It then explores how feminist theories of knowledge have built different frameworks to consider new answers to this question. In this field of feminist research, which is known as ‘feminist epistemology’, the politics of subjectivity intersect with the politics of knowledge. The chapter examines key positions within this field and identifies how knowing and identity remain central problems for feminist epistemologies. The chapter then examines why feminists have worked with (and against) psychoanalysis in their attempt to

address this problem. Finally, the chapter sets out a post-Lacanian feminist epistemology which makes the problem of knowing and being central to feminist knowledges. It shows how this approach can provide the conceptual building blocks for ‘third wave feminist epistemologies’ (Campbell, 2004b) that offer new ways of thinking through feminist politics of sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge.

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT? NEW SEXUAL CONTRACTS IN NEW TIMES

The first scene of *Confessions of a Shopaholic* opens with a shot of the glittering shoes that the little girl Rebecca could not have. It closes with the adult Rebecca’s delighted description of a Gucci bag she came to possess. Rebecca describes this phantasy scene as a ‘dreamy world full of perfect things, where grown up girls got what they wanted’. This *mise-en-scène* of contemporary femininity exemplifies what Angela McRobbie describes as the ‘new sexual contract’ (McRobbie, 2009: 54). For McRobbie, this new sexual contract displaces an older story of modern social belonging. This older story was first told by early European political theorists to explain the agreement of men to enter into modern political society, where all equally possess rights and agree to civil obligations. Carole Pateman argues that this social contract was in fact a fraternal pact that organized relationships between men. This pact was supported by the ‘sexual contract’, which ordered modern relations between men and women. In this social order ‘women are subordinated to men as men, or to men as a fraternity. The original contract takes place after the political defeat of the father and creates modern fraternal patriarchy’ (Pateman, 1998: 3).

Now, however, it seems that a new sexual contract is emerging in the context of new globalizing post-Fordist and neo-liberal capitalism (see Fraser, 2009; Oksala, 2011). Taking the British context as an example, it is

possible to see how this ‘new sexual contract appears to displace traditional modes of patriarchal authority and attribute to young women all manner of social, political, and economic freedoms’ (Adkins, 2008: 191). Under the terms of this new contract women will use their freedoms to enter this new world of capitalist consumption. In return, women are promised that they can ‘have it all’ (Day, 2010). Nina Power sharply observes of such images of contemporary womanhood: ‘[t]o Freud’s infamous question “what do women want?” it seems, then, that we have all-too-ready an answer. Why! They want shoes and chocolate and handbags and babies and curling tongs washed down with a large glass of white wine’ (Power 2009: 30). For younger women such as Rebecca this new sexual contract promises economic freedom through the consumption of shoes and handbags. For older ‘grown up’ women, it promises husbands and babies (just as its earlier form did). For both generations, it offers what Nancy Fraser describes as ‘a new romance of female advancement and gender justice’ (Fraser, 2009: 110).

On closer examination, it increasingly appears that the terms of this sexual contract are too costly, and that grown-up women do not really get what they want. These promises of ‘family’ life and economic participation seem increasingly undesirable or unbelievable. McRobbie identifies the physical and psychic pain of normative sexuality as the cost of entering the new sexual contract for younger women (McRobbie, 2009: 54). As they grow up, nearly half of all British women never marry, and significantly decreasing numbers live in nuclear families (Office for National Statistics, 2012a). They earn lower wages, and have less political power, than their male counterparts in a changing – but still gendered – society. These British trends are typical of industrialized Europe and North America and are now also emerging in the industrializing Asian and Latin American economies (UN Women, 2012). We now see the emergence of new problematics of desire, sexuality and ‘femininity’ in the differentiated

forms of late capitalist consumption and neo-liberal politics currently evolving from London to Beijing.

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that another late capitalist story of failed romance has also appeared. These are stories of apolitical and indifferent young women, of apathetic and exhausted post-feminists or of 'feminist killjoys' who simply cannot be happy (Ahmed, 2010). In this narrative 'the best tip for women wanting to have it all is: don't bother' (Marin, 2010). However, none of these stories challenges the remaking of femininities and their discontents in these new times or offers alternative visions of the 'all' that women want. Rather, they are intensified 'backlash' narratives against legal and social gains by women that first emerged in the 1980s against second wave feminism (Faludi, 2006). For this reason, as McRobbie describes, the vital question in this post-feminist context is "'what now?'" (McRobbie, 2009: 21).

Contemporary feminist theory insists that 'gender trouble' is central to these global transformations, even if it is neglected in dominant approaches to thinking about these changes (Yuval-Davis, 2009). The challenge remains to gain a better understanding of the gendering of these social transformations. It remains necessary to reinvent feminist politics for this gendered present and to rearticulate feminist demands in terms that might answer the question of what women want in terms that are less costly and more liberatory. Meeting these challenges rests upon developing new feminist knowledges that can invent new methods to investigate and build better cognitive maps of this 'neo-liberal, fragmented, dislocated, experiential reality' (Mirza, 2009). This epistemological potential rests upon the possibility that feminist theory and practice can operate as potentially transformative knowledges that change how we know our social world. To engage with the political question of what women want now, it is also therefore necessary to engage with the epistemological question of how we know ourselves and our others in these 'new

times' (Mirza, 2009). In these engagements, the politics of subjectivity intersect with the politics of knowledge, and understanding how they intersect is a crucial problem for third wave feminist epistemologies.

THE FIELD OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

What *is* 'feminist epistemology'? This term now refers to a diverse and interdisciplinary field of research on feminist theories of knowledge. However, when this term was first used in North American and European scholarship in the 1980s it did not refer to a recognizable body of work. Rather, it referred to a set of theoretical and political problems concerning accounts of knowledge. These initially focused upon the question of whether there are 'distinctive feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology and philosophy of science' (Harding and Hintikka, 1983: ix).

These early feminist epistemologies developed two key deconstructive critiques of 'sexist' and 'masculinist' knowledges (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: 2). The first critique engaged with the models and practices of science that inform the natural and social sciences, arguing that these are gendered. This approach argued that the issue is not simply that illegitimate social values influence scientific research, but more problematically that those values form part of the research process itself (Fox Keller and Longino, 1996). The ideas and practices of scientific knowledge reflect the gendered and unequal social world from which 'science' emerges. The second critique engages with the ideas of knower and knowing that inform European epistemological models more generally. In this argument, such knowledges presume a masculine subject whose dominating, instrumental and objectifying relation to what is known derives from cultural models of masculinity (Scheman, 1987; Lloyd, 1984).

However, the aim of this work was not to simply provide a 'better' account of

epistemology but rather to explain the difference that feminist politics can make to how we know the world. This issue of the politics of knowledge (and in particular the politics of feminist knowledge) has been central to feminist theorizing from its second wave development in the 1970s (whether in the North American tradition of the Combahee River Collective or the European tradition of Luce Irigaray). This engagement with feminist epistemic practices identifies the emergence of feminist epistemology as a distinctive field of study. It marks the move from an emphasis upon deconstructive epistemological projects that aim to expose sexist bias and masculinist knowledges to reconstructive projects that aim to provide new models of feminist knowing in order to reconstruct epistemic practices as feminist practices. Because power relations shape how we know the world, this more recent project of feminist epistemology aims to construct new models of knowing the social world so that it becomes possible to understand that world differently.

Two important characteristics of the field emerge with this reconstructive project. The first is an unpacking of 'the ontological and epistemological category of Woman as well as the lived experiences and social positions of women' (Ali, 2007: 195). With this increasing emphasis upon intersecting relations of power that produce knowledge, there is also a concomitant development of ideas of 'oppositional' or 'intersectional' epistemologies that aim to provide theories of knowledge that can capture and critique social and global inequalities (Sandoval, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2012). The second characteristic flows from the increasing focus upon feminist knowledges as the object of study for the field. With this focus, the field begins to develop as an interdisciplinary area of research that moves from its narrower philosophical concerns to engage with the many disciplines that feminist theory draws upon, ranging from sociology to legal theory.

This interdisciplinary, methodologically pluralistic and politically diverse field of

feminist epistemology can be delineated by (1) its object of study, (2) its project or collective aims, and (3) its set of common political and theoretical positions. These theories share a common focus upon feminist theory and practice as their object of study. The shared aim of those engaged in this complex and changing field is to examine how feminisms can produce transformative knowledges that change our understanding of our social world. This diverse body of work links the production of knowledge to the transformative values of feminist movements and examines how these values can produce new models of epistemic practice. It considers how feminist theory and practice can operate as more persuasive and political accounts of our social world.

Epistemology is traditionally conceived as those necessary and sufficient truth-conditions for propositional knowledge. By contrast, the field of feminist epistemology analyses the social and political construction of knowledge, including feminist knowledges. Gayatri Spivak (1989) helpfully describes this analysis as linking problems of ontology (theory of being), epistemology (theory of knowledge) and axiology (theory of value). Feminist epistemologies seek to make explicit these models of the subject (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and politics (axiology) that inform feminist truth-claims. This approach challenges us to ask: What *is* the female/feminine subject? How *do* we know what these subjects want? And what *are* the politics of these desires? However, it also raises three key conceptual problems. The first is how to make explicit the models of the person, politics and knowing that inform our accounts of the world. The second is how to understand the social and political construction of knowledge, including feminist knowledges. The third problem is how to construct new feminist models of knowing. All three problems shape current research in the field, but it is the second and third problems that have come to dominate contemporary research.

Two key groups of arguments have emerged in debates around these problems.

The first set of arguments focuses upon how to understand the formation of feminist knowledge in its social and political context, and how it also offer a critical perspective on that context rather than simply reflecting these values. These theories examine how the distinctive nature of feminist knowledge can emerge from our given social and political orders. Particularly influential examples of this approach are the standpoint theories of Hartsock (1983) and Harding (1991), as well as Haraway (1991) on situated knowledges. This work focuses upon theorizing feminist knowledge as 'a critical vision consequent upon a critical positioning in inhomogeneous gendered social space' (Haraway, 1991: 195). Hartsock and Harding offer an experiential standpoint argument that contends that social groups are located differently in relations of domination, and that these groups' different experiences of oppression will produce different knowledges of the social world. To rebuild these as critical knowledges requires beginning from the standpoint of oppressed and marginalized groups (see hooks, 2003; Collins, 2003). Haraway outlines an argument for political standpoint, and suggests that feminist critical visions of the world are built through coalitional politics. For Haraway, this standpoint needs to be developed from political work and coalition building (see Campbell, 2004a).

The second key group of arguments seeks to analyse the epistemic practices that produce feminist knowledges. One approach engages with epistemic norms that we use to evaluate truth claims, such as models of rationality and objectivity. They reconceive reasoning as a connective and critical process. They also reconfigure objectivity as acknowledging the situatedness of truth-claims and accepting responsibility to communities of knowers and political values (Longino 2010). Another approach engages with the relationship between knowing subjects and the production of knowledge, arguing that there is an important connection between the production of feminist knowledge and the knowing subject. They offer different ways to think about the

knowing subject that move past traditional assumptions of the knower as an autonomous and disembodied individual. This approach instead considers the knower as an embodied female or feminist subject (see Irigaray, 1985a; Braidotti, 1992) or as collective groups of feminist knowers, such as the idea of epistemic community in the work of Longino (2002) or Code (1995). More recently, this knowing subject has been reconceived through the so-called 'new feminist materialisms' (Tuin, 2011). These theories return feminist epistemological thought to the problem of how to theorize materiality and subjectivity. This problem ranges from how to understand the physical embodiment of the biological subject to how to extend epistemological analysis to include the material physical world, such that it includes non-human things and objects as well as humans as epistemological agents (for example, see Tuin, 2009; Withers 2010). This 'materialist' turn thereby returns feminist epistemologies to many of the earliest engagements of the field with philosophical questions concerning 'metaphysics, methodology and philosophy of science' (Harding and Hintikka, 1983: ix).

The relationship between feminist theories of knowing and being remains a central problem within the field of feminist epistemology (Hemmings, 2012). Tuin (2009) invites us to develop 'third wave feminist epistemologies' to engage with this problem, arguing that the 'new materialisms' provide a novel approach to theorizing sexual difference, and hence a means of 'jumping generations' of the impasses of second wave epistemological thinking. However, Hemmings (2009) suggests that Tuin's approach does not imagine a different relation to the new epistemological problems opened up, and explored, by second wave theory. In contrast, she argues that Tuin's analysis reproduces the Oedipal narratives of generations of thinkers that she seeks to escape. This exchange is part of a larger contemporary debate concerning the periodization of 'waves' or 'generations' of feminist thought and politics that contrasts second wave feminisms of the 1970s and

1980s to the third wave of the 1990s and onwards (Snyder, 2008). However, a more productive strategy to address these ‘generational dilemmas’, as Hemmings calls them, is to resist Tuin’s emphasis upon ‘qualitative generational change’ in feminist epistemology (2009: 18). Instead, my approach seeks to build upon the shared acknowledgement of both Hemmings and Tuin that ‘third wave feminist epistemology’ names an important and continuing problematic within feminist theory, rather than providing a final answer to the question of feminist epistemologies.

I developed the notion of ‘third wave feminist epistemologies’ in my earlier work to name a set of emerging problems for theories of feminist knowledge (Campbell, 2004b; Tuin, 2010). This term did not indicate a fixed referent, such as specific thinkers or traditions, or even a particular theoretical taxonomy or framework. Rather, following the insights of feminist epistemologists themselves, I used the term ‘feminist epistemology’ to refer to a field of research that coalesces around a shared set of theoretical and political concerns. The ongoing productivity of the field of feminist epistemology (like the theory and politics from which it derives) lies in the diversity and hybridity of the feminist knowledges that form its object of study and in the plural and dialogical nature of the accounts of those knowledges. The disagreements and negotiations concerning feminist knowledge as an object of enquiry, and the different accounts of that object, produce feminist epistemology as a collective field of enquiry. Accordingly, my conception of ‘third wave feminist epistemologies’ refers to a collective set of conceptual knots and issues that coalesce around a shared set of theoretical and political concerns.

Following this approach, the dialogue between Tuin and Hemmings itself represents an important, productive exchange within this field. This exchange points to a foundational and persevering theoretical problem in the field: how to understand the production of the feminist knower and feminist epistemic

practices. How, then, to reconsider these conceptual knots and issues? In her early description of this central problem of feminist thought Spivak identifies feminist readings of psychoanalysis as offering an important ‘epistemological itinerary’ (1989: 209). If this relationship between feminist knowing subjects and knowledges remains a central problem for third wave feminist epistemologies, then feminists might again reconsider rereading psychoanalysis for its epistemological itinerary, which offers another useful account of knowing and being.

FEMINISMS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Early last century, Freud wrote to the French psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte that ‘the great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is “What does a woman want?”’ (Freud, 1955: 468). It seems that in our current times Freud’s ‘great question’ remains unanswered, and the problem of ‘femininity’ remains as pressing as ever. Spivak’s earlier interlocutor Jacqueline Rose argues that psychoanalysis still:

needs to be brought back into the frame as part of feminist language ... Psychoanalysis can help us understand how public phantasies work, why they’re so powerful and why they can be so ugly, and still be so attractive and so persistent. There’s no discourse in the culture for understanding the unconscious force of that, except for psychoanalysis. (Mitchell et al., 2010: 79)

What women want is central to the self-description of third wave feminisms, and femininity, sexuality and desire have become highly contentious issues within third wave politics (Snyder, 2008). In the context of contemporary ‘gender troubles’, psychoanalysis again becomes an important site of engagement. Psychoanalysis can help to understand the individual and collective effects of sexed subjectivity, as well as the power of contemporary phantasies of femininity. As

Juliet Mitchell's classic argument cautions, 'psychoanalysis is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis of one. If we are interested in understanding and challenging the oppression of women, we cannot afford to neglect it' (Mitchell, 1974: xiii). For feminism and psychoanalysis, sexual difference makes a difference to both becoming subjects and knowing the world. It is here that the politics of subjectivity meets the problem of feminist knowledge, and that feminist epistemologies meet psychoanalysis. This intersecting problematic means that it is possible for feminist epistemologies to draw upon both the psychoanalytic insight that sexual identity is contingent and impossible as well as the feminist insight that sexual identity is contingently tied to empirical social subjects and relations.

However, there has been a long and complex relationship between different feminist and psychoanalytic traditions. The intersections between these fields change as feminist and psychoanalytic theories and politics shift, with the relationships between feminism and psychoanalysis taking different forms at different times. However, one of the most influential strands of psychoanalytic thinking for contemporary feminist theory has been the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. The influence of Lacanian theory has extended beyond practising psychoanalysts to shape an influential generation of theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, who have become central to feminist thought. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the leading contemporary theorist of gender, Judith Butler, has consistently engaged with Lacanian psychoanalysis from *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) to her most recent discussion of sexual difference and kinship (Butler, 2013).

Feminist theory has predominantly read Lacanian theory as (and for) an account of the constitution of 'sexual subjectivity': that is, how we come to understand ourselves as 'masculine' and 'feminine' persons. Feminists such as Jacqueline Rose have argued that

Lacan's work is useful because it understands sexual identity as problematic and sexual difference as contingent. For Rose, Lacan's work offers a cultural, rather than biological, account of sexual difference. This approach is important because it explains sexual difference not as a biological given but rather as a symbolization of the body that represents subjects as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. It recognizes that sexual difference is integral to the formation and experience of subjectivity. However, it also reveals the 'problematic, if not impossible, nature of sexual identity' (Rose, 1982: 28). According to this psychoanalytic model, there is only a contingent relation between sexual bodies and identities. Since the unconscious reveals the failure of all identity, sexual identity is necessarily unstable, incomplete and lacking, which never quite maps onto our bodies or selves (Rose, 1986: 90). In this account, while both masculinity and femininity are never fully achieved or stable, 'femininity' is a particularly problematic subject position. This is because the socio-symbolic order that appears to create sexual difference is in actuality structured around the 'masculine' term.

However, Lacan's account of masculinity and femininity has also given rise to contentious debates concerning feminist appropriations of his work. The key accusation of 'phallogentrism' centres on two main objections. The first is that Lacan ties his concept of the phallus, the symbolic element that marks the subject as named by language, to the penis, the physical organ of the male body. Second, by doing so, Lacan privileges masculinity and the male body as his model of sexual difference and its formation. For example, Nancy Fraser contends that Lacan's account is irrevocably phallogentric, with the consequence that feminism should not 'use or adapt the theory of Jacques Lacan' because its structuralist determinism naturalizes women's oppression (Fraser, 1992: 182). Butler (2012) returns to this problem of the seemingly unchangeable symbolic order in her most recent critical engagement with feminist Lacanian theory.

However, another strand of feminist work undertakes a post-Lacanian project of challenging the symbolic structures of the existing social order. An important example of this can be found in the work of Luce Irigaray. Whitford summarizes her project as the construction of 'a female sociality (*les femmes entre elles*), a female symbolic and female social contract, a horizontal relation between women' (Whitford, 1991: 79). Irigaray calls for a horizontal relation between women because she argues that the Symbolic order represents a horizontal relation between men and forms a society and culture 'between-men' to the exclusion of women. Irigaray proposes two key strategies for a rewriting of the Symbolic order. The first deconstructs masculinist philosophical discourse as the master discourse of modern Western culture. For example, this strategy is pursued in her book, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray, 1985a). The second strategy is a reconstructive project that calls for the creation of new ways of imagining and representing what it is to be a woman. An important example of this project in Irigaray's work is her creation of different representations of the female body, such as the 'two-lips' metaphor of *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Irigaray, 1985b). Building on this strategy, Irigaray has drawn up a civil code of 'positive rights of citizenship in the female mode' with the aim of producing a new civic identity for women by (Irigaray, 1993: 38). Against a conservative reading of Lacan's work that holds that the Symbolic order is the only possible symbolic structure, Irigaray offers the possibility of a different symbolic order in her suggestion that women should create a new language and social contract that are appropriate for them. This strategy considers both the difficulties for women of the 'feminine' role that the 'masculine' defines, as well as the problem of how to reconceive 'femininity' in other terms (Ferrell, 1996).

This Lacanian argument concerning the failure of identity, and its structuring socio-symbolic order, has also been taken up by

post-colonial feminist and queer theorists. These theorists engage with the Lacanian account of subjectivity, but argue that his insights are helpful in understanding the making not only of 'sexual' difference but also of 'racial' difference. In this reading of Lacan, 'racial' identity is neither completely 'successful' nor successfully 'complete'. Kobena Mercer's post-colonial and queer adaption of Jacqueline Rose's Lacanian feminism exemplifies this understanding of identity, where:

[w]hat distinguishes psychoanalysis from sociological accounts of black masculinity ... is that whereas for the latter, the internalisation of norms is roughly assumed to work, the basic premise and indeed starting point for psychoanalysis is that it does not. The unconscious constantly reveals the 'failure' of identity ... Black people's affinity with psychoanalysis rests above all ... with this recognition that there is a resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life. (Mercer, 1994: 170)

This account conceives ethnic and sexual identity neither as originary nor as essential. Rather, it emphasizes how complex psychic processes of identification and disidentification form 'racial' and 'sexual' post-colonial ethnicities.

There has been considerable debate concerning the utility of Lacanian psychoanalysis for feminist post-colonial theory, which primarily concerns its 'often intractable claims of universality [and] its desire to privilege sexual difference over other forms of difference' (Seshadri-Crooks, 1998: 354). This critique contends that Lacanian psychoanalysis is a universalizing and ahistorical theory that fails to acknowledge its own historical and political specificity as a modern European philosophy (see McClintock, 1995). However, Seshadri-Crooks also suggests that a possible strategy is to 'evolve a procedure that does not require an analogy between sex and race ... to discover the intricate structural relations between race and sex, to see how race articulates itself with sex to gain access to desire or lack – the paradoxical guarantee of the subject's sovereignty beyond

symbolic determination' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000: 3). For example, she uses Lacanian theory to engage in a careful reading of cultural texts of 'race' to work through those phantasies that guarantee the sovereignty of the racial subject, so as 'to resist the specious enjoyment promised by Whiteness' (2000: 160). Other now classic examples of this feminist post-colonial approach include those of Jan Campbell (2000) and Ranjana Khanna (2003).

An important element of this strategy is to use Lacanian psychoanalysis to shift the focus of post-colonial studies from 'the elaboration of the psychic mutabilities of the post-colonial subject alone' to consider the subject in context of the constitution of communities and collectivities as such (Chow, 1999: 34–5). Rey Chow's important work in this area shows the usefulness of Lacanian psychoanalysis for exploring 'the structural problems of community formation that are always implied in the articulation of the subject [and to address] issues of structural control – of law, sovereignty, and prohibition – that underlie the subject's relation with the collective' (Chow, 1999: 35, see also Bowman, 2010). This engagement with the relation between subject and collective involves a reconsideration of the socio-symbolic order as a social order. Like Irigaray, Chow proposes a post-Lacanian project which analyses and challenges the existing social order that structures subjectivity in terms of racial and sexual difference.

These feminist theories share the use of Lacanian theory to understand the formation of sexuated and racialized subjects in the socio-symbolic order and the structuring of that order through the representation of sexual and racial 'difference'. They also use it to understand the failure of those identities and the incompleteness of the socio-symbolic order that produces such subjective differences. These post-Lacanian feminist strategies reveal another way of understanding how we come to know ourselves as gendered and racialized subjects. For this reason, the

productive appropriations of Lacanian psychoanalysis suggest another approach to reworking the 'generational dilemma' of feminist epistemology, in that they envisage another reconfiguration of the relation between epistemology and ontology, and hence of knowing our selves and our others otherwise.

FEMINIST DISCOURSES

Women cannot be self-assured without language and systems of representations being transformed, because these are appropriate to men's subjectivity, they are reassuring to the between-men culture. (Irigaray, 1990: 96)

How *does* feminist knowledge offer critical knowledges of our selves and our others that can contest and change the existing social order? If feminist epistemologies recognize the social construction of knowledge, then how can feminist knowledges escape that construction? This problem can be seen as a variant of a classical problem of the sociology of knowledge. This is the problem of how the sociologist can claim to describe the 'truth' of the social world, when they exist in that society and hence do not have a position that transcends social relations and values. Ultimately, this question founds the reconstructive project of feminist epistemology, which asks how feminist knowledge can effect an epistemological break that produces new ways to know the world. As Irigaray describes it, this break with previous epistemological models requires the transformation of 'language and systems of representation' (Irigaray, 1990: 96). This transformation of the socio-symbolic order is crucial, because it structures subjects and their desires. It involves building another epistemological frame to think differently about desiring subjects and their relations to others.

LACANIAN DISCOURSE

Lacanian psychoanalysis offers feminist epistemology an important account of the

formation of the subject and knowledge in the field of sexuality. From his earliest work, Lacan emphasizes that ‘the structures of society are symbolic’ (Lacan, 2006: 108). For Lacan, language produces the subject and its relations to others. Reworking de Saussure’s account of the structure of language and of Lévi-Strauss’s structure of culture, Lacan argues that meaning emerges from a differential relationship between symbolic elements, or signifiers. These signifiers exist in a structural relationship to each other – the symbolic order – that symbolizes or represents a social order.

As a socio-symbolic order, language has three registers (for further discussion, see Campbell, 2004b). The imaginary register is the aspect of the socio-symbolic order that involves the image, imagination and phantasy. These are the ‘images of social place’ and self through which we imagine our relation to the order of representation, or, in Lacanian terms, the symbolic. The symbolic is the structuring order of linguistic elements, which the imaginary fills with phantasmic content. In *Confessions*, Rebecca imagines herself as ‘the girl in the green scarf’, a girl with bigger eyes, a more expensive haircut, more poise and more confidence. This is an imaginary scene, in which Rebecca pictures herself as a beautiful woman who is confident in her relations to others.

The symbolic is the order of cultural exchange, which is structured by the paternal law prohibiting certain kinship relations and permitting others. Crucially, for Lacan, this signifying order rests upon a social order of symbolic and sexual exchange. This socio-symbolic order constitutes subjectivity and intersubjectivity in particular forms. This sexuuated order structures subjectivity in relation to the phallus, the signifier of sexual difference (Lacan, 2006). For Lacan, the subject is sexuuated and the social is structured by sexual difference. In Lacanian terms, sexual difference is structured in relation to the phallus, the mark of the loss of bodily enjoyment all subjects give up on entering the social world. The phallic function is ‘*the function*

that institutes lack, that is, the alienating function of language’ (Fink, 1995: 103). However, the symbolic structures feminine and masculine subjects (which can be either men or women) in terms of a different relation to this loss, such that the masculine is presumed to be complete and whole, while the feminine is presumed to be incomplete and lacking. So, for example, in *Confessions*, Rebecca believes her self to be incomplete until she meets Brandon, the man she believes will satisfy her desires.

However, the symbolic is also necessarily an incomplete structure, because it will always be missing a symbolic element that could complete it. Accordingly, as a signifying order, any system of representation is always incomplete. This ‘gap’ or ‘lack’ in the symbolic order is the real. This is the third register of language. The real is that which cannot be represented in the socio-symbolic order because there is no signifier that can represent it. It is at this point of the failure of the symbolic that phantasy comes into operation. In the psychoanalytic sense, phantasy is an ‘[i]maginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish ... in a manner which is distorted ... by defensive processes’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 314). For Lacan, ‘phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary’, the lack or gap in the symbolic order (Lacan, 1986: 60). This concealing operation of phantasy can be seen in *Confessions*, in which the question of what women want is answered with the phantasy man, whose presence masks Rebecca’s other unrepresentable desires.

This account of language and subjectivity can be described as the ‘classical’ Lacan of his key text, *Écrits*. However, Lacan (1998; 2007) subsequently reworked this account in his later theory of the social bond of discourse. In this important reformulation, he described four social ties or ‘discourses’ of psychoanalytic experience in the later seminars of the 1960s and 1970s. For the later Lacan, discourse is a chain of symbolic elements, or signifiers. Discourse produces the

social link between subjects because discursive chains of signifiers structure stable intersubjective relations. The Lacanian concept of discourse links the structure of signification and the intersubjective relation because it describes signifying chains that form relations between subjects. This is not an idea of 'discourse' in the Foucauldian sense of an epistemological and political system of statements. Rather, discourse is a linguistic relationship, in the sense that stable structures of symbolic elements shape our relation to our selves and our others. This approach emphasizes the intersubjective aspect of discourse, in which language functions as the link between speaking subjects. In the Lacanian sense, discourse is 'a social link (*lien social*), founded on language' (1998: 30).

For Lacan, discourse is a 'fundamental relationship, resulting in a particular *social bond*' (Verhaeghe, 1997: 100). It consists of a chain of symbolic elements that function as the social link because they symbolize certain forms of relationships between subjects. The social bond consists of these chains of symbolic elements, which signify the relation of one subject to another. This social bond of discourse knots together words and concepts, enabling the circulation of symbolic elements between speaking subjects. This discursive link fixes meaning, in the sense that it becomes possible to exchange stable meaning between speaking subjects. The concept of discourse thus links signification and intersubjectivity. The signifying chain that forms relations between subjects derives from the transindividual and sexuated order of language.

In the later Lacanian epistemology, 'knowledge' is not only a relation of subject to object but also, critically, a relation of subject to subject. Lacan argues that discourses represent different forms of the social bond. The discourses that produce different forms of intersubjectivity also produce different forms of knowledge. In this way, the later Lacanian account of knowledge moves between subjective and intersubjective structures. Because Lacan's model

describes not only the relation of subject to object but also the relation of subjects, discourses of knowledge reveal the relation of the knower to its others. The Lacanian model thereby unfolds the epistemological relation of knowing subject, signifier and known object to include the relation of the knowing subject to other subjects. The later Lacanian epistemology is a model of knowledge as *social*, in the sense that it is the product of the discursive link between subjects.

For Lacan, the dominant modern discursive link is the Discourse of the Master. This discourse produces mastering knowledges, which he identifies as those of the University and of science (Lacan, 2007: 147). Like the deconstructive feminist epistemological theories, Lacan identifies science and university discourses as producing forms of knowing that seek to dominate and control their objects. However, these modern discourses of knowledge operate within the field of sexual difference. If the dominant discourse of modernity is that of the Master, this Master is a masculine subject that exists in fraternal relations to other masculine subjects (Campbell, 2004b). As feminist thinkers such as Pateman and Irigaray have shown, the modern social contract is a sexuate contract, which presumes fraternal relations between masculine subjects as social subjects and feminine subjects as objects of exchange between them. As a fraternal social bond, the modern Discourse of the Master produces 'masculine' forms of knowledges and knowing subjects. How, then, might feminist knowledges create other ways of knowing and being?

FROM LACANIAN TO FEMINIST DISCOURSE

To rewrite the modern fraternal discourses of subjectivity and sociality requires a transformation of these fraternal models of knowledge. This is the aim of the contemporary reconstructive project of feminist epistemology.

Braidotti points out new forms of feminist knowledge ‘imply the transformation of the very structures and images of thought, not just the propositional content of the thoughts’ (Braidotti, 1992: 184). For Braidotti, developing feminist epistemologies involves not just discovering new ideas (that is, new content) but also creating new ways of understanding the world (that is, new epistemologies). To use Lacanian epistemology to undertake such a reconstructive project involves reconfiguring it through feminist politics and social theory, since the feminist knowledges are both political and social. This reframes the focus of our epistemological investigation from Lacanian discourse to feminist discourse.

The feminist idea that it is possible to transform systems of thought and representation begins with the possibility that the existing socio-symbolic order does not know (or represent) subjects or objects. For this reason, a useful starting point for the transformation of existing epistemic orders is considering the limits of that order. Accordingly, feminist transformations of existing ways of knowing can begin with the articulation of that which a phallogentric Symbolic order does not represent. Taking this approach, I begin to develop this psychoanalytic feminist strategy by returning to the phantasies of femininity in *Confessions*. This offers a helpful starting point for an examination of the ‘system of representation’ of ‘feminine’ (and ‘masculine’) identities and for the identification of the gaps in these discourses of what it is to be a woman (or a man).

In *Confessions*, Rebecca imagines herself as ‘the girl in the green scarf’ – this is the girl with bigger eyes, a more expensive haircut, with better poise and added confidence. The ‘girl in the green scarf’ is a composite image, made up of different signifiers of a particular form of white feminine sexuality – large eyes, luminous skin, glamorous hairstyle, bodily poise, confident presentation and – of course – the green scarf that she will buy to make her into that woman. This is what Angela McRobbie (following Judith Butler and psychoanalyst Joan Riviere) calls

‘post-feminist masquerade as a mode of feminine inscription, across the whole surface of the body’ (McRobbie, 2009: 64). McRobbie suggests that this contemporary form of femininity emerges as a new cultural dominant because of the current challenges to the older forms of patriarchal Symbolic order. She points to an important remaking of femininities in contemporary capitalism, even as it installs the white heterosexual subject as norm. However, the feminine masquerade is now also rearticulating ‘racialized’ femininities from the most recent ‘multi-cultural’ campaigns of Estee Lauder to the all ‘non-white’ models of the Givenchy couture collection (Butler, 2013). Lacanian psychoanalysis helps to reveal how these ideas of femininity (and their masculine counterpart) do not escape from the phallogentric socio-symbolic order. It insists that modern fraternal discourses of the social contract emerge from the collapse of the older paternal law of force and authority. For this reason, these modern discourses can be seen as representing a new form of the phallic order, rather than as superseding it (Campbell, 2004b). As such, they are in actuality modern fraternal discourses of identity, which still structure subjectivity and sociality in terms of the relations between masculine subjects and a phallic social order that supports them.

These modern discourses can be understood as producing imaginary identities. These identities collapse phantasies of self and the ‘idealizing capital I of identification’ (Lacan, 1986: 272). They fill social norms of masculinity and femininity (the ideal) with imaginary content (the phantasies of self). So, for example, Rebecca imagines herself as the woman she would like to be when she buys her green scarf. This is her fantasy of what it is to be a ‘woman’. Following Kaja Silverman (1992), these discourses of identity can be called ‘social fictions’, because they are dominant or hegemonic representations of identity. For example, in the opening scene of *Confessions*, Rebecca composes this normative feminine ‘self’ from and through each clothing purchase. ‘Do what you want, what

you want' is the chorus that opens the scene of Rebecca's commodity seduction. What lures her into the store is a material object: the green scarf. The scarf is a real object that glimmers with 'something more', and it is this 'something more' that captures Rebecca's gaze. The scarf has become a psychic object, an object that does not fulfill 'real' or material needs but rather psychic desires. Or, as the mannequin puts it, 'who needs a scarf? wrap some old jeans around your neck to keep yourself warm ... the point about *this* scarf is that it will become part of a definition of your psyche'. The material object becomes a psychic object through the co-ordinates of Rebecca's desire: that is, through her wish to be her image of herself as the 'girl in the green scarf'. In this way, this object supports Rebecca's deepest attachments to the social fictions of 'femininity' circulating in her world of late capitalist consumption.

Social fictions produce an imagined self that we fill with phantasies of who we would like to be and images of who we imagine ourselves to be. This self operates as an imaginary object filled with phantasmic content (the imaginary *a*), as can be seen the diagram below.

Social fictions:

s-s-s-s-S identity (imaginary a)

These social fictions are composed of signifying elements (the chain of signifiers, or s-s-s-s-s above). One signifier in this chain (the dominant signifier, or **S** above) 'names' subjects in this hegemonic order. This is the social norm of femininity, which is made 'real' to subjects through their phantasmic attachments to this norm. This making 'real' of a signifier involves filling it with the imaginary content of the 'self' ('identity' in the diagram above). While McRobbie emphasizes masquerade as performance or practice, a Lacanian account emphasizes the deep attachment or 'unconscious wish' that ties us to these performances, and the psychic costs and pleasures that come with this feminine phantasy. The performative account

assumes that the practices of feminine masquerade make us into 'feminine' subjects, whereas Lacanian psychoanalysis assumes that it is our attachment to ideas of 'femininity' that give these practices meaning as markers of sexual difference.

However, it is also important to understand that the imaginary *a* of the self 'stands simultaneously for the imaginary phantasmic lure/screen *and* for that which this lure is obfuscating, for the void behind the lure' (Žižek, 1998: 80). That 'void behind the lure' is the symbolic *a*, understood as that which marks the excluded term of discourse, the gap in (or void of) its symbolic structure. This marks a place of structural impossibility: namely, that point at which the socio-symbolic order is incomplete and lacking.

Social fictions therefore have imaginary and symbolic registers, as can be seen in the second diagram below:

Social fictions:

s-s-s-s-s imaginary identity | symbolic a

In this diagram, the symbolic *a* marks the gap or lack in the socio-symbolic order that the imaginary identity of 'femininity' veils and conceals. In *Confessions*, when Rebecca imagines she is the girl in the green scarf, her phantasy of self covers the gap in this social fiction. In this scene of wish fulfillment, the green scarf will support Rebecca becoming the 'ideal' woman, which she is not and cannot ever be. In Lacanian approach, there is no 'true' feminine behind the masquerade, for the masquerade of femininity is itself a phantasy that we identify with.

In contrast, feminist discourses traverse these phantasies of identities by insisting that those social discourses found themselves upon a repudiated term. This repudiated other is the *a*, the excluded and necessary term of that discourse. Feminist knowledges link that excluded *a* to women. Social fictions produce the realities of women's lives and bodies as a discursive category that can only appear as a 'gap' or 'lack' in these discourses of selves and their others. However,

feminist politics permits the recognition of this founding lack or excluded *a* term of social fictions. This recognition of the symbolic *a* of social fictions symbolizes this gap or lack, so that it no longer functions as a term which social discourse excludes. For example, feminist analyses of the phantasy of femininity presented by *Confessions* could point to the exclusion of particular realities of gendered and racialized identity from this phantasy of femininity. These range from the unequal distribution of wealth between women and men (Rebecca is employed by Luke) to the cost of this heteronormative 'feminine' identity (Rebecca gives up her financial autonomy to gain a husband) to the apparent exclusion of particular racialized bodies from this 'new femininity' (Rebecca lives in a white world). By developing these critiques, feminist discourses can identify the social fictions of gender and the reality of the social experiences of women that those discourses exclude.

Social fictions represent a fictional identity that excludes the complex and specific social experiences of women from their representation of these femininities. An example of this operation can be seen in sexual difference. The operation of social fictions substitutes an imaginary and fictional myth of 'The Woman' for the complexity of women's social experience. Social fictions operate to repudiate that reality, putting in its place certain fictional ways to be a female subject, such as becoming 'the girl in the green scarf' of *Confessions*. Yet, at the same time, this representation does not include Rebecca's actual body, which has physical existence and functions. Like all romantic comedies, *Confessions* ends with romance, not sex. This is not to argue that 'women' do not exist (either as fact or in discourse). Instead, social fictions produce their social experiences as the excluded of discourse, namely as its repudiated *a* term.

This excluded *a* of social fictions is the 'real' of women. Social fictions do not represent the 'reality' of women's experience (an experience of oppression and domination as

well as pleasure and desire), but rather provide a representation of living under their reign. That reality takes many forms: bodily, affective, cultural, material and social. Social practices produce that 'reality', which represents the particular social relations experienced by women because they are gendered subjects. This formulation does not indicate that all women have the same social experiences because they are women, but rather that sexuation inflects subjective formation and experience. This experience is discursively produced, since it is 'specifically and materially engendered' in social relations (Lauretis, 1988: 9–10). However, it is also produced by social fictions as a category of social experience that is excluded from the hegemonic order of representation.

Social fictions (and their exclusions) can be traced to the operation of a fraternal phallic socio-symbolic order that produces discourse as discourse and the subject as subject. In Lacanian terms, the production of the 'real' of women as an excluded term of discourse is linked to the impossibility of symbolically representing women as such in a phallogentric fraternal order. In feminist terms, this symbolic economy renders 'women' as either the phantasy of The Woman (the unattainable ideal of femininity, which is represented as struck through because of its impossibility) or as an excluded term (the gap or lack in the hegemonic representation of femininities). Following this approach, it becomes possible to understand how feminist knowledges can create new representations of this excluded real of women in social fictions.

Unlike social fictions, feminist knowledges represent the 'real' of women as other than the gap or lack within discourse. Rather, they symbolize and reinscribe it into the discourses of social fictions. This reinscription shifts the relation of signifying elements within the discourse, producing a new chain of signifiers. This reinscription can produce a new discourse, and thus a different representation of women. For example, let us take the phantasy of the workplace romance of *Confessions*. Luke Brandon is Rebecca's charming and handsome

employer both when they first meet and fall in love, and again when they become romantically involved at the end of the film. In contrast to this benign phantasy, the reality is that over 50% of working women in Britain experience sexual harassment as a problem in the workplace (Unison, 2008). The discursive structure of this social fiction can be seen below:

Social fictions:

s-s-s-s-s identity | a

s-s-s-s-s femininity | sexual harassment

This diagram describes the operation of the social fiction in which the phantasy of romantic love between employer and employee masks the reality of women's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace. This experience appears as struck through in the diagram because it is not represented in the social fiction of femininity.

However, feminist activists such as Catherine MacKinnon first named the reality of workplace harassment as an actionable form of sexual discrimination in the 1970s. The next diagram illustrates the structure of this feminist discourse:

Feminist discourse:

-s-s-s-s-s femininity | sexual harassment

Feminist discourses name this experience 'sexual harassment' and resignify it not as the flattering forms of male attention or attraction imagined in the conventional images of femininity but as a harmful form of sexual discrimination. In this way, feminist discourses signify this experience, rather than repudiate it. Feminist discourse thereby articulates this gendered social practice within the discourses of social fictions. Firstly, it changes the representation of that social practice by creating a new signifier of the 'real' of women and secondly it reinscribes that signifier into discourses of social fictions. The structure of this discursive operation can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Feminist discourses:

'real' of women => S => s-s-s-s-s

By moving through the phantasy of femininity and naming the 'real' of women that is absent in social fictions, feminist knowledges can operate as transformative discursive practices. If discourse produces both social subjects and the relation between them, then creating new discourses produces different subjects and social relations. If social fictions produce racialized and sexualized subjects, then feminist discourses permit the articulation of new discourses of subjects and their relations. Feminist knowledges can operate as radical discourses of subjectivity and intersubjectivity because they produce new discourses of how to be subjects and also how to exist in relation to other subjects.

FEMINIST DISCOURSES AND COMMUNITIES

The production of these feminist knowledges is not singular, but plural. These knowledges are formed both by the relation of knowing subjects to other knowing subjects and by their collective relationship to the values of feminist politics. Feminist knowledges are not based upon the knowledge possessed by an autonomous knower. Rather, the epistemic positions of feminist knowers are collective. Elissa Marder argues that 'when one "speaks as a feminist", in the name of the feminist project, one must say "we"' (Marder, 1992: 163). If to speak as a feminist is to speak as a member of a political collective project, then it is also to speak in a relation to other feminists. It involves shifting from being an individual political subject to being a member of collective feminist movements.

Whatever content is given to the term, a commitment to feminist politics marks its subject. Identification with feminist politics forms the subject as a speaking subject in feminist discourse and as having a relation to other members of a political movement. This series of secondary identifications with feminist politics (or people) as ideal objects, and with other members of the collective movement, produces this subjective position.

These political identifications produce intersubjective and collective relations. They involve affective, imaginary and symbolic identifications, which construct the relation between subjects of feminist movements. These can involve affective identification with other women, imaginary identification with other members of collective feminist movements and symbolic identification with feminist politics (Campbell, 2004b).

With this formulation of the collectively produced position of feminist knowers, Lorraine Code's and Helen Longino's descriptions of epistemic communities become very useful for understanding the production of feminist knowledge. In particular, their respective concepts of 'epistemic responsibility' and 'epistemic accountability' permit us to understand how feminist movements function as epistemic communities that negotiate cognitive goals and practices. In these negotiations, the knowing subject is responsible and accountable to feminist politics. The knower negotiates her responsibility and accountability within feminist discourses, so that feminist knowledges are contingent upon the relations between subjects and the dialogue between them. However, those dialogues are themselves produced in relation to a feminist politics. Each knowledge-claim describes not only a relation between members of the political movement but also their relation to feminist politics.

This structure of feminist epistemic communities charges knowers with an accountability to, and responsibility for, other subjects and feminist politics. The relations between these subjects, and in turn their relation to a feminist politics, constitute these epistemic communities, thereby structuring the negotiations of feminist knowledges by the criteria of responsibility and accountability. In this operation of the feminist epistemic community, knowers are accountable to feminist politics and ethically responsible to others. The knowledges that emerge in the dialogue between these subjects therefore are never simply (or only) epistemological. They are also political in their production in relation to

feminist ideals and ethical in their constitution in intersubjective relations. This does not mean that these knowledges are necessarily or inevitably satisfactory by political and ethical criteria. They are not, as evidenced by the racist and classist knowledges which some feminists produce. However, the explicit construction of feminist knowledges as accountable to feminist politics and as ethically responsible to others entails that political and ethical values become part of epistemic practice. The production and definition of the terms 'feminist' and 'politics' are continually negotiated because 'feminist thinking has paradoxically defined itself in response to those questions of who or what' (Marder, 1992: 149). This ongoing process negotiates and renegotiates who is named by the term and what such a naming implies.

With this understanding of feminist epistemic communities it becomes possible to identify how feminist discourses articulate those intersubjective relations. These discourses can be seen as representing a symbolic exchange with other subjects identifying with 'feminist politics'. This symbolic relation between the subjects and the communities that comprise feminist movements produces feminist discourse. Code characterizes knowledge-claims in epistemic communities as 'forms of address, speech acts, moments in a dialogue that assume and indeed rely on the participation of (an)other subject(s), a conversational group' (Code, 1991: 121). Following this description, feminist knowledges are forms of address to feminist communities and speech acts within their discourses. Feminist knowledges can be characterized as dialogues with other politically committed subjects that are formed by the 'conversational groups' in feminist movements. Feminist discourses represent these dialogues between subjects identifying with feminist politics. These dialogues are therefore intergenerational and transnational, like the feminist movements that form them. For this reason, we can understand the political movements of feminism as constituting feminist epistemic communities.

FEMINIST COMMUNITIES OF KNOWLEDGE

In this approach, feminist knowledges can be seen as the epistemic claims that the discursive exchanges of feminist epistemic communities produce. This reformulates those knowledges as discursive practices that these communities of knowers constitute. Accordingly, they form a medium of relation between members of the feminist movement. Feminist knowledges do not simply consist of passive propositions with which all knowers agree. Rather, they function as the practices by which knowing subjects engage in symbolic exchange. Through these practices, knowers create and exchange new signifiers of selves and others. This is an epistemological model in which knowers participate in discursive exchange and are able to recognize each other as speaking subjects. It characterizes feminist knowledges as discourses that articulate the symbolic relation between feminist subjects as a new representation of selves and others.

In these discursive practices forms of feminist subjectivity and collectivity are constantly (re)negotiated in the consensus and dissent of feminist movements. The dialogic structure of feminist epistemic communities constitutes the productivity of feminist knowledges, since the negotiation of political forms of subjectivity and intersubjectivity grounds their continual articulation and rearticulation. In this way, feminist epistemic communities give content to the ideas of 'feminist politics' and 'feminist movement', since they define those terms in that given moment.

This description of feminist knowledges characterizes them as discursive practices negotiated in the feminist movement. Feminist knowledges are therefore provisional, insofar as they are contingent upon their moment of production, and also strategic, because they are conditional upon the definition of the aims of the feminist movements of their time. They also have a particular ethical and political form. Their production by a

knower who is accountable and responsible to others gives them an ethical structure, and her relation to feminism gives them a political structure.

This accountability and responsibility also challenges feminist knowers to acknowledge and address the social, discursive and material inequalities that constitute epistemic communities. If epistemic communities construct knowledges, social relations also produce those communities. So the social, material and epistemic practices that reproduce inequitable social relations also form feminist epistemic communities. For this reason, Spivak insists in her early exchange with Rose that feminist epistemological questions must engage with the '*disenfranchised* woman who is *historically* different from ourselves, the subjects of feminist theory, and yet acknowledge that she has the right to the construction of a subject-effect of sovereignty in the narrow sense' (Spivak, 1989: 216). Feminist knowers have developed a number of material and epistemic practices that attempt to resist the reproduction of the existing social relations that position women as other than speaking subjects. Those practices, including equity of access, a politically aware use of language, redistribution of resources and non-hierarchical relations, actively work to construct democratic epistemic communities. As Spivak suggests, these practices at their most profound level must also involve the creation of new epistemic models. The ongoing challenge for third wave feminist epistemologies is to ensure that the constitution of epistemic communities is always a political and ethical act that constructs all women as speaking rather than silent subjects.

FEMINIST DISCOURSE AS A NEW SOCIAL BOND

Feminist knowledges can thus represent new discourses of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Unlike social fictions, these discourses do not represent social relations between men

but instead social relations between women as speaking subjects. In these discourses, the subject enters discursive relation to other women (rather than becoming part of the social exchange of women 'on the market', as Irigaray puts it). These symbolic relations between women form feminist discourses and permit the symbolization of new intersubjective relations. In turn, this symbolization produces new signifiers of feminism, which, when inserted into its existing signifying chains, can produce different discourses. Ultimately, these discourses can symbolize new social relationships between men and women, as well as between men because they articulate new forms of subjects and social relations. This symbolization of new social bonds can become the basis for the reworking of the socio-symbolic order of social fictions.

So, rather than succumbing to post-feminist melancholia by falling into a depressive position in which the socio-symbolic says all and nothing of women, feminist discourse 'bring[s] about new forms of representation and definition of the female subject' in order to produce new symbolic and social forms (Braidotti, 1992: 182). Feminist discourses can resignify existing social discourses through their representation of the 'real' of women, and so produce new discourses of what it means 'to be' a subject. In this way, feminist knowledges build new discourses of subjectivity and, in particular, of female subjectivity.

In this model, feminist discourse symbolizes the relation between feminist subjects. It functions as the material of that relation, and hence as its mediation. Feminist epistemic communities produce this discursive tie, which articulates a relation between women. Crucially, feminist discourse symbolizes these intersubjective relations between women in terms of feminist politics. They articulate a relation between women as speaking subjects. In Irigaray's terms, feminist discourse constructs a female sociality in its symbolization of a horizontal relation between women – 'les femmes entres elles'.

By doing so, feminist discourses can produce a social contract between female subjects, and hence a new discursive social bond.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the ethical and political practices of feminism are integral to the construction of that social bond. Unlike other discourses, such as the social fictions of the fraternal social contract, feminist discourses articulate the relation between subjects as ethical and political practices. Ethical relations to other women and commitments to feminist politics form the intersubjective relations of feminist subjects. This does not entail that the relation between feminist subjects is necessarily ethical or political, but that commitments to feminist politics construct those relations in terms of ethical and political values. If discourse articulates social bonds, then feminist discourses articulate different forms of social bonds because they build new ethical and political representations of social relationships. This new social bond does not posit women as objects of exchange, but rather as social subjects. They become speaking subjects and, accordingly, subjects within the social order. This new socio-symbolic contract represents women as knowers, as the makers and users of signs. This opens the possibility that feminist discourses can create original epistemological models, and that these new epistemologies can serve as the basis for the creation of alternative and better ways to know our selves and our others.

FROM POST-FEMINIST DISCONTENTS TO FEMINIST DISCOURSES

If the terms of the new sexual contract promise that women can enter the economic exchange of objects in consumer capitalism, feminist psychoanalytic theory reveals that they do so *as sexuated subjects*, and that the *sexual terms* of the sexual contract remain unchanged. It illuminates how the new sexual contract offers two different forms of exchange, structured through different social fictions of femininities. The first is the conventional path of

Rebecca, which involves heterosexual monogamy (and of course ultimately marriage and children). The price to be paid for this is her economic freedom, for she becomes an employee of Luke. It is this path that the 'have it all' generation is now suffering. The second path is that of the new oppressive hypersexualized femininities, in which women 'make sex objects of other women and of themselves' (Levy, 2006). It is this second path that has become increasingly visible to young women. This 'raunch culture' is an intensification of the sexual competition of 'women on the market'. This is visible in *Confessions* in the character of blonde and leggy Alicia, Rebecca's sexual competition for Luke's affection, and who is introduced to the businessman as a Finnish prostitute in the final scene. Both positions enact the normative femininities that circulate through this socio-symbolic order. This psychoanalytic perspective helps to identify the costs of any new (fraternal) sexual contract that is supported by the phantasmic social fiction of *The Woman*, and how the 'problem' of femininity is also the problem of masculinity in this social order.

What, then, do women want? In McRobbie's diagnosis of the new sexual contract, she argues that the 'sexual contract on the global state is most clearly marked out in the world editions of young women's magazines' such as *Grazia* (McRobbie, 2009: 59). In a recent edition, columnist Tanya Gold (2013) comments that 'we need to recognize that we have had a sexual and consumer revolution, but that that's not equality'. In actuality, we have not yet had a feminist revolution in which Rebecca wants more than a green scarf and a rich husband. A feminist psychoanalytic approach can help to understand the operation of these social fictions of femininity and the pleasures and pains of these 'feminine' desires. However, it also reveals that the operation of feminist knowledges can intervene in these discourses, and how these knowledges can symbolize more liberating forms of what women might want. This symbolization of new sexualities, subjects and social relations remains both the most

radical promise and the most difficult task for third wave feminist epistemologies in these times of neoliberal politics and consumer cultures.

NOTES

- 1 www.imdb.com/title/tt1093908/, accessed 20 March 2014.
- 2 www.boxoffice.com/statistics/movies/confessions-of-a-shopaholic-2009, accessed 20 March 2014.
- 3 www.sophiekinsella.co.uk/books/shopaholic-series/, accessed 20 March 2014.

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Entangled Subjects: Feminism, Religion and the Obligation to Alterity

Sian Hawthorne

The ethical necessity of being attuned to historical and cultural specificity, of carefully calibrating difference as the ground for political enunciation, has for feminism become a settled proposition. Very little feminist analysis now proceeds without first acknowledging and tracing the intricate socio-cultural intersections that inaugurate and constitute its political itineraries. It is surprising, therefore, that *religious* difference appears to signal a certain intractability in the feminist veneration of intersectionality, seeming to exist beyond the borders of feminist obligations to alterity. Whether in arguments regarding the ordination of female clergy, the veiling of Muslim women or reproductive rights, to name but the most prominent arenas in which the apparently inimical nature of the relationship between religion and feminism is staged, 'religion' and religious allegiance are attributed the status of cause of oppression rather than source of emancipatory insight.

Implicit in the assumption that equates religion with the oppression of women is an uneasy question that haunts feminist thought:

why do women persist in perpetuating and cooperating with traditions and systems that are allegedly detrimental to their well being? Put differently, why do so many women remain committed to their religious identities when virtually all religious traditions either deny them coeval status with men, limit their access to authority or circumscribe their opportunities to forge lives as individuals in their own right?¹ The dominance of female participation in religion is now well documented. Women are more likely to have a strong interest in and commitment to religion than men (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975; Bensen et al., 1989; Lenski, 1953; Sasaki, 1979; Yinger, 1970); they attend places of worship in greater numbers and more frequently than men (Batson et al., 1993; Cornwall, 1989; Moberg, 1962);² their religious allegiance is more likely to remain constant over the course of their lifetime, regardless of the type of religious tradition to which they are committed (Cornwall, 1989; Glock et al., 1967; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985). Theories that assert the inevitable secularization of Western societies

in the aftermath of the post-Enlightenment division of Church and state have thus had to be tempered when confronted by the specificity of women's persistent religiosity. Feminist anxiety around women's religious allegiances is at the same time inflected by the awkwardness inherent in assuming that these are a sign of their falling prey to 'false consciousness' which not only denies women's agency and casts them as unknowing dupes of a superstructure, but contradicts the conventional feminist insight that female experience (and articulations of that experience) is a legitimate hermeneutic lens. What might the data regarding female participation in religion say, therefore, to feminism's secular liberal assumptions and allegiances?

The data taken alone suggest the need for a more complicated, certainly richer feminist account of religion that resists the temptation to set up religion and feminism as an inevitably dialectic pairing. A necessary preliminary step on the way to developing such an account might be to plot a detailed genealogy for the antagonistic attitude towards religion among (mostly Western) feminists in, at the very least, the liberal tradition. While clearly an enterprise that goes well beyond the scope of this chapter, I want here, by way of a prolegomenon to such a project, to suggest three areas that would profit from closer examination and to reflect briefly on the implications these might have for the ways in which feminism could reconfigure its relationship to 'religion' as both an epistemic category and an ontological identity marker; indeed, to suggest that 'religion' should rather be understood by feminists to constitute an entangled set of epistemological and ontological commitments. Firstly, it is necessary to remember how religion was taken up as an emancipatory resource in early feminist history and to encourage familiarity with the subsequent wide-ranging and intensive intellectual work undertaken by feminists within confessional and religious studies contexts. There is a vast amount of scholarship in the area, although, as Ursula King has noted, the invisibility of religious studies within feminist and

women's studies curricula and anthologies is marked (King, 1990: 275; 1995: 219–20). While this marginalization can be attributed to the prevalent assumption among feminists that religion has little to offer women, the extent of the literature in the field as well as the many methodological innovations that feminists' engagement with religion represent require that a responsible feminism should become more religiously literate. Secondly, the discursive implications of the unreflexive alignment of feminism with secularism both historically and in the contemporary frame of post-secularism must be unravelled in order to trace the extent to which secularism as the doxa of modernity required the privatization or domestication of religion in order to found its own claims. Feminists are more keenly aware than most of the politics and gendered nature of privatization and thus need to exercise more caution when accepting a secular account of religion that demands its confinement to the private sphere. Thirdly, in order to avoid a repetition of a colonialist procedure of divide and rule, feminists should familiarize themselves with the current academic reassessment of the semantic adequacy of the taxon 'religion'. This work has sought to recall both *religio's* ethnocentric provenance and the political effects of its imperialist translation beyond the borders of its European origins such that it simultaneously assumed the character of a universalizable phenomenon and became a sign of epistemic inferiority. A failure by feminists to come to terms with these various practices of religion-making runs the risk of repeating that colonial move which made of religion a figure of abjected alterity in order to assert its own progressive character and to masquerade as a 'civilizing' mission.

GENEALOGIES OF RELIGION: THE FRATERNITY OF SECULARISM AND COLONIALISM

Eduardo Mendieta has suggested that 'How the West allegedly became secular is a story

not just about the containment of religion within the West, but also a story about what distinguishes the West from the rest' (Mendieta, 2009: 236). Insofar as the feminist relationship to religion is figured as inimical, it is feminism's own alliances to secularity that implicate it in this epistemic and geopolitical underpinning of Western self-understanding. Here I want to outline briefly the operationalization of 'religion' under the dual signs of secularism and colonial knowledge formations in order to track the risks that this genealogy might pose for feminist negations or occlusions of religious difference.

The Enlightenment master narrative of reason as both the foundation and pinnacle of 'civilization' relied on the notion that reason had conquered or contained religion. The *taxon* 'religion', inasmuch as it carried a simultaneously temporal and spatial valuation, operated as a negative epistemological signifier in a series of conceptual dichotomies – public/private, secular/religious, state/religion, West/East – that were fundamental to the self-understanding of European modernity and thus were foundational to post-Enlightenment Western ontology. For Daniel Dubuisson, the historian and anthropologist of religion, the category of religion was absolutely fundamental for the creation and nourishment of the idea of the Occident as world-historical vanguard:

Created by the West, enshrined in Western epistemology, and central to its identity, the concept of religion eventually came to be the core of the Western worldview. Since this notion is intrinsically linked to all the philosophies, complementary or competing, that have been invented in the West, the West cannot, at the risk of its own disintegration, do without it, because these global conceptions would then decompose into scattered or juxtaposed fragments Would not abandoning the idea of religion be the equivalent for Western thought of abdicating part of its intellectual hegemony over the world? (Dubuisson, 2003: 94)

Modernity as the age of reason required a contrastive foil that would ordain, necessitate

and justify its doctrine of progress; the West could point to its defeat of superstition and to its elevation of reason as the means by which it had achieved the triumphs of industrialization. By asserting a distance from religion, from the atavism, and irrationality religion was taken to represent, the West was, moreover, able to distinguish itself philosophically, materially and thus hierarchically from those societies and cultures it set out to subjugate. However, Dubuisson here hints not only at the role that conceptions of religion played in securing the West as the best, so to speak, but also at the religious origins of secular modernity. One of the seemingly founding gestures of the Enlightenment, the assertion of the human individual as autonomous, rational and interior, was in fact unthinkable without the splenetic programme of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation initiated a slow revolution in which previously unassailable articles of faith, particularly the locus of truth, were challenged and reconceived. Accessible vernacular translations of the Christian scriptures were substituted for the mediating authority of the clergy such that interpretive responsibility now lay with the individual. State religion replaced global Catholicism, thus shifting the balance of power towards the nation state. The full implications of the principle of an individual's autonomous judgment in matters of religion were slowly to be realized in the Enlightenment elevation of human reason. As the centre of gravity shifted from the mediating role of the clerical elite to the individual as arbiter of salvation, it was simply a matter of time before the emphasis on human autonomy in relationship to the divine proceeded to a new examination and then a final rejection of the foundational veracity of the Christian faith. Religion no longer warranted a privileged place in the public sphere; it was stripped of its historical role as arbiter in those public institutions that were now to legislate truth and power. The state began increasingly to take over the roles that the church had historically played – providing education, healthcare and welfare – and religion was gradually confined to the private sphere, domesticated as a matter

for the individual's conscience. The privatization of religion constituted its demotion from having permeated every aspect of life to now being reduced to a mere dimension, segregated from the realms of the political, economic and intellectual. It is worth noticing the gendered dynamics of this redistribution. Aune et al. point to the masculinized character of secular modernity when they note that its

core characteristics ... – rationalization, separation of church and state, bureaucratization, industrialization, capitalism – were mainly driven forward in the public arena by men. The division of women and men into 'separate spheres', coupled with the privatization of religion as it lost its social influence, feminized religion, connecting it with women's activities in the private sphere. (Aune et al., 2008: 5)

With the spatial distillation of religion to the private sphere in the service of secularism, temporality was also redistributed in the Western imaginary, affecting a different division of space directed at constructing the 'West' as separate from and superior to the 'East': conceived of as sequential and inexorable, secularism was understood to mark a teleological movement from a primitive reliance on the erroneous reasoning that religion represented to the civilized and civilizing present secured by the exercise of rationality. In the aftermath of the Enlightenment, the use of the term 'religion' to classify worldviews at odds with secular modernity indicated an a priori clear division between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood, superstition and reason, past and present and, most significantly, 'us' and 'them'. Thus, the mobilizing narratives of Western secularism – the autonomous subject, the conquest of religion and the rise of scientific empiricism as conveyor of truth – carried with them what Mendieta refers to as the 'colonial and imperial underside of modernity' (Mendieta, 2009: 238). 'Religion' once more played a pivotal role in orienting Western ontology inasmuch as it enabled a distinction to be conjured between the enlightened nature of European modernity and the 'religious', thus erroneous,

primitive and degenerate, worldviews of the colonized populations. The contrastive function of 'religion' served as the ground of possibility for the colonial imaginary: that of the European duty to civilize.³

What is often forgotten is the extent to which 'religion' was an ethnocentric and normative descriptor; the contemporary common-sense assumption of religion's universality obscures the history of its production and its subsequent violent inscription on cultural practices, traditions and conceptual schemas quite alien to the specificity of its European provenance. The representation of non-Western traditions and worldviews as 'religions' interpellated them into a highly provincialized debate that not only restricted their possible modes of articulation and signification but also predetermined their reception and dissemination. Thus, to use the term 'religion' to refer to non-Western traditions is to subject them to an epistemic and conceptual regime that always already marks them as inferior and mistakenly assumes a shared referentiality, that of the agonistic dichotomization of the religious and the secular characteristic of post-Enlightenment European history. The West's struggles to overcome religion were struggles to overcome Christianity and Christianity was the primogenitive model in the identification and analysis of those traditions we now understand as religious. The effect of taking Christianity as a prototype of religion has meant that the parameters for what counts as religion – and who must be marked as religious – are determined on the extent to which a tradition or practice can be seen to conform to the Christian model wherein belief in a transcendent deity is an essential feature. As Donald Lopez has noted, 'Belief appears as a universalist category because of the universalist claims of the tradition in which it became most central, Christianity. Other religions have made universalist claims, but Christianity was allied with political power, which made it possible to transport its belief to all corners of the globe' (Lopez 1998: 33). In the context of the colonial imposition of the Christian

prototype, it should be noted that performative praxis or kinship networks, rather than creedal belief, were far more often the basis for participation in those non-Christian traditions that were translated as 'religious'. Moreover, the modern Western tendency to privilege belief as the essence of religiosity is precisely a repetition of the Enlightenment privatization of the religious, wherein it is wholly separated from the public realm of the political: an emphasis on belief stresses the internal, personal dimensions of a creedal idiom and implies that all other spheres of human activity – political, cultural, intellectual or economic – are protected from the menacing cognitive modalities that bear the signature of the 'religious'. This segregation not only marginalizes and disarms the significance of the religious sphere for debates in the public domain which it nonetheless structures and originates, it also effectively protects all 'religious' traditions from public scrutiny and criticism in the marketplace of ideas.

Similar to the privileging of belief has been the assumption of the centrality of a canonical textual tradition when categorizing the 'religious'. As Richard King has argued in the context of the colonial translation of 'religion' into the South Asian context,

'religion' and the related group of concepts and orientations that cluster around it ... functioned as *prescriptive* models or blueprints ... This is no more apparent than in the tendency in both colonial narratives and indigenous South Asian responses to locate 'authentic religiosity' within the sacred texts of a tradition and in the interpretation of prescriptive statements within those texts as descriptive accounts of historical truth. (King, 2011: 45)

Here King draws attention to the residual aftermath of the colonial imposition of a highly Christianized understanding of religion. Inasmuch as India can serve as a representative case, the translation of the – by now – obscurely Christianized '*religio*' into the rich and layered discursivity of subcontinental Asia reduced its heterogeneity into a crude homogeneity which could then be divided on the basis of presumed differences in doctrine derived from

constructed textual traditions into discrete units – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jaina, Parsi and so on – indirectly enabling the colonial policy of divide and rule. The various colonial demands for the collation of texts as the locus of religiosity – reflecting, it should be noted, the Protestant preference for literacy – had the further effect of sanctioning and sacralizing high-caste Brahmanical representations of social order and conservative gender valuations. Thus the prescriptive character of 'religion', its differentiation from the secular embedded within colonial knowledge production and its fabrication of distinct textual traditions gave rise to a number of new creations: 'Hinduism', a term coined by the British evangelical Charles Grant, who advocated a robust programme of Christianization in the 1770s, and, in the 1820s, 'Buddhism' and 'Taoism' (King, 2011: 45). It is not too much of an exaggeration to suggest that these were colonial inventions insofar as their codification as *religions* did not describe some pre-existent unity but rather was a deliberate act of assemblage and of translation of diverse elements into a seemingly coherent whole on the model of Christianity. Notable is the fact that these designations were subsequently adopted by colonized societies in their efforts to exhibit their 'modernity' – that is, to operationalize a division between the religious and the secular elements of society – in order to prove the case for their independence from colonial rule. In order to undertake such a performance, religion had to be both invented and embraced as a marker of national or cultural distinction.⁴

However, even if 'religion' is a colonial invention shaped by and for modernity, it cannot now be a question of refusing its use. To do so would be to deny its other life, one where it operates strategically as a source of valued and collective identification – where its ontological dimensions take priority over its epistemological function – and as a work of active (re)translation and resistance within a post-colonial framework where social categories are remade and put to work. That 'religion' has become an identity marker as well as an intellectual category demands that

our focus cannot merely be concerned with epistemological reflection; it must also necessarily be directed towards the ontological dimensions of category formation: to people, their valuations and inscriptions, and to our own subjectivities as they are constructed in and outside, against and in complicity with the colonial and secular domains. Religion is thus no longer merely a semantic marker of inferiority or of difference. In a post-colonial context it may become a sign of hybridity in that, while it certainly carries with it the history of its invention, it also charts a series of strategic appropriations. Does not the critique of the colonial invention or imposition of 'religion' deny and ignore the creative, transformative and resistant nature of the post-colonial condition?

Homi Bhabha (2004: 101, 121–4) has certainly suggested, for example, a modeling of hybridity as resistance to colonial authority by the colonized through the unlikely power and machinations of mimicry. 'Resistance' in the context of colonial encounters, Bhabha explains, 'is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the "content" of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced with the rules of recognition of dominating discourses' (Bhabha, 2004: 110). The appropriation of 'religion' as an identity term entangled with epistemic contingencies, whose content is remade in the very act of its appropriation, opens up ways of seeing how colonized populations were not merely hapless victims but were creative in their resistance and re-employment of the values and inscriptions of the European metropole such that it was also acted *upon*, remade and subverted. The ambivalence effected in the identity term – religion – and the consequent resistance to its forceful imposition in the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, is exemplified for Bhabha in an early nineteenth-century missionary register which reports the encounter of Anund Messeh, an Indian missionary, who meets

with a large assembly of Indian converts to Christianity near Delhi:

He found about 500 people, men, women and children ... in reading and conversation. He went up to an elderly looking man ... 'Pray, who are all these people? And whence come they?' 'We are poor and lowly, and we read and love this book' Anund, on opening the book, perceived it to be the Gospel of our Lord, translated into the Hindoostanee Tongue ... 'These books', said Anund, 'teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use'. 'Ah! no', replied the stranger, 'that cannot be for they eat flesh' [Anund] explained to them the nature of the Sacrament and of Baptism; in answer to which they replied, 'We are willing to be baptized, but we will never take the Sacrament ... because the Europeans eat cow's flesh'. (in Bhabha, 2004: 102–4)

Bhabha understands the tale to epitomize a form of native subversion of the terms of the colonizing religion; the Indian converts, while apparently prepared to adopt some aspects of Christianity, are not willing to do so wholesale: they have allegiances to certain cultural practices that they will not renounce. As Bhabha puts it, 'in embracing the Christian religion they never entirely renounce their superstitions towards which they always keep a secret bent' (2004: 121). According to Bhabha, the native Indian embrace of the Christian faith via hybrid demands, as depicted in this case, must be read as a subversion of the imposed faith, constituting a form of resistance that is arguably more forceful than a straightforward repudiation because it is in the resistance constituted as hybridity and mimicry that the colonizing idiom is remade and undone. Christianity is, as a consequence, particularized and subordinated to a local idiom, with the result that its status as a stable, universal referent is subverted. The identity term of the colonizer that is out to suppress and eliminate the difference represented by the colonized, is subtly transformed and undermined in the process. Hybridity that marks the case achieves the displacement of the Gospel, 'the English book', and with it, colonial conceptuality. As Bhabha suggests,

'If the appearance of the English book is read as a production of colonial hybridity, then it no longer simply commands authority. It gives rise [instead] to a series of questions of authority' (2004: 113).

Might we not then read women's persistent religiosity as a sign of subversive mimicry, and women's investments in religion as a kind of hybridity that parallels native resistance to the colonial imposition of a Christian model of religion? Feminist scholarship in the field of religious studies has tended to suggest such a reading. Margaret Suchocki, for example, has suggested an equivalence between the colonialist practice of religion-making in the image of Christianity and androcentrism, suggesting that 'Absolutizing one religion such that it becomes normative for all others is a dynamic with clear parallels to sexism, whereby one gender is established as the norm for human existence. Therefore the critique of gender can be extended as a critique of religious imperialism' (1989: 150). Similarly, Morny Joy has argued that 'the process of "othering" that has been inflicted by dominant Western values is similar to the way women ... have been judged and found wanting according to prevailing standards of masculinity and/or rationality' (2001: 178). However, the metaphorical extension of concepts related to the historical fact of European colonization in order to exemplify the alterity and exploitation of women employs a series of problematic assumptions – not least that all colonialism operates in the same way and towards the same ends – which result not only in the elision of the specific historicity of the European colonial period but suggest that all women share a similar experience of gender oppression assessed predominantly in the terms prescribed by Anglo-American feminism (Mohanty, 1991: 52).

How, then, might feminists both frame and engage with the simultaneous clarity and ambivalence that marks 'religious' women's articulation of their political positioning and choices such that we are attuned to the complexity and entangled nature of

category formations, political enunciations, material conditions and subjective identifications? How are we to think about the use of categories such as 'religion' and the 'secular' in the work we do and the lives that women live? How are we to negotiate the potential conflict or divided nature of these categories among themselves, let alone between them? Part of the answer lies, I think, in the need for feminists to attend to the ethnocentrism of their understandings of religion such that women's persistent religiosity might be seen to articulate a critique of the secular frame of feminism as a consequence of the historical facticity of colonialisms and their afterlives. These colonial histories have formed the present for all of us, however differentiated our relations to those histories might be, and they thus remain the place from which the relationship between feminism and religion must be (re)thought. The Indian feminist Uma Narayan, addressing the agonistic encounters between Western and non-Western feminists, has argued that:

Colonial history is the terrain where the project of 'Western' culture's self-definition became a project heavily dependent upon its 'difference' from its 'Others' both internal and external. The contemporary self-definitions of many Third-World cultures and communities are also in profound ways political responses to this history. Working together to develop a rich feminist account of this history that divides and connects us might well provide Western and Third-World feminists [with] some difficult but interesting common ground, and be a project that is crucial and central to any truly 'international' feminist politics. (Narayan, 1997: 80)

Narayan's argument here implies that 'Western' feminist efforts of self-definition, for example as 'secular' as opposed to 'religious', are also profoundly 'political responses to this history', an analysis that corresponds to the Western history of 'religion'-making I have, albeit cursorily, tracked above. Might we then read the feminist preoccupation with religion as a site of oppression and its elision of religious sites

of critique, resistance and transformation as precisely embedded in a neo-imperialist politics that of necessity invokes a temporal and spatial differential – and thus inevitably hierarchical – relation to a series of Others in order to sustain feminism's self-understanding as a source of emancipation? If feminists persist in the complacent alignment of 'religion' with 'oppression' while at the same time paying lip service to the value of intersectionality and difference, we fail to start from this 'history that divides and connects us'.

ATTENDING TO HISTORY: CONFESSIONAL FEMINISM

It is certainly the case that the history of relationship between feminism and religion, inasmuch as these have any clarity as heuristic abstractions, has been both fraught and productive. Religion (specifically Christianity) was singled out by prominent suffragists as playing a uniquely powerful role in authorizing the subordinated status of women and maintaining gender inequalities. In 1893 Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826–1898) produced her polemical work *Woman, Church and State*, generally accepted as the first attempt to offer a historical account of the secondary status of women within the Christian tradition. Gage published her account in order to refute some of the arguments that had been marshalled to oppose women's campaigns for equal rights, namely that the subjection of women was divinely ordained and that under Christianity women enjoyed a higher status than they had previously. Gage was viewed by many within the suffrage movement as dangerously radical, however, and was as a consequence marginalized in historical accounts of the movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) suffered a similar fate following her publication of *The Woman's Bible* (1898) – co-authored by Gage and Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) – which was a revision of the Christian Bible that excised all recognizably 'anti-female' passages in

order both to reveal and challenge the misogyny and androcentrism of the Christian tradition, demonstrating the marginalization of women within its central text.

However, religion was equally understood to offer emancipatory potential. For example, Barbara Taylor notes that Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) 'contains at least fifty discussions of religious themes, ranging from brief statements on one or other doctrinal point to extended analyses of women's place within a divinely-ordered moral universe' and cites Wollstonecraft's attribution of her Christian faith as the source of her 'indignation' regarding women's inequality, to the degree that it was 'thanks to God ... that Mary Wollstonecraft became a feminist' (2002: 99, 100). The women who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and the extension of political rights to women were demonstrably motivated by Christian ethical teachings regarding the god-ordained equality of all people, repeatedly turning to scriptures to endorse their arguments.⁵ Various improvements to women's status within ecclesiastical hierarchies and in access to theological training were understood to constitute crucial advancements in the women's movement.⁶ Moreover, despite the negative reception of Cady Stanton's work among fellow suffragists, her revisionist work inaugurated a dynamic and ongoing tradition of 'biblical interpretation by and for women' (Isherwood and McEwan, 1993: 50) where women were able to articulate independent theological perspectives often significantly at odds with orthodox teachings, contributing to their reform and reinvigoration.

It was in the period from the early 1960s onwards that energetic work connecting feminism and religious study and practice really came into its own. Feminist scholars both within and beyond the Jewish and Christian traditions began to undertake theological reflections from engaged, although expressly critical, stances, indicating the partiality and impoverished nature of these traditions when women's experiences were excluded from

their religious imaginaries. Moreover, they insisted on the necessity of recovering the significant, often formative, contributions of women to the development and dissemination of those traditions as a means of challenging the doctrinal basis of the exclusion of women from full participation. June O'Connor has summarized feminist efforts in this respect as consisting in three core activities: 'rereading, reconceiving, and reconstruction' (1989), and these informed the methodological practices of the feminist work in both confessional and academic contexts running in parallel to, and in dialogue with, the kinds of epistemological reflections being undertaken in the feminist movement more generally. Much of the pioneering work of feminist theologians from the early 1960s exposed the androcentrism and misogyny of the Christian and, to a lesser extent, the Jewish traditions historically, in order to demonstrate the extent to which these had departed from the emancipatory potential of their foundations (critiques of some other traditions followed shortly). Women were identified as a legitimate category of analysis as well as active agents of religious practice and study, with women's experiences within their religious traditions being promoted as a credible and corrective hermeneutical tool. New forms of female-centred religiosity were explored and epistemological and methodological tools were developed that both exposed and challenged the androcentric bias of mainstream scholarship in the fields of theology and religious studies.

Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) was a key milestone for feminist studies of religion, inaugurating a new era of feminist theological reflection marked by the systematic critique and reformulation of Christian doctrine from the perspective of women's experience. Following Daly, writers such as Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983; 1985), Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983), Anne Carr (1988) and Judith Plaskow (1990) contributed to a lively and wide-ranging discourse explicitly based around the spiritual needs expressed by contemporary

women and the need to reform the Christian and Jewish traditions from the standpoint of feminism. Parallel to debates regarding the marginalization of non-white and non-heterosexual perspectives in the broader women's movement, the issue of how to define women's experience and from whose perspective it might be viewed became a contested area with the emergence of the distinctive voices of black and Womanist, Asian, Latin American (Mujerista) and lesbian feminist theologians.⁷

In spite of all the work highlighting women's historical subordination and oppression within religious traditions, feminist theologians as well as scholars of religions also drew attention to women as active agents and religious innovators in their own right. Within the context of feminist theology this concern was largely a response to the contemporary controversy over the role of women in the church, particularly over the ordination of women. Much early scholarship was therefore concerned with establishing the evidence for women's leadership in the church in different historical periods.⁸ In parallel, feminist studies in the non-confessional academic study of religions similarly investigated the relationship between the treatment of women within religious traditions and their position in wider social and cultural systems, demonstrating how women develop strategies of resistance and innovation within a multitude of religious traditions and assessing the ambiguity and complexity of feminine symbolism within many religious systems.⁹

The question of whether or not Christianity in particular was capable of reform or was in fact irredeemably sexist was a major focus among Christian feminists during the 1970s and 1980s. Daly's text *Beyond God the Father* (1973) not only marked her own departure from Christianity but provoked a protracted and passionate debate among feminist theologians regarding the extent to which religious commitment could be compatible with feminist goals and beliefs. Those who, like Daly, argued that the only feasible

option for Christian feminists was to abandon the tradition, suggested that what women must do is to create a new tradition based on women's contemporary religious experience (see, for example, Daphne Hampson, 1990; 1996). There were many feminist theologians, however, who responded to Daly's work by insisting that, while certainly requiring critique, Christianity was capable of being reformed, that new models of faith and practice and of textual exegesis could be produced to correct oppressive ideologies and, further, that early Christianity presented valuable models of gender equality and social justice (for influential examples see Ruether, 1974; 1975; 1981; Trible, 1978; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983; 1984). These debates among feminist theologians – intricate, interdisciplinary, intense – in respect of the compatibility of 'religion' with feminism have continued unabated¹⁰ and have extended well beyond the borders of the Judaeo-Christian traditions. Islamic feminists, for example, have developed sophisticated and diverse Quranic exegeses and interpretations of legal arguments derived from *hadith* (the sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) literature to assert women's legal rights and valued personhood as well as to defend Islam against charges of misogyny.¹¹

A critique of the representation of divinity as male in many religions has been another prominent theme, with many theorists demonstrating the contribution that these masculinized discourses have made to sanctioning male authority and damaging women's relationship both to divinity and to each other. Daly's *Beyond God the Father* was one of the most searing indictments in this regard, but non-theological feminists such as Luce Irigaray have made similar assessments (see particularly the chapter 'Divine Women' in Irigaray, 1993). Goddess Spirituality (also known as Feminist Spirituality) emerged as an identifiable movement in the 1960s and 1970s and was a direct response to feminist dissatisfaction with the masculinized discourses around divinity. It sought instead to recreate and reimagine a women-centred

spirituality, offering an account of the past in terms of matriarchal prehistory where goddesses were venerated as a manifestation of women's life-giving power. In Goddess Spirituality 'the feminine divine' is viewed as more originary, reflective of and necessary to women's spiritual expression, development and flourishing than the gods of the patriarchal religions.¹² In recent years the movement has been subject to critique from the perspectives of archaeologists, historians and anthropologists, who have challenged the historical verifiability of their claims and have levelled charges of essentialism and reversed patriarchy (see particularly Lunn, 1993; Wood, 1996; Goodison and Morris, 1998; and Eller, 2000).

However, this attempt to recover an egalitarian religious prehistory is a major component of feminist work in religion in general and thus raises important questions about the extent to which the past can be an ally of feminist activity. Notable in this respect is the work of the self-identified feminist Buddhist theologian Rita Gross, who claims that her work constitutes a 'feminist revalorization of Buddhism' (1993: 305). In her *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (1993) Gross attempts to show how a reconstructed authentic core of Buddhism reflects and supports feminist values, insofar as it 'is without gender bias, *whatever the practical record may reveal*, and that sexist practices are in actual contradiction with the essential core teachings of the tradition' (1993: 210; *my italics*). She extrapolates from this to suggest that many religions may have originally possessed an egalitarian, non-sexist central vision uncontaminated by later patriarchal distortions introduced by an exclusively male hierarchy intent on asserting male privilege and power. Gross's work has attracted strong criticism from other feminists working in the field, most notably Marsha Hewitt (1999), who has argued that the major problem with Gross's reconstructive efforts – and indeed for similar feminist revisionist histories – is that Gross establishes herself as the arbiter of

the Buddhist tradition, imposing on an alien context a historically specific, ethnocentric and ideological vision of appropriate religiosity informed by liberal feminist values. What Gross does, therefore, is endorse the universality of feminist insights against evidence to the contrary; her attempts to transform Buddhism into a set of ideas palatable to and in the tradition of modern Western feminist thought instead subjects Buddhism to what Hewitt calls 'ideological colonization'. As Hewitt notes, in determining what constitutes the irreducible feminist core of the religion, 'the question is decided in terms of the primacy of feminism, not tradition' (Hewitt, 1999: 57, 58).

Of course, there are many good reasons for elevating feminist insights above those that are inimical to women's interests but this should not be done by playing fast and loose with the historical record; to impose feminist values retrospectively on material wholly different historically, philosophically or geographically is to indulge in a form of discursive imperialism that weakens the intellectual credibility and political force of feminist work. With Gross's project, however, the dilemma that feminists who are drawn towards the positive elements of religious practice and belief must confront is brought into sharp focus: how are the valuable aspects of a religion that appear to accord equality and value to women – aspects that women themselves articulate as vital resources for their well being – to be reconciled with those seemingly dominant elements – doctrinal, scriptural, ritualistic and structural – that have insisted on women's inferiority and exclusion and which have contributed so significantly to their oppression? There is no single answer to such a question, of course – the ongoing feminist work in religion alone attests to the diversity and range of possible negotiations, accommodations and transformations that characterize women's religiosity. But here we should recall the historical and political framing of 'religion' that I traced above in order to understand the stakes involved in

negating its complexity and pursuing a straightforward equation of 'religion' with 'oppression'.

In her important work on women's piety in the orthodox women's movement in Egypt, Saba Mahmood urges caution regarding the certainty of those feminist political commitments that proceed from secular valuations of religion 'when trying to understand the lives of others who do not necessarily share these commitments ...'. For Mahmood this means that '[W]e can no longer arrogantly assume that secular forms of life and secularism's progressive formulations necessarily exhaust ways of living meaningfully and richly in this world' (2005: xi–xii). Mahmood's point echoes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assessment of Anglophone feminism, which, she suggests, glosses a significant problem when it displays a superficial, tokenistic regard for 'postcolonial marginality': 'that a concern with women *and* men who have not written in the *same* cultural inscription ... cannot be mobilized in the same way as the investigation of gendering in one's own' (1999: 170). Perhaps, therefore, the task for feminists in approaching 'religion' is to seek to understand both its ontic and epistemic value for those women whose allegiances it holds, such that feminist inventories of what constitutes a rich and meaningful life might be expanded, enriched and complicated. That is, women's religious affiliations might signal the construction of autonomous domains in which the ontological (religious identities) and the epistemological (religious worldviews) are of necessity interpellated, forming the performative – and thus dynamic – environment in which women seek to live meaningful lives. To fail to see the ontological and epistemological aspects of religion as entangled in respect of women's affiliations and allegiances, and instead to insist on their separation, is to impose a ethnocentric and hierarchical conceptuality that seals off the personal from the public. A more complex understanding of the forces that shape and enable religious affiliation might enable us to avoid what Mahmood identifies as the

feminist co-optation of women's agency in support of 'the goals of progressive politics' such that we might see and value those 'dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance' (2005: 14). Given the imperialist history that has aligned religious allegiance with conceptual error, feminists must begin to develop the means to acknowledge and extend hospitality to the autonomous domains in which religious women articulate conceptualities *and* identifications at odds with the academic or feminist construction of their worlds and values. Mahmood quite rightly argues that

If we recognize that the desire for freedom from, or subversion of, norms is not an innate desire that motivates all beings at all times, but is also profoundly mediated by cultural and historical conditions, then the question arises: how do we analyze operations of power that construct different kinds of bodies, knowledges, and subjectivities whose trajectories do not follow the entelechy of liberatory politics? (Mahmood, 2005)

We would thus also do well to acknowledge that the question regarding the ways and means of navigating the contradictions of the patriarchal structures we inhabit is one that is in fact basic to the more general confrontation by feminists of most non-religious institutions and discourses that have historically sanctioned women's marginalization or exclusion. Religion cannot be singled out as having a unique responsibility for women's oppression; to do so is not only to fail to understand the facticity of its value for a vast multitude of women and to learn from women's determined efforts to carve out a presence in the diverse contexts that want to enforce their absence, but also to perpetuate ignorance regarding the religious roots of secularism, the strong tradition of critique and questioning that has been religion's gift to modernity (and not only in the European context; see Asad et al., 2009) and the imperialist dynamic that ensured the imposition of a correspondence between religion and inferiority.

What might remain, then, of feminism's responsibilities in respect of religious difference? What are the means of traversing the differential requirements for feminists of overturning the dynamics and forces of gender subordination alongside fidelity to the dignity of women's experiences and accounts of themselves? As Aune et al. have pointed out, women's religiosity does not imply a rejection of modernity so much as 'a complex series of negotiations with modern culture, constructing reciprocal forms of accommodation and resistance' (2008: 7). For feminists to assume otherwise is, I think, to cooperate in what is effectively a (neo)colonial narrative that denies affective agency to women while accruing to the feminist a kind of ontological capital derived from an epistemological parochialism that is in the end unethical to the degree that it denies the layered, entangled subjectivity of the religious other, of her discourse and layered affiliations and of her refusal of the conceptual mechanisms that insist on the stark division of the religious from the secular, of the public from the private, and between 'us' and 'them'.

NOTES

- 1 Saba Mahmood (2005) explores this problematic and the questions it poses for feminist-oriented research with exemplary care in her ethnography of the women's mosque movement in Egypt.
- 2 General extrapolation from the data, however, needs to be tempered by the methodological obstacles faced in gauging women's religious participation. As Aune et al. note, 'measuring women's religiosity by attendance at places of worship can be inaccurate. This is because religious obligations for men and women are sometimes different, with women's involvement in domesticity and childrearing considered a more important expression of faith than attendance at a place of worship – this seems especially so for Jews and Muslims ... [Thus] existing measures work better for Christian women's religiosity than for other religions ... Indeed, some of the existing work exploring reasons for women's dominance in religiosity treats religiosity as synonymous with Christianity' (2008: 6).

- 3 The formative role that colonialism played in the translation of religion has been well documented and debated in recent years. See particularly Fitzgerald, 2000; 2007; Joy, 2001; King, 1999; Masuzawa, 2005; McCutcheon, 2000.
- 4 For a persuasive, analysis of the effect of the colonial and neo-colonial translation of religion on the Sikh tradition see Mandair, 2009.
- 5 The positive and dynamic relationship of women to religion in nineteenth-century North America and Britain has been well documented by Ruether and Keller, 1983 and Morgan, 2002.
- 6 In 1853 the Congregational Church in New York ordained the first female minister, the Reverend Antoinette Brown (1825–1921), and in the early 1840s Oberlin College in the USA enrolled a small number of women into its theological school, having started admitting women to higher education in 1837. As Ursula King has noted, 'Women's admission to theological studies [was] the most important contributory factor in making women theologically literate, thus enabling them to contribute to theological debates on their own terms' (1990: 278).
- 7 On black and Womanist theology see Williams, 1986; 1993; Oduyoye, 1986; 1995; Cannon, 1988; Weems and Broucek, 1988; Grant, 1989; on Mujerista theology see Isasi-Díaz, 1989; 1992; on Asian/Third World feminist theology see Fabella, 1988; 1989; Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, 1991; Chung, 1991; King, 1994; on lesbian theology see Heyward, 1982; 1984; 1989; Harrison and Robb, 1985; Hunt, 1991.
- 8 See Ruether and McLaughlin, 1979; Atkinson, 1983; Dreyer, 1989 as representative texts.
- 9 Notable among these were Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow's *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (1979) and *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* (Plaskow and Christ, 1989), Yvonne Haddad and Ellison Findly's *Women, Religion and Social Change* (1985), Clarissa Atkinson, Constance Buchanan and Margaret Mile's *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female Sacred Image and Social Reality* (1985), Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (1987), and Ursula King's *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* (1989). A further trend was feminist scholarship that sought to address the neglect of women's perspectives and data within religious studies. The first of these – *Women and Religion*, edited by Judith Plaskow and Joan Romero – which was published in 1974, was followed by Denise Lardner Carmody's *Women and World Religions* (1979). The first properly non-confessional volumes were Nancy Falk and Rita Gross's *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures* (1999) and Ursula King's *Women in the World's Religions, Past and Present* (1987). Numerous anthologies and books rendering women's participation in religious traditions more visible have also followed, such as Arvind Sharma's *Women in World Religions* (1987). Studies focusing on the position and roles of women within single traditions have done similar work: for example, Diana Y. Paul's *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition* (1979), Doranne Jacobson and Susan Wadley's *Women in India: Two Perspectives* (1977), and Azizah Al-Hibri's *Women and Islam* (1982).
- 10 While these have occurred in many fora, the most prominent sites for dialogue between feminist theologians have been the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, founded in 1985 and published by Indiana University Press, and *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology*, established in 1992 and published by Sage.
- 11 For examples and summaries of debates within and about Islamic feminism see Abou-Bakr, 2001; Afshar, 1996; Afshari, 1994; Ahmed, 1992; Badran, 1999; Barlas, 2002; Cooke, 2001; Majid 2002; Mernissi, 1985, Mir-Hosseini, 1996; Moghadam, 2002; Roald, 1998; Wadud, 1999; Wadud, 2006; Tohidi, 2002; Yamani, 1996.
- 12 See, for example, Stone, 1976; Christ, 1979; Goldenberg, 1979; Starhawk, 1979; Downing, 1984; Eisler, 1987; and Gadon, 1989; see Eller, 1993 for a comprehensive ethnography of the Goddess Spirituality in North America; see Hildebeitel and Erndl, 2000 and Chitgopekar, 2002 for critical examinations of the Western appropriation of Asian goddess symbolism.

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Religion, Feminist Theory and Epistemology

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In the latter part of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first religion began to assume something of an unlooked-for presence in the politics of the global north. It had been widely taken for granted that 'modern' societies had become largely secular, with only residual evidence of minimal religious observance and influence or a degree of 'religious modernization' that came close to the expectations of the secular (see, for example, Wilson, 1998: 45–65). The emergent presence took two forms: the first was the political recognition that in many countries outside the west religion continued to play a central life in social and political life; to assume that social and technological innovation would bring with it the growing irrelevance of religion was a misconception. The second presence that religion achieved was that of becoming in itself the focus of various attacks, the majority of which argued that religion had never been anything except a negative force in individual and collective lives and was, *ipso facto*, a backward-looking and absurd set of beliefs.¹ These

attacks, often supported by comments about the negative implications of religion for women, have been read as specific evidence of the political liberality and commitment to the cause of women's emancipation of western, secular societies. This revived critical discussion of religion, in part through the articulation of pro-feminist values and aspirations, is the subject of this paper: a discussion of the different epistemologies of religion and feminist theory but also of the assumption that there is a radical disjunction between the sacred and the profane. One immediate example of this similarity is that ideas of the 'truth' of religion and feminism are contingent and time bound: however much writers may argue for consistent traditions within both it is apparent, through any examination of the changing history of feminism and religion, that they differ across time and place. Indeed, as feminist theory has become increasingly sophisticated the boundaries and meaning of the term 'feminist' has become less secure.² Thus, in the twenty-first century, in which religious views have

acquired, across the globe, a greater political force than over-hasty assumptions about the inevitable secularization of the modern world had supposed, it is essential for feminist theory to engage with the lived meaning, through both practice and understanding, of religion. In the first part of this paper three forms of the feminist critique of religion will be considered, while the second will consider the implications of accounts of the impact of religious practice (particularly that by Saba Mahmood) for both feminist theory and assumptions about the 'modern' and the 'secular'.

FEMINISM AND THE CRITIQUES OF RELIGION

Attacks on religion, and its social consequences, have a history that goes back before the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and often include similar assertions to those made in the twenty-first century about the continuation, through religious beliefs and practices, of traditions that exclude and marginalize women. Across the west there are long traditions of anti-clericalism, particularly in the case of Christianity, which have a recorded history from the fourteenth century.³ English narrative fiction, in which women have played a formative part, provides many examples of women writers portraying ministers of religion as (variously or comprehensively) stupid, vicious, greedy, lazy and hypocritical. From Jane Austen to George Eliot English clergymen were lampooned; it was George Eliot, indeed, who was credited by her contemporaries as the 'first godless writer of fiction that has appeared in England'.⁴ In terms of the three religions of the book (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) the case of specifically male failings has not been difficult to make, since institutional power in those religions is, and always has been, largely held by men and certain interpretations of those foundational texts suggest beliefs in a rigidly structured binary of gender. (At the

same time this should also not blind us to the attacks by members of one religion on members of another; anti-Semitism in European literature, for example, has an extensive tradition – see Rubin, 1999.) But that very gender binary has been the focus of a long-standing critique by both women and men; for example, rereadings of the Christian Gospels have long cited St Paul's comment that men and women, Jew and Christian, 'are all one in Christ Jesus' to support both the status and the claim of women to religious ministry within Christianity.

That particular – and much cited – sentence in St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians appears to carry the message that the acceptance of Christian beliefs confers a democratic unity on its followers. However, the actual practices of both the Christian and other religious institutions have seldom followed either the letter or the spirit of those remarks. While women have been part of many religious institutions (in Christianity, for example, as members of female religious orders and as licensed preachers in Britain from the seventeenth century onwards) the general pattern of the distribution of formal power in all organized religions has been overwhelming male. This gendered distribution of institutional power within religion provided the first focus of attack for feminism of the 'second wave'. A second focus of attack was about the gendered person of God, a third a critique of the epistemological status of religion. In all cases, the point was made that both the teaching and the practice of religion (in the case of all the 'religions of the book') were entirely discordant with the general expectations of contemporary societies. Within Christianity some churches have achieved a degree of accommodation with modern norms which has often obscured or marginalized other blatantly exclusionary practices and assumptions. For example, in the case of the United Kingdom the ability of the established Anglican church to accommodate itself – often unwillingly – to certain changes in social behaviour (the use of contraception, divorce and various forms of the

legal ‘modernization’ of marriage) has provided an apparent acceptance of aspects of a modern, secular society that has allowed arguments about a female priesthood (and promotion within it) to remain largely dormant until relatively recently.⁵ Yet, despite this refusal of the claims of women to equality, for various notable women writers of the twentieth century (for example, Hilary Mantel and Edna O’Brien) Christian teaching has remained of great symbolic as well as literal importance. In the words of Hilary Mantel: ‘I was brought up as a Catholic and it’s not easy to throw over the faith. I believed that, short of crucifixion, you shouldn’t really complain’ (Mantel, 2004: 209). But women did both complain and remain within religious institutions.

The first attempts to challenge what to many feminists has long seemed to be the close connection between patriarchy and religion emerged in the most organized form in the 1970s. Although, as suggested above, it is incorrect to assume that there had been no challenge by women to male religious authority prior to this date it is the case that a challenge located within the specific politics of feminism did not emerge in any coherent form until that decade. The concept of ‘patriarchal power’, widely used in western feminism of the early 1970s, was manifestly applicable to the so-called Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (see Coward, 1983). In all of these religions the central figure of authority (whether on earth or heaven) was male and authority was located in male followers. Access to worship within these religions was always available to both women and men but in the case of all of them, as they became more clearly institutionalized, so women became more marginal to institutional power. But at the same time all religions allowed symbolic power to certain female figures, whether they were Mary, mother of Jesus Christ in the Bible or Fatima, the wife of the prophet Mohammed in the Qur’an. Each had a part in either (or both in the case of Christianity) the teaching and the iconography of the religion, a part which has

attracted considerable feminist attention.⁶ But, as the evidence from all three major world religions made clear, women had no formal relation to the operation of either institutional or doctrinal power.

But it was not this absence of women from institutional power that attracted the attention of feminists such as Mary Daly and Carolyn Heilbrun: their concern was with that second focus of the second wave feminist critique of religion: the gender of God and by implication the assumption that, since God was male, so too was religious authority. Daly and Heilbrun wrote specifically about Christianity and focused attention on the idea of shifting the biological identity of Jesus Christ (see Daly, 1975; Heilbrun, 1974). Similar arguments towards androgyny were made within Judaism by, among others of the same generation, Goldenburg and Gendler.⁷ Returning more than once to the text of St Paul, Daly asked what the assertion of ‘in Christ there is neither male or female’ could possibly mean, given that all historical evidence had little doubt that Jesus Christ was male.

Within that same generation of ‘second wave feminists’ there had also, however, been feminists who wished to turn to more abstract forms of deity. Carol Christ, for example, advocated a search for religious meaning in both the actual and the fictional meaning of women’s lives. Christ wrote in the context of her studies of the work of Margaret Atwood and Doris Lessing that: ‘... in a pluralistic world we must give up our search for the single definitive perception of the ultimate and turn instead to timely, perspectival and finally limited perceptions which clearly recognise their rooting in stories’ (Christ, 1975: 7).

This suggestion, derived from an essentialism that would become increasingly theoretically marginal as the twentieth century drew to a close, has nevertheless remained a powerful and very visible tradition within all the major world religions and one that is often used to argue for the ‘particular’ strengths of women. That tradition, within

Christianity, has been extended by the work of various scholars, feminist and non-feminist, on the Gnostic Gospels and the so-called Gospel of Mary (see Avocella, 2007: 149–66).

These feminist interventions questioning the necessity for the replication of ecclesiastical authority as definitely male were given short shrift by Pope Paul VI in his Papal Encyclical which responded in 1977 to the growing feminist, and feminist-inspired, arguments about the necessary relationship between male biology and religious authority. In that Encyclical he wrote:

The priest is a sign ... a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognise with ease. The whole sacramental economy is in fact based upon natural signs, or symbols imprinted upon the human psychology When Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this 'natural resemblance' which must exist between Christ and His minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man. In such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man. (*New York Times*, 1977: A8)

The passage is revelatory in what it reveals about the assumptive basis of aspects of Roman Catholic teaching: the unchallenged authority of the 'natural' and the perception of a lack of imaginative competence and understanding among the 'faithful'. The paradox of the most powerful representative of a faith which asks its believers to accept the doctrine of transubstantiation while denying to those same believers the ability to recognize the authority and the presence of Christ in a woman just as much as in a man is, to many people (both believers and non-believers) extraordinary. Nevertheless, this rebuttal of one of the demands of feminists takes us closer to a perception of how the epistemology of religion (whether Christian, Jewish or Moslem) is conventionally organized, a conceptual system which remain founded in two important assertions: the mystical authority of senior clerics and the fixed and non-negotiable status of the

'natural', in which the intervention of the 'miraculous' remains a possibility. If we too quickly assume that the concept of the miraculous has disappeared from some Christian quarters then it is only necessary to recall the assertion by the US politician Todd Atkin in 2012 that 'legitimate rape does not cause pregnancy' (*The Guardian*, 2012). This entirely absurd (and much challenged comment) dramatizes the longstanding, and historically uneasy, relationship between the Abrahamic religions and science.

By the end of the twentieth century (and indeed by the end of the nineteenth in many parts of the globe) the literal explanations of the origin of the planet, the nature and power of the divine and the very meaning of statements about belief and behaviour given in the central texts of religion had all come under scrutiny. Forceful attacks on the Bible's account of the origin of the planet had been in existence since the time of Galileo; Charles Darwin was to contribute yet another challenge to the idea of what became known in the twentieth century as 'intelligent design'.⁸ Although both Galileo and Darwin were vehemently denied and rejected by some in positions of religious authority (as is still the case in some sections of some countries), by the beginning of the twentieth century the consensus of much of the world was that the origins of human existence did not lie in the planned intervention of a god. But, as many writers have pointed out, the language and everyday culture of most societies is permeated with ideas about 'miracles' or appeals to some form of transcendent power at times of personal or national difficulty and stress. The slogan 'In God we Trust', to be found on the currency of the USA, is just one such example of the way in which a belief system in which human choice, intelligence and agency are inferior to the power of the divine is still widely endorsed. In this case the endorsement (not without dissent) literally united God and Mammon.⁹

But it is in feminist discussions about the meaning of science and the distinctions between good and bad science that a third

critique of religion, albeit in this case implicit, arose. The origins of feminist work on epistemology lie in various exclusionary practices about women and women's work in science. A generation of women, which included Hilary Rose and Anne Fausto-Sterling, argued that the general knowledge category known as 'science' was producing poor work because it refused both women as practitioners and work about women (see Rose, 1994, Fausto-Sterling, 1985). This view of science assumed that science could be 'objective'. But in 1986 Sandra Harding, in her *The Science Question in Feminism*, suggested that there should be a place within the construction of knowledge for the recognition of the location of the researcher: 'standpoint theory' became a lasting presence within feminist theory, even if its implicit problem – that of the question of the epistemic authority of the individual or the group – has remained problematic (Harding, 1986). Most recently, Miranda Fricker's *Testimonial Injustice* has suggested ways in which we need to consider questions of authority in the reception of various forms of testimony, an argument which continues earlier work by Lorraine Code and Genevieve Lloyd (see Fricker, 2007; Lloyd, 1984). Many others have contributed to these debates, but the consensus that has emerged is that feminist epistemology is varied but has at its core the question of how we are to assess the authority of arguments and evidence that we are offered as knowledge.

In this, feminist epistemology shares a great deal with other epistemological traditions across much of the global academy. What is crucial in this account of the epistemological is, as Lorraine Code pointed out, the question of paradigm shift: a knowledge which cannot change and which cannot recognize change is, essentially, a dead knowledge (Code, 1991). This argument then returns us to religion and to questions of the relationship between feminist theory and religion; in both cases we see theoretical traditions that have been in a constant state of reappraisal. In the case of feminist theory, the

past fifty years have seen a growing range and complexity of feminist theory, a theory which in many ways has acquired a more tentative relationship with biological sexual difference – a distance that is not unlike the equally equivocal relationship that some Christian thinking has acquired with God.¹⁰

Two of the most consistently critical accounts of religion (those of Marx and Freud) belong, it is worth observing, to theoretical traditions which have, in their own way, often been the subject of feminist attack.¹¹ Even if those attacks have diminished from the days in which Marx and Freud were both a *persona non grata* for feminism (days which stretched from the date of the publication of *The Second Sex* in 1949 to some of the early works of 'second wave' feminism), doubt still exists about the validity of their contribution to feminism. Yet at the same time the relationship of these figures to religion illustrates the way in which two of the great narratives of western modernity, while criticized by one aspect of that modernity, feminism itself, are nevertheless in accordance with the views of many feminists on the question of religion. Feminism, a social and political movement of the modern, joins with two of modernity's most powerful narratives to reject, or at least question, the most ancient narrative of history, that of religion. But this apparent alliance is consistently undermined both by the range of difference within feminist politics and by the complex relationships of feminists to the work of Marx and Freud and to that of other male theorists – as work by Shirin Rai and Joanna Liddle on Edward Said illustrates – which both illuminates and obscures aspects of the experience and situation of women (Liddle and Rai, 1998: 495–520). In the lived complications, in terms not just of the complex meaning of feminism but, equally importantly, of the meaning of the feminine within the modern, it is in religion that many women find a clarity of purpose and identity that does not exist elsewhere. That clarity is often present in a politics of submission to a shared religious epistemology, a politics

which provides a framework within which women can resolve the various problems of sexual difference. But two caveats of some importance here are that in the recognition of the functional appeal of religious explanation and/or order another recognition is also crucial: that religion can be (in many ways similar to femininity itself) a mask which obfuscates various forms of secular and material politics. Equally, that very recognition of sexual difference that fundamentalist religion provides is at the same time organized through gender inequality.¹²

That point takes us to the possibility that two – apparently extremely unlikely – forms of gender politics converge in contemporary aspects of religious practice. For example, the endorsement by women of arguments for veiling or wearing the headscarf is similar in its motivations to the argument for the refusal of essentialist constructions of gender. The former seems to confirm biological identity, the second questions it. But both attempt to resolve modern uncertainty about gender and in particular the meaning of the feminine. At the same time it is important to restate that no religion provides absolute guidance to women about how to dress, but for all women, in whatever society, there is an inevitable negotiation about gender and questions of sexuality.¹³ If we can see that the abolition of socially secure forms of biological sexual difference is convenient for aspects of western neoliberalism so it is important to recognize that attachment to a form of gender difference suggestive of dissent from aspects of this form of political and cultural economy has its own resonance. In this way, whatever are the epistemological shortcomings of the theologies of religions, their practice raises important and disruptive questions for feminist theory: issues that are the subject of the following section.

RETHINKING RELIGION AND FEMINISM

Two of the most recent challenges to interpretations of religion that saw it as only

negative in its implications for women emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century: one was the questions raised by Talal Asad about implicit assumptions about Christianity and the other the work by Saba Mahmood that suggested religion as a location not of women's passivity but of their agency (see Mahmood, 2005; Asad, 2003). Asad's challenge was not written in the context of feminist discussions of religion but it has a considerable importance for the recognition of the social and political implications of religion. Asad questioned the assumption of the implicit superiority of western societies through what was, in his view incorrectly, the positive contribution of Christianity to social and individual emancipation. He wrote critically that:

(Christianity is ...) the seed that flowers into secular humanism, destroying in the process its own transcendental orientation and making possible the terrestrial autonomy that now lies at the heart of Western democratic society. (This contrasts with Muslim societies which remain mired in religion). (Asad, 2009: 22–3)

Asad's comment touches upon a hugely important aspect of feminism itself and of feminist theory, namely the (generally implicit) assumption that the secular is the basis of all 'modern' societies. Thus what his work demands is recognition of both the ways in which 'traces' of religion remain even in societies which self-consciously identify themselves as secular and the way in which a supposed 'absence' of religion too often contributes to over-hasty judgements about the achievement of 'modernized' and equitable gender relations. In the case of the first point it is useful to mention the historical work by Alexandra Walsham on the impact of the Reformation on England: the evidence that she has collected demonstrates very clearly that ideas about religious 'revolutions' or 'transformations' are inappropriate terms for the complexity of the social relations related to religion (see Walsham, 2006: 245 for the discussion about 'laying the ideological foundations for a secular

society'). In terms of this point Asad's work on what he describes as 'formations' of the secular brings into much closer alliance ideas that are often perceived as 'cultural' with ideas that are perceived as 'religious'; the boundaries, as he points out, are often far from clear (Asad, 2003: 153–5).

The work by Walsham and Asad on religion does not belong to specifically feminist engagements with religion but it is relevant here because it opens up ways for considering the encounter of feminist theory with religion and epistemologies of religion. One way of approaching this subject is, first of all, to suggest that although many feminists have dismissed all religions as aspects of a dark and patriarchal past there is both historical and contemporary work on women that has enlarged our understanding of the origins of women's agency. In the case of historical work, studies of Mary Wollstonecraft have consistently emphasized her Christian beliefs, whilst accounts of the speeches by the nineteenth-century black women activist Sojourner Truth have noted her startling arguments about the marginal contribution of the human male to divine revelation in the form of Jesus (see Taylor, 2002: 99–118). Truth's comments accord with modern Biblical scholarship that views the Virgin Birth (like the actual existence of God) as arising from strategically significant needs of the Christian Church at particular points in its history.¹⁴

The rethinking of questions such as the Virgin Birth has been made possible by a number of intellectual factors, one of which, and perhaps the most important in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, is the idea of interpretation. No new idea in itself (interpretation was, for example, at the heart of the Protestant Reformation), the question of 'how we read' has nevertheless become a central plank of intellectual life. This aspect of the post-modern has encouraged feminist scholars to 'read' the central texts of all the world religions and point out, as, for example, Leila Ahmed has done in the case of the Qur'an, the

multiple interpretations of the writing about gender. Feminist scholars of the Talmud and the Bible have similarly advanced diverse meanings of these texts (Ahmed, 1992).

While both these scholars have rethought the relation of religion to the modern and used aspects of the modern (and the post-modern) to question what have seemed to be static interpretations of religion, the work of Saba Mahmood has made a crucial contribution to our understanding, less to the re-interpretation of texts than to the issue of women's relation to the text and to religious practice and observance. Whereas feminists (and indeed others) in the late twentieth century 'read' religion as having negative implications for women, Mahmood, in her study of Egyptian Moslem women, reversed this general view. Mahmood is not arguing for religion, but rather demonstrating that religion can be a path for women to achieve agency and an enhanced sense of self; critics have suggested other readings of the relationship between gender and religion (see Gourgouris, 2008: 437–45). In much the same way, Jacqueline de Vries and Phyllis Mack have recorded the part that religion (in their case largely non-conformist Christianity) played in the politics of Quaker women in the eighteenth century and feminists of the 'first wave' respectively (Vries, 2010; Mack, 2005). Again, this evidence refutes the too rapid assumption that religion (in any form) encourages political and social passivity in women and is always related to the 'un-modern'. Writing about the work of Mack and Mahmood, the historian Joan Scott notes:

... both in different ways call into question the secular, liberal concept of agency as the 'free exercise of self-willed behaviour', the expression of a previously existing self ... (in contrast to Mack) Mahmood suggests that 'agentival capacity is entailed not only in resistance to norms, but in the multiple ways one inhabits those norms.' She reminds us of Foucault's definition of subjectivation: 'The very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity agent.' (Scott, 2011: 107)

This comment, as well as illuminating (and distinguishing between) the work of two important feminist writers on religion, also invokes a comment made in another context by the philosopher Gillian Rose, in which she comments on her own religious heritage:

My disastrous Judaism of fathers and family transmogrified into a personal, protestant inwardness and independence. Yet, as with the varieties of historical Protestantism, progenitor of modernity, the independence gained from the protest against illegitimate traditional authority comes at the cost of the incessant anxiety of autonomy. Chronically beset with inner turmoil, the individual may nevertheless become roguishly adept at directing and managing the world to her own ends. (Rose, 1995: 35)

It should be emphasized that in this passage (and in the book from which it is taken) Rose is not specifically concerned with a discussion of either religion or feminism. Yet in the quotation above she touches upon themes that illuminates Mahmood's work and previous comments about gender, modernity and religion that belong to a sociological, rather than a feminist, tradition. What Rose does, which links her work to feminist work about religion and to previous work about both the meaning of the modern (and modernity) and religion is to define very precisely in relation to her own self the making of that self through ideas drawn from religion. Yet as she gained that 'protestant inwardness and independence' so she also gained the other inheritance of that version of Christianity: the loneliness of the person in a religion devoid of the certainty of salvation and the presence of mediating forms of assistance.

The individual whom Rose represents herself as becoming is, of course, the person derived from Protestantism and brought to a central part in the history of the modern west in the work of Max Weber. Weber (as was the case also of his sociological contemporary Emile Durkheim) had much to say about religion but in this case one aspect of his work is particularly important: his account, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*,

of the making of the human subject of the Protestant Reformation (Weber, 1958). This person, denied the certainties of salvation given to all within Roman Catholicism, had to attempt to secure redemption through the careful cultivation of individual talent and endeavour. The 'modernity' that results from this is the market economy and its many consequent engagements with countries outside the west. Although the extent of the relationship between Protestantism and the ethic of hard work has been challenged by historians ('an idea best avoided', wrote Diarmaid MacCulloch (2010: 685)), it is nevertheless important that, whatever the origins of that ethic, it took hold in the west as the dominant ethic of the modern. Yet, as Weber himself was to write in 1904: 'The people filled with the spirit of capitalism today tend to be indifferent, if not hostile, to the Church. The thought of the pious boredom of paradise has little attraction for their active natures ...' (Weber, 1958: 70).

In the second decade of the twenty-first century we can see that part of Weber's comment is true: for many people in the west religion plays little part in their lives although they live by, and are firmly persuaded to live by, a belief in the value of work which has its origins in religious belief. It is this 'secular religion' which Gillian Rose has recognized in her own behaviour.

It is in this context that it is important to return to the work of Asad and Mahmood because in the – very different – work of both it is possible to see that same concern with the analysis of the part of religion in driving (and constructing) human action and agency that was the concern of Weber. Asad and Weber are clearly less explicitly concerned with religion and gender than is Mahmood but in all cases what is being outlined are theories of human motivation. In these accounts what becomes largely irrelevant is the epistemological status of the religion itself: it is not that religion in itself is convincing to any of these writers but that its impact on human behaviour is considerable. Feminist historians, as already suggested, have noted the part

that religion has played in feminism, but they have also documented the part that religion (largely the impact of various forms of Christianity on the Global South) has long played in colonial cultural and political invasions of various kinds and, with that, the negation and denial of indigenous forms of female behaviour.¹⁵ In this context, feminist accounts of religion have followed more conventional accounts of religion which have emphasized its negative implications.

EPISTEMOLOGIES OF FEMINISM, EPISTEMOLOGIES OF RELIGION

Feminism and religion share one characteristic: they are both 'broad churches' and have rich and varied epistemological sources and resources. From the standpoint of religious belief it is entirely reasonable to refer to the extensive theologies of all world religions and the wide variety of forms of human experience that they have encompassed. But it is that question of 'belief' that would be problematic for many feminists, for although they might reject the position of fundamentalist atheists which argues, categorically, that God (whoever he or she belongs to) does not exist, so both positions are unprovable. It would seem that the fundamental tenet of the world religions, that a God exists, can exist only as an assertion and at the very best as a richly illustrated history of a human aspiration for transcendence. Given that all world religions exist in many forms and are often deeply divided it is also impossible to speak with any assurance of 'a religion'. When, for example, Anglicans can argue for the dispensability of God or point out that in the Gospels of the New Testament there is no reference to the Resurrection, it is apparent that religious certainty is mythical. This diversity of opinion within religion, and the actual uncertainty of its central texts, needs to be emphasized when 'religion' is presented as a consistent tradition.

To many feminists, pursuing the similarity between the epistemologies of religion and

feminism might appear as the definitive search for the non-existent. Although religions (in all their diversity) have had some difficulty in reconciling themselves within major twentieth-century intellectual traditions (for example, the implications of the work of Freud) and would appear, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, to wish to define questions of gender identity and behaviour in ways that have been subject to considerable critical scrutiny, there are two marked similarities – as well as diverse differences – between feminist and religious epistemologies. The first is that both religion and feminist theory entail the search for the transcendence of the limits of the human person. Although this search sits uneasily with other aspects of religion (for example, that assertion of the authority of 'the natural' that has been previously noted), all world religions encourage the possibility that each human being is malleable into a form that, in the case of religion, more nearly meets the aspirations of that religion. In the same way, feminism and feminist theory has long argued that biology is not destiny: that ideas, the conceptual, can allow greater freedoms and possibilities than a literal reading of biological difference allows.

This recognition of the dialectic between the individual and the social as contained in religion and feminist theory encourages the exploration of both the complex and the more directly apparent meaning of both. We can cite the instance of the feminism that endorses the female entrepreneur as an example of the fusion of a version of feminism with an aspect of religion; at the same time we can take the tradition of feminist theory that stretches from Simone de Beauvoir as an aspect of a tradition that wishes to substitute the strictures of biology for the freedom of humanism. In both cases, and in what are western traditions, we can see at work not so much the distance between religion and feminist theory but some of the shared intellectual and cultural roots. Again, and in the twenty-first century, we can observe the making of new traditions of the feminine in cultures

with religions that maintain a considerable degree of gender separation (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Whether 'emancipated' forms of the feminine will find, in these contexts, new expectations of material relations and an experience of another, more avowedly secular, form of religion remains to be seen.

The second similarity between the epistemologies of religion and feminist theory that demands mention is that both begin from the starting point of how to order social relations and, just as there are differences between feminists on this question, so is this the case for religion. To say that religions all take their views on this subject from the word of God is to maintain a form of fundamentalism as misleading as any other: Gods, theologies tell us, have said many different things. Religion is not coherent and neither is it stable. It is important for feminist theory to welcome this and to recognize its various manifestations and its many possibilities. At a historical point where the claims of religion, across the globe, are acquiring considerable political legitimacy it is important that feminist theory recognizes the part that religion plays in both national and international politics, and often in ways that challenge easy assumptions about the relationship of the secular with the modern (see Bracke, 2003: 335–46; Kinnvall, 2004: 741–67).

NOTES

- 1 The most publicized of these comments were by Dawkins, 2006 and Hitchens, 2007.
- 2 No longer have the boundaries of feminism changed, but its death has been announced. See the discussion in Hemmings, 2011: 136–41.
- 3 This point is explored more fully by Jagar, 2006: 301–22.
- 4 Nineteenth-century attacks by women on aspects of religion took various forms. Women novelists, energetic in their critical pictures of male clerics, created characters such as Dr Grant in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Mr Collins in the same author's *Pride and Prejudice*, while the possible active cruelty of the church appeared in the form of the Reverend Brocklehurst in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. George Eliot was identified with those strands in continental philosophy that were both anti-clerical and deeply suspicious of religious ideas. See for a discussion of George Eliot and religion Qualls, 2001: 119–37.
- 5 Some of the difficulties of the Church of England in coming to terms with sexuality are set out in Thane and Evans, 2012.
- 6 The classic study of the Virgin Mary written in the late twentieth century is Marina Warner's *Alone of All Her Sex* (1976). Later interpretations, such as that by Miri Rubin in her book *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (2009), have emphasized the multiple feminist readings of Mary. She writes: 'In the churches some feminists see in Mary a barrier to liberation, but others seek to seize Mary as a powerful example for women and for churches: of love and faith, of charity and nurture' (Rubin, 2009: 422).
- 7 See Goldenberg, 1974: 341–3 and Gendler, 1976: 241–7. The different traditions and divisions within Judaism are discussed by various authors in Alan Avery-Pack and Jacob Neusner's edited collection (2003). See, for a further overview, King, 2004: 1–12.
- 8 The place of the Christian God in the creation of the universe was first affirmed by St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. It was later developed by the cleric William Paley in the early nineteenth century, whose work had an influence on Charles Darwin, renowned as the author of *On the Origin of Species* and as the non-believer who gave an alternative account, less of the origin of the universe, but rather more of the emergence of human beings.
- 9 The phrase 'In God We Trust' had been written onto US coinage since 1864. The phrase was first printed on paper notes in 1957, despite the protests of secularists.
- 10 Crucial to this rethinking of gender relations was the work of Judith Butler, e.g. *Gender Trouble* (1990).
- 11 Freud set out his objections to religion in *Totem and Taboo* (1918). A feminist reading of Marx's identification of religion as ideology is given by Marilyn Chapin Massey (1987: 151–63). Marx wrote in 1847 that 'the social principles of Christianity preach the need for a ruling and oppressive class'. This was a view challenged by, among others, those who espoused the Liberation Theology in Latin America. See MacCulloch, 2010: 976–979.
- 12 The reference here to masks is an invocation of Joan Riviere's famous essay of 1929, 'Womanliness as Masquerade' (1998).
- 13 The literature on veiling and the various dress codes of Islam is now extensive. For useful discussions see Mernissi, 1992 and Moallem, 2007. A recent important account of the resurgence of

the wearing of headscarf and the veil and their connection to national politics is Ahmed, 2011. For a discussion on Islam, gender and sexuality see Helie and Hoodfar, 2011.

- 14 On the existence of God, see Robinson, 1963 and MacCulloch, 2010: 393.
- 15 There is a considerable literature on both the 'export' of western views about women and western women as missionaries. See, for example, Midgley, 2007. The specific relationship between western development programmes, women and religion has been well covered in terms of its politics and its policies, particularly in terms of reproductive rights. For a more general discussion see the article by Selinger, 2004: 523–43. For a discussion of the colonial attack on the sexuality of colonized women see Heath, 2010.

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Literary, Visual and Cultural Representation

Sadie Wearing

The sexual politics of literature, film, visual and media cultures have been crucial to the dissemination and development of key areas of feminist theory in the academy and beyond. Feminist scholars in literature, film studies and related disciplines have routinely been at the forefront of questioning the ways in which women (as/and 'others') are represented in cultural forms such as the novel and the film; the relation of these representations to the reproduction and repudiation of social norms; and the relation of literary and visual text to the psyche and to the cultural meanings attached to femininity and masculinity. Scholars in these fields have raised a range of key issues for feminism, including: the importance of attending to the symbolic in understanding and deconstructing gender relations; the entwined histories of representation of gender, sexuality, race and class; gender and the representation of the body; the nature of the cultural and critical canon; and colonial and post-colonial representations of difference. Through critical

interrogations of these and related questions this area has provided a catalyst for debate over the myriad ways in which representation matters and its connection to a range of gendered, raced and classed inequalities.

Representation is understood by the authors in this section in an expansive way: as the realm of symbolic and cultural practice that produces images, ideas and fantasies of gender, and therefore as a key battleground for feminism. It is understood to have the capacity to construct, reflect and resist existing meanings of gender and sexuality. The work of feminist literary and cultural scholars on questions of gender and writing; representations and cultural constructions of gender and sexuality; femininity and its cultural and psychic contours and recently the discursive terrain of postfeminism have been central to a range of feminist agendas. This wide-ranging terrain encompasses many of the central dilemmas of feminist theory more broadly – questions over voice and silence,

public and private, equality and difference, the viability of the category of Woman. It is therefore both unsurprising and significant that many key feminist texts work through their arguments in relation to the terrain of both popular and literary culture. However – in addition to its relatively high public profile – the centrality of feminist cultural theory to its wider social currency also corresponds to its relation to the academy. Feminist literary and cultural criticism holds an established (though not uncontested) place in the academic disciplines of Literature and Cultural Studies, Media and Communication studies and sociological considerations of culture. As such, it can be viewed as central to the project, promotion and academic vitality and currency of what is understood more broadly as feminist theory. Work in this area straddles both humanities and social science perspectives and methods, with some intriguing overlaps and cross contaminations as well as some areas of contestation, though both traditions are united in the attempt to dissect the ways that cultural production is implicated in the broader maintenance and disruption of patriarchy and other forms of oppression, from which ‘women’s writing’ and cultural production is by no means immune. Vibrant scholarship on the history of women’s writing, the ways that patriarchy has represented women, the discursive production of femininities and masculinities and the very challenges of language itself as a tool of gendered power have been but some of the areas marked out by work in this area. The range of work also crosses generic and cultural boundaries, that of ‘high’ and ‘low culture’, the literary and the popular and multiple axis of difference.

Theoretically, the terrain is marked by a variety of approaches engaging with diverse perspectives including – but not limited to – psychoanalysis, sociology, literary history, post-colonial theory and perspectives, linguistics and post-structuralism. While its objects of analysis, its methods and perhaps even its politics might be diverse and multiple, what links the work of feminist theory

and criticism of cultural and literary representation is an assumption that these things matter – that they are politically and socially significant and that they constitute as well as reflect prevailing understandings and contestations of the world as it was, is and could be.

Women’s multiple and contradictory roles as producers, consumers and objects of literary and cultural production have a significant tradition of exploration by Feminist literary scholars, theorists and activists. Feminist scholarship in this field has established the need to both deconstruct existing myths and constructions of gender and concurrently to reconstruct the excised, forgotten and silenced female voices, particularly from the past (Green and Kahn, 1985: 7). This led feminists in the 1970s and 1980s to begin to explore the multiple strands that continue to characterize the field, from critique of the existing canon, such as Kate Millet’s scathing *Sexual Politics* (1971) to exploration of women’s writing as either forgotten but recoverable, such as Dale Spender’s *Mothers of the Novel* (1988); as a space of a tradition specific to women, as Elaine Showalter argued (1999), or as a space of ambivalent resistance (such as Gilbert and Gubar, 1979). From this period there was also a questioning of how women and other marginalized groups – by class, and race, for example – are ‘silenced’ by a variety of cultural and social processes (Olsen, 1980) which negate the possibilities for fully occupying the space of the cultural producer.

In addition, however, to work that catalogues and critiques women’s contributions to and existence in cultural production, a further strand of work in this area has reflected debates within feminist theory more broadly over the constitution of gender; the role of representation in its very construction; and how the combined weight of social and psychic processes manifests in language and culture. Post-structuralist accounts stress the ways that, within language, meaning is both learned (culturally inflected rather than innate) and locks the subject into its terms, as in the psychoanalytic perspectives influenced

by Lacan (Rose, 1986) and, relatedly, in the discursive construction of subjectivity described by Foucault. Broadly speaking, language is also understood within post-structuralism as slippery and mutable and thus available for resignification and resistance. So, for French feminists such as Cixous (1981) and Irigaray (1999), in calling for other ways of knowing and writing, the possibility for a post-patriarchal symbolic order is suggested even as the rigid contours of the existing order are described. These questions are explored in this section by Amber Jacobs, who contests the orthodox psychoanalytic stress on loss and the negation of the feminine in part through an exploration not of language as such but of voice. The challenge of post-structuralism is, infamously, a challenge to how we understand the constitution of identity and subjectivity and thus the very possibility of the category of 'woman'. The most renowned exposition of these arguments and their significance for feminist politics comes from the hugely influential early work of Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) – texts which, again, deploy representational practice as integral to their argumentation. These debates and the challenges of queer theory more generally to feminist literary theory and criticism are picked up in Sam McBean's chapter in this section.

Equally key to the development of feminist theory in relation to literature and cultural representation was the intervention into the 'emergent perspective of feminist criticism' of post-colonial critique. This body of work contested (among other things) in, Gayatri Spivak's words, feminist criticism's 'unfortunate' reproduction of 'the axioms of imperialism' through its 'basically isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo-America establish[ed as] the high feminist norm' (Spivak, 1986: 262). This isolationism and lack of attention to the limited perspectives of a feminist criticism purporting to speak for all 'women' is central to both the foundational and the ongoing debates within

feminist theory. In keeping with this, the work of literary and cultural scholars has been marked by contestations as well as consensus, with crucial interventions that have exposed the gaps and silences of feminist criticism and theory, its objects and subjects of analysis, as, for example, in the work of Spivak (1986), Ien Ang (2001), bell hooks (1996) and Bonnie Zimmerman (1985), which point to assumptions and omissions with regard to imperialism, race and class, and lesbianism respectively.

These concerns with both how women are represented and the role of representation in identity and politics are also a characteristic of feminist work in film, cultural and media studies. Work from these critical areas has also examined the 'roles' women play within visual culture but also, again, influenced by psychoanalytic theory, with how women are defined and obscured by 'the male gaze' and specific cultural apparatus (Mulvey, 1989). Feminist film and cultural theory has provided unique insights into the relation of narrative structure and viewing pleasures to both the psyche and to socially constituted audiences (Stacey, 1994; Young, 1996). For feminist activists – as Karen Boyle demonstrates in her chapter – these preoccupations take on a particular charge in the ongoing debates over the cultural practice of pornography. A huge range of work – as Imelda Whelehen charts in her chapter – explores the pleasures and problems of 'the popular' and 'the feminine' understood as an arena of pleasurable consumption as well as oppression. Again marked by its heterogeneity, the work of feminist scholars of media and popular culture has looked at both production and consumption (or reception) in its attempt to analyse, interpret and critique the images and understandings of gender and sexuality and difference that constitute cultural life.

THE CHAPTERS

The chapters in this section aim to explore the vibrancy of work in this area and to suggest

some new directions and ongoing preoccupations for scholars in this area. The section is, of course, not imagined as comprehensive or indeed ‘representative’, but it reflects the variety of approaches adopted with regard to the analysis and exploration of literary, visual and cultural representation.

Amber Jacobs’ essay reflects on contemporary feminist theory’s negotiation of the insights and limits of psychoanalysis through an analysis of Todd Haynes’ television adaptation of the James M. Cain noir classic *Mildred Pierce*. Arguing that the series can illuminate the possibilities offered for thinking beyond the negation of the feminine inscribed in Lacanian inflected feminist theory, she explores the mother–daughter bond in both theory and representational practice and stresses the possibilities for a symbolic order based not on negation of the feminine or on loss but on an (albeit tentative) connection. A connection that is, significantly, established outside of a purely visual economy, with all the legacies of feminist analytics of the gaze that this implies. This emphasis draws on a theorization of the mother–daughter relation which evades the reliance on tropes of Oedipality and which enables Jacobs to explore the possibility of a post-patriarchal symbolic identifiable in contemporary cultural practice.

Sam McBean uses the analysis of Margaret Atwood’s novel *Oryx and Crake*, to explore the contours of the literary in contemporary feminist theory, identifying an invigorated concern with ‘narrative’. Utilizing a queer feminist perspective, she suggests, allows us to reconfigure the politics of gender and the woman writer, reader and character and to rethink the alleged ‘turning away’ from literature that feminist theory is widely imagined to have performed. She suggests instead that feminist theory has reframed its commitment to the ongoing questions posed by the relationship between feminism and the narration of selfhood. This encompasses considerations of how stories, worlds and identities are made, through what devices and with what effects. McBean’s reading of *Oryx and Crake* might in turn be read as part of feminist

theory’s ongoing deconstruction of what Rosalind Coward famously termed ‘the true story of how I became my own person’ (Coward, 1989).

Also concerned with how writing reveals and conceals questions of the relation between the subjective experience and the social, Vron Ware’s chapter engages with ‘life-writing’ as a way of getting at the most crucial and uncomfortable aspect of racialized experience – life-writing is examined here as a testimony to the ongoing importance of claiming and critiquing ‘self’, of recognizing and resisting oppressive contexts both eternally and internally manifest. Life-writing, Ware suggests, reveals ‘the myriad, brutal and often nuanced ways in which racial hierarchy is experienced’, which she puts in productive dialogue with the feminist debates engendered by Ien Ang’s decisive deconstruction of the ‘we’ of feminist theory and the ongoing recognition of moments of incommensurability. Racism is here dissected through an engagement with its subjectifying processes and writing is engaged with as offering at least the possibility of effecting movement and transformation – towards if not achieving an epistemological escape from white supremacy.

Questions of testimony are also a concern in Anna Reading’s account of gender and memory. Linking the emerging interdisciplinary area of memory studies to gender she maps the ways that memory studies has thus far engaged with gender and the shared concerns with feminist theory – the crucial questions of both who and what is remembered – and with what social and political as well as psychic consequences.

THE POLITICS OF THE POPULAR

Few subjects in feminist debate have been as passionately debated as pornography and, in her chapter, Karen Boyle reminds us of the centrality of pornography as an area of frequently polarized feminist debate, enquiry, theory and, as she stresses in this chapter, an

ongoing site of activism. Interest here is less in the potential harm provoked by pornography – which is notoriously hard to measure – but rather with ways that the exploitation of women's bodies for commercial gain is problematically excluded from its framing via the selective use of 'choice narratives'. Boyle unpacks the ways that the important debates on representation and agency, characteristic of some feminist theory, may obscure as well as illuminate the coercive exploitation of both bodies and sexuality, despite the notional dominance of these discourses as popular refrains of feminist activists. She interrogates the association of anti-pornography feminism as censorious, repressive and anti-sex and the concomitant anxiety of many feminists that sexual expression and validation are also at risk in a overly polarized articulation of the debate on pornography. This is a debate which becomes ever more difficult as changes in media and communications technologies alter the terrain of discussion – notably coalescing in anxieties over the sexualization of children, both as consumers of internet pornography and as victims of the industry. Boyle's chapter stresses the potential erasure of the body in articulations of agency and choice, articulations that chime with the discursive terrain of postfeminism.

Imelda Whelehan's chapter also explores the terrain of postfeminism, charting its cultural and academic dominance in her examination of the 'problem' of the popular for feminist theory and criticism. Whelehan traces how the politics of popular culture have played out, particularly through the crucial interventions of feminism, to a reclamation of feminine pleasure from routine negative associations with mass culture's most vilified characteristics. Indeed, it is in part the association of mass culture with the feminine that has instigated an ongoing fascination for feminist scholars and activists who take popular pleasure seriously. These writers, academics and critics are often, in their turn, running not inconsiderable and ongoing risks of their own in being overly

closely associated with the 'low' genres of feminized culture, such as the romance, the soap opera or the 'chick flick'. In part this manifests as a wider tension, described by Joanne Hollows, for example, between femininity and feminism. Whelehan traces the ways in which postfeminism as a discursive terrain picks up on and indeed fuels feminist debate through its equivocal celebration of reclaiming the glamour of highly conventional (though often ironic) codes of femininity apparently shorn of their coercive and repressive associations. As many scholars have noted, however, the flaunting of this postfeminist subject has been at the cost of many of the key insights of feminist discussion of the politics of the popular and its exclusions; the postfeminist icon is blindingly white, young and economically privileged. Finally, exploring a specific aspect of contemporary UK media culture, Harriet Oliver's chapter demonstrates the way in which these postfeminist preoccupations manifest in the editorial decisions of print journalists. Oliver's research demonstrates a worrying trend to reify the separate spheres of feminine and masculine news, which strikes a chord with the gender policing of our time. She explores these trends in relation to the history of 'feminine' journalism and feminist critique.

The chapters in this section of the *Handbook of Feminist Theory* are highly diverse in terms of their approach and object but they are linked by a concern with the role of cultural production and analysis in offering key insights and understanding of the shifting meanings attaching to feminism, subjectivity and power.

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What Stories Make Worlds, What Worlds Make Stories: Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Sam McBean

INTRODUCTION

In a contemporary context in which feminism has been described as turning away from the question of women and writing (see Gubar, 1998; Moi, 2008), Margaret Atwood – a prominent and prolific writer of stories voiced by women – pens *Oryx and Crake* (2003), her first novel not to feature a female narrator. Instead, Oryx, the main female character in the novel, continually refuses injunctions to produce a cohesive and ‘true’ life narrative, expressing instead a lack of interest in telling her story. Similar to how feminism’s supposed retreat from the question of women and writing has been read as indicative of the waning of literature as a site of feminist critical attention, Atwood’s shift away from a female narrator has been read as a move away from feminist concerns (see Ingersoll, 2004; Nischik, 2009; Bouson, 2010). Oryx’s ambivalence over the point of narrating her life seemingly expresses feminism’s supposed turn away from the once revolutionary cries for women to write their

lives and thus create themselves anew. This convergence between feminism’s alleged turn away from literature and Atwood’s supposed turn away from feminist themes makes *Oryx and Crake* a productive entrypoint into considering the place of literature in contemporary feminist theory. Through a reading of Atwood’s novel I will suggest that the relationship between feminism and literature expands beyond the question of women and writing. This chapter considers the question of women and writing as part of a larger and continuing commitment in feminist theory to the exploration of the function of narrative.

Oryx and Crake is a post-apocalyptic narrative that, in part, is concerned with the relationship between words and survival. At one point the narrator Snowman, known as Jimmy before the apocalypse, describes his college girlfriend Amanda’s art practice. Amanda is a visual artist who works on ‘Vulture Sculptures’. To make these sculptures, Amanda shapes dead-animal parts into large-scale words. She then photographs these word sculptures from a helicopter as vultures

devour the decaying flesh. For Amanda, '[v]ulturizing brought them to life, was her concept, and then it killed them' (Atwood, 2009: 287). As decaying flesh, the material through which she writes is dead. The words themselves come alive, take their shape and become readable through the process that inevitably and simultaneously erases them. Amanda's sculptures blur the distinction between being formed in language and being destroyed by that very process. It is a work of art that is not so much about the words themselves – although she painstakingly considers each word in advance – but about the process of meaning-making. Although Amanda is a minor character in the larger narrative of the novel, her sculptures capture *Oryx and Crake's* concern with the relationship between words and survival.

Snowman, narrator and storyteller, relays his story from the post-apocalyptic world in which he may be the only survivor of the mass extinction of humanity engineered by his best friend, Crake. His story is the focal point of the narrative, although Snowman expresses doubt about the point of narrating his story, knowing that 'he'll have no future reader' (46). Despite this uncertainty about the purpose of telling his story, Snowman remains invested in storytelling. He converses with his past self and the ghosts of the people that populated his world. Carol Ann Howells describes this as a survival strategy: Snowman tells stories 'in a desperate bid to reclaim his own identity, ironizing his present situation, and delighting in language and word play' (2006: 172). The relationship between words and Snowman's survival is mutual – his survival seemingly depends on his ability to keep telling stories and, similarly, the survival of words depends on Snowman's survival. Snowman realizes that if he is the last man alive, words will die when he dies: "Hang on to the words," he tells himself. The odd words, the old words, the rare ones. *Valance. Norn. Serendipity. Pibroch. Lubricious*. When they're gone out of his head, these words, they'll be gone, everywhere, forever' (78; emphasis in original).

The relationship between survival and storytelling is further explored through the 'Crakers'. While Snowman might be the last man alive, he is not the only living thing on the planet. The Crakers also survive the apocalypse as Crake's new chosen inhabitants of the planet. The Crakers are bioengineered 'perfect' individuals that Crake explains are the 'result of a logical chain of progression' from 'interspecies gene and part-gene splicing' (356). Along with possessing various characteristics spliced from other animals – such as their grass-only diet – the Crakers have none of what Crake deems the destructive tendencies of humans. They lack, for instance, the so-called neural complexes that lead to hierarchy. As the narrative of the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that Snowman's survival was engineered by Crake in part so that he would assist the Crakers in their transition from living in the lab to adjusting and surviving in the wider world. Snowman is left to care for and protect them, although this job seems to be rather redundant as the Crakers never want for food, can heal themselves and even possess elaborate strategies that ward off any surviving predators. Conversely, it is the Crakers that enable Snowman's survival, providing him with his much-needed weekly ration of fish. In return, what Snowman offers them are stories. As well as narrating the past leading up to the apocalypse, Snowman also carefully constructs for the Crakers a kind of cosmology about their existence. Their desire for these narratives and the delicacy with which Snowman must construct these stories raises the question about how the survival of the Crakers might depend just as much on Snowman's ability to tell them stories as on their ability to learn from Snowman how to tell their own stories.

This chapter will pick up on the theme of storytelling and survival in Atwood's novel, drawing it out specifically through the relationship between Jimmy and Oryx. Oryx enters the narrative as a child featured on a kiddie porn website that Jimmy and Crake frequently view. As Jimmy grows up, Oryx

moves from the porn industry to become a sex worker that Crake hires at university. From there she becomes an assistant to Crake, working with him on the development of the Crakers in his lab. It is in this capacity that Jimmy meets her in person, although he has, since childhood, carried with him a printed still of her from the kiddie porn film. Their relationship is characterized by Jimmy's obsession with knowing her story and Oryx's evasive responses to his questions. She refuses to provide Jimmy with the narrative he desires to hear and instead challenges him, constantly asking what he thinks he will learn about her from his questioning. Far from using storytelling as a survival strategy, Oryx seemingly insists that she does not need to tell her story. Instead, she interrogates the desires that Jimmy invests in storytelling as a way to save her from what he sees as her terrible past. I pursue a reading of Oryx – described as Atwood's 'most ambiguous character to date' (Tolan, 2007: 286) – that sees this resistance to Jimmy's attempts to ascribe singular and coherent meaning to her life as a challenge to the desires that underpin his need to hear her story. While Oryx resists the promise of survival through narration, and thus resists perhaps the allure of narrative as a process through which she might make herself whole, she is not uninterested in storytelling. Her opposition to narrating her story is a critical reflection on the act and function of narrative as survival – she does not turn away from narrative so much as question its function.

In this, an interest in narrative, language and the production of textual meaning remains of primary concern both to Oryx and, I will argue, in much contemporary feminist scholarship (see Ahmed, 2008; Hemmings, 2011; Pearce, 2004; Wiegman, 2012). Despite, perhaps, a shift in contemporary feminist theory away from the question of women and writing and, with it, the belief in the necessary world-changing power of women writing their stories, what remains is what I see as a queer feminist investment in exploring the critical function of narrative,

textual objects and rhetorical structure in multiple contemporary feminist sites. I describe my reading of Oryx through the perspective of queer feminism not to signal a move away from feminism and the question of women and writing towards queer theory, but to hold the two disciplines in close proximity, resisting seeing queer as the after of feminism – or what happens when the identity category of woman becomes 'untenable'. This is an understanding of feminism put forward by, among others, Annamarie Jagose, who explains that feminism does not confirm or require the stability of the identity category 'woman', but instead is committed to challenging and reworking it (2009: 161); Judith Halberstam, who groups a tradition of feminist commitment to destabilizing identity categories under the heading of 'shadow-feminism' (2011: 124); and Robyn Wiegman, who describes feminism as a 'living thing' that is definitively multiple and defined by differences not only among women but within itself (2010: 84).

Thus, by suggesting that Oryx's refusal to narrate her story be read as a queer feminist critical reflection on the multiple roles and effects of storytelling, queerness here is not as an effect of leaving behind the referent woman. It signals not a move on from more foundational feminist literary concerns but instead insists that the question of women and writing can be framed as part of a wider commitment to exploring narrative production – not entirely encompassed by questions of identity and thus not limited to the exploration of representations of women. The question of women and writing as about and dependent upon the subject woman is but one way to frame this history of feminist literary critique; another might be to insist on this question as being part of a wider feminist investment in illuminating the ways in which stories build worlds. Through a reading of *Oryx and Crake* I thus argue that contemporary scholarship concerning feminism's narratives and object relations encompasses questions around authorship, world-building, narrative and textual meaning that extend

rather than turn away from the question of women and writing, or what is perceived as more foundational feminist literary criticism.

WHAT STORIES MAKE WORLDS

Oryx enters Jimmy's life through the screen – he watches her in a kiddie porn film on 'HottTotts', 'a global sex-trotting site' (102), when he is a teenager and she is eight or nine. His first encounter with her is mediated through the camera and the screen. Moreover, it is mediated further through the conventions of the porn film, which dictate how Oryx is meant to look, what she is meant to do and what she is meant to look like she is feeling. Jimmy describes knowing 'the drill', or the levels of 'make-believe' (104) that are required to produce the desired effect for the viewer. However, Oryx captivates Jimmy because she seems to break through the levels of mediation and the make-believe. She is the first girl he watches in these films that 'seemed real'; she was 'three-dimensional from the start' (103). This production of realness is an effect of a glance that Oryx gives to the camera: 'Then she looked over her shoulder and right into the eyes of the viewer – right into Jimmy's eyes, into the secret person inside him. *I see you*, that look said. *I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want*' (104; emphasis in original). In this moment, Jimmy feels confronted by Oryx's look. He describes how her look causes him to feel for the first time that what he was doing was wrong: 'Before, it had always been entertainment, or else far beyond his control, but now he felt culpable' (104). From this first glimpse of Oryx, Jimmy is consumed throughout the novel with the desire to know the truth about her – with going beneath the surface of the printout and having an answer to who she is really.

When Jimmy meets Oryx many years later in Crake's lab and becomes her lover, he finally has the chance, the 'pure bliss' and 'pure terror', of experiencing her as 'no longer merely an image' but 'real, three-dimensional'

(362–3). However, the question of who the real Oryx is confounds Jimmy. Despite his constant questioning of her about her past, he struggles to piece together a coherent picture of who she is. Rehearsing the various narratives he has collected about her, Jimmy describes the many possibilities of Oryx:

Enter Oryx as a young girl on a kiddie-porn site, flowers in her hair, whipped cream on her chin; or, Enter Oryx as a teenage news item, sprung from a pervert's garage; or, Enter Oryx, stark naked and pedagogical in the Craker's inner sanctum; or, Enter Oryx, towel around her hair, emerging from the shower; or, Enter Oryx, in a pewter-grey silk pantsuit and demure half-high heels, carrying a briefcase, the image of a professional Compound globewise saleswoman? Which of these will it be, and how can he ever be sure there's a line connecting the first to the last? Was there only one Oryx, or was she a legion? (361–2; emphasis in original)

Staging Oryx in this way, Jimmy cannot quite settle on the real version. In his drama, she is constantly appearing in a different costume, as a different Oryx. Testing the different versions of Oryx, he is unable to find the one Oryx on which to anchor her various characters; she dissolves into artifice.

It is not only that Jimmy lacks the ability to piece Oryx together, but that Oryx herself actively refuses to give Jimmy the kind of coherent narrative that he desires – she refuses to be any of the characters through which he aims to define her. Eager as he is to identify her as the girl he sees in the kiddie porn, she responds by explaining that she does not think it is her. As Jimmy pushes her to identify with the child that she was in the porn film, asking her what she was thinking while making the films, Oryx resists his question, explaining that maybe she was not thinking anything at all. Unsatisfied, Jimmy pushes her and Oryx, exasperated, cries out: "You want me to pretend? You want me to make something up?" (105). Refusing to fill in the blanks in Jimmy's narrative, Oryx will not provide any depth to the image of herself as a child in a porn film. In this refusal, Oryx raises questions about the relationship

between the image and the real woman who is supposedly behind the (highly sexualized and fetishized) image.

This is a reading that could be pursued through a history of feminist theory, particularly in relation to the question of femininity as masquerade (see Riviere, 1966; Doane, 1982; Butler, 1990). Joan Riviere theorizes 'womanliness' as a kind of mask: there is no difference between 'genuine womanliness' and the 'masquerade'; 'they are the same thing' (1966: 213). This, for Riviere, is a strategy for keeping femininity at a distance – a survival strategy for women who are over-positioned by patriarchal imaginings. This resistance functions, explains Mary Ann Doane, 'in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as a presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic' (1982: 81–2). Oryx refuses to connect the image that Jimmy has of her with a coherent identity; 'the more we learn about Oryx, the less real she becomes' (Tolan, 2007: 286). She doubts even that the image he so feverishly carries around with him is her at all. Oryx threatens Jimmy's viewing of the image through challenging his need to believe that she is really there – his anxiety over needing to know her 'for real' is a product of her refusal to claim an allegiance to the image that is supposedly of her. It is integral to consider the process by which Jimmy imagines Oryx will move beyond the image and be real. Namely, he obsessively desires that she tell her story. Jimmy asks Oryx again and again for a narrative of her life to supposedly bring, through words, some depth to the image that he has of her. Indeed, he seems to believe that her words – her constructed narrative – will fill in the empty image that he has of her.

Jimmy's desire to hear Oryx's story and his belief that her narrative will tell him something real about her mirror some early questions in feminist literary critique, namely the question of women and authorship, or the relationship between writing and women's authentic voice (see Gilbert and Gubar, 1979). Similar to how Jimmy repeatedly desires Oryx to narrate her story, with the

belief that her narrative will fill in the image that he has of her, bringing him closer to her truth, a history of feminist literary critique has placed critical value on women speaking back to the images that claimed to express the truth of woman. In their seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that women 'must escape just those male texts which deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them' (1979: 13). Women writing themselves into literature became an important challenge to a canon in which women were frequently discussed, but rarely given the opportunity to narrate their lives in their words. Adrienne Rich describes how the woman writer is confronted with an abundance of fiction about her, so that, 'over and over in the "words" masculine persuasive force" of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men' (1972: 21). In this, the woman writer is an important counterpoint to these images by men – it is she who might write something truer about women.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* raises the question through the figure of Shakespeare's sister. Addressing the question of whether a female Shakespeare or female genius could exist, Woolf examines the way society would not have encouraged nor supported Judith Shakespeare in her pursuits as an author. Woolf argues that there are no great women authors not because women cannot be great writers but because writing was gendered male – making it difficult for women to pursue writing or for women's writing to be included in literary history. Her argument is a well-repeated one, but I want to take pause to consider how Woolf relies on storytelling to construct her argument. To counter the 'fact' that there had been no great women writers, Woolf creates a fictional story and a fictional woman, since, as she puts it, 'facts are so hard to come by' (2001: 39). What Woolf's use of storytelling as a rhetorical device reveals is the emphasis on

the importance of rewriting or writing anew the stories that had already been told about women and about what women were and could do.

Rich describes this process as 're-vision' – 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction' (1972: 18). She emphasizes that women have 'another story' to tell about themselves – they must 'no longer be primarily mothers and muses for men: we have our own work cut out for us' (1972: 25). Hélène Cixous explains that writing will bring back a materiality to women that has been denied her in masculine-defined narratives; writing will 'give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal' (1976: 880). Cixous famously begins 'The Laugh of Medusa' with the sentence: 'I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*' (1976: 875; emphasis in original). What I mean to draw attention to here is the relationship that has historically been set up in feminist literary criticism between storytelling and what it accomplishes – that underneath the expressed demands for women to re-vision and write is a belief that if women narrate their stories they will be *doing* something. This, for Rich, is an 'act of survival', as she explains that until women 'understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves' (1972: 18). In this view, there is something revolutionary about women writing – the relationship between textual authority and wider claims to subjectivity are clearly interwoven.

Oryx's refusal to narrate her story, her refusal of survival through narrative construction, might then be read as a bleak pronouncement by Atwood on the contemporary state of feminism. If the woman writer has historically been envisioned in feminism as being able to offer a resistance to the images of women produced by men, then Oryx's refusals to fill in Jimmy's images of her seemingly move away from a feminist belief in the importance of women narrating their lives. *Oryx and Crake* has indeed been read

as a shift in Atwood's literary preoccupations; with a male narrator, the novel turns away from Atwood's sustained commitment to using first-person narrative to explore 'female imagination, consciousness and creativity' (Showalter, 2003:35). Previous to *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood's novels were always narrated by a woman and frequently dealt with the theme of 're-vision' (see Grace, 1994; Howells, 1994; McWilliams, 2009; Rao, 1994). The commitment to exploring the challenges faced by women authors and artists is evidenced not only in Atwood's fiction, notably in *Cat's Eye* (1988) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000), but also in her non-fiction essays 'The Curse of Eve' (1976) and 'Paradoxes and Dilemmas: The Woman as Writer' (1976). Owing to this preoccupation, Atwood's work has been given sustained attention through the frame of gender and genre (see Nicholson, 1994; Nischik, 2009; McWilliams, 2009). Often analysed in relation to the question of gender and autobiography, Atwood's writing of female subjectivity is seen to examine and question the limits of the possibility of writing the self (Grace, 1994; Howells, 1994; McWilliams, 2009; Tolan, 2007). Sherill Grace describes Atwood's writing of the gendered self as 'one that denies logical categories and teleological order and presents instead a cyclical, iterative, layered narrative that invites exploration rather than arrival, one that reveals gaps instead of disguising them in a seamless narrative' (1994: 202). Howells similarly describes how *Cat's Eye* exposes the limits of autobiography, drawing attention to the artifice of construction, so that the 'subject herself is always outside, in excess, beyond the figurations of language' (1994: 216). In Atwood's re-vision of the genre of autobiography, gender becomes a primary way through which she criticizes and reworks the question of the production of the subject through writing.

In *Oryx and Crake*, the fractured and multiple nature of Oryx might be read as an extension of this commitment to narrating subjectivity as necessarily incomplete and

unfinished – a continuation of Atwood’s preoccupation with the relationship between narrative and subjectivity (Tolan, 2007: 286). However, as Fiona Tolan points out, *Oryx and Crake* has thus far not been read in the same vein as much existing Atwood criticism (2007: 276). The absence of a female narrator in *Oryx and Crake*, or Atwood’s ‘appropriation of a masculine narrative voice’, has been read as a move away from ‘feminist or female-centred sympathies’ (Tolan, 2007: 276). Instead of being concerned with feminism, the novel has been read as: a shift from ‘feminist and postfeminist’ concerns to ‘humanist and posthumanist concerns’ (Bouson, 2010: 125); a product of post-9/11 fears of terrorism rather than a feminist response to the question of women and authorship (Ingersoll, 2004); or as a novel in which gender does not play a crucial role (Nischik, 2009). Elaine Showalter strangely describes this shift through audience, explaining that ‘*Oryx and Crake* may finally win [Atwood] a wide male readership’, jokingly suggesting that the action of the novel and the protagonist’s ‘American male’ characteristics might appeal to the ‘male undergraduates who groaned and grimaced over *The Handmaid’s Tale*’ (2003: 35). If Atwood’s previous female protagonists questioned and re-visioned the terms of genre, notably autobiography, *Oryx* seems to move Atwood away from these concerns by refusing to tell her story.

Atwood’s novel is in part described as uninterested in and uninteresting to feminism precisely because it is not an exploration of subjectivity through a female narrator. In this, Atwood’s supposed turn away from feminism might be read alongside a sentiment that feminism itself has turned away from literature – where both of these turns define feminism’s relationship to literature through a focus on the question of women and writing. In a review essay in 2007, Elizabeth Hiscox and Cynthia Hogue raised the ‘truism’ that feminist literary studies is *passé*: ‘Everyone has moved, as it were, *on*’ (168; emphasis in original). In 1998 Susan Gubar used the metaphor of ‘disease’ to

describe her ‘apprehension about the state of feminist literary criticism’ (880) and, ten years later, in 2008, Toril Moi described feminist theory as existing in an aesthetic *impasse* (p. 259). Gubar and Moi’s pronouncements are striking not least because both theorists are held as foundational thinkers in the field of Western feminist literary criticism, with their books *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979, co-edited with Sandra Gilbert) and *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), respectively. Gubar’s argument about the waning of feminist literary criticism mirrors many ‘apocalyptic’ fears about feminism voiced at the turn of the century (Wiegman, 2000; Adkins, 2004) and rests on an analysis of how developments in the field of feminist theory have been a ‘hazard to the vitality of feminist literary studies’ (1998: 880). Tracing the so-called dismantling of the category woman by poststructuralist and critical race theorists, Gubar argues that such ‘[s]elf-reflexive theorizing about criticism undermined the term *women* upon which feminist literary practice previously depended’ (1998: 886; emphasis in original). This perspective is shared by Moi in similar language, albeit ten years on. She argues that, despite feminist theory’s preoccupation in the 1980s with questions of women and the production of art, the interest in this question has waned; ‘feminist theory stopped being concerned with women and writing’ (2008: 261). In a manner similar to Gubar’s, Moi links the shift away from literature in feminism, and from aesthetics more generally, to the growing difficulty in the 1990s of speaking about women ‘except in inverted commas’ (2008: 263).

The rhetorical moves that both Gubar and Moi employ to argue that there is something lost in contemporary feminism have been criticized for the way that they discipline feminism as a field and make claims about feminism’s proper subject (see Wiegman, 1999; Hemmings, 2011). Robyn Wiegman responds specifically to Gubar’s argument, suggesting that Gubar demands a unified version of feminism, a demand which not only ‘sacrifices the complexities and discontinuities of feminism’s

institutional history for a plot formula that denigrates academic feminism's internal conflict' but also refuses to consider feminism's 'dynamic mobile and historically transforming intellectual and political formation in positive terms' (1999: 366). While Wiegman is critical of the way in which Gubar's argument limits feminism as a knowledge project, she makes no claims on the future of the field of feminist literary criticism. Instead, for her, '[t]he perspective and priority of literary study cannot provide for academic feminism the point of view needed to negotiate the terrain of its own contemporary moment' (1999: 374). Wiegman does not aim to resuscitate feminist literary criticism, as, she argues, a return to feminist literary criticism is a dangerous return to disciplinarity, to disciplining feminism, and a retreat from 'new knowledges and knowledge formations' (1999: 376). In other words, critiquing Gubar's negative pronouncements on the internal conflict over the category woman in feminism, Wiegman links feminist literary criticism itself to the stable identity of woman and a disciplinary past that cannot be part of the present or future of feminism.

This chapter is positioned in the wake of these concerns and aims to challenge the notion that feminist literary criticism has no place in contemporary feminism. It attempts to build on a foundation of feminist literary criticism without arguing for a return to origins or disciplines. Foundational interests in the production of woman through narrative contained the conviction that narratives accomplished work – that how subjects were represented in narrative could not be separated from the lived experience of those subjectivities. Feminist calls for women to write their stories were invested in the power of narrative to change the world. The exploration of narrative and narrative production remains an integral site of contemporary feminist critical intervention. While the questions of women and writing, femaleness and narrative voice or women and literary representation may not be so central to contemporary feminist

theory, what remains is what has always been a primary concern in this drive to question, critique and produce narratives of women in feminism – namely a belief in the critical value of analysing the production of stories.

WHAT WORLDS MAKE STORIES

Oryx might act as a bridge between concerns with the relationship between women and writing and questions about subjects and objects, theorists and texts, criticism and world-building. While she turns away from the promise of narrating the self she does not turn away from the importance of interrogating storytelling. I read Oryx's refusal of survival through narrative as a refusal to invest narrative with a saving power. However, while she refuses to tell her story, she does not so much turn away from the question of narrative and subjectivity but, as I will argue, critically explores this investment in narrative. I can think of no better teacher from whom to learn that stories matter than Donna Haraway. From her first insistence in 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs' (1985) that myths do real work, she has always argued for the way that 'worlding' is in part an effect of narrative. Her inventive word play, her colourful figurations and her absolute commitment to making up words when the right ones just do not seem to exist is a testament to the power of wording as worlding. British social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern argues that '[i]t matters what ideas we use to think other ideas' (1992: 10), and Haraway turns this into a 'practice of feminist speculative fabulation in the scholarly mode', arguing that '[i]t matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with [...] It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories' (2012). In Haraway's conception, stories matter precisely because it is through stories that we are able to tell other stories; stories are important in part because of the other stories that they make possible.

Haraway's proclamation that stories matter is an invitation to think through what ideas, stories and shapes we, as theorists, take through which to think other ideas, shapes and stories. I want to route this point and the questions it raises through *Oryx and Crake* and in dialogue with three recent feminist texts: Clare Hemmings' *Why Stories Matter* (2011), Lynne Pearce's *The Rhetorics of Feminism* (2004) and Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons* (2012). Drawing on these three texts and a reading of *Oryx*, I will argue for a queer feminist approach to literary studies. This approach interrogates processes of meaning-making, is reflexive about the relationship between text and critic, considers the process through which literary objects and narrative both create and undo fields of thought and is both attached to and cautious about what literary criticism might do.

Despite *Oryx's* insistence that she never thinks about her past and 'doesn't care' (136), Jimmy persists in questioning *Oryx* about all of its minute details: 'He'd wanted to know whatever it was possible to know, about *Oryx*, about anywhere she'd been' (158). He pushes *Oryx* to recount how she was sold by her mother to a man, Uncle En – a sale that horrifies Jimmy, but which she describes plainly as 'the custom' in her village (138). Jimmy expresses rage and anger toward Uncle En, describing him as 'vermin', but *Oryx* instead recalls the sadness she felt when he died, describing how she 'cried and cried' (159). After Uncle En's death, *Oryx* is sold into the kiddie porn industry and stars in films such as the ones that Jimmy watched as a teenage boy. From the porn industry *Oryx* is purchased by a man in San Francisco and kept in his garage under the pretenses of being his maid. In the same way that Jimmy obsesses over the details about the porn industry and whether *Oryx* was raped, Jimmy pushes her about whether she was made to have sex with this man. *Oryx* responds with exasperation and asserts that she was never made to have sex in a garage. Jimmy, unsatisfied, pleads with *Oryx*

to tell him but she responds with a sigh, 'He was a kind man [...] He was rescuing young girls. He paid for my plane ticket [...] If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here. You should like him!' (371). Part of what angers Jimmy is that *Oryx* does not respond to her past in the way he expects her to – she refuses to attach the meanings to her past that he wants her to. At first Jimmy thinks that he 'understood her vagueness, her evasiveness', attributing it to her desire to shield her ugly past from him (132). He attempts to soothe her: "It's all right," he'd told her, stroking her hair. "None of it was your fault" (132). However, *Oryx* does not respond to this comforting, instead asking: 'None of what, Jimmy?' (132).

Oryx is an unsatisfying interviewee for Jimmy because she refuses to see the story of her past that Jimmy is creating as exclusively about her:

'Tell me just one thing,' he'd say, back when he was still Jimmy. 'Ask me a question,' she'd reply. So he would ask, and then she might say, 'I don't know. I've forgotten.' Or, 'I don't want to tell you that.' Or, 'Jimmy, you are so bad, it's not your business.' Once she'd said, 'You have a lot of pictures in your head Jimmy. Where did you get them? Why do you think they are pictures of me?' (132)

Not only does she respond to his questions with evasive ambivalence and sometimes outright refusals, *Oryx* refuses to remain the object of inquiry. She constantly turns the questions back on him – asking him why he believes his story is about her at all, which leads Jimmy to speculate that 'her entire past – everything she'd told him – was his own invention' (371). When Jimmy insists that *Oryx* was the girl that he saw in the porn film as a teenager, *Oryx* relents at one point, explaining: 'It might be me. Maybe it is. Would that make you happy Jimmy?' (105). Jimmy explains to *Oryx* that he does not 'buy' her 'sweetness and acceptance and crap' of her past, to which *Oryx* responds, 'what is it that you would like to buy instead?' (167). In conversations in which

Jimmy tries to understand her, Oryx continually answers him by foregrounding his own subjectivity, by calling him out on his own investments – by answering his questions about her with questions about him. She continuously draws his attention to the fact that he is demanding a certain story about her, attached to a certain narrative already. Again and again, she highlights how his desire to know her might be better understood as being about him: “You don’t understand me, Jimmy.” “But I want to.” “Do you?” (371).

Through, and not despite, her resistance to narrating her story, Oryx demonstrates her commitment to the power of narrative production. This interest in the question of the worlding power of narrative is a vital strand of feminist research, particularly in recent self-reflexive feminist analyses of the field imaginary. In *Why Stories Matter*, Clare Hemmings argues for the necessity of considering storytelling in feminism, focusing in particular on questioning the uniformity of narratives of Western feminism’s history, despite the field’s complexity (2011: 3). The foundations of Hemmings’ argument rest on the belief that stories ‘matter’; ‘they are not neutral and they do not ask us to remain neutral’ (2011: 5). She analyses the narratives that feminism tells about itself, suggesting that these are not merely stories, but that they shape, enable and discipline feminism as a field. Importantly, Hemmings’ version of transformative feminism relies on the exploration of feminism at the level of its ‘political grammar’ (2011: 3) – it is at the level of citation tactics and textual affect. While not a literary theory, it is an invitation to consider how narratives in feminism structure the future possibilities of the discipline. Moreover, it is an exploration of how unpredictable futures might depend on re-narrating the past. This critical exploration of how narratives function in feminism is in part about turning attention to the stories that seemingly act as the ground upon which the real argument is then made. Sara Ahmed (2008), in her analysis of the frequent grounding of feminism as anti-biological, similarly

argues that stories do work. Tracing through a history of complex feminist engagements with biology, Ahmed makes it difficult to see how feminism could easily be characterized as anti-biological (2008: 27–31). She thus explicates that such claims function in a different way – namely as a ‘speech act that works by constructing an “imaginary prohibition”, which is then taken as foundational to a given speaking or intellectual community’ (2008: 31). This narrative works to establish a foundation for the rebellious theorist, who becomes constructed as ‘embarking on a heroic and lonely struggle against the collective prohibitions of past feminisms’ (2008: 32). The narrative of feminism as anti-biological then needs to be engaged with not only as false but as itself doing work – to disprove or merely challenge the narrative is to engage inadequately with how this narrative functions in feminist theory.

These interventions in feminist theorizing analyse the work that narrativization does in positioning contemporary theorists and consider how stories matter in shaping feminism as a field. They demonstrate a commitment to feminist analyses of narratives as worlding. Hemmings and Ahmed, similar to Oryx, focus on unpacking the effects of narrative rather than producing a truer version of events. Hemmings’ solution to the limited narratives of feminism is not to offer correctives to these narratives – indeed, this would be counter to her project. Hemmings explains that she does not want to write a ‘truer history’ but instead aims to analyse ‘the politics that produce and sustain one version of history as more true than another, despite the fact that we know that history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it’ (2011: 15–16). Similar to Hemmings’ insistence that ‘getting the story right’ does not address the function of storytelling itself, Oryx refuses to supplant Jimmy’s narrative with the ‘right’ one in the face of his overwhelming desire to produce the true version of Oryx. Jimmy collects the various narratives attached to Oryx, believing that these narratives hold the key to understanding her:

How long had it taken him to piece her together from the slivers of her he'd gathered and hoarded so carefully? There was Crake's story about her, and Jimmy's story about her as well, a more romantic version; and then there was her own story about herself, which was different from both, and not very romantic at all. Snowman rifles through these three stories in his head. There must once have been other versions of her: her mother's story, the story of the man who bought her, the story of the man who'd bought her after that, and the third man's story – the worst man of them all, the one in San Francisco, a pious bullshit artist; but Jimmy had never heard those. (132–3)

Despite Jimmy's recognition in the above extract of the multiplicities of narratives about Oryx, he refuses to give up hope that he can find the most true narrative – her authentic self. This is Oryx's challenge to Jimmy and Hemmings' challenge to feminism – not to narrate a better story, but to expose how stories work and what they both enable and foreclose.

Similarly, Lynne Pearce, in *The Rhetorics of Feminism*, explores how meaning is produced in feminist theory, focusing on the structure or rhetoric of feminist argument. In this, Pearce considers how meaning is a product of form just as much as content, so that how feminist theorists make their arguments is just as integral to the production of meaning as the arguments themselves. Pearce's work is driven in part by her concern with "agency" and *where*, exactly, "meaning" is produced in contemporary feminist cultural theorizing' (2004: 2; emphasis in original). This is mostly worked out through analyses of rhetorical styles in a wealth of feminist theorists from the past couple of decades. Pearce draws specific attention to the relationship between theorist and text, questioning how feminists and queer theorists use literary and cultural texts in their theorizing. Suggesting that literary and cultural theorists have not always 'been fully aware of *where* they are locating their meaning, or *how* they are using it', Pearce notes, for instance, that many theorists 'effectively find [their] meaning in [their] *reading* of that text, rather than in the informing discourses that have probably

been identified as [their] ostensible object of interest' (2004: 3; emphasis in original). For Pearce, this in itself is not a problem, but she calls for a certain awareness of this relationship – she asks theorists to consider where their meaning comes from.

For example, in a section on queer reading practices, Pearce turns to Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick to analyse how their narrativization of literary texts is an integral part of their queer practice, arguing that such attention to queer storytelling has been largely overlooked. Pearce reads Butler's reading of Willa Cather to argue that Butler's renarrativization of *My Antonia* (1987) exemplifies the instability of 'text/reader agency that is endemic to queer criticism' (2004: 181). Through her tracing of Butler's skill in usurping Cather's narrator but absenting herself as critic, Pearce suggests that Butler produces an analysis, a reading of *My Antonia*, in which the text seemingly tells '*its own* "queer story"' (2004: 182; emphasis in original). Pearce's point is that queerness is an effect not only of the content of Butler's argument but also its construction. The renarrativization of the texts is central to the arguments that these theorists pursue, so that 'queer texts depend upon the (re)construction of queer stories' (Pearce, 2004: 180). This emphasis on the importance of analysing what it is that stories do and what kinds of subjectivities, histories and desires are produced through narrative is a reflective turn away from literary and cultural objects themselves and a turn towards more careful consideration of what it is that we, as theorists, make of them. It expands the remit of feminist literary analysis to include the way that theorizing is a form of narrative construction so that narrative analysis is an important aspect of critical theory more generally.

Pearce's work makes it clear that literary tools of analysis can usefully extend beyond fictional narrative analysis to, for example, the illumination of the structure of feminist arguments. This work links the literary with the theoretical, questioning any clear distinctions

or separations between literary stories and critical theory, making feminist literary studies of wider applicability to critical theory more generally. Moreover, it is an argument for the continued necessity of considering processes of meaning-making in feminist theory. It is this process of narrative meaning-making that Oryx continually asks Jimmy to reflect upon. Jimmy believes that if he can just get the story right, he will finally come to an understanding of Oryx and possibly be able to come to terms with her past. Oryx's questioning of Jimmy reveals her suspicion that his desire to get the story right is linked to the promise that knowing her story will somehow have an effect outside of the knowledge itself. Or, in other words, the narrative promises something for Jimmy that goes beyond apprehending the story. What desires he attaches to the knowledge of her past are unclear, but his dissatisfaction with Oryx's story and his persistent search for the one true version reveals that the promise of the story is linked to some other effect that is outside of the story itself. Oryx avoids narrating her life in the terms that Jimmy lays out for her, instead demanding that he realize his own investments in her as an object that he might produce meaning out of.

Along with Pearce's call for feminists to reflect further on the relationships between objects of knowledge and theoretical production, an exploration of the investment in objects and categories is part of the focus of Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons*. Through an analysis of what she describes as the 'field imaginary of identity knowledges', the text furthers Wiegman's ongoing exploration of the need to be reflexive as critical thinkers about the desires and attachments that we bring to theorizing (see Wiegman, 2007; 2010). Similar to both Pearce and Hemmings, Wiegman's work interrogates feminism as a mode of theorizing and, importantly, of narrative. In her consideration of the field of Women's and Gender Studies in the United States, Wiegman analyses the shift from 'woman' as feminism's object of analysis to 'gender' (2012: 89). She argues that 'the movement from one object of study or analytic

to another is a powerful means for managing inadequacy and loss' (2012: 89). What Wiegman suggests is that a move to 'gender' reflects more than its being a more appropriate category of analysis: this shift in object relations itself is invested with a promise, 'the promise to sustain the relationship to the world that the word *woman* once stood for' (2012: 89; emphasis in original). In other words, the power of gender is not so much its 'capacity to explain, revise, and settle everything that scholars have used or want to use it to do' but instead has something to do with 'the aspiration attached to it' (Wiegman, 2012: 90).

In a manner similar to Pearce's consideration of the under-theorized relationship between feminist theorists and their cultural and literary objects, Wiegman turns to the objects of feminism as a field to consider how they are invested with hope that goes beyond the categories themselves – hope that can be transferred to another category of analysis without dissipating. This is an exploration of the kinds of desires that are attached not to specific categories or objects of study but to theory and analysis itself. Moreover, it is again an insistence on interrogating the production of narratives and theory's relationship to its objects of analysis. Oryx's insistence that Jimmy does not necessarily want to hear her story, that the desires he has invested in this story are bigger than the story itself, reflects Wiegman's insistence that feminism as a field is shaped by an investment in categories of analysis or a commitment to the idea that finding the right object will transform the world.

At the same time as Oryx refuses to voice her narrative, thus leading to her potentially unsatisfying fractured or enigmatic nature as a character, she does more than symbolize a future in which women's narratives are silenced. Similarly, the supposed lack of attention in recent feminist scholarship to the question of women and writing does not necessitate a feminist turn away from literature. More than an absence or a silence, Oryx challenges the desires and attachments that

Jimmy brings to her life story. Oryx asks Jimmy to be reflexive about what he thinks he is getting from narrating her life and, in this way, Oryx interrogates not only the story that Jimmy aims to produce but everything that is invested in the process of narrative itself. Oryx not only argues with Jimmy about the content of his narrative of her life but, more interestingly, she asks him to reflect on why he wants to narrate her life, how this narrative works to construct him and what he expects telling this narrative, or having it, will do. In this way, Oryx frames the question of why stories matter in a different way from that of, perhaps, Rich or Cixous. While there may be less interest in contemporary feminism in the worlding power of women narrating their stories, what continues is critical work that unpacks the processes and effects of narrative as well as the desires they contain. This is, I would suggest, not a turn away from storytelling or aesthetics but instead an insistence on exploring narrative production in a wider sense – to borrow Haraway's terminology, both Oryx and many contemporary feminists are committed to careful considerations of and reflections on how stories 'world'.

CONCLUSION

Again and again in *Oryx and Crake*, and particularly in the relationship between Jimmy and Oryx, the processes and effects of storytelling are explored. There is no necessarily transformative or revolutionary quality given to narrative – particularly to Oryx's narrative. Instead, Oryx resists the demands to narrate her life. Despite the temptation to read this as Atwood turning away from feminist concerns and a reflection of feminism's own supposed turn away from the literary, I have argued that the study of, analysis of, production of and reflection on narrative and storytelling in both *Oryx and Crake* and contemporary feminism continue to be crucially implicated in feminist theory's wider projects. To be sure, this is a shift away from a

belief in the inherent power of women narrating their lives – Oryx has no faith that narrating her story will accomplish anything. However, far from moving away from the importance of narrative production and critique, Oryx remains entirely committed to the critique and exploration of the power of storytelling. Her refusals to narrate her story contain critical reflections on and questions about the role of narrative and the desires that might be attached to it. For feminist literary critique to be framed primarily through the question of women and writing is to miss the multiple sites in which questions of narrative, textual production, rhetoric and storytelling have been and continue to be integral sites of feminist debate and theoretical production. This is not as a turn away from storytelling or literature as an arena of feminist theory. It is an argument for linking foundational feminist literary concerns to a critical turn in feminist theory towards exploring the political grammar, rhetorical structure and object relations of feminism. Literary production and narrative analysis remain crucial arenas of feminist concern and integral sites of analysis. Oryx's challenges to Jimmy's storytelling draw out in expansive ways the questions that feminist literary critics have perhaps always been asking: What do stories do? How do they work? Why do they matter? Oryx highlights questions that seem pressing in contemporary feminist theorizing – namely a concern with how objects, texts and narratives work. In this mode of feminist analysis, the aim might not be to survive through narrative construction, but might be to think through the very promise of survival that is both constructed by and a construction of narrative.

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On Maternal Listening: Experiments in Sound and the Mother–Daughter Relation in Todd Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*

Amber Jacobs

The issues that I tackle in this chapter turn around the question of theorizing and representing alternative spaces and modes of exchange and mediation between mother and daughter that are not reducible to Oedipal models. My underlying project is for psychoanalysis to function in a different way for feminism – a way that would finally move on from its persistent focus on identifying the symptoms surrounding the mother and the daughter and their exclusion from the symbolic order – a way that could move on from repeatedly producing litanies of pathologies associated with needing the mother, fearing her, blaming her, desiring her, loving her, hating her and all the complex narcissistic border-line neurotic and psychotic processes and phantasies associated to the highly cathected, idealized and denigrated maternal body. The voluminous and rich material – clinical, sociological, literary, visual and so on – that describes the complex symptoms pertaining to the mother and the daughter in a culture that can only theorize the paternal genealogy and sequesters the mother and the

daughter to a non-place outside symbolic agency is a premise and a situation that this chapter hopes to both subvert and move beyond.¹

Amongst the most memorable and disturbing representations of a conflicted and passionate mother–daughter relationship in western cultural production is that of Mildred Pierce and her daughter Veda, created by James Cain in his 1943 novel, which was adapted first for cinema by Michael Curtiz in the hybrid film noir/melodrama of 1945 and, most recently, for television in the 2011 HBO mini-series by Todd Haynes.

I will be arguing that the contemporary version of *Mildred Pierce* by Todd Haynes (2011) marks a significant break with dominant modes of representing the mother and daughter – and by implication and extension is innovative in its representation of female subjectivities. Haynes' creation, whilst manifestly appearing as if it reproduces a relentlessly poisonous, pathological and doomed relation between Mildred and Veda, in fact employs formal techniques that completely

change the terms and structure of this mother–daughter relation and our capacities and potential to read and receive them differently.

I will concentrate on Haynes' use of sound – more precisely, the particular way he uses the female musician, her piano playing and her singing voice – in his version of *Mildred Pierce* as a method to carve out a specific psychic space between mother and daughter. My argument is that, in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*, the exploration of and play with the material properties of sound (that exceeds the function of relaying narrative content and meaning) constructs a psychic architecture specific to the mother–daughter relationship. This innovative treatment of the mother–daughter relation has political and philosophical value for feminist thought and practice, and for contemporary visual culture. Haynes' achievement, as I will show, is in transforming *Mildred Pierce* into a work that, to my mind, answers Luce Irigaray's call for the structural transformation of the mother–daughter relationship.² This transformation is effected completely through formal processes and techniques employed with sound.

The content Haynes renders in his *Mildred Pierce* is meticulously faithful to James Cain's novel – he does not subvert the content in the way that Michael Curtiz did in his famous Hollywood film noir version.³ The reappearance of *Mildred Pierce* in 2011, however – while claiming to be a 'loyal' return to the original literary text (see Hastie 2011) – manages, via the specific material properties of the audio-visual medium, to do something quite different, politically, with this story. Haynes transforms *Mildred Pierce* into a feminist work that, I think, completely breaks with the pessimism of Lacanian film theory and psychoanalytic feminism regarding the apparently bleak possibilities of representing femininity outside the concepts of objectification, symptom and lack.⁴

I will also be suggesting that recent feminist and queer interventions into psychoanalysis, which have been in circulation in the last decade or so, can be seen as a significant

context or theoretical ground that make possible and intelligible the restructuring of the mother–daughter relation that, I contend, emerges in Haynes' contemporary version of *Mildred Pierce*.

Certainly, both psychoanalysis and feminism have paid close attention to the mother–daughter bond on registers of both the psychic and the socio-cultural. Attention to the mother–daughter relation in both psychoanalytic clinical case histories and cultural representation have led to repeated accounts of its apparent entrenched pathologies. Such accounts invariably lead either to arguing for the necessity of a rescuing paternal intervention to break up the psychically dangerous dyadic proximity or to the adoption of an Irigarayan approach that identifies the mother–daughter relation as radically written out of the western cultural imaginary and postulated as the potential restorative relationship capable of saving women from being reduced to 'ontological dereliction'⁵ by the patriarchal economies. Denigration and pathologization on the one hand and idealization and utopian wish fulfillment on the other – there is a persistent schizoid logic that dominates theoretical work on the mother–daughter relation that, in my view, has led to something of an impasse.⁶

Post-Lacanian feminist theory, pioneered by Luce Irigaray, put much store in the mother–daughter relation as the site where work could be done that would disrupt and recreate the terms of the dominant Oedipal symbolic. No longer would the mother–daughter relation be banished and abandoned outside the terms of symbolic mediation – left to collapse into the endless symptoms of a perverse, chaotic and unstructured proximity. In the trail of Irigarayan thought, the mother–daughter relation began to be theorized and reread as having always been a symbolic structure with an inherent mediating function that did *not* depend upon the Lacanian paternal third term as its heroic triangulating savior. That is to say, in Lacanian formulations the only possibility of achieving

a mediated space between mother and daughter allowing for thought and symbolism was via the third term represented by the paternal intervention. The paternal third term would then produce the space between mother and daughter and would thus prevent collapse, merging and undifferentiation – which in Freudian and Lacanian models characterize the so called pre-oedipal mother–daughter relation. Once this paternal interruption had produced a space between the mother and daughter (in these models) the daughter would then achieve the capacity to understand her own so-called ‘lack’ in terms of her mother’s lack, blame her for her castrated state and turn to the father to achieve a relation to the symbolic. In this Oedipal/castration models the mother–daughter relation is theorized as either merged pathologically or organized around the daughter’s turn away from and rejection of the mother after the paternal triangulation is achieved. It was this particular psychoanalytic model, in which the mother–daughter relation can only be sequestered outside the symbolic as psychotically undifferentiated or characterized by rejection and hate, that feminist theory has been working successfully to subvert.

The first decade of the millennium saw a wave of post-Lacanian interventions that posited alternative models of the symbolic that theorized structural mediation for bonds that were not reducible to the Oedipal/castration model. In the vein of Irigaray’s placental economy (Irigaray, 1985), other models began to emerge that identified mediating functions and processes linked to the maternal – and in so doing refused the matricidal terms of the dominant symbolic order⁷ – such as Juliet Mitchell’s Law-of-the-Mother (Mitchell, 2000), Bracha Ettinger’s matrixial economy (Ettinger, 2005) and my own theorization of the matricidal law and the function of ‘metis’ (Jacobs, 2007; 2009). All of these theories, in different ways, attempted to postulate a symbolic system of which the maternal was a generative and structuring part.

There began to emerge a rich field of post-patriarchal theories of the symbolic that could serve as a viable resource to make redundant the obdurate Lacanian dogma that the symbolic was impervious to change. These feminist and queer interventions into psychoanalysis were – to my mind – supposed to open the way for an expanded and transformed psychoanalytic theory that did not depend upon a rigid conceptualization of Oedipalization or the Name-of-the-Father as a condition of subjectivity and culture. Instead, the new models were based upon a premise of a porous and mutable symbolic where the relations between psychic and social were intertwined in a network of mutual dynamic exchange – neither preceding the other nor being the first cause.⁸

In this climate of post-Oedipal ontologies or extra-Oedipal symbolics, the impasse that ossified around the repeated schizoid discourses concerning the mother–daughter relation had the potential to change – as did the structural representation of a myriad of relations and socialities previously written out of, pathologized or sequestered outside symbolic mediation and made synonymous (by psychoanalysis) with the unintelligible and/or the psychotic (for an in-depth discussion of this point see Butler, 2004: 102–31).

The significant and growing field of theoretical works that account for and describe modes of exchange and sociality that function according to different laws, unconscious prohibitions and mediating mechanisms from that of the phallic binarism associated with western patriarchies means that it is increasingly possible now to receive cultural production differently. I want to suggest here that this move within philosophical debates in feminist and queer theory can be traced in newly inflected cultural forms and in relation to significant interventions into the ways in which mothers and daughters (and thus by extension) constructions femininities are able to be represented in our cultural imaginary. That is to say, I suggest that there is a concomitant emergence in contemporary mainstream cultural production for previously

foreclosed meanings, structures and messages to be heard, seen and known.

Todd Haynes' 2011 television version of the text of *Mildred Pierce* is an exemplary instance of breaking through the pessimism associated with the long tradition of Lacanian influenced feminist theory regarding the possibilities in theorizing and representing femininities and the maternal without resource to the indexes of castration and matricide.⁹ Although the same claim cannot be made for Cain's original novel or the classic 1945 film adaptation by Curtiz, both of these are of course the crucial and rich material out of which Haynes renders his many-layered transformation of *Mildred Pierce*.

Critical work on Todd Haynes' filmmaking has repeatedly drawn attention to his 'signature' techniques of disrupting and refusing spectator identification processes via formal experimentation with cinematic space, the long slow wide angle shot and excessive framing devices (Doane, 2004). Associated with 'new queer cinema' (Aaron, 2004), Haynes' play with and subversion of genre, along with his striking distancing techniques, have also been seen as an example of a post-modern or post-structuralist cinema concerned with drawing attention to the processes of constructing meaning and disrupting hegemonic representations and norms.

Haynes' interest in classical Hollywood 1940s melodrama and the feminist film theory it generated led him to make what he termed his own 'women's' films', such as *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1988), *Safe* (1995) and *Far From Heaven* (2002), which he described as his 'sisterhood of films; stories about women with the imprint of feminism at their core' (Haynes, 2003: x). While the 1940s melodrama genre addressed a female audience and famously oscillated between subversion and conservative restriction regarding the position of women (socially and psychosexually),¹⁰ Haynes' play with this genre allowed him to use it as a template, adding to it the insights of contemporary deconstructive feminist,

queer and post-colonial critique. Certainly the critical reception of Haynes' 'sisterhood of films' has noted the important ways in which Haynes reworks the 'woman's film' to engage with the specificity of contemporary culture (Morrison, 2007). The turn to *Mildred Pierce* is consistent with this trajectory. *Mildred Pierce* is the story of a divorced single mother struggling to provide for her two daughters in 1930s Los Angeles during the great depression. The story charts Mildred's transformation from domestic poverty to financial success. Starting with a side business of selling cakes and pies to neighbors, Mildred ends up running three busy restaurants while negotiating an intense and difficult relation with her older daughter, the tragic death of her younger daughter and a doom-filled love affair with a parasitical society man. Cain's novel allows Haynes to continue his interest in the domestic 'woman's story' while also using Cain's gritty depiction of the great depression to engage with and echo the current economic climate stemming from the financial crisis of 2008.

While Haynes' *Mildred Pierce* can certainly be seen as a significant new addition to his 'sisterhood' of 'women's films' (Haynes, 2003: x) and offers an important meditation on the psychosocial vicissitudes of economic collapse, I suggest it does even more than this, in that the particular treatment of the maternal and the mother-daughter relation renders Haynes' mini-series part of a new generation of representations that tallies with Teresa de Lauretis' claims about the project of contemporary women's cinema:

The Project of women's cinema, therefore is no longer that of destroying or disrupting man-centred vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps or its repressed. The effort and challenge now are to effect another vision: to construct other objects and subjects of vision, and to formulate the conditions of representability of another social subject. (De Lauretis, 2007: 34)

For my argument, what is most significant about Haynes' return to the James Cain text is his concentration on the thread of the story

relating to Veda's musical talent and her career as a pianist and singer. This thread was omitted from the Michael Curtiz noir film. Almost all references to music that are central to the original story were marginalized in the Curtiz rendition and the associated question of creativity¹¹ that dominates the novel was dropped in favor of the whodunit murder plot that Curtiz added.

Robbed of her singing voice in the 1945 noir film, Veda becomes the typical femme fatale of classical cinema, the glamorous evil 'bad seed' whose cruel attitude towards her mother and all the men around her culminates in scheming betrayal and murder. Haynes' return to Veda's musical talent is highly significant, not only because it turns her into something more nuanced and complex than the pure evil femme fatale of noir but also, as I shall show, because it uses the daughter's singing voice as a way of signifying and structuring distance and proximity, sameness and difference, between mother and daughter.¹²

From the beginning, Mildred is aware of Veda's musical talent and is convinced that Veda 'has something special inside her' (Cain, 1985: 334). The continuous emphasis on Veda's interiority runs through the novel and Haynes' adaptation. Mildred and Veda's father, Bert, have various conversations in which Mildred insists on the talent that she knows Veda has inside of her – that 'something', the right 'stuff', a giftedness inside, that sets her apart (Cain, 1985: 334). Veda's piano playing is initially the manifestation or the evidence of this internal 'thing'. But this special internal gift, this creativity assigned to Veda, is in question throughout the story. The doubt about what is inside Veda is a central theme that carries a high emotional charge between mother and daughter. Following this theme, Haynes lingers significantly on the many scenes that depict the mother listening to the daughter's music. These scenes, which I will call the *maternal listening scenes*, are pivotal in the building up of Haynes' use of sound to construct a mediating and communicative space between

mother and daughter. These scenes experiment with sound in ways that I suggest allow for meanings to be produced and exchanged between mother and daughter that can neither be pinned to the narrative nor reduced to dominant psychoanalytic accounts of the mother–daughter relation.¹³

Veda does not discover her singing voice until the penultimate part of Haynes' series. It is not until she and Mildred are living apart following a violent row that Veda, in Mildred's absence, discovers she can sing. Up until this point she has been a pianist. The shift from piano to voice is structurally crucial and marks the moment at which the mother–daughter relationship dramatically shifts register.

On the manifest/narrative level Veda's move from piano to voice marks a breakdown of the mother–daughter relation. Once Veda becomes a singer she lives apart from Mildred and mother and daughter have no contact; she then betrays her mother by becoming sexually involved with her stepfather and leaves Los Angeles to pursue, successfully, her singing career in New York. Here one cannot fail to see a narrative structure emerge that begs for a classical psychoanalytic reading in which the daughter's capacity to find her voice – which in this Oedipal reading might be interpreted as becoming separate – depends upon her radical severance from her mother. In this type of psychoanalytic reading the move from piano to voice in *Mildred Pierce* would signify the necessary flight of the daughter from the mother that enables the daughter to enter into a trajectory or subjective position of her own and break away from the overbearing maternal clutch into symbolic functioning – represented by the voice and the attachment to the father figure. This reading would make central the idea that the daughter's voice is able to emerge only as a consequence of the severance from the mother: that is to say, its emergence depends completely upon a 'matricidal logic' (Jacobs, 2007: 58) common to psychoanalytic thought. Such a reading would see Veda's

move to Monty (her stepfather) as representing Oedipal triangulation concomitant with the emergence of the daughter's voice and the severance from the mother.¹⁴

Such a reading is consistent ideologically with a matricidal structure underlying the model of subjectivity echoed by Julia Kristeva in her much-quoted Lacanian-inspired mantra: 'matricide is our vital necessity, the sine qua non of our individuation' (Kristeva, 1989: 38). This reading is possible in its neat reductionism, however, only if the voice is read as a literary narrative device and thus interpreted metaphorically as signifying psychological separation/individualization. Such a reading fails to account for or examine the specificity of the medium of the voice *as sound*. The audio-visual medium can make use of *the voice as voice* and thus Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*, while remaining faithful to the structure and narrative content of Cain's novel, and thus leaving in place the possibility of the reductive matricidal reading just described, crucially moves beyond this reading and does something quite different with the daughter's voice. Instead of the voice signifying severance or autonomous individualization, the attention to the specific properties and medium of *the voice as sound* allows Veda's voice in *Mildred Pierce* to operate as a structure *between* mother and daughter; mediating both sameness and difference, connection and disconnection, and allowing for a mode of exchange between mother and daughter that does not function according to the matricidal logic just described.

In the maternal listening scenes, sound is designed and edited differently from its more conventional naturalistic use in all the other scenes in *Mildred Pierce*. When Veda is playing the piano or singing with her mother as either sole listener or among listeners, the sound of her piano playing or voice will repeatedly transgress the boundary between the internal diegesis and the extra-diegetic. The maternal listening scenes consistently depart from a use of sound that keeps naturalistic space intact. In its momentary collapsing

of the binary of the diegetic inside and outside, Veda's music necessarily draws attention to the audio-visual medium and its material organization. Through a variety of sound techniques, such as dramatic audio close-ups, the leaking of Veda's singing voice beyond the diegetic frame and various other methods that bring the audio into the center of the visual frame, Haynes, as I will show, draws attention to the dualistic nature of the sound film theorized by Michel Chion (1999).

One of Chion's famous observations was that dubbing and synchronization were the processes that inaugurated the sound film so that the sound of the voice on screen always already pays homage to both the severance/cutting apart of sound and image, and also the subsequent knitting of them together. The sound film is the end result of the attempt via synchronization to unify audio and visual, to nail down voices to bodies, sound to image, to 'present as a unity something that from the outset doesn't stick together' (1999: 125). The talking film marks the place of a scar, since by representing itself as a reconstituted totality it places all the more emphasis on the original non-coincidence (Chion, 1999: 126).

I suggest that this account of the birth of the sound film is strikingly evoked in the maternal listening scenes in *Mildred Pierce*. Crucially, the 'original non coincidence' (Chion, 1999: 126) of sound and image and the desire for an impossible unity or totality that Chion considers as inherent in the material organization of the audio-visual medium is exposed *only* in the scenes of mother listening to daughter sing or play the piano. In this way, Haynes evokes this radical material severance and the dream of unity that the voice on screen represents as the specific territory of the mother-daughter relationship. In this way, Veda's singing voice functions to carve out the paradoxical place between connection and disconnection, between audio and visual, between mother and daughter.

I am going to concentrate on just three of the maternal listening scenes in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce* to illustrate how, in different ways, this repeated exposure of the formal

non-coincidence of sound and image functions to evoke, represent and structure a specific paradoxical space between mother and daughter that allows for a different kind of communication from that represented on the manifest narrative level.

In the maternal listening scenes involving Veda's piano playing the sound is initially conveyed naturalistically so that the level/volume of sound is altered according to where Mildred is listening from. The listening shots are from Mildred's visual and audio point of view and thus there is a consistent adherence to conventional naturalistic sound design in these listening scenes that keeps the diegetic boundaries intact. In Part 4 of the mini-series there is an important maternal listening scene that serves as a bridge between this conventional use of sound and the abandoning of naturalism which reaches its climax when Veda's voice replaces her piano playing. In the following scene, it is the last time that Mildred listens to Veda play the piano – the last maternal listening scene before Veda becomes a singer. This is also the first scene where the discordant relation between audio and visual begins to be exposed and used as a method to suggest and generate a space of transmission between mother and daughter that cannot be evoked narratively.

Mildred opens the door to her house and immediately we hear that Veda is already at home playing the piano. As Mildred enters the room where Veda plays, the piano music is suitably loud and pervasive and we only see Veda's back as she plays. Then the piano music becomes more muted and distant as Mildred leaves the room and goes into her bedroom and lies on her bed, listening. The lingering shot of Mildred lying on her bed with a contented, blissful look on her face, with Veda's music from the other room wafting in – but muted in volume – depicts a depth of visual and audio space carved between Mildred and Veda. It is sound that produces the domestic architecture in this scene and momentarily carves out a habitable space in which we witness the co-existence

of mother and daughter. We are given a glimpse of a harmonious proximity and distance between mother and daughter that is captured by the simultaneous depiction of two rooms that they inhabit, these being represented via different mediums: Mildred in the visual field and Veda as audio field.

Veda's music infiltrates Mildred's space so that, in effect, Veda is in both rooms simultaneously. The camera watches Mildred listening. She receives the sound alone in her room and she welcomes the sound into the space around her; Veda's piano music does not overwhelm her (as her voice will later do). The positioning of mother and daughter in two different rooms in this maternal listening scene works to convey and contain both proximity and distance simultaneously because of the space the sound creates between the two rooms. Despite everything we know about the story and the characters at this moment – our knowledge of the scheming deceit and cruelty with which Veda treats Mildred and the latter's masochistic adoration of Veda that characterizes their invariably disturbing interactions in the narrative content – this maternal listening scene hovers anomalously and adjacent to the narrative progression/plot. The shot conveys a rare moment of peace and pleasure that exudes from Mildred's languid expression as she lies still, silent, listening. The effect of watching Mildred listening is that *the audio is brought into the center of the visual field*, but not by showing the source of the sound – only by showing its reception. This is the beginning of Haynes' bringing the audio and visual into a complex dialogue and starting to hint at their innate disjunction. The camera is not interested in watching Veda play; it is interested in watching Mildred listen – on her own – in the absence of the sound's source. We are not listening to Veda with Mildred, *we are watching her hear*, and Haynes sets that up explicitly by never cutting to a shot of Veda playing in the other room. This still shot of the listening mother that, crucially, does not make visible the active source of the sound has the effect of splitting audio and

visual while simultaneously confusing them by making the audio (listening) the visual object. The focus on the audio process here also functions to depict listening as active – we are watching something happen despite Mildred’s looking as if she is not doing anything at all. A maternal interiority¹⁵ begins to be represented; an active receiving of the daughter’s sound. In this scene the subversive play with the relation between audio and visual generates a particular arrangement of space depicted between mother and daughter.

The transmission of sound from one room to another and the camera’s focusing on watching Mildred hear Veda open up a complex dualistic space that allows for a content that contradicts and undermines the manifest pathological narrative between the mother and daughter. Via this complex subversion of the relation between the audio and visual a specific architecture is produced that inaugurates an alternative transmission *between* Mildred and Veda, depicting both distance and proximity. This scene is the first where it becomes clear that Haynes’ approach to sound is directly related to the question and possibility of refiguring the mode of communication between mother and daughter. Via sound, Haynes tells another mother–daughter story that coexists with Cain’s original text while also contradicting it and intervening in the violent and bleak negativity that the manifest narrative charts between Mildred and Veda. In Haynes’ version something else becomes possible.

Commentaries on this memorable scene in reviews of Haynes’ series have tended to read this moment depicting Mildred’s apparent peace and pleasure either as representing her omnipotent satisfaction at having Veda all to herself – an apparent ideal of how Mildred would like things to be: *just the two of them* (Hastie, 2011: 27) – or else as a moment of denial anticipating the ‘let’s get stinko’ attitude to life that Mildred resigns herself to at the end.¹⁶ Interpreting Mildred’s pleasure, as she lies alone in her room listening to her daughter play the piano, as emerging from a possessive and controlling maternal

desire is consistent with a psychologizing Oedipal reading that can see the mother’s pleasure only in pathological terms – as suffocation or possession. Additionally, such an approach fails to pay any attention to the formal construction of this scene via the specific properties of the audio-visual medium, and thus misses the specificity of how sound is structuring the meanings of this shot in its creation of space. By psychologizing the character in this way this psychoanalytic approach misses how maternal pleasure and interiority and the mode of exchange between mother and daughter is refigured formally in this scene, so that sound produces a connection *and* a space between mother and daughter that unleashes a pleasurable affect that is in excess of and resists reduction to either narrative logic and development or Oedipal psychoanalytic models.

It is the sudden and intrusive sound of the phone ringing in the same room in which Veda plays the piano that interrupts this particular arrangement of sound and space in this maternal listening scene. The sound of the phone is notably louder than the piano playing was in relation to where Mildred is listening from. Narratively, the sound of the telephone figures to interrupt the maternal listening scene in order to mobilize plot development: Veda stops playing to answer the phone and the camera moves away from Mildred and onto Veda talking on the phone. The sound of the phone completely alters and restructures the space that the maternal listening scene had composed. Introducing a third element to the scene (the voice on the phone) closes down the particular dualistic space that the sound of the piano had opened up. While the sound of the phone ringing is within the diegesis, it verges on an audio close-up: from where Mildred lies it sounds just that bit too loud in comparison to the muted volume of the piano music. This differential of volume according to where the sound comes from has meaning; to my mind it suggests that the use of the daughter’s music is functioning specifically to create an alternative space between mother and daughter while other sounds,

unrelated to Veda or Mildred, such as the phone ringing, function only according to narrative, diegetic, oedipal logic. That is to say, the phone as third element, breaking up the dyadic communication of this maternal listening scene, belongs to a different economy of sound than that of the piano and singing voice – which, as I have shown, are used to open up an alternative structured dualistic space between mother and daughter not reducible to the triangular oedipal structure embedded in the narrative.

Significantly, the voice on the phone, or the interrupting third element that functions to close down the dualistic composed space that Veda's music produced between mother and daughter, is a voice that informs Veda about the death of her piano teacher. The third element introduces a loss and, more specifically, a symbolically *paternal* loss that underlies the structure of Oedipal logic. The telephone disturbs Mildred's reverie and makes her walk from her bedroom into the same room as Veda, hence the spatial distance and communication that the piano produced between mother and daughter is lost; the sound of the phone collapses the specific audio-visual space of this maternal listening scene. The phone ringing, as if an alarm, wakes us up out of the adjacent or suspended reality or space that the maternal listening scene had created and so re-establishes the Oedipal narrative economy that the sound of Veda's music had for significant moments subverted and transformed.

Haynes cumulatively builds up this particular work with sound in the representation of the mother–daughter relationship and, most crucially and substantially, in the shift to Veda's singing voice in the last two episodes of the series. There has been much discussion of the voice in cinema, most notably the seminal work of Michel Chion (1999) but also the feminist film theory of Kaja Silverman (1988), Mary Anne Doane (1980: 33–50), Amy Lawrence (1991) and Britta Sjogren (2006), who have contributed innovative work on the specific functions and effects of the female voice in cinema. Lack

of space here prevents me from doing justice to the complexity and scope of the debates this work has generated but I draw upon these authors' works as the theoretical context or field informing my own analysis of the experimental use of Veda's voice in the following two maternal listening scenes in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*.

The first time we hear Veda's singing voice is perhaps the most memorable, densely layered and complex scene in the whole series, and is striking in its innovative use of sound to create new spatial representations within the mother–daughter relation. The context/backstory of the scene is that Mildred and Veda have been living apart and are on non-speaking terms after a row resulting in Mildred throwing Veda out of the house. During their separation, we follow Mildred's further successes in her businesses, the development of her female friendships and her separation from her lover, Monty. The unbearable pain and loss that Mildred suffers in Veda's absence is reiterated in various scenes depicting her as if in a state of mourning, and in desperation she finally asks Bert, Veda's father, to give her news of Veda's life. Bert tells Mildred that Veda has become a contralto soprano singer, and is going to be singing on the radio. Both parents had no knowledge of Veda's talent for singing and are bewildered by this change of instrument/medium. They decide to listen to Veda for the first time together at one of Mildred's restaurants, and it is this listening scene to which I will now turn.

A special table is set up for Mildred and Bert outside, and slightly away from the rest of the tables, on the front balcony facing the ocean. The large radio is carried by one of Mildred's employees and placed in a prominent place in the center of the visual frame, on the table between Mildred and Bert. As Veda is about to be introduced on the radio the camera closes in on both Bert and Mildred's faces as they sit at the table facing the radio, transfixed by what is about to happen. The shot is composed so that we see the back of the radio (which looks like a large box) in the

front of the frame and Mildred and Bert's faces set back and looking intensely at it, so that it actually looks to us as if they are watching a screen rather than listening to a radio. Both parents avidly stare at the radio in what looks like disbelief and wonder as the voice of their daughter emanates: alien and sublime, beautiful and strange, her voice as they have never heard it before.

Mildred leans forward to get closer to the radio, focusing on it with a piercing stare, as if Veda was literally inside it or as if it had replaced her – as if the radio itself was an extension of or embodiment of Veda rather than a machine broadcasting her disembodied voice. What is striking and awkward about this scene is the confusion set up between the visual and audio mediums resulting from the sustained emphasis on looking at the radio or *watching the voice*. Mildred watches the radio as if she expects or hopes it to transmit some visual evidence that this sound was really coming out of Veda, that this voice was really linked to the body of her child, the direct outpouring of Veda's 'special' interiority with which she had for so long been obsessed. When Mildred strains to get closer to the radio as Veda's voice emanates, it is not her ear she puts close to the speakers – it is her eyes.

This split or gap between audio and visual that is produced by Mildred's frantic looking for the voice's source draws attention to the very impossibility of the pinning down or nailing of the voice to image, body or mouth – as if within Mildred's stare at the radio is the suggestion that Veda's voice emanates precisely from this gap, this schism or split between the audio and the visual that Haynes hints at, if not exposes, in the maternal listening scenes. Within the diegesis, Mildred's extreme response to the disembodied voice on the radio shows her disturbance at not being able to fix voice to body, sound to image – a kind of panic at the uncanny ghostly disjunction between her daughter and this ethereal voice.

The radio as visual object looms large and completely dominates this scene. After the

long shots of Mildred's face staring at the radio as Veda's voice pours out the camera then focuses in on the radio itself, and there is an intriguing long slow close-up of just the radio which fills the visual frame. We now watch the radio and hear Veda's singing exactly as we had just watched Mildred and Bert doing; we, too, are forced into this impossible position of *looking at the voice*, or, more precisely, visually contemplating the audio apparatus. Haynes (again) moves the audio completely into the center of the visual field. The confusion that is built up between listening and looking, audio and visual, in these shots of Mildred and Bert's staring at the radio and the image of the radio itself culminates in a distancing effect that draws our attention to the dualistic material of the sound film; its integral 'acousmatic' (Chion, 1999: 5) nature, whereby voice and body/image are cut in two and then stitched back together via synchronization so that voice and body will never quite match. This disjunction between audio and visual that Haynes exposes in these scenes reveals what Chion calls the 'scar' or 'seam' that always remains, as if haunting the sound film, despite the great efforts, 'the jerry-rigging' (1999: 130), to hide this radical and original separation/discordance at the heart of the audio-visual creation.

The whole sequence in this maternal listening scene is a typical Haynesian distancing/alienation effect. The audience is once again led to contemplate this material organization of the audio and visual and the concomitant 'wild dreams of unity and absolutes' that Chion contends motivate the attempt to 'recreate the totality' that the sound film represents (1999: 136). It is no coincidence that this negotiation of the impossible desire for unity and the radical irreducibility of two elements integral to the sound film is evoked here within the specific terrain of the mother-daughter relation.

The scene continues with Mildred suddenly getting up from her place at the table and rushing away from the source of the sound towards the sea. As she moves away

from the radio the volume of Veda's singing voice gets louder. The further away Mildred gets from the radio the louder Veda's singing becomes, so that, as she reaches the shore and stands looking out to the raging sea, all other sound is drowned out. This extreme amplification of Veda's voice completely abandons naturalistic sound design and is a moment of hyperbole proper to melodrama, signifying not only Mildred's state of extreme emotion and agitation at hearing Veda sing but also the way in which Veda's voice overwhelms and invades Mildred – who, despite running away from its source, can find no distance from it. The explicit association with the myth of the sirens here functions on many levels, the all-pervasive trap of the female voice that pervades the spatial void of the sea drawing the listener into its lethal, inescapable grasp. Ever since the film screen has been inhabited by the voice that permeates the boundaries of the screen, the myth of the sirens has haunted it (Chion, 1999: 115).

On a formal level in this scene, Veda's amplified voice dissolves the boundary between internal and external diegetic sound. The singing voice, as it gets louder, drowns out all other sound occurring within the scene (the sound of waves, of the people in the restaurant and of Bert calling to Mildred). In this way Veda's voice merges into extra diegetic music/sound while simultaneously remaining within the diegeisis (as the voice on the radio) within the frame. In this way Veda's voice exposes and transmits the specific property of the voice described by Dolar, following Chion, 'as the embodiment of the very impossibility between inner and outer, interior and exterior' (Dolar, 2006: 70), and, significantly, it is to the mother via the daughter's voice that this message is transmitted.

This complex theme of the schism between audio and visual and the effect of the voice on screen that Haynes examines in the context of the mother–daughter relation culminates in the last maternal listening scene in Part 5 of the mini-series. Mildred, Bert and Monty go to see Veda perform at the philharmonic auditorium.

This scene functions as a corollary of the radio scene; it places the voice again in the center of the visual field but instead of the radio we have the Veda as its conduit, thus seemingly returning voice to body, sound to image.

Significantly, Mildred is sitting in the dress circle in the enormous auditorium, a considerable distance from the stage, meaning that she cannot see Veda's face in close-up. As Veda starts to sing, the camera for the most part focuses in close-up on Mildred's face, watching her listen and look at Veda from afar. When the camera turns to the stage we, too, see Veda in a long shot. Mildred expresses rapturous emotion and emotion as the sublime voice fills the auditorium. Haynes again uses audio close-up, so that the volume of Veda's voice does not tally with the distance between Mildred and the stage. But this amplification does not seem to signify the disturbance and confusion that it did at the beach/radio scene described earlier. In this scene, the sound and its source are safely unified in one body, and for a moment Mildred relaxes and lets the voice permeate the space like air.

It is not until Monty passes Mildred the opera glasses that the scene shifts register and the material split between audio and visual is brought into focus again, this time via Mildred's looking through the magnifying glasses at Veda singing on the stage. The striking disjunction between Veda's facial expression (of which we and Mildred are given a close up view) and the quality of the her voice produces a confusing and de-stabilizing incongruence to this shot and thus brings into focus an explicit paradoxical dynamic between sound and vision. The camera looks with Mildred through the opera glasses and Veda's face comes into focus, doubly framed by the glasses and the stage. Her expression, as she sings, is strained and full of hate. Significantly, it is in this visual close-up of the singing daughter that Mildred sees the gorgon type expression, the deadly poisonous look on Veda's face that Treviso (Veda's music teacher) had warned her of, calling Veda a 'snake' or 'viper' with a

beautiful voice (Cain, 1985: 515). The sight of Veda with hate in her eyes and open mouth, pouring out an incongruously ethereal and beautiful sound, results in Mildred quickly becoming agitated. She flings down the opera glasses, refusing the close-up view. We return to the distant long shot from the dress circle, where the voice wanders freely and the body from which it comes remains distant and out of focus.

It is, crucially, when Mildred sees the voice recovered to body, when audio and visual meet in the magnified image of Veda singing, that she turns away. What is unbearable and causes Mildred to refuse the close-up view is the radical discordance between the visual and the audio that is paradoxically exposed in this unified audio-visual whole – when voice is seemingly knitted back to the body/image. Yet this recovery of voice to body fails to deliver the wild dream of unity that Chion describes (1999: 136) and instead only makes the severance and the discordance between audio and visual even more explicit. The voice does not seem to belong to that body; in Mildred's view through the opera glasses Veda looks like a sinister puppet with someone else's angelic voice cascading through her. What Mildred sees is an audio and visual disjunction, a ventriloquism that produces an effect of horror. It is far safer to return to the distant long shot where this disjunction between audio and visual, between voice and body, can be more successfully disavowed.

Haynes' use of famous mainstream actors in his series means that we can assume a widespread knowledge or assumption on the part of the audience that Veda's singing voice is dubbed. More precisely, the technique of playback is being used so that Evan Rachel Wood, who plays Veda, is miming the words to the sound of another, hidden, woman's voice.¹⁷ The lack of homogeneity of audio and visual, body and voice, is referenced both inside and outside the diegesis. The failure of Veda's singing image to deliver (to Mildred) a unified fit between audio and visual functions to break down our own capacity to play

along with, and disavow, the artifice of playback/dubbing as we watch this scene. Haynes makes the split between audio and visual inside the diegesis (the incongruous image and voice of Veda through the opera glasses) and makes explicit the real extra-diegetic ventriloquism (dubbing and playback): the severance and non-coincidence of the voice and body that are the material conditions of the making of this scene.

The 'contract of belief' (1999: 153) that Chion refers to is disrupted here – the audiences' willingness to play along in recognizing that a voice comes from an actor's body as her own, even while we know it is dubbed. In this way, we, like Mildred, are held in a moment of alienation where the severance, the disjunction and the failure of wholeness inherent to the audio-visual object is doubly figured at two simultaneous levels. At this moment the audience is taken back to the origin of sound cinema, the story of a severance and the fraught attempt at audio-visual unification. This story of severance and unity explored so extensively via attention to the material organization of the audio-visual medium is rendered within the specific terrain of the mother-daughter plot and on this register I suggest that the daughter's voice 'imaginarily take[s] up the role of an umbilical cord' (Chion, 1999: 62) referred to by Denis Vasse: the cutting of the umbilicus at birth correlates strongly with the attention paid to the opening of the mouth and the first cry. 'The umbilical cord and the voice constitute a pair in which "the umbilicus means closure Whether it names or calls, the voice traverses closure without breaking it in the process All in a single act, it attests to the limit and escapes it"' (Denis Vasse in Chion, 1999: 61–2).

Veda's voice and the complex ways in which Mildred receives it, as we have seen, conjure up an acknowledgment of an irrevocable split. This split or severance, I suggest, opens up a potential space between mother and daughter explored innovatively in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*. The gap between audio and visual that Haynes makes explicit

in the story of a mother and a daughter opens up an in-between, uncharted place between two different elements that are not reducible to one another. This gap, or in-between space between two irreducible elements, is negotiated and explored between mother and daughter with the female voice as its operator. Rather than the split between audio and visual producing a gaping hole or a void, like the dark space or non-place between the lips of the open mouth, Veda's voice in *Mildred Pierce*, which emanates precisely from that gap, sings of both connection and disconnection, distance and proximity; it opens up a generative space of exchange and transmission between mother and daughter and represents (rather than pathologizes) this paradox.

It is significant that Haynes decided to depart from James Cain's text regarding the choice of opera that Veda sings. Cain was highly specific about the particular pieces of music that Veda plays and sings and it is therefore extremely significant that it is on this musical detail that Haynes, who otherwise attempted and professed complete loyalty to every aspect of the novel, boldly disregards Cain's choice. David Weyner, an operatic expert with whom Haynes worked to devise Veda's repertoire, commented that the arias Cain chose for Veda in his novel were 'not realistic for what a young soprano at that time would attempt' (*Los Angeles Times*, 2011), but, more crucially for our argument here, Cain's arias did not have a content or context that resonated with a mother–daughter theme. Haynes and Weyner's choices are arias that are explicitly related to stories relating to a mother–daughter relationship and the powers of the voice. In the crucial radio scene discussed earlier Haynes has Veda sing 'The Bell Song' from the opera *Lakme*, by Delibes, in which the young woman's voice within the story is used specifically to seduce, lure and trap in the vein of the Homeric sirens. While Veda sings in French, Haynes inserts a hidden layer of reflexivity here, so that Veda sings of the enigmatic properties of the voice and its relation to cunning, magic and seduction as Mildred stares into the raging sea with the

voice encompassing her and collapsing and distorting space. In the LA Philharmonic concert scene (discussed earlier), Haynes has Veda singing 'The Queen of the Night' aria from Mozart's *Magic Flute*, the context of which is a complex mother–daughter argument/plot; here Veda sings the 'Wrath of Hell Boils in my Heart' from the point of view of the mother. These changes show that the music scenes are a crucial site through which alternative transmissions belonging to the communication between mother and daughter are explored and run concomitantly (and in some senses in contradiction) to the plot. While most of the work Haynes does with sound and the mother–daughter relation, as we have seen, is on the formal level, he meticulously makes sure that the content (albeit in French and German, so perhaps not immediately accessible to Mildred and the audience) relates to the form. This one and only departure Haynes makes from Cain's novel supports my contention that, for Haynes, the music/sound is primarily a tool to explore and develop the scope and potential of transmissions between mother and daughter.

In this way, in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*, Veda's music is always a specific address to the mother – each of Veda's performances becomes, effectively, maternal listening scenes that coexist and go beyond the meanings of the spoken narrative content. This alternative mother–daughter exchange that is told via formal play with sound and its discordant relation to the visual in the maternal listening scenes I have discussed makes this rendition of *Mildred Pierce* highly significant as a post-Irigarayian representation. Mildred and Veda, before Haynes' intervention, were famous for echoing the age-old poisonous hate and destruction that has become so rigidly entrenched in western constructions of the mother–daughter relation since Aeschylus's Clytemnestra and Electra.¹⁸ Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*, however, through the register of sound, refuses the inevitability of that mythical and ideological construction.

NOTES

- 1 For an account of feminist work on the mother–daughter relation see: Jacobs, 2007: 129–48 and Stone, 2004: Ch 4.
- 2 For Irigaray's ideas about the mother–daughter relation see Irigaray, 1993.
- 3 The Michael Curtiz 1945 film noir version added a murder twist to the story in order to transform it into the noir/crime/thriller genre.
- 4 For a discussion of this Lacanian model and the debates within psychoanalytic feminism regarding the possibility of moving beyond this construction see Jacobs, 2007: 7–15.
- 5 For a lucid explanation of Irigaray's notion of 'ontological dereliction' see Whitford, 1991: 81.
- 6 For an overview of psychoanalytic accounts of the mother–daughter relationship see Jacobs, 2007: 129–48.
- 7 See Irigaray, 1991: 34–46 for an account of the matrilineal symbolic economy and see also Jacobs, 2007: 32–45.
- 8 See also Butler, 2000 as an example of a post-Oedipal intervention into psychoanalytic models of the symbolic.
- 9 See Butler, 2000: 73–9, for an important discussion about the cost to feminist film theory of continuing to refer to the Lacanian model as a reference.
- 10 For a discussion of Todd Haynes' engagement with 'the woman's film' see Doane, 2004.
- 11 See Rob White and Amber Jacobs' 'Dialogue on Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*' in *Film Quarterly* web exclusives for more on this question of creativity in Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*. [www.filmquarterly.org/2012/02/todd-haynes-"mildred-pierce"-a-discussion/](http://www.filmquarterly.org/2012/02/todd-haynes-)
- 12 Interestingly, the Michael Curtiz noir film uses a female voice-over but it is not Veda's voice. Mildred's voice narrates the story in a series of flashbacks. The maternal voice therefore is the extra diegetic voice that has implications regarding how the female voice functions in cinema. For an excellent discussion of the female voice-over in Hollywood classical cinema see Sjogren, 2006.
- 13 I extensively discuss dominant psychoanalytic accounts of the mother–daughter relation in Jacobs, 2007: 148–56.
- 14 I have explicated, discussed and critiqued this account of Oedipal triangulation and the implications for the mother and daughter in part 1 and 3 of *On Matricide* (Jacobs, 2007).
- 15 See Bolton, 2011 for an in-depth study of representing female interiority on screen.
- 16 Dialogue on *Mildred Pierce* with Rob White and Amber Jacobs in *Film Quarterly* Web exclusive.
- 17 The real singer used for Veda's singing voice is the Korean coloratura soprano Sumi Jo.

- 18 For an in-depth discussion of the ancient Greek myth depicting the mother–daughter relationship between Clytemnestra and Electra see Jacobs, 2007, especially part 3.

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The Space of a Movement: Life-Writing Against Racism

Vron Ware

I hope, some day, to write my autobiography. I have not yet done so – although most of my writing is autobiographical. In one book, *Killers of the Dream*, I have chosen to take one fragment of my life, my experiences as a white person in a strictly patterned highly conformed culture, and write as fully as I could of that... Why did I do this – instead of writing about myself as an individual? Because I was not a free individual during some of those years, I was a white conformist. I told both as documentary and as confession my story as one human being caught in the white-black strands of a web that seemed to be soft and pliable but was made of thin steel wires which caught and held and wounded the human spirit. (Lillian Smith (1963) in Cliff, 1978: 197)

In the foreword to her book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison asked the freighted question, ‘what does positioning one’s writerly self, in the wholly racialized society that is the United States, as unraced and all others as raced entail?’ (1992: xii). Addressing a readership that went far beyond the field of American literary scholarship, she continued, ‘What happens to the writerly

imagination of a black writer who is at some level *always* conscious of representing one’s own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be “universal” or “race-free”?’ While Morrison’s intervention was to have a major impact on literary and cultural studies, her inquiry had specific resonance within an already agonistic feminist discourse on the salience of racial oppression as a form of gendered experience.

Since autobiographical writing had long been intrinsic to feminist politics, the visibility or absence of ‘race-talk’ (or ‘racism awareness’) in such a highly segregated society had remained a contentious issue (hooks, 1981). By 1992, when Morrison’s intervention was made, the notion of white privilege as a form of unexamined and unearned power (Frye, 1983; McIntosh, 1988) had begun to shape anti-racist feminist consciousness in the US, prompting a more confessional mode of life-writing as a corrective to white solipsism (Rich, 1979). However, where Morrison’s work explored the interplay between ‘literary blackness’ and

'literary whiteness' (1992: xii), many feminist theorists were convinced that, in terms of political subjectivities forged out of bitter experience, blackness and whiteness were mutually exclusive. This held true no matter whether feminists attempted to transcend the binary of black and white through imaginative, scholarly or political labour.

Ien Ang, for example, wrote that 'subjective knowledge' of what it is like to be 'at the receiving end of racialized othering' is 'simply not accessible to white people' in the same way that 'the subjective knowledge of what it means to be a woman is ultimately inaccessible to men'. In her view, however, those 'moments of incommensurability', if acknowledged, could be used as a starting point for common political pursuits if 'we accept that politics does not have to be premised on construction of a solid, unified "we" ... but on the very fragility, delicacy and uncertainty of any "we" we forge' (Ang, 1997 discussed in Ware and Back, 2002: 271–3).

I

In this chapter on feminism, life-writing and racism, I attempt to place these debates, which lay at the heart of late twentieth-century feminism, into a more productive framework. I ask what might be gained by, first, a longer temporal perspective and, second, a more cosmopolitan outlook that understands life-writing as a form of 'autobiographical disruption' of racial certainties. I discuss examples of women's life-writing that are alert to the myriad and brutal but often nuanced ways in which racial hierarchy is experienced, looking not for incommensurability between black and white but for an openness to the greater risks involved in using one's own life to explore the damage wrought by racism, segregation and apartheid. Lillian Smith evokes the scope of this endeavour when she introduces her famous autobiographical investigation into the psychology of Southern white supremacy, *Killers of the Dream*:

I wrote it because I had to find out what life in a segregated culture had done to me, one person; I had to put down on paper these experiences so that I could see their meaning for me. I was in dialogue with myself as I wrote, as well as with my home town and my childhood and history and the future, and the past. Writing is both horizontal and vertical exploration. It has to true itself with facts but also with feelings and symbols, and memories that are never quite facts but sometimes closer to the 'truth' than is any fact. (1963: 3)

In her book *Begging to Be Black* (2009) South African poet and author Antjie Krog weaves together a series of encounters, memories and stories that address the 'long conversation between black and white' in her country. One of the disparate narrative threads is a detailed account of her time in Berlin on a year's fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies. It begins when she walks into the apartment after the long journey from Cape Town. Falling asleep on the sofa, she woke to a beautiful autumn light streaming into the room, and that phenomenon, combined with the smell of coffee, made her feel as though her throat would 'burst with light and happiness'. However, 'what comes pouring out, unexpectedly, are harsh choking sounds of relief' (2009: 89).

Interspersing her observations between journal format and letters to her mother, one day she wrote that she had just returned from the supermarket after finding rhubarb yogurt on the shelf. 'Yes, Dr Oetkers Onken Joghurt mit Rhabarber-Vanille-Geschmack – Gutes aus Milch!' This mundane discovery was just one sign of the texture and taste of everyday life in western Europe. In another letter she told her mother:

Do you know that pedestrians here actually wait for the green man to flash, even when there is not a single car on the horizon? Is this the meaning of a law-abiding citizen? I find myself in petrifying angst at traffic lights: if I wait, I feel completely illogical; if I cross while it is red (and there are no cars), I feel the eyes of the Germans bore into my back: Go on, you Third World scoundrel, that is why you and your ilk are in such a moral quagmire (2009: 120).

As the days pass, marked by reflections on what is strange and unfamiliar in her surroundings, contrasting with her native land, she invites her readers to listen to her inner dialogue, which constitutes just one layer of her book:

I can't remember when I last felt so safe, cared for and WANTED despite being white. I know we live a highly privileged life in South Africa, but I hadn't realised how harsh my life in reality had become. It is not because I can walk alone through Hasensprung at one o'clock in the morning without the slightest notion of fear, but because one is shielded from people who are poor, hungry and cold. I am protected in my flat from the poor. I can see them only on a poster at the station. In Cape Town they are on my doorstep three or four times a day, at traffic lights, on the streets ... The poor mark the most breath-taking vistas and the most desolate horizons in South Africa. Here, where I live in Berlin, the poor is a theory. (2009: 91)

This is no mere travel diary of a foreigner abroad, however. The reason for her sojourn in Berlin is to take time to daydream, to develop her understanding of certain moral and philosophical concepts rooted in South African history, and this project demands that she move to an entirely different environment in order to be able to think. Her dialogue with a professor at the university provides another strand of the book, one that both outlines and explores her intellectual preoccupations as an author. Early on she tells him 'In order to understand something I have to write it; while writing – writing, as it were – I find myself dissolving into, becoming towards what I am trying to understand' (2009: 92). As the discussion develops her interlocutor attempts to summarize her position, introducing her to Deleuze's theory of transformation and elaborating on the concept of 'becoming' in more abstract terms. 'One moves from an established known identity by transforming oneself,' he tells her. 'But transformation always moves in a particular direction and writing is often the best way to trace these directions.' (2009: 92)

The ensuing dialogue reveals the predicament with which Krog has wrestled both since, and long before, the end of apartheid. The reconstructed exchange between professor and student is a format that allows her to articulate her life project in conversational terms:

Is it possible for a white person like myself, born in Africa, raised in a culture with strong Western roots, drenched in a political dispensation that said black people were different and therefore inferior, whether it is possible for such a person as myself to move towards a 'blackness' as black South Africans themselves understand it? (2009: 94)

Her second question follows on from this, framing a quest for alternatives to the Western paradigms that 'insist liberal values are the only possible framework for a modern state'. At one point the professor suggests: 'But you are saying: because you lived in this apartheid bubble which tried to keep itself whites-only and Western, this has stunted your own changing and becoming?' (2009: 94)

In reply Krog says simply: 'I am not necessarily interested in African philosophy versus Western philosophy, but rather in what kind of self I should grow into in order to live a caring, useful and informed life – a "good life" – within my country in southern Africa' (2009: 95). For her this is not a personal mission to investigate the origins of clearly defined terms such as 'blackness' and its opposite, 'whiteness', and their entanglement, nor is it a quest for alternative knowledge that can be attained only outside the fraught conditions of daily life in her native land. She frames her project as one that is both ontological, expressed as a search for a different kind of self, and epistemological, in the sense that this is about a different way of knowing. This task requires a deep reckoning with aspects of the past, her own as well as the catastrophic legacies of European colonial expansion and apartheid. In order to do this she creates a 'mytho-poetic narrative', one in which an eclectic cast of characters can take part: 'King Moshoeshoe, missionaries

from the 19th century, Antjie Krog and her friends and colleagues, ANC cadres, the Deleuzian philosopher Paul Patton, Krog's husband J., Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the ANC Youth League' (Motha, 2010: 290).

Searching for a figure of speech that transcends the problems of separateness and incommensurability, Krog refuses the notion of mingling, entangling and other forms of mixture, turning instead to a more organic image of a root that 'can become or link to another' (2009: 95). This metaphor of growing-towards (an impulse of interconnectedness) is an appropriate starting place for this essay. While a focus on the subterranean highlights the work of writing the self as a transformative undertaking that has multiple dimensions, the commitment to cultural change indicates the importance of attending to the relationship between history, memory and subjective interpretation.

II

A recent collection of essays examining the capacious genre of life-writing began with the observation that the practice now holds 'a ubiquitous place in contemporary culture rivalling, overlapping and problematizing distinctions between the factual records of life history and its fictional counterparts' (Taylor and Kaplan, 2009). The focus here is on the way in which women's life-writing can unlock, challenge and document the ways in which racial difference and racial hierarchy are both lived and resisted in any particular time and place. Although I am drawn to the articulation of gendered subjectivities, I am less concerned with whether this counts as feminist or not. In particular, this essay will consider how the autobiographical perspectives of those identified as white can communicate not just a sense of the past (of where one is starting from) but also how one might consciously become, and transform oneself into, something other than what one was. These questions suggest a way

of reading and interpreting self-narratives that might illuminate the workings of racial power, privilege and subordination because they bring to light the psychological, material and symbolic processes entailed in the struggle for change (Ware and Back, 2002).

Confining this enterprise to examples produced by women identified as white allows us to investigate the grounds for being 'disloyal to civilisation', a political orientation originally proposed by Lillian Smith in 1962 (Cliff, 1978). The first might be the principle of estrangement, not just a result of a physical journey that provokes a sense of dislocation but a way of being in the world guided by an ethics of resistance. Zygmunt Bauman has described this state of mind as the creative possibilities of exile: 'the refusal to be integrated – the determination to stand out from the physical space, to conjure up a place of one's own, different from the place in which those around are settled, a place unlike the places left behind and unlike the place of arrival' (Bauman, 2000: 208).

Second, I discuss a body of work that illuminates the process of disentanglement, of extracting the self from complicity in hateful institutions, dubious identifications and an uncritical relationship to everyday life. And, third, as we read autobiographical writing as journeys of self-discovery, we can also discern ways in which transformation of the self *through writing* opens up moral and political dilemmas embedded in the desire for revolutionary change.

Although this essay examines a variety of authors writing within distinct historical and geographical contexts, there is no suggestion that racism remains the same across time and place. Retracing the significance of the autobiographical voice in feminist theory and politics, this essay focuses on women's life-writing as a situated mode of resistance to the dominant racial regime, whether the institution of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, colonialism, apartheid or its aftermath. The selection of authors is not intended to sketch out a chronological survey or to tie discrete modes

of writing together as if they constituted a literary genre of their own. Instead the connection between these diverse texts is provided by the analytical approaches suggested above. One connecting feature is a desire to understand the relationship between blackness and whiteness not as abstract, theoretical terms but as a complex configuration of meanings arising from and within specific circumstances. A second is an interest in experimental techniques of self-disclosure as means to show the visceral grip of power and privilege. A third is the motivation to change oneself in the course of discovering new forms of solidarity with those who are positioned differently by virtue of their birth, their heritage and their skin.

III

In an essay entitled 'The Female Stranger: marginality and modes of writing', cultural theorist Janet Wolff emphasizes the salience of psychological journeys made in the course of a lifetime, offering a critique of the artificial separation so often made between the academic and the personal. 'The narrative constructed from personal memory, from fragments of memoir, and from apparently isolated moments, competes on equal terms with other narratives, including those formulated in macro-sociological or abstract terms' (1995: 17). Acknowledging that there was an established tradition of sociological thought that recognized the value of distance and objectivity in the social observer, Wolff explored the creative possibilities of estrangement (and marginality), particularly when it allowed women writers to articulate a sense of distance from what they had previously found familiar or taken for granted. The standpoint of the female outsider, whether a stranger or simply a foreigner, offered original ways of knowing either about places left behind or the new worlds encountered through some kind of travel.

Although Wolff examined writings by women who had made their escape from one

geographical location to another, the process of travel that enabled new insights was not necessarily a result of migration. 'But for the woman who has left home,' she wrote, 'it seems to be the case that displacement (deterritorialization) can be quite strikingly productive' (1995: 9). New concepts of place, or a different sense of relationships between places, could emerge as a result of an individual moving away from familiar surroundings. Secondly, travel could play a significant role in changing one's sense of self as well as one's angle of vision. Documenting these changes, she suggested, may take the form of 're-writing the self, discarding the life-long habits and practices of a constraining social education and discovering new forms of self-expression' (1995: 9). For this reason, she suggested, 'the narrative of the fragment and the memoir, motivated as it is by those who have reclaimed their "buried selves", often in the process of a journey, is one worth telling' (1995: 17).

Wolff's essay on the creative uses of dislocation for women writers who are either forced or obliged to leave home speaks powerfully to another feminist intervention on the importance of knowing where one was writing from. In 1984 the poet Adrienne Rich published her 'Notes Towards a Politics of Location'. Her argument provoked new directions in feminist discourse since it directed attention to the impact of both geography and geopolitics on feminists' social formations (1986). Like Krog, Rich was born into an apartheid system, albeit in the US, which meant that her place of birth already marked her existence as a product of a particular social order. Even as she took her first breath, she wrote, her body was claimed as white by Jim Crow America before it was identified as female.

'White, female; or female, white. The first obvious, lifelong facts. But', she continued, 'I was born in the white section of a hospital which separated Black and white women in labor and Black and white babies in the nursery, just as it separated Black and white bodies in the morgue' (Rich, 1986: 215). Rich's

intervention was made at a time when many feminists, black and white, were treating those 'obvious, lifelong facts' as a fixed, even rigid, basis for political action. Those who were hostile to identity politics interpreted her plea as a demand for a more complex, intuitive effort that was both a highly individual matter and, at the same time, necessarily part of a collective conversation about the fluidity of all socially constructed identities (Ware, 2004).

Above all, her work was directed towards revolutionary change that was global in scope. She urged her readers to make connections between different kinds of struggle, avoiding the pitfalls of thinking that the world revolved around them, their priorities or their country. In doing so she warned of the problems of writing in the first person: 'Whatever circumscribes or mutilates our feelings makes it more difficult to act, keep our actions reactive, repetitive: abstract thinking, narrow tribal loyalties, every kind of self-righteousness, the arrogance of believing ourselves at the centre' (Rich, 1986: 223). There were no guarantees that writing from a personal perspective automatically involved a repudiation of the constraints of upbringing, socialization and self-interest.

In another essay, 'Memoirs and Micrologies', Wolff assessed feminist autobiographical method in the light of the growth of cultural studies and cultural history during the 1980s and early 1990s. She too expressed reservations about the use of the personal voice for its own sake: 'Self-reflection need not be politically radical, ethically correct or analytically illuminating', she wrote. 'It can be simply self-indulgent, embarrassing and irrelevant' (1995: 50–51, emphasis in original). She approached the interplay between the personal and the political (or the autobiographical and the critical) through a consideration of why Walter Benjamin had become so popular, tracking the way in which some feminist historians and anthropologists had successfully used 'autobiographical interruption' to transform conventional methods of

ethnography and cultural analysis. But it could not simply be assumed that 'the memoiristic provides guaranteed access to knowledge', she insisted, 'because we still have to address the question of typicality'. Where Rich directs feminist attention to class, race and nationality, here Wolff suggests the importance of historical awareness in the course of interpreting experience: 'So where the personal is valuable in laying bare the structures and prejudices of cultural work, it does not necessarily provide the route to better cultural history, unless we can be persuaded that this particular experience is somehow *typical* or indicative of a moment' (1995: 50–51, emphasis in original).

This brief discussion of the gendered politics of location and dislocation reflects the intense and longstanding interest in autobiography within feminist discourse. While this is largely due to the promise of an exploration or revelation of a 'self', there has been greater attention to questions of fragmentation, fictionalization and the sheer unreliability of subjective recall (Cosslett et al., 2000: 4). At the same time the study of autobiography 'makes trouble: it is difficult to define as a distinct genre, on the borderline between fact and fiction, the personal and the social, the popular and the academic, the everyday and the literary' (2000: 1). To this list I would add the now, the then and the yet to come, reiterating the importance of memory-work in both recovering and re-establishing a historical record of trauma, suffering and struggle (2000: 174–5).

IV

Interest in life-writing that is attentive to the structuring effects of racism in women's lives emerged out of the project of 'reconstructing womanhood', to borrow the title of Hazel Carby's exploration of African American women novelists (1987). Carby assembled a genealogy of black feminist theory through reading slave narratives and fictional work written by women alert to

voices and registers that had either been elided in conventional literary histories or else dismissed as irrelevant. The crux of her argument was that the institution of racial slavery had produced, and depended on, particular configurations of class, race and gender which meant that black women's literary perspectives could not be examined in isolation. In order to dissect the stereotypes of black female sexuality prevalent during the ante-bellum period, she argued, it was first necessary to identify the accepted paradigms of white Southern womanhood. Stereotypes, she wrote, 'only appear to exist in isolation while actually depending on a nexus of figurations which can be only explained in relation to each other' (1987: 20). Literary critics needed to investigate the relationships between these constructs in order to appreciate their mutually constitutive cultural and representational power.

For those searching for voices of resistance, it was doubly important to understand the mechanisms held in place by male domination and racial slavery. Only then was it possible to identify the ways that 'black women, as writers, addressed, used, transformed, and, on occasion, subverted the dominant ideological codes' (1987: 21). One of the key protagonists in this new 'black female literary tradition' (Carby, 1987; Doriani, 1991) was Linda Brent, whose narrative, entitled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, was edited by a white abolitionist, Lydia Maria Child, and published shortly before the Civil War. Brent, who wrote under the pseudonym Harriet Jacobs, is frequently cited as an important narrator of slave experiences, not least because of her gendered account. However, the autobiography was taken seriously only when Jean Fagan Yellin, a feminist scholar, managed to establish the authenticity of Jacobs' story. Carby cites Yellin's suggestion that it was possible to interpret her voice as an appeal to the sisterhood of all women:

Seen from this angle of vision, Jacobs' book – reaching across the gulf separating black women

from white, slave from free, poor from rich, reaching across the chasm separating 'bad' women from 'good' – represents an attempt to establish an American sisterhood and to activate that sisterhood in the public arena. (Yellin, 1985: 276, in Carby, 1987: 50)

In the introduction to her biography of Brent, based on the narrative, Yellin explained that she had turned to the text as part of her own process of self-exploration, revealing that she had first studied it as an academic, purely in relation to race and class. It was only later that she found herself drawn back to thinking about the gendered elements of Jacobs' life-story, searching for a vocabulary which she did not think she had (2004: vii). It scarcely needs pointing out that both Carby's and Yellin's work on nineteenth-century black female authors was indicative of a broader feminist engagement with the politics of race and gender that intensified from the 1970s onwards (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981).

III

In another influential essay, entitled 'Disloyal to Civilisation: feminism, racism and gynephobia', Adrienne Rich noted that 'One of the useful things about the past is its safe distance: I mean, because we feel a certain detachment from it, we can allow ourselves to perceive in history ways of behaving which continue into the present, and afflict our actions still' (1979: 304–5). Rich's intervention was an attempt to break through the wall of 'secrets and silence' that was the legacy of slavery, separating white feminists from black, even those committed to loving and working together. Rich urged her readers to look back to the institution as the source of white women's complicity in the oppression of black people. But this was no easy task. 'The mutual history of black and white women in this country', she wrote, 'is a realm so painful, resonant and forbidden that it has barely been touched by writers either of political "science" or of imaginative literature' (1979: 281). Yet, she continued, 'until

that history is known, that silence broken, we will all go on struggling in a state of deprivation and ignorance' (1979: 281).

Reading eyewitness accounts of white women's complicity in slavery provided invaluable access to this mutual history, but the endeavour also required the ability to read through or across racism's historical registers. One of Rich's examples was Frances Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation 1838–9*. Kemble was an English actress and writer, born in 1809, who married a wealthy American who was the owner of substantial plantations of cotton, rice and tobacco and large numbers of slaves. Her diary of the winter of 1838–9, which she spent on the plantations, was eventually published in 1863, during the Civil War. She detested the whole institution of slavery and her outspoken views led to the break-up of her marriage and the loss of her children. Rich was less interested in what she did to defy social expectations, however, and more concerned to show what could be learned from reading Kemble's narrative. 'To read it is to experience the full impact of racist language and cliché embedded in a passionate and unrelenting indictment of slavery', warned Rich. Black people were described as 'good-natured, childish human beings, whose mental condition is kin in its simplicity and proneness to impulsive emotion' to that of white children; she commented that 'the features of adult black men and women are "displeasing" and "ugly" though "I have seen many babies on this plantation who were quite as pretty as white children."' (Rich, 1979: 305)

Rich insisted that what made Kemble's work so valuable was her politically incisive theories about the social hierarchies that kept the institution in place, pointing to her comments on the Georgian pinelanders or poor whites as an example: 'To the crime of slavery, though they have no profitable part or lot in it, they are fiercely accessory, because it is the barrier that divides the black and white races, at the foot of which they lie wallowing in unspeakable degradation, but immensely

proud of the base freedom which still separates them from the lash-driven tillers of the soil.' (1979: 305)

Rich described how, despite some 'distasteful language', she found reading Fanny Kemble 'an enlightening experience'. This was because 'she knew what racism was, analysing with sensitivity its effects upon the morale and psyche of free black people in the North, while unconscious of the extent to which her own language reflected her lingering allegiance to white racist culture' (1979: 305). Rich did not have the benefit of reading the biographies of Kemble that have been compiled more recently, so her suggestion that journals written by white as well as black women should be read as 'mutual history' was all the more radical. Recognizing the inability of an anti-slavery activist such as Kemble to grasp how racism still deformed her view of black people's humanity was an opportunity to learn. She pointed out that it was precisely Kemble's 'intelligence and depth of feeling, the authenticity of her anger and pain, which throw into unintentional relief the forms of racism she has *not* explored or encompassed in her defence of black people and her indictment of slavery' (1979: 306).

Rich's comments on Kemble's *Diary* suggest not that she was unique but that even those views considered unpalatable or anachronistic should not disqualify her work from being treated as an indispensable resource for feminist, anti-racist analysis. The journals of white women married to or daughters of slave-owning men supplied important texts that should not be dismissed as irrelevant any more than the narratives of slaves themselves.

Mary Chestnut was another example of a diarist whose anguished reflections provide 'one white woman's instinctive, undeveloped awareness of the connections between sexuality and racism under slavery' (Rich, 1979: 293). Rich brought this text directly into conversation with her audience by stating: 'Like some intelligent women today, whose writings reveal a partial, yet blocked,

feminism, she seems to pace back and forth, tormented, seeing and articulating just so far, helpless finally within the limits of her vision' (1979: 293).

Chestnut's 'turning and turning in her cage of bitter knowledge' was further illuminated by the testimonies of former slaves who described the various roles of the white mistress from a very different angle. Rich cited several passages illustrating Brent/Jacobs's detailed depiction of the 'black/white female cathexis' that existed in countless slave-owning households:

No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death ... The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feeling towards her but those of jealousy and rage (1979: 294).

Rather than see the two sets of voices as providing diametrically opposing perspectives, Rich emphasized 'the sexual, racial, and economic tangle' that ensnared all women, black and white, 'at the heart of their female existence' (1979: 294). It was this knot of interconnection that she urged her readers to explore within the context of their own lives as well as examining their 'mutual history' as Americans.

The concept of 'exploring racism' took root unevenly in the fertile soil of 1980s feminism. This had some unfortunate consequences. For one thing, it meant that white women were frequently discouraged from analysing racism, whether in a political or sociological vein, unless they first discussed their own formation as agents and beneficiaries of white supremacy and their complicity in all its manifestations (Eisenstein, 2001). This approach, characteristic of the turn towards identity-based politics, did little to address the guilt often induced by discussions of racism, which Rich castigated in the same essay as an insidious problem. 'A great deal of white feminist thinking and writing', she wrote, 'where it has attempted to address black women's experience, has

done so labouring under a massive burden of guilt feelings and false consciousness, the products of deeply-inculcated female self-blame, and of a history we have insufficiently explored' (Rich, 1979: 281; Ware, 1992: 229).

IV

We turn now to notable examples of feminists using autobiographical or auto-ethnographic methods to address the particular ways in which racialized and gendered identities were shaped in the experience of growing up in the US. An early example of this type of intervention was the volume *Yours in Struggle*, a collaboration between three women who described themselves as 'white Christian-raised Southerner, Afro-American and Ashkenazi Jew' (Bulkin et al., 1984). The brief introduction, written collectively, reveals the mode of thinking about identity, difference and separation that characterized feminist politics during that decade. The authors explained that 'we are all lesbians who have worked together politically and respect each other's work'. This book happened, they continue, 'because we were able to talk to each other in the first place, despite our very different identities and backgrounds. Each of us speaks only for herself, and we do not necessarily agree with each other. Yet we believe our cooperation on this book indicates concrete possibilities for coalition work' (Bulkin et al., 1984: 7).

Minnie Bruce Pratt's account of her upbringing, unhappy marriage and coming out as a lesbian is described in her essay 'Identity: Skin Blood Heart', which was an exemplary self-narration of a white lesbian caught up in a web of patriarchal, homophobic and racist oppression. Her account begins in the streets of Washington DC, where she lived at the time of writing, situating her contemporary self in the maelstrom of US racial politics in both intimate and unavoidable ways.

... when I walk out in my neighbourhood, each speaking-to another person has become fraught, for me, with the history of race and sex and class; as I walk I have a constant interior discussion with myself, questioning how I acknowledge the presence of another, what I know or don't know about them, and what it means how they acknowledge me. It is an exhausting process, this moving from the experience of the 'unknowing majority' (as Maya Angelou called it) into consciousness. It would be a lie to say this process is comforting. (Bulkin, 1984: 12)

Pratt is at pains to explain the conditions under which she began her journey to break free from 'the narrow circle of the self' (18). There are powerful descriptions of pivotal moments where she felt utterly confused, compromised or constrained, either in her relationship with her father or when living as a mother, wife and teacher in a military town. Inevitably she loses custody of her two sons, aged six and seven, when she leaves her husband for another woman: in her essay, this is rendered as an extraordinary passage that expresses the astonishing pain she experienced as a result (27). Retracing the steps that she took to break with her past illustrates the role that life-writing can play in the self-conscious process of transformation. 'How do we begin to change', she asks, 'and then keep going, and act on this in the world? How do we *want* to be different from what we have been?' (19, italics in original) For her it was the 'falling in love with and becoming sexual with another woman' that propelled her to jump 'outside herself', and through this new identity she came to understand, in 'a complicated way', the connections with racism and anti-semitism (19).

Pratt's method of self-disclosure entailed recounting her dreams and habitual fears of the consequences of criticizing the social norms that surrounded her during her upbringing. It meant openly assessing the behaviour of her parents, particularly her father, with whom she had been close. Writing about him from a distance meant betrayal as well as disentanglement, taking responsibility for denouncing the values

with which she had been raised as well as venting her anger.

In a passage towards the end of the essay she described two nightmares that gave shape to the psychological anguish produced by her break with family and culture. In the first she was left with a sense of rage and helplessness that forced her to acknowledge her 'responsibility for what the men of my culture have done, in my name' (53). In the dream her father had brought her an object, a box, which remained after he had gone. 'Why should I be left with this?' she asked herself. 'I'd done my best for years to try to reject it: I wanted no part of what was in it.' The visual and affective aspects of the sequence allowed Pratt to interpret what it might mean, providing a literary device to admit the psychic costs of betraying the culture of white supremacy:

And yet it is mine: I am my father's daughter in the present, living in a world he and my folks helped to create. A month after I dreamed this, he died; I honor the grief of his life by striving to change much of what he believed in: and my own grief by acknowledging that I saw him caught in the grip of racial, sexual, cultural fears that I am still trying to understand in myself. (Bulkin 1984: 53)

In the second nightmare Pratt experienced being shot in the head by a young white man who was driving a tractor. The unmistakable rural setting of white southern culture and the fact that he could have been 'any of the boys I went to high school with' made the encounter all the more shocking: 'he *looked at me*: he knew *who I was*, not just by my family, but by what kind of person I was, and he knew I was no longer on his side ...' (53, italics in original). The fact that he could identify her as a 'race traitor' despite both being classified as white summoned the terrors of violent punishment that were in store for women who declared 'not in my name'.

I have discussed the importance of the autobiographical voice in an essay written for a sociological collection on racialization (Murji and Solomos, 2004). I wrote that I

was specifically interested in stories told by adults where they recall the first time they became uncomfortably aware of being positioned within a racial, social order that required compliance and defied explanation. I was particularly interested in Mab Segrest, whose documentary account of work against Klan, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, turned into an examination of her own trajectory from Southern childhood to feminist selfhood in which her perspective as an anti-racist witness was inseparable from her politics of gender and sexuality. Her memoir also belongs within this reflection on feminist life-writing as a project of disentanglement and disloyalty.

Segrest, who was born in Alabama, worked as an organizer against the Far Right in the mid to late 1980s in North Carolina, where she lived. She located herself at the very start as southerner born and raised in the same soil that had produced the neo-Nazis and Klansmen as she set out to write what she thought of as 'objective' facts recording both random and routine racist crimes. 'I did so', she wrote, 'out of the certainty that, in the face of evil, good people do not respond because they can pretend they do not know' (Segrest, 1994: 1). But her attempts to be detached, to shape 'the procession of crisp black letters across the empty page', gradually induced a kind of madness. After she manifested both physical and mental symptoms of distress, she was forced to quit her work to find a more 'subjective' language inspired by poet Muriel Rukeyser's conception of 'unverifiable fact' (1994: 2). Searching for a different tone of voice, Segrest began to investigate her own upbringing within a dysfunctional family, determined to identify the sources of her terror and fury. Her memoir was a confrontation with her family history, knowing that, in the white household where she was raised, 'themes of race permeated our family interactions'. Life-writing for her was a way of revealing the pathologies of deep-seated racism within southern culture by showing a link between this personal life and the barbaric, systemic violence of white supremacy.

V

Although both Pratt and Segrest belong within a distinctive genealogy of lesbian feminist writers their work can also be read alongside a tradition of Southern autobiography as well. In a literary review of what he calls 'the white southern racial conversion narrative' Fred Hobson notes that 'The outburst of white southern autobiography driven by racial guilt, beginning shortly before mid-century, would continue for three decades, indeed still continues to a great degree' (Hobson, 1999: 15). Attributing this phenomenon to the emerging 'southern party of guilt', Hobson identifies the 'religious impulse' as the factor that spurred a new generation of whites to take social action against southern racial divisions. In the 1940s Lillian Smith, who was born in the Deep South in 1897, became the first American writer to embark on a psychological analysis of white racism. Her novel, *Strange Fruit*, was published in 1944 and became a best-seller, establishing her reputation as a controversial author. Her investigation into the mental and social structures of segregation, *Killers of the Dream*, was published in 1949 and later reissued with a new prologue during the civil rights movement (Smith, 1963; Ware, 2004).

Smith attracted controversy not merely because of her denunciation of the South's economic, political and social institutions and her views of the dehumanizing effects of segregation; she was also concerned to investigate the connections between racism and sexuality that lay at the heart of the culture, both in terms of her own experience as a woman but also as a way of comprehending the psychology of white supremacy. In a letter written a decade later she admitted that she wrote *Killers of the Dream* to give herself insight. 'I realized the symbolic significance of darkness, body openings ... I also stressed the inter-relationship between body image and Puritanism' (Gladney, 1993: 167). Her explorations into this analytical territory took her right back to her own childhood, as she

explained in the extract quoted earlier in this essay: 'I wrote it because I had to find out what life in a segregated culture had done to me, one person.' Her motives were not, of course, as narrow as this comment might suggest; the very first paragraph of her book evokes the terror of growing up in a community vibrating with the ominous rhythms of self destruction.

Even its children knew that the South was in trouble. No one had to tell them; no words said aloud. To them, it was a vague thing weaving in and out of their play like a ghost haunting an old graveyard or whispers after the whole household sleeps – fleeting mystery, vague menace to which each responds in his own way (Smith, 1963: 15).

As an essayist, novelist and outspoken activist against racial segregation, Smith is a significant figure in this discussion and her legacy is hard to compress. Deeply anti-fascist and anti-militarist, Smith was strongly against communism as well. This contrived to limit her appeal to socialist feminists in the 1980s, in spite of Rich's exhortation to go back to the past in order to address the 'sexual, racial and economic tangle' that stunted feminist politics. However, subsequent critics have traced Smith's antipathy to communism to her experience of travel outside the US as a young woman. Jay Garcia notes that during this time Smith 'became keenly aware of the portable nature of white supremacy and the everyday life of empire' (2008: 61). He cites as evidence an extract from an autobiographical sketch entitled 'A Skeleton Chronology of the Big Experiences of My Life: 1922–1925': 'China took my mind in its 3000-year-old grasp and shook it hard until it sloughed off a great deal of Western custom and habit and [I] began for the first time in my life to think critically, to question' (Smith, nd). Smith attributed one particular incident to her epiphany. It occurred when she witnessed a British policeman lashing a 'Chinese coolie' in broad daylight. 'My mind tore wide open', she wrote. 'It has never closed up since' (Garcia, 2008: 61).

This brief discussion indicates the value of assessing Smith's work in the broader context of the global anti-colonial struggles taking place in the period between the outbreak of war in 1939 and her death in 1966. Her lifelong interest in Gandhi and Tagore, explored in depth by Garcia, suggests that her autobiographical insights into southern culture, the politics of her location, can be read as part of a worldly exchange. It is possible, for example, that Smith's advocacy of disloyalty to civilization was influenced by Virginia Woolf's formulation of 'unreal loyalties' (Gladney, 1993: 51, 137). As Garcia observes, 'Smith's humanism involved moral decision making and a distinctive style and artistic cadence, with the "human" serving as a salient moral category, a form of cultural address, and a horizon of social transformation' (2008: 59).

VI

Although there is no evidence that Smith was in dialogue with anti-apartheid activists, her analysis of segregation, and of white supremacy in particular, had profound resonance in South Africa. We turn now to a more recent generation of autobiographical writing in the context of apartheid and its aftermath. In a collection entitled *Senses of Culture*, published in 2000, Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael suggested that life-writing had become more of a cultural activity than a literary convention. 'Memoir, reminiscence, confession, testament, case history and personal journalism, all different kinds of autobiographical acts or cultural occasions in which narrators take up models of identity that have become widely available, have pervaded the culture of the 1990s and have spread into the new century' (2000: 298). They offered an analysis of the way that so many South African writers, their opinions, identities and subjectivities suppressed for decades under apartheid rule, had begun to tell 'stories of the self in public' as a means to create a new pluralist cultural space (2000: 317).

Almost a decade later Nuttall elaborated on the concept of entanglement, defining the term as a condition of being ‘twisted together or entwined, involved with’, but one that was especially useful since it ‘works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication’ (Nuttall 2009: 1). In an essay entitled ‘Secrets and Lies’ she turned to the representation of whiteness in ‘autobiographical acts’ and other self-narratives in order to explore processes not just of entanglement but also of its opposite, disentanglement. By this she referred to the process of extracting the self from whiteness ‘in its official fictions and material trajectories, its privileges and access to power, now in an emerging context of black political power in South Africa’ (2009: 59).

Nuttall argues that the question of selfhood in first-person narratives offers a way of undoing the foreclosures of race, of keeping race open as a practice in the making. ‘In tracing subjectivity through first person narratives, that is, a way can be found of avoiding the ossification of racial scripts, or maintaining economies of meaning based on “absolute figures” of whites and blacks’ (2009: 59). Understanding whiteness as a locus of power and privilege relies on two strata of analysis. The first attempts to unravel the scopoc economy of looking and watching while the second seeks to expose the web of deceit, secrecy and fabrication on which whiteness has come to rely. The process of watching the self, writes Nuttall, emerges not least through the self-conscious process of a certain mode of autobiographical writing itself. While her whole book is concerned with the cultural politics of the post-apartheid period she begins her discussion with a consideration of Ruth First’s prison memoir entitled *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation Under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law*. She does this in the belief that this particular text provides ‘an important template and historical reference point for the 1980s and beyond’ (2009: 60).

First was one of South Africa’s best-known activists and intellectuals during the war against apartheid. Born in 1925, she was imprisoned for her political beliefs and activities and then exiled from South Africa in 1964 along with her husband, the prominent South African communist Joe Slovo, and their children. Writing in 1969, she explained how her life was dedicated ‘to the liberation of Africa for I count myself an African, and there is no cause I hold dearer’. She was killed by a parcel bomb in 1982 while in Maputo. Nuttall analyses her memoir, written in detention in the 1960s, noting that it is ‘an acute account of the self under mental and physical duress’ (2009: 60). It is also, she continues, ‘a striking examination of “political whiteness”, a term she uses in the text and an identity she assumes and gives content to at the height of apartheid’s brutal rule’ (60).

In First’s memoir the concept of political whiteness becomes evident through this language of watching, expressed through a degree of self-consciousness underlined by frequent qualifying clauses such as, ‘I told myself’. Nuttall writes: ‘First engages in watching the self as a white self within a conscious political process of trying to become someone else.’ The penalties of disavowing the privilege and power endowed to those born with white skins threatened to place the white anti-apartheid activist into a schizophrenic position. Here she refers to the work of Fanon, who identified the importance of looking and watching as a form of ‘racial scopophilia: sets of racially coded solicited and unsolicited looks, caught in the tension of demand and desire, and also a site of splitting’ (2009: 61).

The gender dynamic of making whiteness ‘political’ can also be linked to a broader feminist analysis of ‘the gaze’. Nuttall points out that, while the work of Berger, Irigaray and others has explored the way that women ‘watch themselves being looked at’, First was concerned to invert this visual objectification, pointing out as a matter of principle how others might see her as a white woman. She also applied this way of seeing to her

descriptions of anyone whose whiteness was linked to their position of relative power. In one example cited by Nuttall she wrote about her work for the Johannesburg city council researching 'the number of supervisors for (white) children in (white) parks' (2009: 62).

While First was writing as an adult, her daughter Gillian Slovo's autobiography, published in 1997, reveals what it was like for a child to be raised with a profound consciousness that whiteness was entirely constructed and that to be white was to assume a fake identity. Slovo's memoir, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country*, also discussed by Nuttall, provides a fascinating comparison with feminist life-writing produced in the US. Where feminists such as Pratt and Segrest were forced to reckon with their location in the deeply segregationist South, unpeeling layers of socialization in the course of their activism (a task in which life-writing played a major part), Slovo was in a position to recall the effects of not being permitted to think of herself as white despite being seen as white by others. Nuttall explains:

Her childhood ... was marked by a sense of exclusion. One of her fears was that she would be 'found out', would reveal the secret of who she was – to other whites. The secret, that is, that she was not 'white like them' or in the sense that they were, that she was, as she writes, 'passing for white'; an imposter. (2009: 62)

Comparing the texts provided by mother and daughter produced at different stages of the struggle to dismantle apartheid becomes even richer when placed alongside the memoir of Joe Slovo, who was married to First and the father of Gillian. Although it is difficult to do justice to Nuttall's discussion of these three self-narratives within one family in the context of South African literary conventions, it is worth noting the difference that gender seems to make in terms of formulating a political distance from white identity. In Joe Slovo's book *Unfinished Autobiography* there is an 'overarching, theological commitment to the political struggle' which makes the question of

identity almost redundant (2009: 64). There is a sense in which 'Slovo appears to abolish the question of the white self and notions of selfhood embedded in looking and watching' (64). Both he and First spent a large part of their lives in hiding because of their political and military activities, but this produced different modes of relating to the self that was being hidden (or kept under surveillance). While First accentuated her self-consciousness in her writing, for Joe Slovo, 'a working-class Lithuanian Jewish refugee', the practice of concealing the self meant 'discarding or disavowing certain forms of self-consciousness' (2009: 65). Avoiding the simplistic notion that the discrepancy between the two strategies was due solely to the predispositions of gender, Nuttall speculates that it was likely also to have been the result of specific political and class histories.

Placing these situated accounts together makes it possible to glimpse the configurations of class, gender and whiteness that emerged within a particular segment of political life and culture, one in which activists 'believed powerfully in, and acted upon, a political credo in which race would be erased' (2009: 65). They form an important chapter of the literary and cultural history of South Africa, and offer a way of reading the past that is able to animate those struggles by revealing the psychological costs as well as the penalties of disavowing whiteness. Turning to more recent examples of the use of self-narrative to avoid 'the ossification of racial scripts', Nuttall discusses a hugely significant and successful example of early post-apartheid autobiographical writing provided by Antjie Krog, whose work we encountered at the start of this essay.

VII

Krog's documentation of the early days of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Country of My Skull*, was an international bestseller (Krog 1999). The text, published

in 1998, comprises several distinct genres, from biographical writing through the recording of testimony before the TRC to the autobiography of Krog herself, although this is sometimes fictionalized; ‘at other times it is written in the style of personal journalism; at certain moments it moves into poetry’ (Nuttall, 2009: 65). Krog’s exploration of powerful emotional and psychological reactions to the Truth Commission’s work is compiled almost as a journey; her book is dedicated to ‘every victim who had an Afrikaner surname on her lips’. As Nuttall points out, she knows that her language, Afrikaans, ‘carries violence as a voice’, but she turns to the rhythms and sounds of Afrikaans almost as a litany when she confronts her visceral hatred of Afrikaner men such as Dirk Coetzee, leader of the Vlakplaas hit squad, whose crimes were laid bare by the commission. In spite of her unequivocal disloyalty to the civilization founded on the principles of apartheid her desire to recognize and record the evil they stood for is tempered by a curiosity to know what motivated their ruthless behaviour. Thus she introduces ‘an ethnic specificity into her engagement with her whiteness’, making it seem as though, sometimes, it is as if whiteness hardly exists for her (2009: 66). As Nuttall observes, it was her Afrikaner identity that ‘shapes her most profound responses’ (2009: 67). This is an important point, she argued, in a context where ‘the process of living certain identities turns not only around self-identification but around the continual identification of the self by others’ (2009: 67).

One of the main themes of the book is the bleak possibility that the country would not be able to move beyond hatred and resentment. In the face of devastating evidence provided by the testimonies, Krog writes openly of her intermittent longing for an essence of Afrikanerhood that is wholesome, non-racist, forgiven, while knowing in her heart that this is not possible. This reluctant yearning comes from a growing despair that the TRC was

simply not equipped to deal with the twin issues of reparation and reconciliation.

And suddenly it is as if an undertow is taking me out ... out ... and out. And behind me sinks the country of my skull like a sheet in the dark – and I hear a thin song, hooves, hedges of venom, fever and destruction fermenting and hissing underwater. I shrink and prickle. Against. Against my blood and the heritage thereof. Will I forever be them – recognising them as I do daily in my nostrils? Yes. And what we have done will never be undone. It doesn’t matter what we do. What de Klerk does. Until the third and fourth generation. (1999: 197)

This agonized recognition that there would be no absolution, no catharsis and only a partial reconciliation underscored the message that there would also be no place for a habitable, forgiven version of white ethnicity, whether Afrikaner or English. She recalls an earlier interview with Desmond Tutu where he tells her that if you don’t know the past you will never understand today’s politics. Then she describes an incident where a friend who had emigrated visited her in her office. The friend took a phone call and told her: ‘It’s your child. He says he’s writing a song about Joe Mamasela and he needs a word to rhyme with “Vlakplaas”.’ She lowers the phone. ‘Who is Joe Mamasela?’

A massive sigh breaks through my chest. For the first time in months – I breathe.

The absolution one had given up on, the hope for a catharsis, the ideal of reconciliation, the dream of a powerful reparation policy ... Maybe this is all that is important – that I and my child know Vlakplaas and Mamasela. That we know what happened there. (1999: 198–9)

I suggest that Krog’s method here provides an example of what Wolff might recognize as ‘autobiographical interruption’, discussed above. Although working as a radio reporter, there was no possibility of remaining impartial or objective in the face of the testimonies she was recording. Her subjective reflections provide an ‘oblique gaze’ on the material being gathered through the TRC

while the format of memoir, sometimes fictionalized, supplies her cultural and social analysis with an immediacy it might not otherwise have had (Wolff, 1995: 48).

Krog's second book, *A Change of Tongue*, took the form of a series of auto-ethnographic essays in which she engaged once again with issues of identity and belonging, grounded in her own formation as an ethnic Afrikaner, a writer and a South African citizen committed to bearing witness to the crimes and atrocities committed in her lifetime and in her name. Where *Country of My Skull* mixed reportage, testimony, poetry, fiction, memoir and history, Krog's palette in the second book became even more chaotic as she explored multiple layers of memory work in the context of a society under transformation. The title 'a change of tongue' refers not just to the aftermath of revolution but also to the linguistic concept of Transformational Grammar. Her epigraph states that 'Some rules, according to Noam Chomsky, are transformational: that is, they change one structure into another according to such prescribed conventions as moving, inserting, deleting, and replacing items ...' (Krog, 2003:)

Once again, by weaving her subjective experience into an disparate mix of material, she draws readers into the heart of the political struggle to remake South Africa. At one point in the compilation of the book a virus wiped out the hard drive of Krog's computer. Devastated by the news that she had lost everything – 'poems, lectures, essays, creative pieces spanning nearly ten years, the chapters on poetry in African languages, the half-finished Afrikaans translation of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*, a recent play in pentameters ...' (2003: 91)– she suffered a mild stroke. As she recovered her health, and the young technician began to fax her some recovered fragments of her hard drive, she started to piece together her own thoughts by rereading the testimonies she collected while covering the TRC. These retrieved pieces were not completely intact, as they contained elements of code that were unreadable. Krog reproduces the text in all

its undecipherability, with the effect that the spoken words of the women and men giving their testimony retain their power to shock in a way that might become muted in a conventional page of text. She also makes a profound point about language itself. As Motha explains: 'Language is one contested and complex site of becoming. The Constitution guarantees 11 languages, but English is in the ascendant' (2010: 288–9).

Towards the end of *Begging to Be Black* Krog engages in a final conversation with the professor with whom she has been in dialogue for several months. He asks, unexpectedly, whether she is writing a novel. This provides an opportunity for Krog to articulate her thoughts on the limits of the imagination, saying, shockingly, that she considers it 'overrated'. In reply to another question about whether literature has failed her she is forced to confront her own limits as a writer: 'I think I am saying that in a country where we have come from different civilizations, then lived apart in unequal and distorted relationships that formed generations of us, our imagination is simply not capable of imagining a reality as – or with – the other' (2009: 268).

As a result of her conversations, the fruits of her daydreaming, not just in a foreign land but in one struggling to come to terms with its own past, she tells him that she was no longer worried about not being able to imagine what it might mean to be black, a probable prerequisite for writing fiction set in South Africa. Pressed to continue, she adds that to imagine black, at this stage, is to 'insult black'. That is why she stays with non-fiction, 'listening, engaging, observing, translating, until one can hopefully begin to sense a thinning of skin, negotiate possible small openings at places where imaginings can begin to begin' (2009: 268).

VIII

Commenting on Krog's project in *Begging to Be Black*, Motha draws attention to the question that underpins her work: 'What mode of

becoming ... might secure a postcolonial future?" (Motha, 2010). He interprets her quest for what he calls 'being-becoming' as a more general epistemic and ontological problem that lies at the heart of all transformative politics. In doing so, he emphasizes the radical possibilities of listening to stories in order to become. By such a process, he suggests, Krog opens 'a liminal space' (300). He defines liminality as:

the space of a movement, contact with an outside, un-homing and re-homing at the same time. The liminal space is hazardous, the site of risk, exposure but also opening the possibility of sharing, being-with, refusing the safety of clear positions and certain outcomes. (2010: 300)

Attempting a more thorough critique of Krog's epistemological project than is possible here, Motha's definition of this liminal space of being-becoming evokes the territory to which I have been drawn in my own meditation on life-writing as a means to free oneself from that 'bitter cage of knowledge' held in place by white supremacy. Where I began with a focus on life-writing as an exploration of estrangement, entanglement, disentanglement and dislocation, I end with a simple sense of movement. Writing, writingly, as Krog puts it, is itself a journey that entails a 'thinning of skin, a 'dissolving into', whether as a process of transformation or 'being-with'. As her work inspires new directions for writers intrepid enough to venture into this uncertain territory, we are entitled to ask how feminism has contributed to and enriched the writerly imaginations of those who have been able to disrupt such provocative terms as 'raced' and 'unraced' that we noted at the start of this chapter.

'A movement for change, lives in feelings, actions and words', wrote Adrienne Rich, while, for Lillian Smith, being in a dialogue with oneself entailed a radical disloyalty to civilization. For Smith, as for many others who have been committed to this path, writing as exploration 'has to true itself with facts but also with feelings and symbols, and memories that are never quite

facts but sometimes closer to the "truth" than is any fact' (1963: 3).

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Making Memory Work for Feminist Theory

Anna Reading

INTRODUCTION

Someone, I say, will remember us. (Sappho, sixth century BC)

Sappho was confident that someone would remember us despite the fact that women's contributions, as now, were subject to erasure (Jarratt, 2002). As Kate Chedgzoy notes, 'feminist scholarship is itself a work of memory that has retrieved many women from oblivion as historical actors and recorders. Its very existence bears witness to the gendered and power-laden dynamics of remembering and forgetting' (Chedgzoy, 2007: 216). But, as Chedgzoy also recognizes, this is not simply a question of being remembered or not but also how and in what forms women and men are remembered: Sappho and her poetry are remembered arguably because, unusually for the time, she wrote down her poetry, rather than relying on the older technologies of oral culture (Lardinois, 2007). However, within the relatively new field of Memory Studies works by women scholars that illuminate

aspects of gender and women's oppression have often been overlooked: women's contributions are 'almost entirely absent' from key works that include Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* and the *Lieux de Memoire* project by Pierre Nora (Chedgzoy, 2007: 216). Out of a total of eighty extracts in *The Collective Memory Reader* (Olick et al., 2011) there are just thirteen that involve women as either primary or secondary authors in one major collection. Only exceptionally have collections included a more gender-balanced recognition of women's contributions to memory studies as well as particular theoretical sections on work on gender and how this intersects with other identities (Rossington and Whitehead, 2007). Yet, within Memory Studies, research that has explicitly addressed questions of gender has tended to be viewed as less significant than other research on memory that has addressed national identity or traumatic memory. Nevertheless, there is a long etiology of feminist work that addresses gender and memory which provides important tools and insights for feminist epistemology

and particular approaches connecting individual women's oppression with collective experiences within patriarchal societies. Thus, this chapter seeks to foreground the issues raised for feminist theory and for feminist academics by examining a range of theoretical approaches to memory from feminist theory as well those from what is now the field of Memory Studies. It also seeks to highlight what remains problematic and unresolved within research on memory in terms of its implications for knowledge practices within feminist theory.

The chapter opens with a reconsideration of earlier feminist thinkers and their theorizations of the significance of the past, as well as the work of those who sought to use memory as a tool for women's liberation from oppression. The chapter then provides a discussion of key turning points, problematics and paradigms within feminist theories of memory and work on gender in the field of Memory Studies that offer important insights for our understanding of gender, especially in terms of culture and representation. These have emerged from a concern with memory and gender in a range of disciplines that includes psychoanalysis and psychology, sociology, literary and historical studies, and media and cultural studies. I then appraise the development of feminist memory studies from within gender and women's studies, as well signalling the importance of work that has come out of the development of non-Western ideas of memory that offer new conceptualizations and approaches to feminist theory. Finally, the chapter examines an emergent theoretical trend that is seeking to understand how gender and memory are articulated trans-nationally through the dynamics of globalization and digitization.

Memory Studies, like Gender Studies, has developed as an interdisciplinary field that includes a variety of analytical, conceptual and methodological approaches. The study and analysis of memory has been an important component of much theoretical work throughout the twentieth century, with the academic study of memory over the past twenty years having grown especially out of media and

cultural studies, holocaust studies, psychology, literary studies, sociology and history. Studies of gender within Memory Studies and the development of what may be termed feminist memory studies, it is argued in this chapter, extend the conceptualization of gender around issues of representation beyond and across the conventional categories of text, production and consumption. In addition, emergent work on gender and memory addresses the ways in which gender is being articulated within new dynamics of digital media technologies and globalization. The chapter begins with early feminist theories of memory; it then shows how memory work can offer complex understandings and innovative methodological approaches, as well as difficulties in the understanding of gender in relation to both individual and collective trauma such as sexual abuse and genocide. Conceptually, Memory Studies offers not just a view of how feminists can understand who is left out of history, for what reasons and when, but also includes explanations for broader continuities and/or transformations in patriarchy at the social, political, cultural and literary levels through its varied conceptualizations of 'collective memory'. Since no single chapter can include all that one would like, the focus here is on the key conceptualizations of traumatic memory, social memory, collective memory, historical, literary and cultural memory, and post-colonial and digital memory to reveal what these in particular can offer that is distinct for feminist theorization and research. The chapter ends with a consideration of how new directions within Memory Studies arising out of post-colonial theory, as well as digital media theory, proffer new theoretical approaches to globalization and digitization that seek to capture the movements and trajectories of memory in relation to gender.

EARLY FEMINIST THEORIES OF MEMORY

The political philosophy that emanated from what has been termed 'The Enlightenment'

of Europe and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or what some historians now term the long eighteenth century, was important in providing some, albeit partial, insights into how the concept of memory began to be used to explain women's oppression. Theoretical antecedents can be observed in the campaigns around the globe for women to inherit property, which included the understanding of the social, cultural and economic impact of the denial of inheritance on women's lived lives. These campaigns are echoed in contemporary struggles globally for indigenous land rights and the return of native title, in which women activists have drawn on the importance of memory of the land, and their relationship to it, as part of their claims (Burnett, 2011; Goodall, 2001). One Palawa woman activist, Mrs F. Gardiner, from Tasmania, her people having been subjected to genocide by the British, argued: 'We are claiming land rights, what is wrong with that, it is our ancestors calling from their graves' (cited in Haebich, 2000: 76). Similarly, political debates begun in the nineteenth century in Europe and the US to enable a woman to keep her surname within patrilineal cultures were centred on the axiom that what appeared to be a merely nominative problem – the loss of one's name of birth with marriage – resulted in the woman's natal history not only being forgotten within family memories but also being erased from public records and archives which then underpinned the androcentric bias of public memory. However, it is Mary Wollstonecraft's pioneering work at the end of the eighteenth century that offered the beginnings of a theoretical understanding, although essentially an elitist one, of the significance of the social inheritance of particular aspects of religion to women's oppression. Wollstonecraft argued that religious memories in British society were being used to oppress women, but that a better knowledge of history for middle-class women could liberate them. The literary memory of the Bible, she argued, was mobilized within patriarchy to legitimize keeping women

within the domestic sphere. To counter this, Wollstonecraft, now somewhat contentiously, suggested that there would need to be the broader teaching of history and the formal education of women in an understanding of the public past. This memory of the past would then provide some form of limited liberation for women. In a chapter on National Education in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft sets out what she sees are the important elements of education for mixed schools for girls and boys. Following her earlier arguments that women have been kept in a state of ignorance, which included ignorance of the past and of history, she advocates the importance of teaching 'history and the history of man (sic)' to boys and girls up until the age of nine. But the conceptual problem for feminist theory is that Wollstonecraft saw no need to extend this teaching of the past to all young women and men: rather, beyond the age of nine, history would only be for 'young people of superior abilities'. Those intended for practical employment would learn their trades, while the select few would be taught 'the dead and living languages' and 'continue the study of history and politics' (1985: 287). She concluded: 'It is plain from the history of all nations, that women cannot be confined to merely domestic pursuits, for they will not fulfil family duties, unless their minds take a wider range' (1985: 294). Wollstonecraft's theoretical approach is illustrative of how memory, understood to be synonymous with history here, has been mobilized within feminist political theory for the benefit of the few: in this case it is not women, but only middle-class girls and women, whom Wollstonecraft advocates should benefit from the legacies of historical inheritance. In addition, Wollstonecraft does not acknowledge that it might take more than simply the teaching of 'the history of man' to women, since what they would learn might provide them with only a partial view of the past, rather than one that also included the history of women. Wollstonecraft also does not acknowledge the complexities of religious

practice at the time, which was highly divided along denominational lines as a result of the Reformation (MacCulloch, 2010), with religious memory in Britain a much more complex interplay and intermingling of landscape and social factors than she allowed (Walsham, 2012).

This eighteenth-century elitist paradigm for explaining how memory is mobilized in relation to gender was then partly nudged beyond its selective middle-class foci within the empirical memory projects and theorizations of nineteenth-century British feminist reformers. They argued that the significance of memory to women's struggles for equality was located not in providing androcentric history for already privileged girls but in giving voice to and documenting working-class women's stories that were given no voice within culture and which went undocumented within public histories of the time. Thus, in England, Josephine Butler recorded five short life-stories of sex workers dying from venereal disease and poverty so that their lives would be remembered rather than being erased from the public and national memory. The mini-biographies were published as a series, 'The Dark Side of English Life', in *The National League Journal and Methodist Protest* in 1877. Both of these publications campaigned for the repeal of England's Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869, which allowed for the forced routine medical examination of sex workers (see Jordan, 2006; Starkey, 2006). In this way, Victorian feminists made important connections between an activist's understanding of the significance of memory as biography and the importance of public memory through documentation, the work providing a theoretical antecedent to the development of approaches in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in which women within the academy and feminist activists have sought to capture, document, preserve and celebrate women's life stories as history.

However, what is notably absent from these earlier accounts is a more complex sense of the collective impact of memory or

how socially inherited and cultural memories of the past could provide an explanation for both continuity and disjuncture in patriarchy. There is also no explanation of any kind of dialogical relationship between individual and collective memories. This idea – of how micro and macro memories can work together, or be in contradiction with each other, or serve to mobilize particular aspects of gendered identities – was then determined by a number of sources, one of which was the work of the social theorist and existential philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Her work proposes that the wider constraints of history, the dominant narratives of an epoch or era, provide for the particular dynamics of women's oppression, as well as the motivations and mobilizations against that oppression, within an individual woman's life. For example, after the Algerian War (1954–62) and the revelation of atrocities that included collective punishment through sexual violence against women committed by French forces, de Beauvoir wrote: 'I felt the war inside me again, all wars, all the things that tear us apart' (cited by Lawson, 2002: 125). To de Beauvoir, the social memory of the repeated rape of Algerian women implicates her, making her both a witness and an accomplice, resulting in the motivation and mobilization for collective protest against French colonialism that ruptures her national identity as a French woman: 'I needed my self-esteem to go on living, but I was seeing myself through the eyes of women who had been raped twenty times, of men with broken bones, of crazed children. A French Woman' (cited in Lawson, 2002: 126). De Beauvoir's theoretical approach is self-reflexive in that she articulates her theory of the importance of witnessing and secondary witnessing to women's identity through her own use of the form of the memoir: in this way she draws attention to the significance of memory to women's subjectivity within her own writing and to us as readers. In *La Vieillesse* she extends Jean-Paul Dealy's work on memory, making the distinction between three kinds of memory: sensor-motor

memory, autistic or unconscious memory, and social memory (cited in Lawson, 2002: 385). To de Beauvoir, it is social memory that is most important to understanding women's oppression since it through this that past events are reconstructed and facts are mobilized in the present to tell the 'proper' story of history that then polices women's life-chances. This, as Tidd notes, 'is the logical position given that her notion of selfhood implies being in the world with others' (Tidd, 2004: 204, n.23).

Reconnecting these theorizations of the significance of memory to contemporary feminist theory provides some of the ground work for feminist scholars to consider the different ways in which individual memories, significant in a woman's gendered identity formation, then also register as intersectional collective social inheritances that may have contradictory effects: collective memories can oppress women but also could be used as a form of women's liberation and for creating a more equal world. As we shall see, these two dynamics are at play in the more explicit theorizations of gender and memory studies that have since emerged from other distinct disciplines and approaches, each with their own particular methodologies.

LITERARY AND CULTURAL MEMORY

A substantial element of the feminist project for feminist literary historians has involved the recovery and reclamation of women's texts that have been forgotten by the literary canon, as well as the development of a theoretical understanding of why it is that so much of women's writing vanishes from mainstream culture (Showalter, 2009). Joanna Russ, in *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1983), outlined eleven mechanisms through which women's writing becomes lost, including 'false categorization', 'anomalously', 'denial of agency' and the actual banning of women's work (Russ, 1983). Mary Daly's *Outcourse* (1993) proposed a radical form of 're-membering' as a tool to

dismantle the particular cultural and literary myths of patriarchy that serve to oppress women. Literary memory also has as its specific focus of study on the meanings constructed through the literary text, and seeks to find out the various ways in which the literary texts of a particular epoch may represent aspects of the past. For feminist theory in the area of representation especially, an approach from the perspective of literary memory enables scholars to examine the continuities and changes in fictional representations of women, of femininities and masculinities, and of gender and sexuality over time and within particular literary contexts in terms of genre, theme or national cultures. Hence in the now-classic work *Writing War: Fiction, Gender and Memory*, in which the opening analysis considers how literature articulates gendered memories of the First World War, Liz Hanley writes, 'Cannons and Canons have more in common than the accident of sounding alike' (1991: 18). Faith Beasley's (1990) work on the literary memory of seventeenth-century France revised accounts of the period through re-including marginalized women's fiction and memoirs into the canon. Her work provides feminist theory with an approach to literary texts that seeks to understand the significance of the gender of the mode of production as well as aspects of consumption, including how literature about war is marketed in ways that sediment women's oppression through the valorization of men's 'active' role in defending the nation.

A concern with literature and literary memory in relation to gender was similarly brought together in a collection by Jon Neubauer and Helga Geyer-Ryan in 1997, although this work went much further than the previous text in its thinking. It argued that, since men and women assume different cultural and social roles, both their way of remembering and what they remember may be different. The approach suggests how literary memory can provide for feminist theory a way that seeks to understand the dialectical relationships between women,

men, historical events and how they are represented in literary texts and, subsequently, how those texts shape men and women's memories and identities (Neubauer and Geyer-Ryan, 1997).

The wider conceptual framework of cultural memory, rather than the more limited one of literary memory, does something similar, but while it might include the analysis of gender representations within literary texts over time, it assumes that these are better understood through broader cultural articulations that may include performance, dance, museums, music and the arts. For feminist theory, cultural memory research offers an approach that seeks to understand the meanings, silences and tropes in wider cultural discourses in terms of the ways in which they not only represent women and women's history but also thereby frame and create gendered social and cultural relations through our consumption and cultural memory of them.

The advent of a particular concern with gender using the idea of cultural memory was initiated by a special issue of *Signs* edited by Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith (2002b). Within this collection, cultural memory is organized around what is now perceived to be a rather limited binary approach, in which women's perspectives on the past provide a 'counter-memory' to androcentric cultural memories. Nevertheless, the overall idea of cultural memory is important in providing an approach that considers how individual gender performances are enacted through narrative and meaning derived from aspects of the past. Thus Faith Beasley's *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in 17th Century France*, demonstrates how the idea of cultural memory can provide an understanding of how gendered mythical stories within national cultures are mobilized and disarticulated over time. Najmabadi's (1998) analysis of a story in Iranian culture known as 'The Daughters of Quchan' traces how it rose and fell in cultural memory: in 1906, the year just before Iranian constitutional reformation, the story of the capture and sale of Iranian girls

and women by Turkoman tribesmen came into public consciousness and in the following year, with the opening of the new Iranian parliament, it led to demands for public justice. Yet, despite being a dominant public story at the time, it subsequently became disarticulated within Iranian national memory. Thus the study shows how, within cultural memory, gendered stories are both mobilized and marginalized within the creation of national cultures. What is or what is not remembered is crucial to the configuration and development of gendered identities, as well as, within culture and societies more broadly, to understanding how gender is bound up with power (Hirsch and Smith, 2002a). What a cultural memory paradigm also reveals is how memories are assigned value in different cultural contexts, with particular memories that threaten or promote gendered social cohesion disarticulated. Cultural memories of societal trauma show, for example, that memories that demonstrate a return to 'normal' gendered identities come to dominate, while those that threaten gendered identities and relationships in the present, such as stories of rape and sexual violence, may remain disarticulated for many decades (Reading, 2002).

Although cultural memory studies have developed key understandings of the ways in which memory articulates gendered identities (Keightley, 2011; Cooper, 2011) most studies, regardless of the disciplinary origin from which they have emerged, have tended to be framed within a paradigm in which questions of gender are reduced to focusing on women's memories. Thus Paletschek and Schraut's important edited collection, *The Gender of Memory: Cultures of Remembrance in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe* (2008), largely examines women's cultures of memory within the context of the development and transformation of nation states in Europe. Furthermore, what the various approaches discussed so far have in common, whether historical or literary, is an approach to gender and memory that situates the individual within a collective that is

assumed to be nationally bounded: theoretically, cultural memory is framed in terms of a national collective in relation to the individual which is largely subjected to narrative or meaning-based analysis (Jacobs, 2010; Paletscheck and Schraut, 2008).

MEMORY, SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Memory Studies that are psychological or psychoanalytic in approach provide insights into understanding how gender is constituted through women's consciousness, recollection, repression and trauma as part of the development of gendered sexuality within patriarchy. The reinterpretation by Nancy Chodorow of the role of the significance of memory in terms of the unconscious and how the infantile relationship with the mother is important results in a unique memory of intimacy that individuals tend to recreate. In particular, Chodorow provided an analysis of memory in terms of the relationship between the unconscious and conscious mind and how this is played out differently for men and women in terms of the individuation of the gendered self and our sexuality (1999). While some argued that her work could be used to establish the distinct identity of women's writing and representation (Gardiner, 1981), there is also a strong tradition of feminist psychoanalytical criticism that is not reliant on Chodorow (see, for example, Felman, 1987; Gilbert and Gubar, 1979), that sees her work as overly simplistic because it misses out the role of the father and reduces the psychic to the social (Eliot, 1991).

Other groundbreaking theoretical work on gender and memory from a psychological or psychoanalytical approach derives from an empirical focus on child sexual abuse and the impact traumatic memories have on women's subsequent lived experience of gendered identities as part of continuing structural oppression within the family and society. Psychological studies have examined how,

for example, women's testimonies of sexual abuse are frequently minimized or completely denied. This empirical research offers a description of how, within patriarchal societies, there is a bias against the veracity of women's personal memories: various mechanisms prevent women's witnessing of abuse becoming accepted as public testimony, which then serves to reinforce women's oppression (Herman, 1992; Haaken, 1998). We see such processes at work within the continuation of debates concerning 'rape culture', in which women's accounts of rape or assault are ignored through the institutional sexist bias of political parties, which ignore women's stories, the police, who seek to make women retract their stories, and the courts, which seek to demolish women witnesses of rape and sexual assault.

These processes have been played out within the academy and the medical profession: there was a backlash against the significance and veracity of women's accounts of sexual abuse within broader psychoanalytical theory through the development in the early 1990s of the concept of 'False Memory Syndrome' (FMS), which was directed against feminist empirical and theoretical work. In the FMS debates survivors were accused of having 'false memories' of sexual abuse planted into them by unscrupulous therapists. This was in itself a replay of earlier backlashes within patriarchy against women's memories of abuse that threatened the established order, as identified by Jeffrey Masson (1985) in the trajectory of Sigmund Freud's work at the beginning of the twentieth century. Freud, Masson argued, fearing the approbation of the Viennese medical community, abandoned his original thesis that his female patients' traumas were the result of repressed memories of real sexual abuse. Instead he developed the thesis that his female patients' traumas were the result of fantasies created by the female patients' unconscious (1985).

However, the FMS backlash then led into a more nuanced approach within later work on memories of sexual abuse (Haaken, 2010).

This subsequent research maintained that it is important to acknowledge and understand why women's testimonies of remembered child sexual abuse often include ambivalence and dilemma: 'acknowledging an element of ambiguity in recollected past episodes is crucial to maintaining a sense of agency in the present' (Reavey and Brown, 2009: 5). For feminist theory such work has been important in providing an analysis of the significance of agency in the process of telling the past. Memory is not simply about recalling what happened: men and women may recall events differently and show different kinds of agency in terms of how they then articulate them in different ways in relation to cultural and social obstacles (Reavey and Brown, 2009: 24). Research on memories of sexual abuse also provides insights into how we might conceptualize the connections between the micro elements of women's familial oppression, the development of gender roles and the wider context of women's oppression. For example, in Janice Haaken's idea of 'transformative remembering' she shows how in the telling and retelling of stories of sexual abuse women's individual experience becomes understood by women as linked to wider social and economic issues that then in turn changes the woman's self-representation (Haaken, 1998).

The other key approach that derives from research on sexuality is the work conducted by Frigga Haug in *Female Sexualisation: A Collective Work of Memory* (1987). This research, led by a collective of West German women in the 1980s, entailed groups of individual women writing their personal memoirs over a period of two years in which they detailed their developing sexuality from childhood into adulthood. The women's life-narratives were then subjected to the collective critique of the other women in the study, who interrogated the gaps, silences, collective context and wider meanings of their stories. The research led to the specific conceptualisation of what was termed 'memory work', which is now an established methodology of investigation; for feminist theory it provides

'a bridge to span the gap between theory and experience' (1987: 14). 'Memory work' as a methodology seeks to mobilize memory collectively to 'chart the experience of women through discourse, via their subjective experience of the body' (1987: 14). Thus the key to Haug's explanation of the significance of memory is the premise that it is the heuristic experience of women working *collectively* rather than individually with personal memories that will bring autonomy for women out of heteronomy. This is significantly different from the ongoing dominant premise within psychoanalysis more generally, that it is through *individual* therapeutic memory work with a professional psychoanalyst or an expertly trained counsellor that will cure us or liberate us from trauma. Haug's 'memory work' sparked off a range of subsequent studies that explored other aspects of gender in relation to collective memory, including menstruation, pro-feminist men and stories of immigration (Hyle, 2008).

TRAUMATIC MEMORIES AND MEMORIALIZATION

Work within War Studies and Holocaust Studies provides important theoretical insights into the differentiated traumatic impact of remembered and forgotten aspects of collective trauma on women and men. Research demonstrates some of the complexities of how women remember, and how women and women's particular experiences are remembered and hence are culturally represented (or not) within memorial sites and through public memory institutions. It also shows how the social inheritance of traumatic events in societies is gendered in intersectional ways across different forms of communication in relation to national boundaries and ethnic backgrounds. Thus research on the history of the First World War, which has more broadly shown the relationship of memorialization processes to modernity (Winter 1998), has reclaimed forgotten aspects of women's experience (Lee, 2005;

Watson, 2004) and how this was shaped by gender in, for example, battlefield tourism (Lloyd, 1998) and public commemoration (Biesecker, 2002.)

Within Holocaust Studies the development of work on gender and memory has had a major impact on the conception of the gendered representations of collective trauma that include genocide. Joan Ringelhaum, at the US Holocaust Museum, has argued that she could detect a split between gender and the public memories of the holocaust represented in historical accounts, in museums and memorial spaces (1998). Despite the publication soon after the Second World War of *The Diaries of Anne Frank* (in which the author's references to teenage sexuality were edited out), which became well known within Western public memory, many female Holocaust survivors' stories remained marginal within public memory. Thus, gendered perspectives in Holocaust Studies in the late 1980s and 1990s focused on gathering, documenting and analysing individual survivor's testimonies to understand more fully the workings of the genocide in relation to victims, as well as the role of perpetrators and bystanders, and to fill in gaps in public memory. There was a growth in research on women victims and survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, with a particular emphasis on individual memoirs and collections of memoirs by Jewish women. The research provides some important insights for feminist theory into the way that gender is a critical factor in the mechanisms of mass ethnic murder and in understanding the inheritance of collective trauma. Research shows that there were particularities of experience for Jewish women victims and survivors in the Holocaust that were different from those of Jewish men, as well as distinct experiences for lesbians and women from other ethnic groups, including Roma and Sinti. Research showed how the particular experiences felt by women of sexual assault and rape, mothering and menstruation were muted in testimony and in fiction (Horowitz, 1994, 1997;

De Silva, 1996; Gurewitsch, 1998; Rittner and Roth, 1993; Reading, 2002, 2012).

Research on the memory of the Holocaust and a pre-Second World War multi-ethnic Europe is also illustrative of a wider concern that led to the theoretical idea of the significance of gendered memory work as recuperation that builds on the documentation projects of Victorian feminists. Research sought to bring back into the public domain erased and forgotten aspects of women's history and women artists, film-makers and writers who in the early part of the century were prominent and respected practitioners in their respective fields. Thus Julie M. Johnson's *The Memory Factory: The Forgotten Women Artists of Vienna 1900* (2012) shows how the 1930s and the Nazi Holocaust resulted in the murder and erasure of a significant period in the history of Jewish women in Europe, which was then further erased after the Second World War in historiographies that did not include women artists. Johnson's work sought to explain the mechanisms of why and how such prominent women artists, fully integrated into mainstream art circles and exhibitions, were subsequently forgotten within public discourse and art history. Similarly, other work on gender and memory within the study of the Holocaust has then sought to theorize not so much how and what individual women remember but how this has then been taken up or not by public memory institutions, literature and the mass media (Jacobs, 2010; Maier-Katkin, 2007; Apfelthaler and Köhne, 2007; Reading, 2002). Holocaust studies also paved the way for thinking about the significance of material culture as forms of memorialization of women's lives and experiences: Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, for example, have examined how gender figures in acts of memory and transmission through testimonial objects (2006). They focus on a book of recipes and a miniature artist's book from Terezin and Vapniarka concentration camps. Such theory enables a conceptual bridge between material and energetic understandings of memory rather than conceiving of them as separate

and distinct: the recipes, for example, are written down in a book and are thus material memories, yet they are then re-enacted energetically through the process of cooking.

Overall, within Holocaust Studies most gendered work has sought to fill in the gaps and silences in memories of the genocide. While much research has focused on women's stories from within the Jewish community and within the memorial contexts of particular national boundaries, other work has provided some correctives with studies that examine transnational memory flow and the role of ethnic backgrounds in relation to gendered memories of the Holocaust, as well as placing a focus on marginalized victims including the Roma, Afro-Germans and lesbians and gay men. This work in particular offers insights into how some cultural memories of the past come to gain authority and power in the public arena, while others do not. As we shall see further on, increasingly, memory work on the Holocaust through its connections to other genocides arising from colonialism is resulting in more complex multi-directional understandings of memory that provide a more complex and dynamic understanding of the trajectories of memory across and between gender, class, ethnicity and national identities.

COLLECTIVE AND SOCIAL MEMORY

It is, however, the idea of 'collective memory', derived from the work of the mainstream sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and including his work on gender and memory, that remains central to Memory Studies. Halbwachs argued that the family was one of the key frameworks for the inheritance and communication of memory, describing the process thus:

The wife does not, of course, forget all her anterior memories when she enters the family of her husband. The memories of her childhood are strongly engraved in her mind and they are renewed in the relations she continues to have with her parents, her brothers and her sisters. But she is enjoined to synchronize them with the ideas

and traditions which have been imposed on her by her present family. (Halbwachs, 1992: 76)

He added that the other frameworks for memory include religion, class and tradition: however, his work is underdetermined in that he did not explain how gender specifically is worked through these. There are related insights, however, from Orlando Patterson's groundbreaking work on memory and slavery, in which he equates the slave's loss of memory with social death. He identifies the significance of the removal of the child from the mother in the system of slavery in which all, including offspring, are the property of the slave owner. He argues that 'natal alienation' explains the way in which slavery cuts off the human being from their ancestry and results in non personhood:

Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory. (Patterson, 2011: 279)

What Patterson fails to ask, however, is whether this natal alienation is different for men and women and how, historically, women and men inherited the meanings of their biological forebears or anchored the living present in any conscious community of memory in ways that may be shared but also different.

Sociological work on gender and collective memory has addressed the ways in which memory is significant within micro-units such as the family inside broader structural transformations (Wolf, 2007). Historical sociology has also led to a particular focus on memory that has sought to examine the gendering and gendered processes within collective memory or the 'the heritage of a nation, movement, group or family, based on shared experiences, that is generally acknowledged as such by the members of the community involved' (Grever, 2003). Jane Addams' groundbreaking study *The Long Road of*

Woman's Memory (2002), written in response to several months spent living in war-torn Paris in 1915, is based on her encounters with the stories of grieving war widows. She examines the role of memory and myth in women's lives and argues that we will overcome the blind spots of memory in relation to post-colonial people only by travelling down new roads of knowledge and understanding.

My own, earlier, work sought to propose a replacement for the binary presumption in the concepts of individual and collective memory through the idea of 'socially inherited memory'. The concept seeks to explain the connections, rather than the distinctions, between the individual and collective memory through a combination of analysis of inherited memories from both individual and mass stories told through media and culture, and a seeking to address how memory is reproduced and articulated through social and political structures (Reading, 2002). Socially inherited memory extends the neo-Marxist theorists Ernest Laclau and Michel Mouffe's (2001) idea of 'articulation' to suggest that memory at the individual level is an articulation but also a *rearticulation* and a *disarticulation*, with social memories inherited by men and women through social structures, public institutions and cultural mediations.

ORAL MEMORY AND HISTORICAL MEMORY

Historical studies highlight the significance of the framing of public accounts of historiography in ways that have excluded women's histories in the work place and domestic sphere. Historical approaches to memory offer explanations for changing practices and views of memory (Carruthers, 1990) and how the marginalization of women's memories within historical accounts is the result of a number of different factors, including the ways in which women's testimonies are often legally less creditable within particular

epochs (Van Hoots, 1999). Thus, Van Hoots argues that in medieval Europe women were rarely used as witnesses in court, with male historiographers then having to provide a rationale for the inclusion of a document or testimony by a woman (1999: 51). Francis Yates' now classic account *The Art of Memory* conversely reminds us of the earlier symbolic female power credited to memory, with the Ancient Greeks' conceiving of Mnemosyne as the mother of all other pedagogies and the origin of thought being syncretized by the Romans in Europe (Yates, 1999). Accounts reveal how the particular paradigm of legitimacies within mainstream history has served to exclude and marginalize women's history: oral history derived from orally transmitted life-stories, for example, has been given less status than history derived from material culture and archival analysis within mainstream historiography. This insight has led to something of a paradigm shift within historical studies that occurred at the epistemological and methodological level. For example, the development of the History Workshop movement in the 1980s sought to change the discipline of history through giving voices to marginalized groups via the use of the oral memories of working-class people, women and people of colour. A significant collection of memory work on gender has emerged from this struggle (Leydesdorff et al., 1996). The collection *Gender and Memory* in the International Yearbook of Oral History illustrated the perceived differences in men's and women's oral memories, such as how women use more speech and dialogue than men in their accounts of the past (Ely and McCabe, 2009: 1).

For feminist theory, the oral history movement also offered an important critical intervention into the long-established dichotomy between what was conceptualized as 'history' and what as 'memory', in which history was seen to be more legitimate, serving then to exclude women's voices from historical accounts. By the end of the 1980s, however, a shift had occurred so that history and

memory were understood as dialectically related and the attention of the historian became focused on what Nora described as 'the process between' (Nora, 1989), with memory as a related and legitimate subject of study within history (Cubitt, 2007). The oral history movement called for a recuperation of stories by working-class people through the use of methodological techniques such as life-history work. Such research was then used to fill in the representational absences in public history, including the glaring absence of working-class women's history. Also crucial here for feminist theory is the fact that the movement changed historical analysis within the academy and the kinds of evidence and artefacts that were then deemed legitimate by public memory institutions. The concept of storied enquiries and autobiography as legitimate tools of social enquiry by the researcher herself is now used to powerful transformative and critical effect by feminist scholars: Audrey May Evans, for example, discusses writing her own autobiography as part of the collective work of analysis of the oppression of Australia's aboriginal people (2010: 175–86).

FEMINIST POST-COLONIAL MEMORY STUDIES

Post-colonial memory theory disrupts the cultural and social paradigms of memory usually configured around women and the nation state. Post-colonial theoretical engagements with memory are conceptually more dynamic, often with an emphasis on the performative dimensions of memory that then traverse established binaries such as the public and the private, the individual and the collective. This strand of theory arose predominantly out of research on migrant men and women's memories within post-colonial frameworks which have highlighted the differences for men and women in their relationships with home, the past and place. Such gendered memory research then offers to feminist theory an approach to gender and

women's oppression that focuses not on fixity and what remains the same but on that which is changing and fluid by tracing the mobilizations of memory through various movements of things, people and, more recently, data. *Unsettling Partition* by Jill Didur for example, has made an important contribution to reconfiguring gendered memory studies with her focus on literature of the partition in India and Pakistan. In particular, she examines how within nationalist discourse women's bodies and identities became central to the trope of citizen in which the sacredness of the nation was conflated with the sacredness of women's bodies (Didur, 2006). In post-apartheid South Africa Annie E. Coombes explores through testimonies women's narrative accounts of their prison experiences and therapeutic initiatives around HIV/AIDS to ask whether there is a particular way of memorializing experience that would take women's particular experiences into account (Coombes, 2010).

Such research also then takes into account the more complex considerations of the intersections of gender with ethnicity. Tina Campf's (2005) analysis of the personal narratives of Afro-Germans who had experienced Nazi Germany revealed the entanglements of practices in which Afro-German men and women were initially included in Nazi Germany's ideology and practice and later were rejected and vilified. Cheryl McEwan's (2003) work on Apartheid South Africa has addressed how women have been marginalized and made invisible within collective memories of the South African nation even within the role of recent Truth Commissions (2003: 1). Kimberley Wallace Saunder's analysis of African American women and memory in the United States in *Mammy: A Century of Gender, Race and Southern Memory* (2008) has shown how the remembered figure of the 'Mammy' has been critical in the reproduction of gender and oppression.

Post-colonial research on the memories of women outside of Europe and North America in other contexts of oppression also provides

far more complex theoretical precepts and concepts, unsettling Western preconceptions of the nation state that largely underpin gendered collective and cultural memory studies to suggest the contradictory and contested nature of land and memory as a result of colonization and occupation (Kassem, 2011; Neguib, 2009; Soh, 2008). Post-colonial theory also allows for a framework that recognizes how gendered memories are both locally and globally articulated. Annie Brewster's study of memory through aboriginal life-writing, for example, demonstrates how earlier studies of gender or women within the Australian context ignore the global intersections of race and ethnicity within post-colonial memory. Our understanding of how memories are gendered needs to be framed within a globalized rather than nationalized context (Brewster, 2002). Neuenfeldt's study demonstrates the very particular local–global theoretical complexities of gender and memory that have emerged from the different debates around remembered gendered traditions in relation to the playing of the didgeridoo: 'gender seems to serve as a point of disputation with particular relevance for non-Aborigines' (2006: 41). Within the present-day context of globalization and commercialization and where the violence of colonialism has erased within local cultures much of the memory of musical traditions of Australia's indigenous peoples, there is then an unevenness in relation to gender and its articulation: 'gender rules are contingent on a wide range of factors. The debate remains simultaneously localized and transnational, consistently inconsistent, and fundamentally paradoxical' (Neuenfeldt, 2006: 41)

(DIGITAL) MEDIA MEMORY

As well as the newer frameworks being offered by post-colonial memory work there are also significant theoretical paradigm shifts within what has become the field of Memory Studies that are important to feminist cultural analysis. Research now emphasizes the

dynamics of cultural memory (Erll and Rigney, 2009), its multi-directionality (Rothberg, 2009), its multiple mediations (Neiger et al., 2011) and the context of new media ecologies (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading, 2009).

Communications research especially on both 'old' and 'new' media has uncovered the ways in which technologies have a significant dialectical role in how gender is articulated through the production and consumption of mediated memories. Historical work on the relationships between technology and memory are particularly revealing in terms of showing that these relationships are not fixed: different media are articulated in various ways that can change over time in relation to the intersectionalities of gendered identities. Hence, research on memory and communication practices in Babylonian society in Ancient Mesopotamia has shown how women and men participated on equal terms when memories of the past were locally organized through ritual practices at local temples. However, a change occurred with the use of the technology of writing in Babylonian society, when the role of the scribe was taken on by men. Memory became delocalized and more centralized, with the memories of the role of women in the family and society increasingly left out (Yonkers, 1995: 98, 237).

The invention of the printing press and with it the advent of the printed book similarly has been argued to have reconfigured the gendered articulations of media and cultural memory. Print technology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made gender central to processes of memorialization. Western print culture became easily exportable around the world 'by triumphant capitalist and imperialistic Europe' and went on to play a major 'role in determining the economy, colonial and memorial structures that have governed nineteenth and twentieth century history' (Weber, 2008: 176). Writers such as Dryden and Bacon saw the book as a new form for cultural memory. With the 'explosion' of print in the mid-seventeenth

century came the development of the modern library and archive which replaced what had previously been closed, individual collections of manuscripts often as part of a private cabinet of curiosities. Furthermore, with the capacity for the printed press to make many copies, the book became part of a commercial network of production and consumption in a way that Weber claims was not true for the works of painters, sculptors, dramatists and architects: 'Gender becomes increasingly central to processes of memorialisation, and the professional author central to the struggle for the mastery of cultural memory' (Weber, 2008: 3).

While the press brought men's manuscripts into the public sphere, it left women's manuscripts in the private realm, vulnerable to erasure and obscurity. Significantly, towards the end of his study Weber draws on the theoretical work of new media and cyberspace critic Donna Haraway to argue that feminist memory scholars need to consider the significance of computer culture in adding new articulations of gendered memory. Weber's work thus signals the importance to feminist theory of the ways in which digitization and digitality are changing the relationships between gender and memory. The combination of digitization with globalization might indeed be now conceptualized as a 'global memory field' in which memory is an assemblage of discourses and practices through which gender and memory can be traced as being transformed in terms of transmediality, velocity, valency, extensity, viscosity and modality (Reading, 2011).

NEW DIRECTIONS: FEMINIST MEMORY STUDIES

A particular area of feminist memory studies has been focused around the aim of analysing the ways in which cultural and historical memories of feminist activist struggles and feminist theory in the academy are themselves remembered or forgotten within historical, cultural and social memory. There is

a long tradition of feminist autobiography, from the story of the Jamaican visionary medical pioneer Mrs Seacole (2009) to that of the feminist activist Vera Brittain (2009) and that of the Indian feminist Kamala Devi (1986), who provides an account of the political and personal struggles to attain agency and autonomy as well as changes in the public sphere and in public policy. These, and many others, stand as important individual memory projects by women to provide public memories of their lives, their social context and their political struggles. Then there are also those works of feminist memory that involve individuals or collectives working to document the capturing of a number of personal narratives and testimonies from those in the women's movement as activists in particular national contexts, such as the women's movement in the 1970s in the US (Duplessis and Snitow, 2007), and in Australia (Henderson, 2006), and the development of women's and gender studies programmes in the academy (Aikau et al., 2007). Research uses a variety of approaches and methods and has included oral history work with interviews with feminist activists and academics; textual analysis of the ways in which the media represent feminist struggles; archival work unearthing hitherto forgotten strands of feminist struggles; analysis of feminist material culture; and, more recently, digital analysis of the trajectories of images and stories of feminist struggles through connective technologies. Such work has sought to ensure that feminism and the feminist movement are not forgotten or articulated in simplistic ways that erase the nuances of historical memory or reduce feminist history to two or three 'waves' of activity, as if there was no feminist movement or struggle in between.

Feminist memory studies have also included analyses of the ways in which Western feminism has marginalized the struggles for suffrage outside of Europe and the UK. Hence in *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy* (2004) Louise P. Edwards and Mina Roces bring together illuminating

analyses of the ways in which memory and myth were mobilized within suffrage movements developed in the early part of the twentieth century within various colonial contexts globally, particularly in Asia. In Vietnam historical memories of women warriors such as the Trung sisters who fought against Chinese invaders were articulated and in tension with colonially introduced ideas of women's rights. Transnational studies of feminist memory also disrupt national paradigms, showing the interconnections and movements by feminist activists around the world: thus a study of the cultural memories of the image of Rosie the Riveter and the ways in which this emerged as a feminist icon in the late 1970s shows its trajectories from its origins in the US to the UK (Chidgey, 2013).

This feminist work includes the development of particular methodological activist practices that can be brought to bear in relation to feminist theory more broadly through acts of what Alan Rice has termed 'guerilla memorialisation'. This involves contemporary feminists making past elements of women's history and activism publically known through performances or re-enactments at the site where historic events took place. Hence in Leicester in the UK in November 2011 the organization 'Cycles and Suffragettes' organized a flash mob cycle ride around the town centre with women dressed as suffragists to commemorate the freedom and independence brought to women through the bicycle as well as its critical use by suffragettes such as Alice Hawkins (Dawson, 2011). In May 2011 women who, in the 1980s, had been part of the nonviolent struggle against nuclear weapons at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, which had resulted in the removal of US nuclear weapons from the UK base, reconnected through Facebook and pitched tents, made fires and sang on the common at Newbury again (Reading, forthcoming).

Studies of memory enable a conceptual approach to gender and representation that traverses the conventionally triangulated approach to the analysis of society and culture

around what are perceived as distinct areas of production, consumption and text. A focus on memory has enabled feminists to consider gendered transformations across time as well as space within interdisciplinary frameworks of analysis that can make use of many different kinds of methodologies. In turn, feminist memory work has challenged mainstream Memory Studies through a growing emphasis beyond national boundaries and on the intersectionalities of gender and other aspects of identity.

The political and social context of theoretical work on gender and memory has changed hugely in the past fifteen years with the advent of connective and digital technologies. The latter is changing the epistemology for feminist knowledge practices and memory studies since, with digitization, cultures of record and practices of remembrance cut across conventional dichotomies. It is increasingly difficult to conceptualize memory in terms of the conventional binaries of individual and collective, organic and inorganic, national and international. Rather, with digitization and mobile technologies the ways in which gender is articulated are changing to the extent that, increasingly, methodologies are being developed that emphasize trajectory and mobilities rather than a static and bounded analysis. N. Katherine Hayles reminds us that it is important, however, not to assume that the digital simply takes over from the analogue; rather, she argues, we need to seek to understand the translations and dialogues and unevenness between the two that are changing how we think and how we think about what we do (Hayles, 2012). This is also true with gendered memory studies and feminist memory studies. While there is always recuperative work to be done on marginalized aspects of women's memory, there are a growing number of issues that will become more pressing that arise from the combination of globalization and digitization and its unevenness around the world. These include the ways in which feminist memory and women's memories are travelling in new ways through new media technologies, and how, in

turn, this is changing gendered memory languages, practices and forms.

Furthermore, thematic research within memory studies has tended to emphasize the importance of memories of violence: of war, trauma, genocide and conflict. This is not to say that this emphasis is not highly valuable (it has largely been the concern of my own work), but we need then to be attentive to developing foci and theory that complicate our theoretical paradigms. Thus there are an increasing number of studies on women as soldiers, as torturers and as active agents in fascist regimes. There are also other important themes and approaches which, although not central, suggest a challenge to mainstream Memory Studies' dominant concern with war and conflict and a turn instead to addressing the relationships between gender and memories of nonviolent struggles, between gender and corporate forgetting, as well as between men's memories and the relational aspects of masculinity and memory.

Finally, while some of the theoretical work on gender and memory will, as Sappho strongly believed, 'not be forgot', there is an irony in contributing a chapter on gender and memory in which through my own omissions I have undoubtedly left out crucial elements of feminist theory and women's work. For these I apologize in advance, hoping that the forgotten strands that are not in this section of this book, or in the circulations of its digital copies, will, nevertheless, be picked up and rewoven into our memory by other feminists and, so, dynamically endure.

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Feminism and Pornography

Karen Boyle

INTRODUCTION: FEMINISM, PORNOGRAPHY, REPRESENTATION

Feminist debates about pornography cut across a number of the sections in this *Handbook of Feminist Theory* and would be equally at home under the heading of ‘sexuality’ or ‘economy’. This speaks to the multidisciplinary of work in this field and to important conceptual differences and shifts in the framing of pornography as an object of feminist enquiry. To begin my discussion, then, I want to consider the implications of placing this chapter within a context of debates on representation, relating this to questions about the nature of pornography which have been central to feminist thinking. This chapter does not offer a comprehensive overview of feminist debates on pornography but, more modestly, analyses how feminists (primarily, Anglo-American feminists) have defined and framed pornography in activist campaigns and academic thinking.

For a *Handbook of Feminist Theory* to place pornography in a section on representation is,

in some ways, an obvious choice. Pornography can be understood as a genre and so arguably sits easily alongside chapters on life writing, for instance. Certainly, part of what has concerned feminists about pornography is how women (and men) are represented within it and, therefore, what pornography has to say about gender, sex and power. Even once positions ‘for’ and ‘against’ pornography became entrenched in the 1980s (the period defined by the so-called ‘sex wars’), there remained a broad feminist consensus that, in its most popular and commercially successful manifestations, pornography was typically unashamedly sexist, racist and male-centred (Bronstein, 2011: 281).

That pornography exists in a variety of media need not undermine its positioning in debates about genre and representation: ‘horror’ or ‘fantasy’, for example, similarly exist in different media. However, genre studies on ‘horror’ or ‘fantasy’ tend to be medium-specific: the horror *film*, *telefantasy*. In contrast, academic writing on pornography has often emphasized the ‘message’ over the

medium. A glance through some key texts underlines this: Andrea Dworkin's classic *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1981) discusses written, photographic, comic and audio-visual pornographies; Linda Williams' more recent *Porn Studies* (2004) includes articles on comics, audio-visual pornographies and political discourse; Gail Dines' *Pornland* (2010) provides examples from print-advertising and magazines, as well as audio-visual porn; and even a collection published within a *film* and culture series (Lehman, 2006) includes a chapter on letters to *Penthouse*. Moreover, as this list suggests, alongside immediately recognizable pornography – material which is produced and marketed *as* pornography, is sexual in content and intended to sexually arouse its consumer – included in many of these texts are discussions of material that is not produced, marketed or consumed according to that logic. Such a broad-ranging analysis of culture is not unusual, particularly within feminist media and cultural studies (such as Negra, 2009; McRobbie, 2009), and the advantages of such an approach for *political* thinking can be considerable in allowing us to identify, analyse and understand persistent patterns in representation that cut across the culture. However, in relation to pornography this approach can pose problems that take us to the heart of intellectual and political debates about what pornography is and what, if anything, should be done about it.

While feminists have been interested in pornographic representations, they have also understood that it is precisely the complex relationship between representation and reality which defines audio-visual pornographies. Pornography is an unusual form of representation with a peculiar relationship to the 'real'. On one hand, what defines audio-visual and photographic pornographies is their ability to offer (mediated) access to real bodies and the ways in which they interact with one another. In pornography we see the bodies of real women and men. What happens to those bodies – when they touch or are

touched, penetrate or are penetrated, are kissed, licked, choked, hit – is equally understood to be real, as are the fluids those bodies emit. Pornography's promise is to show what other genres of sexual representation do not, to offer the best vantage point from which to see what other genres withhold, and to show *real* bodies, interactions and emissions. In short, in audio-visual pornography the bodies and the mechanics of their interactions are real.¹

At the same time, audio-visual pornography is the most generic of genres, following conventions which are hackneyed and transparently fake (Paasonen, 2010) and making claims about the *experience* of sex which are hyperbolic and unrealistic. This is particularly true in relation to women's sexual pleasure, which poses a problem for porn in that it cannot be *visually* authenticated in the way that men's orgasms can (Williams, 1989).

This produces a tension that characterizes much academic writing on pornography, between wanting to read as 'real' the bodies and experiences of women involved in porn and wanting to engage critically with pornographic texts and how they are made meaningful. This tension cuts across writing from both the anti-porn and porn-sympathetic positions.²

For anti-porn feminists the central concern is the connection between violence and pornography, and a key argument in anti-porn feminism is that pornography *is* violence against women. This depends on an acknowledgement that the sex of pornography is, as Gail Dines (2010) calls it, 'industrial' sex – sex produced in the interests of profit, where the sexual pleasure of the female performers is immaterial (and often inauthentic) and which uses (up) real bodies on its production line. It depends upon inequality (structural violence) as, for pornography to be successful, men (as a group) must experience sexual entitlement over women (as a group) so that the purchase of sexual access to the body of another for the purposes of sexual pleasure is naturalized. Just because the woman on screen professes to enjoy what is being done

to her does not make it so (it is representation), but equally it *is* being done to her and this has literal effects on her body (it is reality) as well as a social impact in its symbolic and actual relationships to the position of women in society. Pornography, in its current forms, could not exist in a society where there was gender equality.

For writers more sympathetic to porn, sexual fantasy rather than violence has been a structuring concern. For these writers, pornography is fantasy (representation) and this accords it protected status, whether or not we like what it says. It is a form of 'speech' and to curtail that speech is a violation of civil liberties, an argument with particular currency in the US and which took on a real urgency in the Reaganite 1980s (also the height of feminist anti-pornography organizing). Just because a woman is being raped on screen does not make it so (it is representation).

However, when it comes to pleasure these arguments become muddled and we come back to questions about reality. In many writings sympathetic to pornography the argument is made that it is a form of sexuality (a reality) and so to place limits on pornography is to place limits on human sexuality and imagination. As such, porn-sympathetic writers and activists have often positioned themselves as *sexual* dissidents, forging connections with other sexual minority groups and making particular links with queer activists and theorists. Yet, within porn-sympathetic approaches there is also a tendency to refer to porn performers as sex *workers* and to discuss their exercise of choice and agency in their employment. This raises thorny questions about *whose* sexuality the sexuality of pornography is. On one hand, sex workers are represented as sex enthusiasts, turning their love of sex – and exhibitionism – into a remunerative occupation: in the words of a pro-sex-work site, 'we like sex so much we do it full time'.³ Yet, there is also a recognition within this discourse that sex work can be mundane and boring, as well as skilled and dangerous, and

that there is no necessary correspondence between workplace sexual experiences and personal sexual preferences. In other words, the sexuality of pornography (and other forms of sex 'work') is *not* the sexuality of the performer: rather, the performers are a conduit for the expression of the punter/viewer's sexuality. This may be a contract the performer enters into consensually – and porn-sympathetic critics have emphasized this in contra-distinction to what they see as the 'victimizing' tendency of anti-porn feminism – but nevertheless, it is not, and can never be, a relationship based on mutuality of desire and pleasure.

As this brief account suggests, there is a split in feminist thinking about pornography that in some ways corresponds to the structure of this *Handbook of Feminist Theory*. For anti-porn writers, understanding pornography in relation to debates about industrial patriarchal capitalism is important (Johnson, 2010), although the more intimate forms of violence in which pornography is implicated have often been the focus. Outside of the academy, anti-porn perspectives have – unsurprisingly – therefore found particular currency within the feminist anti-violence movement. In contrast, for those more supportive of porn, the relationship with sex and sexuality is most pertinent.⁴ As noted above, porn-sympathetic perspectives are therefore more likely to have been embedded within writing and activism around sexuality and, in particular, dissident or minority sexualities. Yet, as I have suggested, the discourse around 'work' sits uneasily with this.

Of course, in all disciplines which are centrally concerned with representation there are multiple ways of defining and studying objects – in relation to the conditions of their production, the mechanisms of their distribution, the modes of their consumption and authorship, as well as the various ways we might investigate textuality. But rarely are the political and personal stakes as high as they are in feminist debates about pornography. Positively, this means that these debates have never been confined to the academy and feminist academics have assumed a

responsibility in relation to real-world constituencies including survivors of sexual violence, sexual minority groups, the porn industry, consumers and policy-makers. However, it also true that these debates are rarely conducted with the respect one would expect of academic exchanges. This can have a powerful silencing effect as well as cohering damagingly with a caricature of feminists as unreasonable, angry and anti-intellectual.

Outside of feminist circles, those who publicly speak out against the porn industry all too frequently find themselves the subject of sexualized and personalized attacks with comments about their sexuality and appearance at times accompanied by the threat of sexual violence. This is not new (Steinem, 1997), but the internet does perhaps make it a more common, instant and widely participated-in experience (Elliott, 2011; Dines et al., 2010). To make a discussion of the benefits, costs and implications of feminist research part of the presentation of that research is uncontroversial in many disciplines – feminist sociologists have a long tradition of discussing these issues – but media disciplines have *not* historically been good at this. In the context of the porn debates this can be fraught, as any suggestion that women are on the receiving end of abusive treatment faces the counter-accusation that this is part of an anti-porn feminist tendency to see women as victims and to read ‘speech’ too literally. In a very small way, these examples should remind us that debates about representation, speech and abuse are not abstract: they have a real-world referent and this brings with it real-world responsibilities.

As a way into these debates, I want first to provide a brief account of the historical context in which feminist debates about pornography developed. I will focus on anti-pornography feminism – initially the dominant position *within* feminist thinking – and it will be clear that feminist theory and activism were in close alignment in the early period of debate. In particular, I will use the work of radical US feminists Andrea Dworkin and

Catharine MacKinnon, and their attempt to address the harms of pornography through civil legislation, in order to tease out themes which have reverberated down the years and remain pertinent to feminist analyses of pornography.

ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY FEMINISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

In one of the foundational texts of feminist film scholarship, UK feminist Claire Johnston noted: ‘From the outset the Women’s Movement has assumed without question the importance of film in the women’s struggle.’ She continued: ‘The reason for this interest in the media is not difficult to locate: it has been at the level of the image that the violence of sexism and capitalism has been experienced’ (1991: 2). Johnston was not writing about pornography – feminists did not turn their attention to pornography in a concerted way until later in the decade – but her comments establish that an interest in ‘the image’, in representation, was central to second-wave feminism from its beginning,⁵ and that it is largely *from* this activist interest that theoretical positions developed. This is worth stressing as, now that feminism has become ensconced within the academy (not always comfortably), it is easy to forget that feminist theory developed not only in libraries and classrooms but more centrally in consciousness-raising groups, grassroots publications and activist conferences. Moreover, Johnston pinpoints that the image was significant for feminists because of its relationship to violence, a relationship that is both symbolic (in terms of representational strategies) and material (in terms of its implications for women’s lives in a capitalist patriarchy).

As Julia Long (2012) and Carolyn Bronstein (2011) have separately argued, feminist anti-pornography organizing in the UK and US grew out of this interest in the media combined with feminists’ accumulating knowledge – in large part developed through

consciousness-raising groups – about male violence against women and the developing critique of heterosexuality in the period following the sexual revolution. The sexual revolution had seemed to promise so much to women and, while there were important advances (legislation around abortion and homosexuality, the availability of the contraceptive pill), many were critical of the way in which men's sexual entitlement was enshrined in the sexual revolution rather than challenged by it. The framing of male sexual use of women as revolutionary was an important factor in facilitating the expansion of pornography in the 1970s (Long, 2012; Bronstein, 2011; Tyler, 2011). In this context, feminist understandings of pornography were crucially interlinked with understandings of other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly prostitution.

The key theoretical legacy from that time – which owes much to Dworkin (1981) – is the understanding of pornography *as* violence against women, not symbolically but actually, and as linked to other forms of gender violence in which one group of people (primarily men) exercised their control over another (primarily women). As discussed above, radical feminists emphasize that pornography depends upon men purchasing sexualized access to the bodies of women, and doing so in a context which consistently upholds this form of commerce as intrinsic to male sexuality and historically inevitable (a branch of the 'oldest profession' rendered possible by technology and industrial capitalism). It is about male power and how women – as a *class* – are subordinated by that power in ways which are further structured by social inequalities which are equally open to sexualization (race, class, sexuality, disability).

But while pornography made and marketed as such was an important focus, feminist definitions of pornography tended to be quite broad and campaigns tackled other forms of sexualized sexist representation too. For example, the 'Angry Women' protests in West Yorkshire (UK) in the late 1970s/early

1980s targeted both licensed sex shops *and* mainstream cinemas showing films such as Brian de Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980). Significantly, these protests took place in the shadow of the 'Yorkshire Ripper', a then-active serial killer who targeted women throughout the region, initially killing women in prostitution. Only when non-prostituted victims were identified did the police step up their efforts to catch the killer, advising women to stay indoors or seek male protection. In targeting sex shops and cinemas, the Angry Women protests forcefully insisted on the rights of women to occupy public space and highlighted the ways in which pornography (in its broadest sense) legitimated a culture in which the actions of the killer were understandable and women rendered culpable. This analysis of the role of pornography in enshrining men's sexual entitlement to women and promoting a 'rape culture' was a central component of anti-porn feminism.

Although not articulated in these terms at this juncture, much of this early work therefore hinged on a recognition that pornography is a powerful discourse which shapes the way we understand the world. 'Discourse' is a useful term here because discourse, from Foucault, is understood as a group of statements that together produce a certain kind of knowledge. Discourses are '*practices* that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 9). Similarly, anti-porn feminists argue that pornography is a practice. It does things. For Dworkin and MacKinnon, for instance, pornography is what pornography does (also Cole, 1989). The important conceptual point about this is that for radical feminists pornography cannot be understood simply as representation, as a form of 'speech' requiring constitutional protection (MacKinnon, 1993). As such, censorship should not be a meaningful solution, although this position was not universally shared among anti-porn feminists in the 1980s (Bronstein, 2011: 173–99).

In the mid-1980s Dworkin and MacKinnon pioneered a civil rights approach to legislating against pornography which would have

allowed those who could prove harm in or through pornography to sue those involved in its production and distribution. It was a *civil* and not a criminal approach, and it sought to move the terms of the public policy debate away from questions about morality, obscenity and censorship and, instead, to focus on harm. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to deal with the hearings in detail, something which has, in any case, been done by others.⁶ Rather, I want to briefly discuss the hearings as a way of introducing key tensions which were to emerge in feminist debate through the 1980s and which have strong legacies in the shape and nature of current academic approaches to pornography and their relationship to a broader feminist politics.

The definition of pornography put forward by MacKinnon and Dworkin in the civil rights ordinances was both broad ranging and actually quite specific: The graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words, that also includes one or more of the following:

- (i) Women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities;
- (ii) Women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation;
- (iii) Women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped;
- (iv) Women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt;
- (v) Women are presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display;
- (vi) Women's body parts – including but not limited to vaginas, breasts and buttocks – are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts;
- (vii) Women are presented as whores by nature
- (viii) Women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals
- (ix) Women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.

In addition, all the ordinances also define “the use of men, children and transsexuals in

the place of women” as pornography. (*Everywoman*, 1988: 2)

Such a definition encompasses materials which are not produced, sold or consumed *as* pornography, *providing* they meet the specific criteria around harm. Likewise, *only* if they meet these criteria would materials widely recognized as pornographic be defined as pornography in this context. In other words, Dworkin and MacKinnon sought to (re)define pornography as what it *does*. The logic here may seem somewhat circular and it is at odds with commercial definitions of pornography in which it is intent (to arouse) rather than content that is privileged. Indeed, one of the problems with how the debate about pornography *within* feminism developed through the 1980s was that the ‘sides’ were often not concerned about the same objects *as* pornography.

To an extent, this is still the case. Porn-sympathetic feminists accuse anti-porn feminists of focusing on the extreme as paradigmatic; and anti-porn feminists express frustration that porn-sympathizers focus their attentions on exceptional texts linked to their own pleasure. Certainly, the MacKinnon–Dworkin definition does emphasize explicitly violent content and it assumes that violence represented in a sexual context is always problematic – an issue that was central to the so-called ‘sex wars’ of the 1980s. The term ‘sex wars’ is in itself troubling, as it insists that the main struggle was around sex – rather than violence, equality, representation or industry, for example – but porn-sympathetic approaches, linked to sexual minority groups, were largely successful in reframing the debate within feminism in these terms. So, for instance, one key area of contention was around the pleasure of consensual sado-masochists – particularly women – and their insistence that, in this context, violence could involve a complex and managed interplay between desire, pleasure and pain. This debate did not begin with the hearings – the Barnard College conference ‘Towards a Politics of Sexuality’ at which these arguments coalesced was held in 1982 (Vance, 1992) – but what is

interesting in the context of this chapter is that the ‘split’ manifests around sexuality – the ‘sex wars’ – rather than pornography *per se*. For anti-porn feminists a discussion of sexuality was part of a broader analysis of the structures of patriarchy and an emphasis on what men – as a class – gained from these structures, including through their use of pornography. As such, women’s sexuality and pleasure *within these structures* was not a central concern. Porn-sympathetic feminists, on the other hand, were concerned about the rights of individuals to sexual pleasure and anxious about the role of the state in policing those pleasures, including access to pornography.

Yet, despite MacKinnon and Dworkin’s arguments about porn as a practice, their definition is, at base, a definition of a kind of representation (‘pictures and/or words’) in which the industrial context is not immediately visible. In contrast to Dworkin’s earlier intervention (1981), which took as its explicit theme ‘the power of *men* in pornography’, the emphasis here appears to be on the victimization of women. Whatever we might think of this definition, its emphasis is not on the victimization of women *by sex* but the victimization of women in and through *words and images*. Despite the shorthand referral to this period of feminist history as the ‘sex wars’, I would argue that this distinction mattered then and still matters now: sex is not reducible to representation; sex and pornography are not synonyms (Boyle, 2010a: 206–9).

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the final clause of the definition, men are not really visible within it. Indeed, men have been curiously absent from much subsequent thinking about pornography despite Dworkin’s early emphasis on their class privilege. This is partly because of the role that *women’s* testimony was to play in the development of feminist theory. Before I consider this, it is worth noting that one man did have a key role in the anti-pornography hearings: Dr Edward Donnerstein, a psychologist with a long track record of investigating the ‘effects’

of violent and sexual content on consumers. Donnerstein presented a summary of the scientific field in which he controversially asserted that ‘the evidence for linking pornography with sexual violence is considerably stronger than that for cigarette smoking and cancer (and much clearer than that linking violence on TV with violence in real life)’, a position he subsequently reversed (*Everywoman*, 1988: 5). Although there is now a longstanding feminist critique of the effects tradition (Boyle, 2000), the effects paradigm was – and sometimes still is⁷ – seductive for feminists seeking to influence public policy as it seemed to provide ‘scientific’ proof of the arguments feminists had developed from grassroots work. The evidence presented by anti-pornography feminists – gathered from the testimonies of women hurt by pornography – was of how the men who abused them used porn to groom and instruct them on behaviour; of how men with whom they had intimate relationships used porn to pressure them into unwanted acts; of how clients required prostituted women to enact the fantasies of porn; of the sexual harassment of working women through the display of porn in the workplace; and of the use of pornography to groom soldiers to rape women in war (for example, *Everywoman*, 1988; Dines, 2010; Armanda and Nenadic, 2011).⁸ The ‘scientific’ evidence was of bodies and attitudes measured in a lab. Moreover, as so-called ‘effects’ research is widely discredited within media and cultural studies (see Gauntlett, 1995), its use by anti-porn feminists has too often skewed the debate to porn’s disputed ‘effects’ – whether porn *directly and unilaterally* causes people to do or think certain things – something which has only recently begun to be challenged by empirical work on consumption.

What the hearings are perhaps most known for is the opportunity they presented for women (and men) who had been harmed in and through pornography to tell their stories. The use of personal testimony has a long history within feminist organizing and it has

been the basis on which much feminist theory has been built. Indeed, in her historical account of anti-porn feminism in the US Bronstein (2011) stresses the importance of conscious-raising groups in generating an understanding of the prevalence and everydayness of women's experiences of male sexual violence. Armed with this knowledge, feminists became increasingly critical of the ways in which the culture at large normalized and glamorized women's victimization and male aggression, arguing that this created the context in which violence flourished. The hearings built on this process, recognizing the power of women's words and the importance of giving voice to experiences of abuse, which had long been invisible. In collating this testimony and providing it with a public airing the hearings sought to build a political, *structural* analysis akin to the function of consciousness-raising within the movement more generally. Perhaps the most powerful strand of this testimony was from those involved in the production of pornography and, specifically, the testimony given by Linda Marchiano who – as Linda Lovelace – had been the star of *Deep Throat*, the film credited with making porn chic. At the hearings, and in her previously published book *Ordeal* (Lovelace 2006), Marchiano testified to the multiple ways in which she had been abused by her pimp/manager and how her use in porn was central to that abuse. This testimony was (and is) powerful evidence of the ways in which porn and violence are literally interlinked, even when the representation is not explicitly of violence (*Deep Throat* is not 'violent' pornography).

Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Boyle, 2011), one of the difficulties with placing this kind of testimony in the public sphere is that its political character is too easily lost. Individual stories have a seductive currency that collective ones do not. As feminists campaigning against different forms of gender violence have found out, for the media, 'the personal is – the personal' (Armstrong, 1996: 38). The seductive currency of the personal in the mediasphere – and the reluctance

to examine the social in relation to gendered violence – perhaps goes some way towards explaining why Dworkin and MacKinnon struggled for more than a decade to find a US publisher for the collected testimonies from the anti-porn hearings (MacKinnon and Dworkin, 1997), even as other stories of a decidedly more individualist character attracted considerable interest and publicity (see Lords, 2004). Indeed, as evidence of the harms of pornography became the topic of more mainstream commentary, the experiences of women harmed in and through pornography were frequently pitted against those of women who claimed porn's positive influence in their lives. Not least because Lovelace/Marchiano had publicly occupied both positions, anti-porn feminists were at times openly sceptical of the accounts of women speaking positively about their experiences in the industry, while industry women could be equally vitriolic about what they identified as the 'victimizing' tendency of anti-porn feminism. This poured over into academic writing, with many anthologies from the 1990s onwards – whatever their political stance – including personal testimonies of (ex-)porn performers (e.g. Assiter and Carol, 1993; Elias et al., 1999; Russell, 1993; Stark and Whisnant, 2004; Tankard Reist and Bray, 2011). Implicitly, if not explicitly, individual accounts seemed intended to bear witness to the industry *per se*, offering a more general truth often explicitly pitted against the 'false' accounts of others – specifically, other women. As such, the debate became increasingly personalized as women passed judgement on the authenticity, significance and representativeness of other women's experiences.

This focus on the reliability of women cohered disturbingly with porn's world-view of women as unreliable and contradictory narrators of their own sexual pleasure. Indeed, the 'harm' narrative has since become part of the story commercial pornography tells *about itself*, with porn producers and performers apparently only too willing to admit that porn sex physically damages

women's bodies, that experiences of abuse, poverty and addiction are driving many women into porn and that deception and coercion are industry standards (Boyle, 2011; Tyler, 2011). Of course, while the evidence may be strikingly similar, the use to which it is put is not. In porn-industry narratives the harm done to women is itself sexualized, while feminist-inflected debates about choice and agency are used to justify the abuse. If the performer *chooses* to be there, then it seems that what the industry does to her is irrelevant.

It is fair to say that anti-porn feminists were slow in dealing sensitively with questions of women's choice and agency, too quickly condemning women's choice to perform in or consume porn as false consciousness (Bronstein, 2011: 196). Although there is an important point here about the constraints on women's choices within a patriarchal system, as Rebecca Whisnant (2004) has since argued in an anti-porn context, personal choice is not immaterial and some choice is always better than no choice. However, while the exercise of choice is important in the context of individual narratives and lives, the *structural* analysis of porn as an industry depending upon a fundamental inequality (men's willingness to purchase sexual access to the bodies of women) remains untroubled by this evidence.

The importance of telling the stories of those involved in the industry remains an issue, but the focus shifted after the 1980s towards textual analysis which found its home in the now-established disciplines of film studies (particularly in the US) and media and cultural studies (in the UK). I will consider the implications of these disciplinary interventions in the next section.

THE SEXUAL TEXTUAL TURN

As noted above, the debate about pornography became extremely divisive for feminism in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, leading to this period being (mis)characterized as a 'sex

war' within feminism. In this context, the publication of film-scholar Linda Williams' *Hard Core* (1989) was to be particularly significant in heralding a shift in the way porn was studied and, indeed, to its institutionalization within the academy.

Williams' book presents an historical account of the development of audio-visual pornography – primarily that aimed at heterosexual men – that identifies its generic and formal features. While Dworkin's *Pornography* was also interested in texts, Dworkin – as critics have noted – read these texts quite literally in terms of their women-hating ideologies and did not pay much attention to their formal complexities. In this respect, Dworkin's work was very much of its time and sat comfortably alongside other feminist critiques of, and campaigns against, sexism and sexualized violence in the media (see Bronstein, 2011). As feminist scholars within emerging disciplines began to integrate grassroots concerns into their research, a re-evaluation of many previously denigrated genres began to take place. While much of this work focused on women's genres (soap operas, melodrama, romance novels), Williams had herself published on women's spectatorship of horror (Williams, 1996 [1983]) and her analysis of pornography spoke to this broader context. Here, pornography could be understood alongside other genres that had been culturally derided at least in part for their ability – indeed, intent – to move the body of the spectator, to screams (horror), tears (melodrama) or orgasm (pornography).

Williams' book marks the beginning of a disciplinary shift for porn studies. Earlier feminist engagements with pornography stressed its social function and attempted grand theories of the position of pornography (and of women) in contemporary society wedded to approaches to challenging pornography in order to improve the position of women. From *Hard Core* onwards, pornography began to find a place in the film studies curriculum (albeit largely in select and liberal US universities) and as

part of the film studies' list of major publishers.⁹ In other words, porn began to be positioned as a genre or category of representation like any other, requiring similar methodological approaches. Feona Attwood, writing in 2002, reads this shift as a *contextualizing* one, noting that while key scholars were centrally concerned with texts, they were interested in situating these texts historically and culturally within the category 'pornography' in order to think about how that category functioned at different times. (Attwood, 2002). They were interested in porn's discursive function in broader debates about sex, taste, culture and censorship.

Although I take issue with Attwood's suggestion that the concern with context *per se* was new (anti-porn feminists previously sought to contextualize pornographic texts in relation to production and consumption practices), the contexts she draws attention to do represent an important shift away from questions about porn's relationship with violence against women, inequality and commercial sex towards relationships which might more accurately be described as *inter-textual*. Attwood also notes that the increasing slipperiness of the term 'pornography', in an era where the sexually explicit has become more mainstream, has made the object of analysis for porn researchers less immediately obvious. From the 1990s onwards scholars have been increasingly interested in the 'pornification' of culture, meaning that studies professing to address porn often have broader reach than Williams' focused analysis. For example, Jane Juffer's (1998) work on women's engagements with 'pornography' includes discussions of erotic fiction, sexual self-help books, couples videos and lingerie catalogues. Williams' own later *Porn Studies* (2004) goes further: alongside discussions of the Starr report into President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky, World War 2 pin-ups, Japanese comics aimed at women and avant-garde artists' films, there is a limited discussion of commercially recognizable pornography with an emphasis on subversive reading strategies and the margins of the

porn industry (gay and lesbian porn). This makes an analysis of porn *as an industry* and as a *specific* mode of production more difficult, even though the existence and success of this industry is often used to justify academic interest in these objects. In her introduction to *Porn Studies*, Williams makes the case for taking pornography seriously in exactly this way:

To me, the most eye-opening statistic is the following: Hollywood makes approximately 400 films a year, while the porn industry now makes from 10,000 to 11,000. Seven hundred million porn videos or DVDs are rented each year. Even allowing for the fact that fewer viewers see any single work and that these videos repeat themselves even more shamelessly than Hollywood [...] this is a mind-boggling figure. Pornography revenues – which can broadly be construed to include magazines, Internet Web sites, cable, in-room hotel movies, and sex toys – total between 10 and 14 billion dollars annually. (Williams, 2004: 12)

However, Clinton's testimony about his relationship with Lewinsky is not part of this industry. Nor are a number of the other texts studied as pornography in this book. So there is a tension here between an emphasis on the scale and profitability of a defined pornographic industry and an academic study that considers not the mainstream of this industry – the most widely distributed products, bestselling formats and genres, the majority (heterosexual, male) audience – but its margins and influences within non-pornographic culture.

Although the web of pornographic connection in which Williams was interested in 1989 was primarily textual, her comments in this later volume suggest the importance of making connections across different forms of sexual practice – as, for instance, in her inclusion of 'sex toys' within pornographic revenue. Williams is not alone in this. In her introduction to *Mainstreaming Sex* (2009: xiv–xv), Feona Attwood's reach is even greater, placing the selling of sexual products such as vibrators and lingerie to women alongside the repackaging of burlesque, the

promotion of pole-dancing fitness and the gentrification of strip joints. Most worryingly, Attwood allies pornography and other forms of commercial sex with a hedonistic consumerism in pursuit of sexual pleasure (what she calls 'sex for its own sake'). While this definition of porn consumption may chime with some consumers' experiences, it is certainly not how the sex of pornography is experienced by those who perform it. Sex for its own sake suggests an activity (sex) which is enjoyable and satisfying in itself, engaged in freely and for pleasure. Whatever else it is – or is not – commercial sex is, by definition, not sex *for its own sake*. Both these authors thus implicate women as consumers but fail to get to grips with important gendered distinctions in the examples they give, where women are primarily presented as purchasers of *goods* (vibrators, pole-dancing classes, lingerie), buying products which work on their *own* bodies, without the necessary involvement of others.

Building on this point, I want to return to pornography's relationship to sex. Although the 'turn' I have focused on here was first and foremost a textual one – indeed, many of the authors I have mentioned are dismissive of the 'sex wars' and seek to chart new territory in their own work – the emphasis on the sex of pornography which characterized the challenges to anti-porn feminism in the wake of the Barnard conference remains. Nowhere is this more explicit than in the explanatory blurb on the weconsent website, launched in 2012, which positions itself as a site 'for anyone who works in the erotic industries – from lap dancers, porn stars, adult TV staff, sex workers, sex shop assistants to sex academics, sex researchers and sex journalists'.¹⁰ While academic life in the twenty-first century may not be the bastion of privilege it once was, to lump together as 'workers in the erotic industries' media and cultural studies academics researching sexual representations with porn stars is quite a stretch, flattening important distinctions about the nature of 'work', the structure of the 'industries' and their relative status, pay structures and on-the-job

safety. Moreover, the site's tagline – 'we love sex so much we do it full time' – makes no sense in relation to academic labour *unless* we accept that researching, or marking essays on, the sexually explicit is 'doing' sex. Thus, not only has pornography become so amorphous as to become almost meaningless in academic debate, it would appear that 'sex' has too. Moreover, the suggestion that there is a necessary alignment between the interests of the sex industry and the interests of academics researching that industry is deeply troubling.

There is a broader point here about the people and objects feminists study and their relationship to them. As I argue in the Epilogue to *Everyday Pornography* (Boyle, 2010a: 204), we are living in an essentially post-feminist culture where questions about women's choices, desires, pleasures and representations seem to dominate the academic agenda for feminists working in media-centred disciplines. Increasingly, feminist media scholars study what 'we' like and 'we' like what we study. Of course feminist research is not – nor should it be – 'objective' in the way that that word has traditionally been used to mask the grounded realities in which knowledge is produced (Boyle, 2012), and there is nothing inherently wrong with studying objects we like or groups we see ourselves as part of. However, as Tania Modleski warned as early as 1991, there is a danger of this kind of criticism becoming increasing narcissistic, 'based on an unspoken syllogism that goes something like this: "I like *Dallas*. I am a feminist. *Dallas* must have progressive potential.'" (1991: 45). As such, this kind of criticism can function to close down feminist enquiry in its individualism and failure to properly interrogate pleasure.

While some of the writing from the 1990s was certainly interested in the possibilities of pleasure in this individualist way, more recent research has sought to investigate the pleasures of porn consumers on a wider scale. The researchers have been explicit in their intent to 'rescue' porn consumers from the negative views of them which are argued

to have dominated academic and popular discourse around porn consumption (McKee et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2011) in a way which echoes early feminist work on women's genres. Whether negative views of porn consumers *have* dominated discourse is debatable.¹¹ That said, in the context of debates which have been dominated by behaviourism (what porn does – or does not do – to viewers) and, more recently, where the 'discovery' of porn addiction has medicalized and depoliticized men's porn use, considering how and in what contexts viewers 'do things with' porn is a necessary corrective. However, there are cautionary notes to sound about this work which take us back to key questions about what pornography is.

First, the stated intent to let consumers 'speak for themselves' (McKee et al., 2008) harks back to the use of testimonials from those involved in the production of pornography and runs the risk of being equally as divisive, while marginalizing the important role of the researcher in shaping that testimony. As Karen Pitcher (2006: 12) discusses, personal choice has become so fetishized in post-feminist culture that there is a hesitation to decry or interrogate actions involving personal choice: the phrase 'it's my choice' has become virtually synonymous with 'it's a feminist thing to do'. In presenting the voices of porn consumers McKee et al., claim that the only alternatives to taking interview responses 'at face value' is to assume that the interviewees are liars, or that they are stupid or deceived. They write: 'asked to choose who knows themselves better – the people we spoke to, or an academic who's never met them – we're going to give the benefit of the doubt to these consumers' (2008: 40). If the academic has no active role in interpreting their data, however, it is difficult to see what the point of academic research is (as opposed to market research, for example).

Moreover, the emphasis on *consumers* – and on current, active, enthusiastic consumers – can tell us only part of the story. In other areas of media studies the emphasis which audience researchers initially placed on 'fans' of

popular texts is complicated by work which considers those with differing levels of engagement (for example, Gray, 2003; Andrejevic, 2008). In this, the figure of the 'anti-fan' – the person who dislikes a text and in communicating that dislike contributes to its discursive construction – and the 'non-fan' (who exhibits no engagement) are also recognized as important. At the very least, this work might alert us to the danger of fetishizing the porn-enthusiast. More productively, it suggests the importance of studying those who refuse to engage with pornography – alongside those who do – to better understand what pornography means in contemporary culture and the conditions in which choices are made about its consumption, as well as the conditions in which choice is *not* present.

One of the recurring themes in writing about porn consumption is that porn is perceived by consumers as having a sex educative function. This coheres with a wider cultural shift where porn performers are increasingly being looked to as 'sexperts' within mainstream contexts *even though* these same performers are often remarkably candid about the lack of desire and sexual pleasure inherent in their porn performances (Boyle, 2011; Tyler, 2011). In this context, porn consumers' use of porn as sex education requires further, more nuanced, investigation. It should be the beginning of a critical conversation not only about the *kinds* of sex consumers are learning about (a concern, too, for anti-porn feminists) but, more fundamentally, about the externalization of sexual pleasure this implies. After all, the fundamental reason pornography exists is not to enhance the desire, pleasure and feeling of its performers – for whom porn is, at best, *work* – but to arouse the viewer. As such, the sex of pornography is always performed with the viewer in mind and shot to give 'him' the best *view*. How the sex of pornography feels to those performing it is immaterial to the genre – though how it looks like it feels may not be immaterial to viewers' engagements and pleasures (Parvez, 2006).

This returns us to questions about what pornography *is* – representation, sexuality, practice, product? As I will briefly discuss in the final section, anti-pornography feminists would argue that, despite changes to the availability and acceptability of hard-core pornography, the *nature* of pornography – and hence the need for feminist analysis and anti-porn activism – has not changed.

THE RESURGENCE OF ANTI-PORN FEMINISM

The ‘pornification’ of mainstream culture discussed in the previous section has also been the context in which the feminist anti-pornography movement has found a renewed urgency (Long, 2012). Although some key figures in this (re)new(ed) movement have been active anti-porn feminists for decades, it would be fair to say that by the late 1980s anti-porn feminism had gone into decline, not least because of the divisiveness of the debates outlined above. The professionalization of feminist analysis – and its ensconcing within the academy – also had a role to play in this process, with porn’s position within media disciplines leading to an emphasis on its range of possible meanings (including to actual consumers) and its broader cultural significance. While an analysis of pornography *as an industry* did not completely disappear in this period (such as Lane, 2001), this work was not typically engaged in by feminist scholars. Indeed, in their own careers, porn-sympathetic academic feminists were more likely to be studying porn alongside film genres than to be engaged in investigations of real-world sexual violence and to position themselves as sexual subjects and as porn consumers rather than porn refusers. Particularly in the UK, where the demise of Women’s Studies courses has made genuinely inter-disciplinary feminist study more challenging, students encountering porn on the curriculum do not necessarily encounter it in the context of the broader debates about violence and sexuality that were significant

in earlier feminist thinking and organizing around pornography. This does not mean that these debates have gone away – outside of academia the feminist anti-violence sector has maintained and developed their analysis of pornography and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation – but it does mean that they are not necessarily the most obvious route into studying porn for new scholars.

For anti-porn feminists, these links with the feminist anti-violence movement remain important. Although we are now in a very different cultural moment, the basic analysis developed by anti-porn feminists in the 1970s and 1980s remains at the core of contemporary anti-porn feminism. This analysis still pertains because the nature of what porn *is* has not fundamentally changed: it is sex produced in the interests of profit, where the sexual pleasure of the (female) performers is immaterial, and its success depends upon there being a class of people who are willing to purchase sexual access to the body of another for the purposes of sexual pleasure, immaterial of the pleasure of the performer. In the age of the internet there has been a need for some rethinking of the *commercial* aspect of this transaction, although, as Johnson’s work (2010) has begun to explore, the consumer does not necessarily have to part with cash to contribute to the generation of revenue for porn companies. That said, the ‘democratization’ of filmmaking through the increased accessibility and affordability of technology does mean that it is possible to imagine sexually explicit representations which are *not* intended for exchange. These representations are not – by definition, *could not* – themselves be the object of academic scrutiny, and anti-porn feminism has largely focused on commercially produced porn, including that which is presented as ‘amateur’.

As with earlier campaigns, however, there remains a dual focus: on the one hand, the primary concern is still with pornography as a specific mode of industrial production and representation; on the other, anti-porn analyses continue to identify the continuities

between pornography and other forms of representation, other forms of violence and other forms of commercial sex. In her study of UK activist groups, for instance, Long (2012) notes that a frustration with the routinized sexual objectification of women in mainstream media and the normalization of aspects of commercial sex have been motivating factors for many contemporary activists. While their campaign strategies and priorities exhibit continuities with earlier feminist anti-porn organizing, and links with the feminist anti-violence sector remain significant, the new movement does not necessarily retain the same analysis of heterosexuality *per se*, and is more open to male participants.

You will have noted that in discussing contemporary anti-porn feminism I have started with activism and not the academy. This does not mean that there is no anti-porn perspective within the academy – there is – but it is notable that academic thinking which is explicitly anti-porn or is, at least, sympathetic to that perspective is more dispersed than the porn-sympathetic work discussed above. If anti-porn feminism has a disciplinary ‘home’ it is still in the inter-disciplinary context fostered by Women’s Studies, which houses political scientists, economists, philosophers, lawyers, sociologists and literary scholars as well as those in media disciplines. The decline of Women’s Studies programmes in the UK has clearly had an impact here, but the broader Women’s Studies community – including the journals and feminist publishing houses which have been vital in disseminating feminist work across a variety of disciplines – continues to be important in supporting this work. While porn-sympathetic arguments claim expertise over ‘sex’ as well as media, anti-porn arguments continue to be fundamentally about the social construction of gender, sexuality and power.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has not sought to present a definitive account of ‘feminism and pornography’

but, rather, has explored how questions about the nature of porn and its inter-relationships with other modes of representation, its industrial status and its position relative to both violence and sexuality remain central – and divisive – ones for feminism. For a student engaging with the feminist literature on pornography for the first time, the sheer volume of material is overwhelming enough. To then find within its pages blatantly opposing arguments and contradictory analyses of the same objects, people and events – *or* opposing arguments about pornography that are based on fundamentally different definitions of what porn *is* – adds to the confusion.¹² Despite the attempts of a number of contemporary scholars to place their work outside of the factionalism around pornography which proved so damaging to feminism in the 1980s, the two ‘sides’ remain, in many ways, as polarized as ever, both within the academy and outside of it.

Feminism does not simply offer a means of understanding pornographic representations, but, rather, asks a series of questions about the relationships of pornography to the broader society and culture, questions about (in)equality, gender violence, sexuality and power that relate not only to the diageitic world of the pornographic text but also, importantly, to the real worlds in which those texts are produced and consumed. The content of these texts, the contexts in which they are viewed and the people who are involved in making them have, in some ways, changed since the early days of feminist debate on the issue. Nonetheless, the feminist anti-porn analysis remains rooted in fundamental questions about the compatibility of porn *as a practice* with a feminist vision of gender equality. These questions are not answered by individuals’ enthusiastic embrace of porn production or consumption; they are bigger questions that seek to problematize much that is taken for granted in contemporary discourse around pornography – that it is inevitable, that consumers have a right to this material, that men need pornography. Porn-sympathetic approaches have sometimes

accepted these truisms but have also sought to present a more complex and nuanced account of the pornographic product and those involved in its production and consumption. While this work has generated important insights and often provided a corrective to anti-porn feminism's tendency to analyse pornography as a homogenous and homogenizing industry, in deliberately focusing on the 'borders' of pornography – marginal and exceptional texts, as well as the blurred boundaries between porn and mainstream media/art contexts – porn-sympathetic work has often been guilty of ignoring or sidelining important feminist questions about violence and inequality while advocating a more hedonistic world-view linked to sexual practice.

These differences in focus and politics make comparing across this work an often difficult task but it is a necessary one as claims about pornography *per se* – and what, if anything, feminists should be doing about it – emerge from these contexts. Only by contextualizing the available evidence can we ensure that, whatever our position on pornography, our thinking and scholarship is rigorous and ethical.

NOTES

- 1 A small number of ostensibly non-pornographic films have, in recent years, been explicit about showing 'real' sex (*Intimacy*, *Short Bus*, *Romance* and *Nine Songs*). While these films do raise troubling questions about the expectations placed on performers and the slippage between the mainstream and pornographic, the sex of these films is not 'industrial' in the way that Dines (2010) uses the term.
- 2 Designating the different 'sides' in this debate is not neutral. 'Anti-porn feminism' is fairly uncontroversial and is often used interchangeably with 'radical feminism'. However, opposing feminist approaches have been described as anti-censorship, pro-sex, sex-positive and pro-porn. The first three of these labels set up false dichotomies, implying that anti-porn positions are pro-censorship or anti-sex – a perspective which damagingly took hold during the so-called 'sex wars', where the attempt was made to recast feminist debates

about porn as debates about sex and sexuality. While the pro-porn label is embraced by some – and is often used by anti-porn feminists to describe their opponents – it does not encapsulate the ambivalence towards the texts and practices of the commercial heterosexual porn industry (as well as to illegal material such as child pornography) which characterizes some of this work. I have therefore opted for the more neutral porn-sympathetic here and only use pro-porn to refer to work which explicitly identifies itself in this way.

- 3 www.weconsent.org, accessed 24 April 2012.
- 4 See debates on porn and pornification in the journals *Sexualities* and *Sex Education* and the editorial framing of Attwood's *Mainstreaming Sex* (2009).
- 5 Carolyn Bronstein's (2011) account of the US anti-porn movement traces a similar lineage, beginning with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and its discussion of representations of women in advertising. She goes on to explore how US anti-pornography feminism emerged out of a general concern with representations of sexualized violence in mainstream media and advertising, noting that the later emphasis on pornography was controversial, alienating some of those who had been involved in earlier campaigns.
- 6 On the position of the hearings within anti-porn feminism see Long (2012: Chapter 1). For MacKinnon and Dworkin's reflections see their *In Harm's Way* (1997).
- 7 For example, a number of essays in *Big Porn Inc* (Tankard Reist and Bray, 2011) make relatively uncritical use of effects research to support contentions about the harms of pornography (MacKinnon, 2011: 12; Sonderegger, 2011; Russell, 2011). The danger of using this kind of research is underlined when those identifying explicitly as pro-porn fixate on the effects question as a way of derailing broader feminist anti-porn arguments (e.g. Brull, 2012). I offer a more detailed critique of the effects paradigm and its use within anti-porn feminism in Boyle (2000).
- 8 As these examples suggest, anti-porn feminists have often sought to make connections along what we might – following Liz Kelly (1988) – describe as a 'continuum' of sexual violence. The continuum allows us to understand connections between actions and experiences which are mundane, everyday and widely accepted (e.g. the display of pornographic images in public spaces) and those which are immediately and uncontroversially recognized as criminal (e.g. child abuse), so building up a picture of how our culture normalizes men's sexual aggression and women and girls' sexual objectification. In relation to

the debates about pornography specifically, this can, however, muddy important questions about choice and consent.

- 9 For instance, the anthology *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* (Gibson and Gibson, 1993) was published by the British Film Institute and includes an introduction by Carol J. Clover, a scholar known for her work on horror. Lehman's 2006 *Pornography: Film and Culture* was published in Rutgers' 'Depth of Field' series alongside titles focused on silent film, the war film, horror, terrorism, racial representation, nationalism and representations of the holocaust.
- 10 www.weconsent.org, accessed 26 April 2012.
- 11 Compare Attwood, 2007 and McKee et al., 2008, with Boyle, 2010b and Pringle, 2011.
- 12 Of course I, like everyone else cited in this article, write from a particular position in these debates and I describe and discuss this in detail in the editorial content of *Everyday Pornography* (2010a) and in my response to a review of that collection in *Violence Against Women* (Boyle, 2012).

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Representing Women in Popular Culture

Imelda Whelehan

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the changing feminist critical responses to the representation of women in popular culture since the late 1980s and to the legacy of Second Wave feminist politics in how women are represented and how representation is approached – both in academic research and as part of the wider popular social and political commentaries offered in broadsheets and other media. It summarizes briefly how early feminist debates on representation simultaneously foregrounded and marginalized academic studies in popular culture from the late 1960s and through to the 1980s. It charts how that situation changes, so that by the 1990s there is evidence of a growing interest in spectatorship and consumption that determines the direction and shape of feminist studies of popular culture into the twenty-first century. It notes the core influence of certain disciplinary perspectives on approaches to representation and gender, such as literary and film criticism and, later, cultural and media studies.

During the course of this discussion it will be useful to reflect on notable feminist essays and collections that have shaped our critical understanding and structured theoretical approaches to the representation of women.

The discussion which follows is broadly chronological in structure to provide the reader with necessary background information at the same time as foregrounding the key perspectives at stake in the study of images of women in popular culture. The following section outlines the emergence of a feminist critical position in academia; this will provide a strong contextual base from which to anchor some of the core issues that latterly divide and fragment to create diverse feminist approaches to representation. Subsequent sections will review and interpret subsequent theoretical developments that have brought the study of popular culture to the fore in feminist scholarship, particularly from the 1990s onwards. The chapter concludes by summarizing the main challenges for analysts of popular culture in an environment where the creators of dominant mainstream images

of women in advertisements, popular television and film are well versed in the discourse of gender studies as well as profoundly affected by a postfeminist sensibility which informs the discourses deployed in the creation and dispersal of popular cultural texts. Contemporary creative teams understand how to deliver an image that seems at once complex and contemporary as well as retroactive and nostalgic to capture the broadest demographic possible. The image and the concise soundbite carry more symbolic weight than reasoned argument in the domain of the 'popular', and I shall explore why it becomes increasingly difficult to challenge images of women that at one level seem to address diversity, freedom of expression and choice, but which also depend on compatibility with traditional 'feminine' styles of being a woman and which ignore diversity in terms of age, 'race' or sexuality.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REPRESENTATION IN SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

From the birth of Second Wave feminism in the mid-1960s, and specifically through the political objectives of the Women's Liberation Movement, the ways in which women were represented on screen, in advertisements and in literature became a prime area of focus. How a woman perceives herself, it was asserted, was mediated by how women as a group were represented in public and political life and in mass culture. In the early stages of the development of a specifically feminist politics there was presumed to be a link between how the media present women and how people then perceive women's identities, social roles and capacities. Images of women, it was suggested, reinforced dominant ideologies of gender difference. Betty Friedan was an early commentator who argued that advertising specifically reinforced women in a domestic role as well as focusing attention on young, attractive and slim women, setting up standards not just of behaviour but also of

appropriate levels of physical attractiveness. Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which helped launch the National Organisation for Women¹ and contributed to the radicalism of the Women's Liberation Movement, scrutinized advertising as the key component of the 'sexual sell'. It was noted that mass culture reinforced the notion that women's domestic roles and responsibilities were unchanged and grounded in biological imperatives, to suggest that their most important social functions remained as carers, homemakers and nurturers.

Feminists suggested that these roles were reinforced through social discourses that associated gender differences with timelessness and naturalness; the challenge was to shatter that link to the natural and show how it worked to support the current status quo, denied the impact of changing societal norms and acted against the collective interests of women. Feminist political challenges were mounted at offensive and reductive stereotypes as well as at events that celebrated women only for their looks and for their sexual desirability. The purpose of challenging such images and disrupting mainstream events, such as beauty pageants, lay in the optimistic belief that creating a wider consciousness of how such images worked and how such events were demeaning would encourage a high degree of lobbying for the rejection of such image-making. A raising of consciousness was regarded as the first stage in the liberation of women from negative stereotyping, as if, by demystifying these images, one could dismantle patriarchy. But by the late 1970s theorists such as Christine Gledhill were cautioning that '[s]tereotypes do not vanish on the production of an image of real women, or of Feminist aspiration. They are materialized in the way society is structured and the way we live our lives; they are part of our reality' (Gledhill, 1978: 463). Academic feminists, especially socialist feminists, recognized the link between dominant images of women and persistent ideologies of femininity that endured despite changing educational and professional opportunities for women.

The vehemence with which feminist groups disrupted beauty pageants such as the Miss America contest in Atlantic City in 1968 and the Miss World event in London in 1970, stickered offensive advertisements in public places such as the London Underground, threw red paint over pornography and engaged in other acts of public theatre to raise the public's consciousness about the selectivity and exclusions in the mainstream representations of women earned them the reputation of being bitter women unable to compete with those who could measure success by their attractiveness. This representation of radical feminism persists to this day. In tandem with the highly visible and vocal protests against mainstream representations of women, however, feminists also engaged in the serious business of producing alternative images that celebrated diversity and authenticity. In general, 1970s feminism displayed a conscious optimism, buoyed up by the strength of support for feminist projects which mounted constant challenges to sexist representations.

Eva Figes' *Patriarchal Attitudes*, first published in 1970 and inspired by Friedan's work, looks at the social position of women as inflected by religion, psychoanalysis, philosophy, literature and politics. In her first chapter she notes that '[m]an's vision of woman is not objective, but an uneasy combination of what he wishes her to be and what he fears her to be, and it is to this mirror image that woman has to comply' (1970: 17). Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, also published in 1970, focused on the images of women reflected through the psyche of men in her acute and controversial rereading of some of the twentieth century's erstwhile literary lions, such as D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and Norman Mailer, on the grounds that 'there is room for a criticism which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced' (1977: xii). Literary studies was an area which, early on, felt the impact of a feminist critique, inspired by Millett. Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader* (1978) and Mary Ellmann's

exploration of the gendered language of what she calls 'phallic criticism' (1979: 27–54) underscore how literature is defined by norms of male experience and how male literary criticism is imbued with gendered language which imagines (and judges accordingly) the women behind their writing. 'Images of women' criticism was one facet of the early feminist critical enterprise which theorists such as Toril Moi later dismissed as tending towards the most naïve form of content analysis (Moi, 1985: 42–9), but for early feminists its power was in its simplicity and the ways in which all kinds of imagery could be explored, discussed, dismantled and politicized and alternative role models could be imagined as part of early academic feminism's utopian political project.

Feminist literary criticism of the 1970s tended to focus on literature and the lack of recognition of women writers as part of the literary canon, yet Lillian S. Robinson notes 'that I encountered the male literary tradition against a background filled with trashy popular fiction by, for, and about women' (1978: 202). As Robinson implies, popular fiction spoke to women's encounters with narratives of women's lives in a realm normally excluded from the literary: it was in some ways an 'escape' from the patriarchal logic which underpinned academia. For her, popular culture is vital to an understanding of women's social position under patriarchy, and she advocates focus on the women *reader* as well as *writer* of popular fiction to 'tell us something about the materials women use to make their lives in our society' (1978: 205), a position more broadly embraced in the following decade.

The focus on representation in the dual sense of depiction and visible presence in public spaces helped feminist criticism influence a range of arts and humanities disciplines. Latterly the analysis of offensive or restrictive gendered images provided the fuel for the most engaging aspects of feminist cultural criticism, sitting beneath some complex discipline-specific theoretical positions. The study of 'stereotypes', for example, had

a significant impact on emergent academic areas such as film studies, media studies and cultural studies. During the 1970s and into the early 1980s there remained some correlation between feminist critical and political aims, so that the critical work influenced coordinated and effective protests against advertising and cultural productions to the extent that corporate image producers became more circumspect about the way women, men and the relationships between them were depicted. In this way feminist critiques had an impact on mainstream representation, as advertisers felt the need to mollify a possible regiment of angry women; but market researchers and advertisers also learnt fast to incorporate the rhetoric of feminism to their own ends. The Philip Morris Virginia Slims cigarette campaign in 1968, which contained the byline 'You've come a long way, baby', is an obvious example, in which women smoking is associated with liberation and new choices. In addition, the 'natural look' in makeup and fashion was a commercial response to feminist rejection of the tyranny of makeup and corsetry. For a decade or more advertisers remained responsive to new images of women; the fragrance Charlie, launched in 1973, is another example of this internalization and commercialization of feminist ideas that showed women in the public domain.

As I shall go on to explore later in this chapter, it was not until the 1990s that Western culture saw a marked return to retrosexist and gendered imagery which signalled a nostalgia for and a celebration of sexual difference unmediated by feminist critique, a celebration which is often cheerfully offensive even if disguised by the adoption of irony or other forms of humour as a defensive rhetorical device.

EMERGING FEMINIST CRITICAL APPROACHES TO POPULAR CULTURE

Studies in representation have two pathways, one devoted to the analysis of the negative

representations of women and femininity, and the reception of such images, and the other exploring and showcasing oppositional work by alternative image makers. These two strands make perfect sense when one is working in the field of 'high' culture, but approaches to popular culture require focus on the former, and a nuanced extension of 'Images of women' approaches in feminist literary studies, where images are identified as negative but discussed within a broader socio-historical framework to explore their engagement with contemporary social realities. As noted above, approaches to popular culture are rare in early feminist critiques but work such as Robinson's on the politics of reading 'trash' (1978), underscored by her commitment to exposing how our responses to culture are inflected by both gender and class positions, shaped the field. Latterly Judith Butler's positioning of gender as performance has been deployed broadly in the study of popular culture, often in order to find a way to positively explore irony, play and ambiguity.

As implied above, the study of popular culture lends itself to exploration of gender, class and 'race' because of the focus on mass consumption as well as production. Furthermore, given that popular cultural products are generally conceived as the opposite of art – undemanding, deeply conservative, reassuring in their superficiality and clichéd narrative trajectories – work on reception becomes essential. The work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK was essentially interdisciplinary in nature from the start and heavily influenced by Marxist, post-structuralist and feminist theories, with one of its students, Angela McRobbie, becoming one of the most significant feminist cultural critics. While much feminist scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s remained resolutely highbrow in areas such as literary and film studies, McRobbie's work on youth culture and girls' magazines offered important groundwork for further feminist cultural criticism. Such work added a further layer to the

earlier 'images' approach to representation, particularly showing how mainstream cultural products could seem contradictory in their purveying of ideological messages and signals about appropriate forms of gendered behaviour. Critiques interrogated how consumers can appropriate imagery and negotiate a path through the most obvious meanings and even interpret them against the grain. As Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment argued in 1988, '[p]opular culture is a site of struggle ... a site where meanings are contested and where dominant ideologies can be disturbed' (1988: 1). In different areas of enquiry where feminist criticism had come of age, particularly in literary and film studies, the 'popular' remained a contested area of focus, where aesthetic and formal considerations promoted the study of high art rather than low culture, but the 1990s and the legacy of postmodernist perspectives on culture enabled the critical questioning of 'grand narratives' and their cultural hierarchies.

THE GAZE, AUDIENCE AND AGENCY

The issue of representation and gender in feminist film theory was constructed around Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze' in mainstream Hollywood cinema as discussed in her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', first published in the journal *Screen* in 1975. She argued that the male gaze 'coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order' (2009: 16): men look and women are to be looked at in the economy of popular film narrative. In this famous and much criticized and anthologized essay she articulates the ways in which the unconscious, itself shaped by patriarchal logic, controls ways of seeing. Heavily inflected by the tradition of psychoanalysis, Mulvey engaged with theories of the look in terms of scopophilia. Understandably, many were uncomfortable with the assumed passivity of such a subject location for the female spectator, inevitably positioning them

as victim of dominant patriarchal ideology. Mulvey's contribution lies in her introduction of the problem of the representation of the female into film theoretical traditions, which were strongly influenced by psychoanalysis, and its problematization of what women do when they look at the screen. She attempted to facilitate an understanding of how patriarchal discourses of power are imbricated and perpetuated in cultural productions. Later critics, including Mulvey herself, either modified or repudiated the starkness of this division between the male gazer and the female gazed-upon, but this short essay provided the cornerstone of feminist film theory debate in the 1980s. It raised questions about how women and men respond to gendered representations, and about the nature of women's agency in their interpretation and response to such representations.

After Mulvey, revisionist commentators represented the spectator as capable of being an active and resisting subject, and this image of the audience as knowing and less likely to be duped or passive in their consumption of imagery is crucial to studies of popular culture in the 1990s. Jackie Stacey distinguishes between the concept of the female spectator and the actuality of female spectatorship and in doing so brings film theory staples to feminist cultural criticism. Stacey pursues, among other things, the 'possible homoerotic pleasures for the female spectator' (1994: 27), rather than seeing the gaze as a purely masculine position. This is a shift in emphasis to audiences and away from theoretical spectators but also reflects the recognition that 'woman' makes an unwieldy category despite its analytical usefulness. Analysing the responses of actual spectators produces a framework for exploring the role of pleasure in consumption and promotes reflection on female agency and the understandings a spectator brings to their actual viewing experiences. Stacey is not celebrating viewing as itself always active or resistant, but seeks recognition of the reality of spectating and the disjunction between

empirical and theoretical studies of the gaze, the latter informed by psychoanalytical criticism. This refinement reminds us that the gaze inflects a normative gendered and racialized set of power relationships that still poses problems in the analysis of sexualized images of women, even when women-as-object claim to be in control of their own image.

AUDIENCES AND AGENCY

As has been discussed above, the study of popular culture lends itself to a consideration of the consumer. From the 1990s critics such as Myra Macdonald were further examining the impact of feminist discourse and its embedding in popular culture through narratives of freedom and choice in a broadening postfeminist discursive redefinition of the relation of women to sexuality, noting that 'by the 1980s consumerist discourses were rewriting sexual desire' (1995: 170). While noting an increasing frankness about sex in women's glossy magazines of the 1970s and 1980s, she speculates that postfeminist discourses of sexual freedom underplay the dividing line between desire and exploitation and sexual harassment, where the media has 'fetishized and commodified female sexuality by associating it closely with beautiful young bodies and the trappings of a glitzy lifestyle' (1995: 189). Macdonald recognizes the difficulty of asserting a new 'female gaze' when all images of women 'are often looked at through old spectacles' (1995: 190). Macdonald's optimism about a positive popular cultural appropriation of feminism is tempered by her feminist political reticence, and in this she demonstrates the dominant critical trend of the 1990s, where the possibility of remaking the image was still envisaged. She notes McRobbie's 'upbeat' writing of the possibilities of youth culture's appropriation of feminism (Macdonald 1995: 219) and the expansion of ethnographic and theoretical studies of consumption that enriched studies in popular culture.

Susan Faludi's *Backlash* (1992) is an example of 1990s popular feminist discourse which supports and broadens academic debate, intervening in popular culture as she uses her skills as an investigative journalist to examine the ways in which feminism in the 1980s lost its hold over the popular imagination and became the target for mainstream masculinist venom. In her chapters on the fashion and beauty industries she asserts that the urge in the 1980s to create a desire for the return to a 'new' femininity is a response to loss of revenue and interest in fashion and beauty products among women after Second Wave feminism, noting that 'fashion merchants latched on to the idea that contemporary women must be suffering from an excess of equality that had depleted their femininity' (1992: 207–8). This chimes with a range of backlash trend articles which implied that professional women were losing touch with their femininity, situating the blame upon victories of Women's Liberation and suggesting that women were burdened by the need to 'have it all'. Nowhere is this better embodied than in the central characters of women's blockbusters of the 1970s and 1980s, underpinned by Shirley Conran's self-help bestseller, *Superwoman* (1975), which instructed women to expect no support from their families in the domestic maintenance of the home.

The have-it-all powerful women depicted in novels such as Conran's *Lace* (1982), who reach the top of their corporate tree 'while engaging in conspicuous consumption of men and designer labels' (Felski, 2000: 100), anticipates the millennial postfeminist found in texts such as *Sex and the City*. Similar images pervaded popular film of the 1980s, such as *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987), *Working Girl* (Mike Nichols, 1988) and *Baby Boom* (Charles Shyer, 1987), but in each case the high-achieving career woman is demonized and depicted as unnatural in some way. In the case of *Fatal Attraction* Alex Forrest has to be killed to protect the sanctity of the home; Katharine Parker (Sigourney Weaver) is punished for her 'masculine'

careerist instincts by being replaced both in the boardroom and the bedroom by a sexier, more feminine competitor; J.C. Wiatt (Diane Keaton) meanwhile finds the virtues of motherhood and working from home as an antidote to the corporate rat race and is rewarded with a true romance. In each case these films depict the continued gendered inequities of the workplace and dramatize the tensions in the term 'career woman' while placing the 'solution' to such problems as retreat or destruction.

Faludi acknowledges that such images are a far cry from the women depicted in 1970s films such as *Up the Sandbox* (Irvin Kershner, 1972) *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (Martin Scorsese, 1974), *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975) and even Oscar-nominated *Private Benjamin* (Howard Zieff, 1980), where women need to escape domesticity and conventional romance plots to find themselves, or, in the case of *The Stepford Wives*, survive. As Faludi notes, by the mid-1980s in film 'a woman who thinks for herself, apparently, could now be mistaken for a subversive' (Faludi, 1992: 160) and instead women are shown 'choosing' to place their domestic role, their man and their femininity ahead of their own needs in a display of 'choice' that parodies the choices that feminism attempted to secure. Faludi's observations were the subject of media controversy and debate at the time and her conception of the backlash has bled into accounts of post-feminist discourse, the key question being whether postfeminism is understood as aligned to backlash anti-feminism or as some kind of corrective to what is represented in the popular media as the excesses of feminism, so that feminism, rather than patriarchy, is positioned as the oppressor of women.

CONTROLLING THE GAZE? PERFORMING GENDER: THE LEGACY OF MADONNA

During the 1990s there was a growing interest in the impact of the appropriation of classic

sexualized imagery of women and whether in appropriation new meanings and challenges could be found. Substantial attention was focused on the contribution of Madonna to the meanings of the gaze via her often controversial music videos. Madonna's emergence on the scene as a 'pop' star marked her out as part of popular culture, yet her videos garnered a great deal of scholarly and media attention usually reserved for artists, with debates about whether her portrayal of the sexualized female and her gay-positive polymorphous sexual behavior were feminist and challenging and how one determined the difference between these and the traditional images she often quoted (for example that of Marilyn Monroe in her video of *Material Girl*). Madonna's power to shock and destabilize boundaries of gender and 'race', as well as remixing the virgin/whore dichotomy, created controversies about whether her videos were politicized statements or simply exploitative of contemporary sensitivities around gender, 'race' and sexuality. Her videos emerged at a time of increased scholarly interest in postmodernism, culture and, specifically, the notion of 'pastiche'. Camille Paglia uses Madonna to 'prove' the 'puritanism and suffocating ideology of American feminism', continuing: 'Madonna has taught young women to be fully female and sexual while still exercising control over their lives' (1992: 4). As E. Ann Kaplan observes, this view and the anti-feminist rhetoric Paglia deploys 'emphasizes how co-optable theories that keep gender binarisms intact are' (1993: 155). It posits Madonna as 'beyond' or outside feminism in her manipulation of the image and the self created. The debates about how one exerts control through the pastiche or appropriation of retrosexist imagery continues and the extent to which objects in the image can be seen to own and dictate their meaning continues to haunt feminist studies in representation; equally, Madonna's influence on feminist studies in popular culture is enormous and often positive in terms of the scholarship produced, in line with Butler's analysis of the performative aspects of gender

and how subversive performances might offer challenges to dominant gender categories. For some she is a role model for adolescent women, if one is to take a positive spin on the 1990s era of 'Girl Power' and its tweenification by the Spice Girls. While there is much to say about the impact of the performances of such female pop stars, looked at from a broader socio-historical perspective, 'to use the example of the privileged few such as the Spice Girls and Madonna to suggest that all women have "arrived" is to deflect discussions of how far women as a group still have to go' (Whelehan, 2000: 54). This variance between a celebration of performance and scepticism about the degree of 'power' or its attainability for an audience remains one of the key problematics at the heart of studies of representation.

Since the early days of feminism's Second Wave, 'gender' had been understood as a construct where preferred forms of femininity and masculinity were endorsed by social and ideological sanctions on abnormality in behaviours and attitudes. By the 1990s feminist critics were heeding Judith Butler's advice to consider '[w]hat new shape of politics emerges when identity as a common ground no longer constrains the discourse on feminist politics' (Butler, 1990: ix). Butler raised fundamental questions about what we are talking about when we discuss gender and identity, and her description of gender as performative, a constant re-enactment (or resistance) of dominant patriarchal paradigms, underscores her argument that 'if there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end' (Butler, 1990: 33). Using a Foucauldian model of power as enforced through discourse as well as material hierarchical relations, Butler explores how dominant discursive networks produce subjectivities and reproduce desired forms of representation. Picking up on the dual meanings of the word, Butler asserts:

on the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. (Butler, 1990: 1)

In her terms, 'woman' as subject of patriarchal political hegemony and as discursively produced through the performance of certain behaviours and styles becomes an unstable and elusive concept; for feminists this point of instability offers a rich vein of emancipatory possibilities.

LIFESTYLE, THIRD WAVE FEMINISM, POST-MILLENNIAL POSTFEMINISM

The expansion of 'lifestyle' and its exploration and analysis by theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu facilitates further consideration of both class- and gender-specific models of consumption and a greater understanding of what desires are mediated by advertising, magazines and popular TV and film. Bourdieu notes that the 'new bourgeoisie'

rejects the ascetic ethic of production and accumulation, based on abstinence, sobriety, saving and calculation, in favour of a hedonistic morality of consumption, based on credit, spending and enjoyment. This economy demands a social world which judges people by their capacity for consumption, their 'standard of living', their life-style, as much as by their capacity for production. (Bourdieu, 1984: 310)

The 'taste-makers' who encourage consumption as an end in itself are highly visible in popular cultural productions, where the concept of 'lifestyle' becomes central. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the changed formulation of broadsheet newspapers and countless TV shows on interior decoration, diet, fitness and fashion. Bourdieu's study analyses the class basis of this economy and feminists have focused more closely on gender designations and 'the

central importance of consuming oneself into being in a life of constant and continual improvement and change' (Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008: 230), which is the desire for the acquisition of femininity through both objects and ideas, in parallel to Bourdieu's analysis of the class-based acquisition of cultural capital.

The growth of postfeminist discourse as the dominant gender-specific discourse in popular culture dovetails with the more overt development of lifestyle as determinant of taste and with the mainstreaming of 'luxury' goods. Although there are debates over the provenance and meanings attached to postfeminism as a concept there is general agreement that it takes its impetus from the most familiar rhetoric of Second Wave feminism, which it normally uses to quite different purposes. Joanne Hollows notes that 'images of "liberation", "freedom" and "independence" for women now populate many media forms because they *sell*, but, in the process, become detached from feminist discourses which gave them any "radical" meaning' (2000: 194). While noting this decoupling of the feminism from the rhetoric, Hollows is an example of the many popular cultural critics who understand the ways in which feminism is being appropriated for negative purposes, but experience 'a real tension here between wanting to hold on to the identity "feminist" and wanting to see how feminism can be made to mean differently for different generations of women' (Hollows, 2000: 197).

Third Wave Feminism differs from postfeminism in that it acknowledges the contributions of feminism's Second Wave but embraces the sense of necessary generational shifts; this is particularly marked in the ease with which popular culture and contemporary trends in style and fashion which emphasize femininity, makeup and body culture are easily embraced as part of a inclusive but still political identity. Third Wave feminists actively embrace an identity that celebrates feminist values in new guises. TV shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* combined

with alternative Riot Grrrl style events and anti-capitalist, multi-racial politics might characterize the Third Wave feminist of the early twenty-first century, whereas postfeminism's meanings have tended to remain slippery and elusive while gaining momentum as the 'feminist' voice which saturates popular culture. Television critic Merri Lisa Johnson positions feminist perspectives as joyless and anti-pleasure, comparing them unfavourably with Third Wave feminists who 'reflect upon, describe, and analyse their pleasures in TV viewing, interrogating the texts and culture that produce the pleasures' (2007: ix) instead of 'the fret and sweat of feminist anxiety' (2007: 12). In this context feminist anxiety sounds like reticence and passivity; the old-fashioned feminist can react only to negative imagery, whereas the Third Wave feminist interrogates, interacts with and appropriates the meanings offered by the work to her own ends. Yet, as popular cultural criticism moved into the second decade of the twenty-first century, fewer critics self-define as 'Third Wave' and the analysis of pleasure and affect in the study of popular representation is more often set against the issues presented by postfeminist forms of address.

Postfeminism can be defined as either a denial or rejection of feminism, or as a revivification or updating of it. For either of these meanings to work, it depends on the idea that we have moved beyond the liberatory phase of feminism, as if feminism's victories are won. At the heart lies the tension between feminism and femininity – the popular notion that feminism robbed women of the 'right' to be feminine, following on from Johnson's anti-pleasure thesis (cited above). The notion of generational mother–daughter clashes also popularizes the idea of an essential tension between feminism (old) and postfeminism (new, sexy, individual). For Angela McRobbie, 'postfeminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, a spent force' (2004: 255). In

this construction postfeminism is positioned as a kind of corrective to outmoded thinking that refreshes and speaks to young women, and many feminists were open to the idea of such a corrective coming into play.

Bridget Jones's Diary is one important example of the way feminism is taken into account while, at the same time, pre-feminist cultural forms and behaviours are central to the pleasure of the book. This book, and others like it, epitomize the notion of 'retrosexism'. Its pastiche of *Pride and Prejudice* looks back to the 'simplicity' of courtship under patriarchy, while references to both Susan Faludi's *Backlash* and *Cosmopolitan* magazine relate to two contemporary models of female empowerment: one feminist and one neo-feminist. *Bridget Jones's Diary* was published in the same year as The Spice Girls released 'Wannabe', and both these 'girl power' position statements set the tone for discussions about feminism and the single girl in the 1990s and 2000s. The character Bridget Jones took on an extra-textual life of her own and was the source of numerous debates about a seeming plague of 30-something singletons changing traditional demographics. Brought to the screen by actor Renee Zellweger, the focus shifted to the 'massive' weight gain required by Zellweger to represent the UK size 12–14 Bridget. The quest for 'authenticity' in the representation of Bridget came at a time when concerns were being expressed about the preponderance of size zero models, and magazines such as *Heat* and *OK* alternated between blazing unflattering photos of 'fat' celebrities across their pages and condemning others who were regarded as painfully thin. The Bridget Jones phenomenon perfectly expresses the key tensions in postfeminist discourse: the combination of nostalgic longings for simpler times of courtship with the joyful consumption to excess of food, drink and fashion returns us to Bourdieu's dissection of 'habitus'.

Bridget offers a celebration of the single life which does away with the negative epithet 'spinster', but its ironic take on the

classic mass market romance takes a more literal turn in much subsequent chick lit. As I have noted elsewhere, 'chick lit provides a postfeminist narrative of heterosex and romance for those who feel they're too savvy to be duped by the most conventional romance narrative. ... it uneasily celebrates romance while anatomizing the way romance makes dupes of perfectly rational single women' (2005: 186). Postfeminist discourse is imbued with this kind of ironic knowingness always encapsulated as a wish for pre-feminist innocence, a freedom from the complexities of contemporary life for women where feminism is portrayed as opening up doors to careers, education and the freedom to stay single and have it all. In this way postfeminism can be seen as a tendency in much popular cultural discourse and broadsheet commentary which prompts scepticism about the victories of feminism, always positioning feminism as tending towards the extreme and in need of some self-deprecating humour to defuse it.

Joanne Hollows identifies the centrality of the notion of the makeover to popular fiction, film and television aimed at women and asserts optimistically that 'analysing "the popular" could teach feminists how to "make over" feminism' (Hollows, 2000: 203). Hollows is identifying an awareness that feminism as a political choice has not proved popular, and is acknowledging that contemporary reflections on feminism are generally found in the academy and are therefore more difficult to access. It is also true, as Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley note, that 'rather than coming to consciousness through involvement in feminist movements, most people become conscious of feminism through the way it is represented in popular culture' (2006: 2). This points to the supreme difficulties women have always experienced in reconciling the theory and political ambitions of feminism against the practice of living in consumerist capitalist culture where popular narratives of femininity, choice and empowerment offer pleasure and play as the key to 'liberation'

and self-definition. Popular culture is seen to reflect our lived experiences and represent dominant values and therefore is unlikely to offer modes of resistance to heteropatriarchy, dependent as it is on promoting and naturalizing 'common sense' beliefs about gender relations, often heavily tinged with nostalgic longings for an indeterminate past. The postfeminist solution, as expressed through the way women are depicted in chick lit, popular film and television, offers a less troublesome direction which allows women to seek empowerment through their individual sense of self. The key success of postfeminist discourse is its compatibility with contemporary manifestations of patriarchy which are most evident at the level of popular cultural discourse; while celebrating the potential for women to have it all, mediated messages inform women that this comes at a price. This is generally communicated in such a way as to comfort them that the decisions they make about jobs and personal lives are freely made and that their life choices are rational and workable ones.

What accounts for the rise and persistence of what is most commonly referred to as the discourse of postfeminism remains highly debated. For writers such as Rosalind Gill it is linked to the emergence of neo-liberal tendencies in western politics and culture, where 'Neoliberalism is understood increasingly as constructing individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating' (Gill, 2007: 163) and where women are required to work hard to transform the self through bodily and behavioural regulation to a far greater extent than men. Postfeminism is characterized by Gill as a 'sensibility' within contemporary popular culture, whose key elements are a preoccupation with the body and the sexualization of contemporary culture. Feminine youthfulness and the pursuit and maintenance of 'youth' at whatever age is central to this discursive framework; as Shelley Cobb observes in relation to popular film, older women, particularly those portrayed as career-oriented, act 'as the default symbol for a feminist lifestyle that is

inconsistent with, or inappropriate to, the preoccupations and concerns of contemporary Western women' (Cobb, 2011: 32). In this way the idea that postfeminism expresses young women's dissatisfaction with the old feminist order is reinforced by the portrayal of older women made 'selfish' by feminism and rendered out of touch with personal and domestic happiness, such as Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). I shall return to the huge amount of post-millennial critical attention given to postfeminist utterances in popular culture; but first I will pause to focus on what might be claimed as the paradigmatic case study of postfeminist discourse in popular culture.

THE POSTFEMINIST PARADIGM – SEX AND THE CITY

Sex and the City has much in common with *Bridget Jones's Diary*, not least in that both started out as newspaper columns before being novelized and later transformed for screen adaptation. The adaptation of the *Sex and the City* concept for TV, which ran for six series from 1998 to 2004, is arguably the high point of the franchise to date. The screenwriters adapted the episodic nature of Candace Bushnell's novelization (published in 1996), to focus narrative attention on four friends – Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha – their relationship problems, their working lives and the dynamics of their friendship. Until the final series, the serial nature of the show allowed an open-ended feel to stories, which were in each episode shaped by a question articulated by Carrie in response to her friends' experiences while drafting her weekly column. Carrie Bradshaw and her friends have, like Bridget Jones, an extra-textual life of their own. There are four 'types' of single women to choose from, ranging from the predatory Samantha Jones, who claims she can 'have sex like a man', to the old-fashioned home-centred Charlotte, who seeks romance and

marriage, a range which signals acceptance (to a degree) of the heterogeneity of women and the range of choices and identities available to them.

Sex and the City the TV show and, to a lesser extent, the films (2008; 2010) capture the postfeminist zeitgeist. Jane Gerhard believes that the popularity of the show is 'due in part to its place at the juncture of two related trends in recent popular culture: post-feminism and queerness' (2005: 37) and that 'queer comes to stand in for a lost feminism' (2005: 38) safely defused and replaced by images of the sexualized and consuming feminine. The programme's 'queerness' is attributed to the gay male writers, notably series creator Darren Star and co-writer Michael Patrick King, but is also witnessed in attempts to represent models of female sexuality which depart from negative associations with the sexually active woman. Additionally, there is a strong portrayal of images of alternative family arrangements where friends form the most significant affective ties, even for the most traditional Charlotte. The friendship between the friends is itself a queer statement about the importance of female camaraderie as much more than an adjunct to heterosexual relationships. It is the friends who provide functional support for each other to the extent that, in the first film, they accompany Carrie on her aborted honeymoon after she is jilted. The glamour associated with the show focused on fashion and lifestyle – most significantly, Carrie Bradshaw's love of Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik shoes – and concretized an association of chick lit/flicks with shoes and accessories evidenced by, for example, chick lit book covers which endorse the central role of shopping to the making of the self.

The character of Carrie Bradshaw, writer and advocate for the glamorous single life, can clearly be seen as the natural inheritor of Helen Gurley Brown, long-time editor of the US *Cosmopolitan* and author of the bestselling *Sex and the Single Girl* (1963). Carrie, like Bridget Jones, is the consummate fictional child of *Cosmopolitan* culture; a

woman with ambition, intelligence and drive who loves men but has no urgent need to be a wife. Gerhard notes how Darren Starr's interpretation of Bushnell's work brings to the fore a homosocial dimension: 'Unlike Helen Gurley Brown, Isadora Wing [heroine of Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973)] or Candace Bushnell, none of whom have girlfriends, Starr put Carrie in a web of committed relationships with other (straight) women. For this Carrie, sisterhood is indeed powerful if not political' (2005: 39). This new construction of 'sisterhood' is indeed a dominant feature of postfeminist representations of women in popular culture and it papers over the cracks in heterosexual relationships to the point where 'the traditional romance narrative is still there but as a residual sensibility, a slightly old-fashioned version of femininity that doesn't work in practice' (Arthurs, 2003: 85). Romance is secondary to the journeys of sexual self-discovery and the more pragmatic aspects of maintaining monogamous relationships (partly by discussing all the intimate details with one's friends), its representation of alternative family and the value of homosocial female groupings challenging to the old order of heteronormative representation which places the couple at the centre; but the journeys made by these women are nearly always ultimately endorsed by their continuing relationships with men.

Sex and the City embodies the successes and ambiguities of postfeminist representation, evidenced by its global success as a TV franchise and feature films and by the number of spinoffs still being consumed. These characters are successful in work and share a reluctance to return to more traditional 'feminine' roles, even while their consumption of style and their high degree of material comfort suggest a celebration of haute femininity and glamour from a pre-feminist age. Their postfeminist frustrations do sometimes extend to the workplace in recognition of the gender politics and institutional sexism still evident, but in an empty ventriloquism of a feminist critique. Feminist observations are utilized

for subtle humour, as in the 2008 film where Miranda, shopping with Carrie for Halloween outfits, observes wryly (while trying on a witch's hat): 'the only two choices for women: witch and sexy kitten'. After Carrie responds with 'you just said a mouthful there, sister!' the 'feminist' moment passes.²

BODILY REGULATION

It is not just the waning fortunes of feminist discourse that have affected what is and can be represented, but the lifting of restrictions around the depiction of certain types of nudity, sexuality and vanishing taboos around the pregnant body once excised from the Hollywood film and elsewhere glossed over. The pregnant woman has become a fetishized object arguably since the 1991 publication of an issue of *Vanity Fair* which featured a seven-months-pregnant nude Demi Moore on its cover. The fact that the photograph was taken by Annie Leibovitz puts it in the frame of high art, but there was much controversy about whether the image was demeaning and exploitative or empowering and revelatory. What is certain is that it offered a landmark shift in depictions of the female body beyond the normal boundaries of slim youthfulness to the point that, by the millennium, '[m]aternity has never been so visible, so talked about, so public and so deeply incoherent' (Tyler in Gill and Scharff, 2011: 22). As Tyler notes, such images of the pregnant female body become less to do with authenticity and more related to ongoing discourses of bodily discipline, so that the still slim, white, middle-class pregnant body is ubiquitously present, indicating that bodily control during pregnancy 'has been reconfigured as a neoliberal project of self-realization, a "body project" to be directed and managed, another site of feminine performance anxiety and thus ironically a new kind of confinement for women' (2011: 29). These related themes of 'performance anxiety' go hand in hand with the explosion of reality TV shows which take the regulation

of the female body and (gendered, classed) behaviour as their central project: 'nowhere are the contradictory discourses around the female body more fully played out, rehearsed and recast than in those television makeover shows which week by week promise to transform "ordinary" women into an acceptable version of femininity' (Tincknell in Gill and Scharff, 2011: 84). Style and 'medical' makeover TV shows such as *What not to Wear* and *Embarrassing Bodies* (first aired in 2001 and 2007 respectively) dwell with morbid fascination over bodies gone 'wrong', whether it be obesity, unpleasant bodily discharges or simply an ill-fitting bra. This suggests a new dimension to the scopophilic pleasures discussed by Mulvey in relation to the cinema where the spectator is exhorted to judge the subject as undisciplined in order to share the pleasure in their return to 'normal'.

The makeover paradigm, particularly the extreme makeover show that promises that one can erase the ravages of time and unhealthy living through cosmetic procedures, has at its core an arguably ever-receding view of the 'normal' gendered body. An interest in women's bodies behaving badly has also migrated to the cinema, where films such as *Bridesmaids* (2011) appropriate the laddish scatological humour of *The Hangover* (2009) and apply it to women. This obsession with the abject, more usually the stuff of horror films, is an interesting development in the realm of the comedy genre. It implies a bizarre kind of gender equivalence, which shows women behaving in vulgar and uncontrolled ways usually associated with post-adolescent or immature men, run in parallel with a more traditional romance narrative. While jokes are made at the expense of fat people and sexual and lavatorial incontinence, the audience is under no illusion about the ways the female body needs to be regulated and scrutinized. The 'truth' about female bodies and what it takes to package them in wholesome, gender-appropriate ways always seems to be on the verge of being exposed – whether in

these new comedies, in reality shows or in other forms of women-centred drama – only to be deferred. They exploit the postfeminist rhetoric of choice that seems to offer access to a range of identities only to close diversity down by focusing on the desirability of the well-regulated body. These norms remain stringently applied in terms of sexuality, youth and ‘race’, so that popular culture is still dominated by images of whiteness and even queer-themed shows such as *The L-Word* (2004–2009) construct lesbian identity in homogenizing ways which codify the lesbian body as inhabiting the same ‘feminine’ strictures as the heteronormative one. While some household names on TV have been queered successfully and imaginatively, such as in recent *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock* episodes, a lesbian character is rarely in evidence.

Traditional images of domestic housework and maintenance are extended to reflect on bodily discipline for women, a discipline reinforced by the preponderance of TV makeover shows which emphasize that the body, like the house or garden or dinner party, is a ‘project’. As Stephanie Genz notes, ‘The makeover genre constructs a version of femininity that – while still dependent on the body as a site of female power – severs its former associations with inauthenticity/falseness and reframes appearance as a location of individual choice and agency’ (in Gill and Scharf, 2011: 127). The increasing normalization of cosmetic surgery as well as the widespread use of photoshop editing in magazine photographs removes us further and further from any notions of authentic femininity to a celebration of the manufactured and artificial, with a greater intolerance to ‘imperfections’ in appearance.

NEW IMAGES, OLD ARGUMENTS?

One can argue that popular culture reads *itself* against the grain using the legacy of pathfinding feminist practices. Image makers are attuned to dominant social concerns,

and the ventriloquizing of feminist themes in popular culture forestalls criticism and heightens the pleasure of textual engagement if one feels that understanding intertextual feminist/postfeminist references is the reward for a sophisticated reading of a text. Since the 1990s feminist studies of popular culture have diversified and arguments have moved from condemnatory to shifting attention to audience and interpretation and from thence variously to a celebration of the pleasures of engagement with the popular and the possibilities of subversion from within the mainstream to re-emerging feminist concerns that a backlash in representation is becoming more and more evident. Whatever your viewing pleasure as a scholar of popular culture, there is more often than not a casebook to enhance it, whether it be *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under* or *Sex and the City*: such work provides an important critical distillation of academic approaches to works considered groundbreaking or paradigm-shifting; they also suggest a fragmentation of critical approaches and a wider lack of consensus over methods of approaching popular culture. The fact that popular cultural criticism has ‘come of age’ also opens up the issue of how much fannish enthusiasm can be tempered by critical deliberation to the point that we may wonder whether it is we that are doing the ‘reading’ of popular culture, or whether we are just reading the script that has already been skilfully prepared for us.

I am not the only feminist critic of contemporary culture who sometimes feels that all I can do is reiterate the same arguments about representation, noting the negative and repeated portrayals of retroactive images of femininity while insisting that these images offer some form of resistance within the constraints of postfeminist positioning. The history of feminist interventions into popular culture is itself the history of the shifting challenges the mass media offers to scholars of feminism that prompt new models of thinking to occur. Such thinking at once charts the development of

a confident informed critique which itself is taken into account by a new generation of image makers who indulge the viewers' delight in pleasurable intertextuality. Images of women have changed and some offer fruitful challenges which invite reflection on the emancipatory possibilities of popular representation. There are abundant subversive images that, even if enveloped in a rather conservative ideology, offer new models of representation for men and women or, more often, problematize images that preceded them. What does not change is the focus on the female body and the use of the young slim white body to suggest the ideal feminine.

Charlotte Brunsdon identifies the phenomenon of 'feminist ur-article' in which 'Second-wave feminism is remembered and demonized, as personally censorious, hairy and politically correct' (2005: 112). She identifies such an article as itself a 'genre' of feminist analysis which positions feminism as potentially out of touch and outmoded by applying feminist principles to a text and, when it fails the test,

the author then mobilizes her own engagement with the text, her fondness for the treatment of the dreams and dilemmas of the heroine, to interrogate the harsh dismissal of this popular text on 'feminist' grounds. The author thus reveals the complex and contradictory ways in which the text – and the heroine – negotiate the perilous path of living as a woman in a patriarchal world. The heroine of this genre is both the author and her textual surrogate, while her adversaries are both textual (vampires, lawyers, ex-husbands) and extratextual – censorious feminists who will not let her like the story and its iconography, that is, the accoutrements of femininity. (2005: 113)

Brunsdon implicates herself as guilty of such a stance; what she is drawing attention to, however, is the constant resurrection of the straw figure of the joyless feminist, while performing a feminist critique to show that such a practice of othering feminism within feminist discourse suggests a paralysing sense of entrapment, just as when one watches a popular film which anticipates and voices back at you your own critiques.

CONCLUSIONS: NEW DIRECTIONS IN ANALYSES OF REPRESENTATION

One of the sticking points of contemporary feminist approaches to the popular is the ways in which postfeminist discourses come to be regarded as an almost universal site of meaning for popular representations of women. Much ink has been spilled on the topic of whether such discourses are anti- or simply non-feminist and whether such a discursive turn is a natural result of youthful rebellion against older feminist 'mothers'. Hilary Radner's examination of women and popular culture takes a slightly different tack, arguing that instead of being the backlash to feminism, popular cultural appropriations of the representation of women are the result of a parallel development, which she calls neo-feminism, and which is

only very tangentially a consequence of feminism; while it was quick to incorporate catch-phrases, such as 'empowerment', and 'self-fulfilment', which it used to its own ends, the major thrust of its perspective coincided very neatly with neo-liberalism as the prevailing philosophy and ethos of the late twentieth century, with which it was eminently compatible. (2010: 19)

By neo-feminism, Radner means 'the tendency in feminine culture to evoke choice and the development of individual agency as the defining tenets of feminine identity – best realized through an engagement with consumer culture' (2010: 26). On the surface, this perspective does not seem to take us further than the analysis of the celebration of consumption regarded as symptomatic of postfeminist discourse discussed earlier. The key distinction that Radner wishes to make, however, is about the relationship between this tendency to express individualism through consumption and embracing the feminine to Helen Gurley Brown's work as self-help author and *Cosmopolitan* magazine editor. While Brown's legacy is in this particular brand of neo-feminism emerging at the same time as *The Feminine Mystique*, it is a perspective that represents indifference

to social change via political lobbying – essentially the high liberal end of feminism, where belief in the transformative power of democracy is enough.

Radner identifies a tradition of women who never embraced the political or philosophical premises of feminism but who sought empowerment under advanced capitalism through the freedom to purchase and construct the self through things, a power made easier by increased access to career pathways in the professions. This modelling offers another way of visualizing feminist and postfeminist trajectories and allows us to reinstate some dynamism to feminist criticism, which, as Bunsdon observes, has been in a state of atrophy. One important area of attention is the need for more thoroughgoing analyses of the portrayal of feminism and postfeminism as a symptom of a generational gap – something that Radner's model refutes, in that she sees neo-feminism as more elderly than Second Wave feminism. This opens up the possibility of an interrogation of the ways in which 'youthfulness' is associated with forms of resistance to feminism, since Radner characterizes neo-feminism as offering a parallel tradition which is equally 'old'. Furthermore, as this chapter has depressingly outlined, the dominant images of women in popular culture are not only of the white, slim and presumed heterosexual but also of the young or age-defying (such as Madonna). Negra has focused extensively on analysing the 'girling' of culture, making the assertion that 'postfeminism thrives on anxiety about aging' (Negra, 2009: 12); more than that, she surveys the postfeminist landscape and finds it full of images of retreatism in celebration of traditional manifestations of femininity.

It is also worth noting how popular fiction aims for inclusivity and 'brand' loyalty, manifested in scholarly circles by the emergence of the fan as critic. The fan perspective potentially combines superior skills in cultural analysis with a consumer's eye for detail and extra-textual engagement which allows us to inhabit popular culture rather than be regarded as the sour-faced feminist

standing in judgement. Feminist critics in popular culture are, however, producing something quite different from broadsheet-informed accounts of popular culture and there have been recent concerns that cultural critics need to actively recapture some sense of political responsibility for where our readings of pop culture lead. Popular culture often communicates depressing truths about women's lives, especially where they simultaneously trade in fantasy and retro-romantic longings, and it is important to assess the complex melange of messages and options such narratives seem to offer, while finding ways to resist the retroactive repetition of images of women which 'girl' and trivialize in order to defuse the threat of grown-up feminist demands.

Recent years have seen a surge in analyses of pleasure and these investigations highlight the negative possibility that studies in pleasure can be about cultural forgetting – the exhaustion of constantly having to remember that the celebration and endorsement of women as objects is bound up in the pleasure of consumption. Some more iconic women's popular cultural texts, such as *Sex and the City*, have arguably become un-analysable: feminist and queer interpretive possibilities are inscribed in such texts whose impact extends beyond the event of the broadcast through internet communities, youtube clips, concept tie-ins and the interest generated by broadsheet and magazine commentaries. *Desperate Housewives* comes with its own catalogue of references to *The Stepford Wives*, *Peyton Place*, *The Feminine Mystique*, the contemporary female gothic genre and cookery and lifestyle shows. We are not working that hard when we draw attention to this – the readings are there for the intertextually adept viewer – and this becomes the key problematic for advanced students of popular culture. As Melanie Waters and Angela McRobbie have observed, we are surrounded by images of feminist hauntings as well as fantasy scenarios of a past untouched by political feminism: 'a kind of hideous spectre of what feminism once was

is conjured up, a monstrous ugliness which would send shudders of horror down the spines of young women today, as a kind of deterrent' (McRobbie, 2009: 1). In the case of *Desperate Housewives* this sense is reinforced by the narration of the series by the 'ghost' of Mary Alice Young.

It was noted earlier that feminist critiques did impact on the advertising industry at the height of its activism and did encourage a degree of cultural change in the way women's lives and attitudes were depicted on TV and in film. That retroactive old-fashioned 'sexist' attitudes seem to have returned so readily is a subject of concern. Despite the 'genderquake' that Naomi Wolf announced in *Fire with Fire* (1993), her view that the white male elite had lost its authority and women had only to grasp a new power seems like a false dawn. As I noted over a decade ago, 'Representations of women, from the banal to the downright offensive, have a way of replicating themselves across the decades as if they tell us some fundamental "truths" about femininity' (2000: 11). While feminism is successfully portrayed as the thief of femininity, cultural productions that celebrate and exaggerate retroactive images of femininity will obscure the nature of feminism's political and cultural victories. If the kinds of femininity portrayed in contemporary popular culture, such as the engagement with the styling of the TV series *Mad Men* (2007–), seem to be intensifying, it may be that feminist critics need to develop a different approach and return, as Rosalind Gill recommends, to 'thinking the relations between things' (Gill, 2011: 68). The image has become dislocated from its historical and cultural context and from originary meanings and is relaunched in an era where ironic dramatization of things past can be enjoyed and consumed as pure 'style'. But styles create templates, underline absences, and the ability to react unfavourably or critique these is often forestalled or snatched away. As Ariel Levy asserts,

the proposition that having the most simplistic, plastic stereotypes of female sexuality constantly

reiterated throughout our culture somehow proves that we are sexually liberated and personally empowered has been offered to us, and we have accepted it. But if we think about it we know this just doesn't make any sense. It's time to stop nodding and smiling uncomfortably as we ignore the crazy feeling in our heads and admit that the emperor has no clothes. (2006: 197)

This chapter charts the length of time feminist commentators have been reflecting on the process of image production in the development of our analyses of and approaches to popular culture. Angela McRobbie (2009) sees postfeminist sensibilities as exhibited not only in both media and pop culture but also in what she refers to as 'agencies of the state' (2009: 1), returning to a materialist, political analysis of the work of the image. McRobbie may well disagree with Radner's overall argument but her recent work suggests a need to take seriously what popular culture is selling to contemporary women:

Does capitalism actually give women more or less what they want, if indeed it provides them with such cheap and available narrative pleasures, in the form of popular entertainment, which also now incorporate something like a feminist agenda in their plots and story lines? What need might there be for a feminist politics at all? (2009: 3)

As she asserts, talking of the definitive postfeminist texts *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City* and their avid consumers: 'These young women want to be girlish and enjoy all sorts of traditional feminine pleasures without apology, although again, quite why they might feel they have to apologise is left hanging in the air' (2009: 21).

Anger and its place in contemporary feminist cultural criticism are re-emerging as a healthy sign of reflection upon the past and critical renegotiation. But contemporary critics are mindful of the popular association of anger with feminist 'militancy', trivialised as part of feminism's assumed critical position, justified or not. Yvonne Tasker considers the tensions at work in the image

of the empowered self-defined woman as strength is set in complete opposition to images of traditional nostalgic femininity: 'the post-feminist commitment to an imagery of strong self-defined, sexually confident yet resolutely feminine women is potentially rife with contradiction. Indeed, what postfeminist culture deems to be signs of empowerment routinely emerges as an accommodation to, and acceptance of, a diminished role for women' (in Radner and Stringer, 2011: 69). Feminist criticism is by no means turning full circle, but there is a will to reconsider this relationship of images to things in order to analyse effectively what Jane Gerhard terms 'the shadowy psychological and institutional crevices in which men hide their power over women' (2005: 40). For Lillian S. Robinson, writing in the late 1970s, '[t]o be effective, feminist criticism cannot become simply bourgeois criticism in drag. It must be ideological and moral criticism; it must be revolutionary' (1978: 3).

NOTES

- 1 The National Organisation for Women was founded in the US in 1966.
- 2 See a fuller discussion of this in Whelehan, 2010.

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'It's all About Shopping': The Role of Consumption in the Feminization of Journalism

Hatty Oliver

The representation of women in popular journalism has been at the heart of the feminist agenda since the 1960s. An attack on the ideology of women's magazines was central to Betty Friedan's 1963 indictment of femininity, *The Feminine Mystique*, while protestors at the 1968 Miss America pageant threw copies of *Cosmopolitan* into their freedom trash can. In the intervening years women's magazines have remained a key subject of both popular debate and academic inquiry. Feminist critiques of popular journalism have been driven by recognition of the role such magazines have played in defining norms of behaviour and appearance and in so doing producing feminine subjectivities. Feminist thinking from Simone de Beauvoir onwards has been concerned with the instability of the category 'woman'. This category has been conceptualized not as a fixed subject position but as an endless process of becoming, achieved through the labour of femininity. Women's magazines have instructed women in this labour and have been at the centre of discourses of fashion

and beauty pivotal to the creation of both a mass market for fashionable goods and universal beauty ideals. In consumer society the realization of successful or appropriate femininity has been achieved largely through the products of the beauty and fashion industries and magazines have fuelled demand for these products.

Explorations of the gendered binaries which underpin our understanding of ourselves and our reality have been central to feminist theory. Drawing out the way in which meaning is structured through gendered oppositions such as mind and body has been fundamental to the feminist project. The mass media, particularly women's magazines, have played an important role in reinforcing and reinscribing these gendered binaries. Since the 1800s popular journalism aimed at women in both magazines and newspapers has played a critical role in demarcating separate spheres of gendered activity. From the outset popular journalism aimed at women has created a version of femininity rooted in the private world of domesticity, venturing

into the public sphere only through the feminized spaces of consumption. A distinct journalistic subfield aimed at women, extending from magazines into newspapers, emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century (Oliver, 2009). During this period women readers become synonymous with advertising revenues and a new feminine journalism¹ organized around fashion, domesticity and society gossip was produced to attract them. Victorian publishing and retailing industries were central to creating the gendered divisions around production and consumption which still structure the formation of gendered identities within consumer culture. This imbrication of advertising, consumption and femininity has set the tone and parameters of commercial journalism ever since. The genre has generally failed to engage with the public, the political or the civic (Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987; Ballaster et al., 1991), and women's magazines have consistently addressed their readers as consumers rather than citizens. Indeed, in their study of the genre, Ballaster et al. concluded that 'the history of the development of the women's magazine as a commodity is also the history of the construction of woman as a consumer' (1991: 47).

The associations with consumption which have defined women's role in society since the industrial revolution are to a large extent the product of women's magazines. These associations have been sustained and fostered by popular journalism and are rearticulated in today's women's magazines in a discourse which links femininity and consumption in a more focused and concentrated way than ever before. In a contemporary neo-liberal context women's longstanding association with consumption has become ever more culturally dominant. As choice and individualism have become central to notions of post-feminist identity, the products of consumer culture have taken on a totemic power as the agents of female liberation and empowerment. Popular journalism remains crucial to feminist debate as the pleasures of consumption, always central to its articulations of femininity, now

dominate a post-feminist media culture and define contemporary definitions of female power and freedom. This chapter will consider both the roots of the relationship between women and consumption and the way it manifests itself in contemporary journalism. It will draw on interviews with forty journalists working in British newspapers and magazines² to consider the extent to which the gendered journalistic spheres defined in the nineteenth century continue to structure print journalism today.

FEMINISM AND FEMININITY: THE MAGAZINE AND THE ACADEMY

Feminine genres such as women's magazines have been crucial to feminist considerations of media representation. Critics have used the texts of such magazines to outline the ways in which a normative version of femininity is produced through the intersection of commerce and gendered ideology. An opposition between feminism and femininity has framed feminist investigations of popular genres (Brunsdon, 2000; Hollows, 2000; McRobbie, 1997). Historically the two discourses have been in a critical relationship, often being used to define one another. In the popular media feminism regularly underpins articulations of femininity through irony (Whelehan, 2000) or dispute and is routinely used as a straw man 'invoked only to be summarily dismissed' (McRobbie, 2004: 259), while in feminist writing there has sometimes been an opposition 'between "bad" feminine identities and "good" feminist identities' (Hollows, 2000: 9). Discussions of popular culture have played a crucial role in academic feminism, the study of women's genres, such as soap opera, romance novels and women's magazines, helping to bring into being the figure of the 'feminist intellectual' (Brunsdon, 2000:19). The feminist academy has remained in a complex and at times conflicted relationship with these popular objects of study, their producers and their

'ordinary' female consumers. In the field of magazine scholarship this relationship has been particularly intense, as the genre has remained somewhat marginal to mainstream media and cultural studies and has been explored primarily through feminist study and so 'remained a debate among women' (McRobbie, 1997: 192). This intensity is unsurprising, as both feminism and women's magazines are discourses concerned with 'women's worlds', both given over to representation of the category 'woman' and striving to define that category (Ferguson, 1983; Rabine, 1994; McRobbie, 1997).

The battle between feminism and femininity, on the ground of the women's magazine, was set in motion by Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, a foundational text of second-wave feminism. Friedan, a former magazine journalist, saw femininity as fundamentally at odds with women's equality, and even their humanity, and identified her former profession as one of the key sites of feminine myth making. Content analysis of magazines enabled Friedan to identify a dramatic shift from the determined 'New Women' of the 1930s and 1940s to the 'Happy Housewife' of the 1950s. She claimed that the magazines of this period 'narrowed women's world down to the home' (Friedan, 1963: 58) and helped to create a generation of women in thrall to an oppressive ideology, maintaining 'that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity' (1963: 38). Friedan set up a division between a public sphere, 'the world of thought and ideas, the life of the mind and spirit' (1963: 32), and a debased private sphere, of the home and body, that was the primary concern of women's magazines.

Friedan's foundational split between femininity and feminism structured the work on magazines that followed. Feminist magazine scholarship has primarily concerned itself with the ways in which a normative version of femininity is shaped through the texts of magazines and inculcated in the reader. An Althusserian notion of ideology has informed much of the seminal work on women's

magazines. Scholars using this approach (McRobbie, 1978; Williamson, 1978; Winship, 1987) saw the magazine as 'a system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology' (McRobbie, 1978: 1) and viewed the genre as a part of an 'ideological state apparatus' that functioned to secure 'submission to the rules of the established order' (Althusser, 1971: 7). In the case of magazines, obedience to this established order entails reproduction of women in 'the image, which a masculine culture has defined' (Winship, 1987: 11). The ideology of women's magazines tends to render this image 'as natural, sometimes as biologically natural, but also as just what seems normal and proper, rather than as the outcome of social and historical factors' (Winship, 1987: 21). In his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus' Althusser extended the Marxist conception of a state, which existed in the 'repressive state apparatus' of the police and army and functioned mainly by force, to include 'ideological state apparatus' such as religion, education and communication that functioned mainly through ideology.

In Althusser's model, although ideological state apparatus lack unity and can appear contradictory, ultimately they all work towards the same goal, 'the reproduction of the relations of reproduction, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation' (Winship, 1987: 28). Early magazine scholarship conceptualizes women's magazines as a part of a communication apparatus that functions to reproduce a capitalist system. Ultimately magazines are commodities that encourage the purchase of further commodities through their editorial and advertising content; therefore they express the interests of capital and the process of commodification. The texts of magazines work in capital's interest to obscure class relations by addressing women as a homogenous group, 'a false totality' (McRobbie, 1978: 3) and so asserting 'a sameness, a kind of false sisterhood' (1978: 3). Winship also identifies a 'women's world' (1987: 7) created by magazines which does not accurately represent a more fragmented reality. Both McRobbie and Winship contrast

the isolation of women's lives, perpetuated by the personal focus of magazines, with the false community the genre presents. Magazines' organization around romance and consumption forecloses both female solidarity and any concern with the public world of political empowerment, instead placing women in the 'world of the personal and the emotions' (McRobbie, 1978: 3). The intimate tone of women's magazines creates what Winship calls 'the "we" women feeling', which works to constitute the reader as a particular type of feminine subject, isolated in the private realm of consumption and emotion. Both McRobbie and Winship focus on this 'ideology of individuality' (Winship, 1987: 64) and attribute to it the perpetuation of both class and gender relations.

CONSUMPTION, LIBERATION AND EMPOWERMENT: POST-FEMINISM AND THE WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

The Althusserian work on women's magazines is over thirty years old and it has met with much criticism and revision in those intervening years. Critics such as Frazer (1987) and Hermes (1995) have questioned the way that such approaches position the power of the media at a purely textual level and characterize magazine readers as passive and duped. This kind of criticism is typified by Hermes' suggestion that, at worst, such scholarship 'assumes readers are not capable of assessing the value of the text and are completely taken in by it' (1995: 149). Whatever the limitations of the early work on magazines, its focus on the structuring power of consumption in media discourses remains highly relevant in a contemporary context. Relationships between feminism and femininity have become more complex and reflexive as feminism and its criticisms of feminine consumer culture have informed the production of magazines. As McRobbie notes, many of the women who work in magazines are the product of academic study that includes feminist scholarship, and are

often 'feminist-inclined' (McRobbie, 1997: 206). This shared educational background means that, when studying such journalists, the feminist academic cannot assume a position of total theoretical superiority or be sure that the ground of feminism is entirely hers. Indeed, discourses of feminist emancipation have been taken up and woven into the traditional fabric of women's magazines, producing a new post-feminist³ version of femininity. As Brunson points out, one of the achievements of 1970s feminism was to denaturalize notions of a 'woman's place'. However, this resulted not in the complete dissolution of the feminine, which was perhaps envisaged, but 'in complex, contradictory and to some extent unpredictable negotiations with traditional femininities' (Brunson, 2000: 14).

One of the key sites for this negotiation has been the women's magazine, where a reimagined 'modernized' discourse of femininity has both appropriated and repudiated feminist ideas to produce a distinct 'post-feminist sensibility' (Gill, 2007b). In Gill's analysis, this 'post-feminist discourse' is composed of a number of features:

The notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference. (Gill, 2007b: 149)

Feminine journalism forms a key part of Gill's post-feminist sensibility; indeed, many of the elements she identifies were developed within women's magazines. A strong discourse of choice and empowerment expressed through consumption alongside an attendant emphasis on bodily discipline and self-surveillance defines the contemporary field of feminine journalism.

The brand of consumption- and style-oriented women's magazines that was heralded by *ELLE*'s 1985 launch was instrumental in the creation of a post-feminist sensibility. Such magazines belong in a wider media

context and can be considered along with other explicitly feminine media products. Films such as *Working Girl* and *Pretty Woman* (Brunsdon, 1997) and television programmes such as *Sex and the City* (Arthurs, 2003; Negra, 2004) dramatize the concern with dress, fashion and the performance of femininity to be found in the pages of *ELLE* and *Cosmopolitan*. Brunsdon, in her 1997 consideration of 'shopping films', recognizes that the antecedents of this new relationship with femininity may lie in magazines when she says 'what in critical theory is called the performativity of gender, always an element of the common sense of women's magazines, is currently much more widely available in the popular media' (Brunsdon, 1997: 86). What these products have in common is an overwhelming concern with the pleasures of consumption, which explains Brunsdon's desire to 'juxtapose two terms, "post-feminism" and "shopping"' (Brunsdon, 1997: 83). Her contention that 'something happens in 1980s in the conjunction (in the West) of the new social movements, with their stress on the claiming and reclaiming of identities, and the expansion of leisure shopping and consumption' (Brunsdon, 1997: 84), can be applied not just to the films she is discussing but also to the women's magazines of the period.

PUBLISHING, ADVERTISING AND RETAIL: A HISTORY OF CONSUMPTION

However, the association between consumption and power which typifies post-feminist media culture has its roots in much earlier media representation. In order to really understand this association between femininity, consumption and liberation it is necessary to go back to the late 1800s. The emergence of a distinct commercial journalistic subfield aimed at women, extending from magazines into newspapers, can be traced to the final decades of the nineteenth century (Beetham, 1996; Rappaport, 2000; Conboy, 2004).

During this period, powerful discourses around femininity and consumption aligned with structural and economic changes in the organization of print journalism to give a new prominence to the female reader and a resultant growth in both women's periodicals and newspaper coverage of 'soft' topics such as fashion, the arts, domestic issues and society gossip. The late Victorian era saw both the beginnings of a modern consumer society and 'the propensity to feminize the realm of consumption' (deGrazia, 1996: 15). With the appearance of mass production and distribution, femininity and consumption became intertwined as the commercial realm entered the private domain of the domestic and new forms of retailing such as the department store produced feminized commercial spaces in the public sphere (Felski, 1995; Bowlby, 2000). The ideal shopper, the middle-class woman, became the privileged agent of consumer culture and this position gave women new access to the public spaces of the city and by extension to the printed public sphere. Women were seen as the primary shoppers and women's magazines and pages in newspapers gave advertisers, including the new department stores, access to these female custodians of the family budget. These elements combined to foster a new feminized sphere of consumption, as LeMahieu notes: 'it was in the mutual economic interest of department stores, the advertising business and popular daily newspapers to persuade women to become frequent consumers' (1988: 37).

Print journalism was at the centre of this feminized consumer culture. As Conboy observes, magazines and newspapers were 'crucial to the formation of commodity and leisure culture as an extension of that sphere in print' (2004: 137). This centrality was driven by the increasing importance of advertising. Innovations in print technology, changes in the structure of the publishing industry and the repeal of onerous taxation on advertising in 1853 produced a new model of finance for newspapers and magazines and advertising began to dominate the production of print

journalism (Curran and Seaton, 2003). With this development, gaining the readership of the newly significant female shopper, the primary target of advertisers, became a key objective for both newspapers and magazines. Press barons such as Northcliffe, Newnes and Pearson identified the importance of 'woman appeal' (Conboy, 2004: 143), prioritizing magazines specifically for women and creating women's pages in newspapers. Magazines for women increased in number and importance (Beetham, 1996), titles such as *Queen* and *The Lady* fostering increased consumer literacy through their fashion and shopping content and beginning 'the construction of specific forms of femininity emerging from within what might be termed a feminized consumer culture' (Breward, 1994: 75). With the proliferation of such magazines, the style of writing they had fostered and the reader they had constructed also found a place within newspapers. In 1896 Lord Northcliffe, already the publisher of successful women's magazines, launched the *Daily Mail*, a newspaper that from the outset targeted women readers. Northcliffe explicitly linked women readers with advertising revenues and demanded that the publication be a 'woman's paper' that featured feminine content (LeMahieu, 1988).

Such developments suggest that the feminization of newspapers, which has been noted in recent years, actually began long ago and that, as Conboy argues, 'the dominant trend of journalism from the middle of the nineteenth century has been to include styles of writing and illustration of greater interest to an idealized woman reader' (2004: 128). These beginnings helped to construct divisions within journalism and perceptions of male and female readers, and they still influence the gendering of different types of content in today's media. Women journalists were employed and women's pages were instituted as a result of newspapers' desire to promote consumerism; as Rappaport observes, 'female writers made their way into the public sphere by selling a utopian commodified view of both the public and private spheres' (2000: 122). In this period

consumption was associated with freedom and a move into both the literal public spaces of the city and the printed public sphere of the newspaper and periodical. The early history of feminine journalism prefigures its contemporary concerns. The linkage of consumption, emancipation and liberation which defines post-feminist media culture is a long-standing discourse which has always characterized popular journalism aimed at women.

CELEBRITIES AND SHOPPING: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Women's magazines' early history demonstrates the pivotal role the genre played in establishing the links between women and fashionable consumption that have helped structure both media representations and gendered subjectivities. The genre has continued to play this structuring role and was key to the development of a post-feminist discourse in the last decades of the twentieth century. Feminist critics such as Brunson (1997), Gill (2007a) and Radner (2011) have suggested that post-feminist notions of empowerment through consumption and the display of the body which characterize contemporary media representations have their antecedents in women's magazines. In her 2011 book *Neo-Feminist Cinema* Hilary Radner argues that women's magazines have been central to the development of what she terms neo-feminism. She suggests that contemporary feminine culture, what is generally termed post-feminism, is actually only 'tangentially a consequence of feminism' (2011: 2). For Radner neo-feminism is a distinct movement driven by commercial culture and sharing 'the individualist and rationalist agenda of neo-liberalism' (2011: 9) rather than the drive for collective social change of second-wave feminism. Radner defines neo-feminism as a pragmatic set of behaviours that places individual success, achieved through the female body and the work that it performs, outside the structures of family. She credits Helen

Gurley Brown, the creator of *Cosmopolitan*, with founding this movement and traces its development from magazines to contemporary cinema.

A brief consideration of the recent history of women's magazines would certainly suggest that they have been at the vanguard of the development of a powerful discursive formation which defines an individualistic femininity almost entirely through consumption. In the last few decades women's magazines have concentrated ever more closely on consumption, marginalizing not just broader social issues but also the discourses of heterosexual romance and the family, which in the past have helped to define the genre. While earlier critiques noted women's magazines' limiting preoccupation with heterosexual romance (McRobbie, 1978; Winship, 1987), recent years have seen magazines retreat from even these concerns in favour of an ever closer relationship with the fashion and beauty industries that provide their funding. Contemporary magazines feature a discourse of feminine pleasure that cannot be understood simply in terms of the private domestic sphere but is rather organized almost entirely around shopping and a commodified version of celebrity. While *Cosmopolitan* magazine is often seen as the originating site of this new version of femininity, I would argue that in a British context the decisive break with both the emotional world of personal relationships and the wider social concerns of feminism can be traced to the 1985 launch of *ELLE*.

ELLE's launch saw the women's magazine genre move away from the intimate and emotional realm and towards fashion and, more particularly, shopping and consumption. Just as the periodicals of the late Victorian period capitalized on changing patterns of female consumption, *ELLE* sought to appeal to what it saw as a new breed of female consumer through its emphasis on fashion and style. As journalist Sarah Mower observed at the time, 'if sex, relationships and emotion are out of fashion as core subjects of women's magazines, fashion itself is in' (1985: 37). *ELLE*

launched into a market dominated by *Cosmopolitan*, a title which focused on women's emotions, relationships and problems. *ELLE* set a new editorial agenda of confidence, style and consumption (Braithwaite, 1995). Joyce Hopkirk, the launch editor of British *Cosmopolitan*, was also involved in the launch of *ELLE* and was keen to differentiate between the two magazines, telling a trade weekly:

features on women's orgasms are a bit passé. Women are no longer interested in very wordy, very anxious articles such as are offered in *Cosmopolitan* and *Company* with fashion thrown in. There's a new breed of reader with no special magazine catering for them. This is where *Elle* will succeed. It is primarily a style magazine with words (cited in Braithwaite, 1995: 129)

The attitudes towards feminism found in the two magazines were also markedly different. When Linda Kelsey took over the editorship of *Cosmopolitan* in 1985 it was losing readers and Kelsey claims that "the management blamed the content; it had become too strong, the men agreed too feminist" (cited in Dougary, 1994: 162). Despite these criticisms Kelsey did not substantially alter the magazine, as she 'always wanted the reader to go away and think, "I've learned something"'. Not just about relationships, but about other areas of life. Like politics, maybe' (cited in Dougary, 1994: 162). During this period *Cosmopolitan*'s editorial content wrestled with definitions of feminism, explicitly reflecting on, and at times rejecting, the wider media's attempts to 'ease us into what it is pleased to term the "post-feminist" era' (Vincent, 1985: 120). In sharp contrast *ELLE*'s launch editor Sally Brampton used the term 'post-feminist' to characterize *ELLE* (cited in *Campaign*, 1985: 32). The new magazine was organized around success and aspiration and therefore explorations of women's troubles, either sexual or political, were characterized as unnecessary and outmoded.

The discourse surrounding the launch of *ELLE* and the attitude towards feminism to be found in its early pages contains all the

elements that have come to define popular post-feminism: a celebration of the power of shopping and a focus on individual achievement and narratives around female sexuality which foreground choice, independence and entitlement. *Cosmopolitan* may have remained dominant in terms of sales figures but *ELLE* won the representational battle and the agenda it set around style and shopping has dominated the women's magazine market and the wider media landscape ever since. While magazines such as *New Woman* and *Marie Claire* may have attempted to change the direction of the genre they were forced to close or move their editorial mix in line with the dominant focus on consumption. The beginning of a new millennium saw a consolidation of the trends towards increased fashion and celebrity coverage in the magazine market with the UK launch of two American magazines, *InStyle* and *Glamour*. Both magazines were focused on celebrity and shopping and unashamedly celebrated consumption. The editorial letter in the debut issue of *Glamour* sums up this triumphant tone:

Here we are – *GLAMOUR*. Britain's first magazine for truly 21st Century women. And with a name like *Glamour*, you know we're going to make you feel good. 21st Century glamour is a new feeling in the air. We may be successful, modern, level-headed women, but we still have a funny turn when we find the perfect pair of kitten heels. *GLAMOUR* is here to help you celebrate those shamelessly indulgent moments in your life, from downing tools at work to show everyone said kitten heels, to organizing a Sex and the City-style cocktail club (tiny bag and foxy skirt compulsory) with the girls. (Elvin, 2001: 11)

Glamour's focus on consumption and its light tone coupled with its 'handbag size' proved to be a huge success and in 2002 it finally broke *Cosmopolitan's* thirty-year run as the bestselling women's magazine. The two magazines were contrasted in the discourse surrounding the launch and subsequent success of *Glamour*, and *Cosmopolitan* was often positioned with feminism as somehow aged and outdated.

The careerism and sexual liberation championed by *Cosmopolitan* appeared to be tainted by association with feminism and so unfashionable. *Glamour's* editor Jo Elvin points out that

[*Glamour*] introduced a new sensibility that it was OK to be glamorous. It's almost a post-feminist thing – women can be successful at work without resorting to the old *Cosmopolitan* thing of being twice as blokey as the blokes. You can be feminine and clever and take spreadsheets very seriously, but you can still go gaga over a pair of shoes (cited in Plunkett, 2004: 8).

The post-feminist discursive formation that had characterized the British women's magazines market from the mid-1980s found its complete expression in the weekly glossy *LOOK*. The magazine's 2007 launch witnessed the refinement of the traditional content of women's magazines to an almost complete concentration on shopping. *LOOK* was notable for the levels of market research which preceded its inception. IPC, its publisher, claimed to have entered the market with an open mind. According to Evelyn Webster, IPC Connect's managing director, the company began to research women in their twenties with 'no preconceptions and no ideas to pitch at them' (Armstrong, 2007: 7). After two years of so-called 'immersion' research, which involved staff living with potential readers in their homes, Webster determined that young women were interested in shopping and celebrities. Relationships and romance were not found to be of interest to potential readers; as she puts it, 'contrary to what you might think, romance is not big on their radar before the age of 30. You discover that what interests this group is not really men but celebrities and shopping' (cited in Thynne, 2007: 11). In the light of this research *LOOK* adopted a remit that Webster described as "unashamedly fashion and style" (cited in Dutta, 2007: 11). As launch editor Ali Hall explained, 'There was no weekly magazine catering for girls who go shopping every single Saturday. The number-one leisure activity for women in this age group was

going shopping' (cited in Sheppard, 2007: 45). With this in mind Hall developed *LOOK* as 'the perfect high street filter' (cited in Farley-Jones, 2007) and 'a celebration of the high street' (cited in Sheppard, 2007: 45). The extent of the magazine's shopping content is overwhelming, colonizing even the cover, where new brands are pictured complete with location and price.

'EVERY WOMAN NEEDS HER DAILY MAIL': THE FEMINIZATION OF JOURNALISM

The agenda of style and feminine self-expression through consumption set by *ELLE* in 1985 proved enduring and found renewed expression in *LOOK*, a magazine launched twenty-two years later. Women's magazines set a template for the portrayal of femininity which has proved extremely influential in the wider media. This representational regime almost completely defines print journalism's relationship to its female readership, extending beyond magazines and into newspapers. Commercialization and tabloidization have characterized the recent history of the British newspaper industry (Gans, 2009; Bird, 2009). The response of newspapers to falling sales has been an increasing dependence on advertising and an attendant shift in emphasis away from areas such as hard news and foreign reporting, which have traditionally defined the journalistic profession, towards lifestyle and features content (Aldridge, 2001; Davies, 2008; Zelizer, 2009). This growth in lifestyle content has seen the publication of numerous newspaper supplements that share the concerns, operating principles and many of the staff of women's magazines.

Although such supplements had existed since the launch of *The Sunday Times* magazine in 1962 it was the 1982 launch of the *Mail on Sunday's* *You* magazine which invigorated the genre. David English is widely credited with rescuing the ailing Sunday paper and he places the acclaim with *You* magazine: 'it took off like a rocket. The week before the

launch the *MoS* was selling about 750,000 and from then on we were 1.5 million' (cited in Fountain, 1994: 16). The *Daily Mail* has been marketed at women readers since its inception; from the first it 'sought out the middle-class wife in the expanding suburbs through its personality and gossip pages' (Holland, 1998: 20). More recently the Seventies advertising campaign, featuring the slogan 'Every woman needs her *Daily Mail*', positioned the paper as the natural choice of the female reader, and *You* magazine formed a part of this tendency, aiming explicitly at women readers. By 1987 advertising trade magazine *Campaign* judged that "the highly successful *You* magazine has taken women's weeklies to the cleaners" (*Campaign*, 1987: 42) and this success proved influential across the sector, as a 1984 report in *Marketing Week* indicates: 'the recent trend has been to indulge in more and more entertainment and glamour to increase demand, a reflection of the success of Associated Newspapers' *Mail on Sunday*' (*Marketing Week*, 1984: 62). *You* magazine has continued to position itself as a women's magazine and its success has been a powerful motivator within the newspaper market. Feminine content has spread beyond the borders of such supplements, infiltrating features and even news sections. The traditional territory of women's magazines has expanded, producing a representational regime that extends across newspapers and magazines. The recent success of the *Daily Mail's* website, now the most successful news website in the world, with over 45 million unique visitors a month, has seen the scope of this regime expanded even further.

OUT OF THE FASHION CLOSET: THE PRODUCERS OF FEMININE JOURNALISM

The subject of this ever-growing post-feminist discursive formation is a feminine figure constructed through her relationship to consumption. The products of consumer culture offer her success and freedom. It seems that,

just as in the late Victorian period, consumption offers women opportunities for access to the public sphere and new forms of feminine subjectivities. Consumption practices promise empowerment, enjoyment and self-expression. The feminine figure at the centre of post-feminist media culture, be it women's magazines, shopping films or television programmes such as *Sex and the City* and *Gossip Girl*, is offered what Hilary Radner terms 'a space of privilege' (1995: 2). The occupant of this space is often a journalist, specifically a fashion journalist. Anna Gough Yates commented on the way that magazine editors in the 1980s and 1990s were called upon to embody their magazines (2003), and this trend has accelerated in recent years to include all fashion journalists. Such journalists not only produce feminine consumer culture but figure within its texts, often taking centre stage in both magazine editorials and as characters in fictional works.⁴ These texts represent the female journalist as the ultimate subject of consumption, the entitled bearer of feminine expertise, skill and opportunity. Indeed, it is the fetishized fashion magazine closet⁵ that most vividly represents Radner's 'space of privilege' within feminine texts. This cupboard, filled with a dizzying array of designer clothes and shoes, features in numerous almost orgasmic scenes of pleasure in both the fictional and factual products of feminine consumer culture. The closet is portrayed as a space of unlimited potential that offers not just pleasure but transformative opportunity (of the kind Gill highlights in her foregrounding of the post-feminist makeover) and empowerment to those who are able to access its space. The fashion journalist is the privileged subject who, through her feminine expertise and dedication to consumption, has gained admission through the hallowed portals of the fashion closet. The ability to access these products, combined with the skill and knowledge to make the right choices, is depicted as the ultimate act of empowering self-actualization, achieved entirely through consumption practices. The journalists who

produce a post-feminist regime of representation are then also often portrayed as its ultimate beneficiaries.

In the final section of this chapter I will examine how these paradigmatic ideal subjects define the 'space of privilege' they have helped bring into being using data taken from interviews with forty journalists working in women's magazines and newspapers to determine the boundaries and goals of feminine journalism. During these interviews I tried to map the editorial and commercial aims of feminine journalism and how participants viewed their own professional expertise. Consumption was unanimously characterized as the subfield's central and defining discourse. Indeed, many of my participants defined their publication's primary function as aiding shopping. While other editorial goals were identified, such as education, information, entertainment or escapism, these aims were always linked back to the subfield's central theme and were usually fulfilled through the purchase of goods of one kind or another. The reader's positioning as a consumer remained stable, whether the products in question were clothes, leisure activities or cultural goods. The conflation of the female reader and the consumer was crucial to the aims and identity of the subfield and provided the gendered address that distinguished it from other areas of journalism. The inseparability of femininity and consumption within journalistic structures appeared to make it self-evident that publications or sections of newspapers that targeted a female audience would automatically address their readers as consumers. This key assumption informed my participant's differentiation of their subfield; they repeatedly suggested that, while women might be interested in many different types of content, readers would not expect or desire to find areas such as news and current affairs covered with any detail within journalistic products that were gendered female.

Feminine journalism's *raison d'être* is provided by the assumption that female readers need a distinct journalistic sphere to reflect

their concerns. Most of my participants took this gendered division of readership for granted and expressed it as a simple and uncomplicated truism. Like Marjorie Ferguson,⁶ writing twenty-five years earlier, I found a shared and implicit set of assumptions about both the genre and its audience. The most marked of these was the notion 'that women's magazines by definition are a separate, specialist genre devoted to "female interests" and that their devotions accord with the presumed homogeneity of the exclusively female culture they reflect' (Ferguson, 1983: 159). Ferguson's interviews revealed that for journalists working within magazines 'divisions of feminine concern were pre-ordained' and 'natural' (1983: 161). This was equally true for my participants, who displayed a high level of consensus about what constituted female culture and which categories of experience could reasonably be assigned to their subfield. Lola, a freelance writer, encapsulated the definition of feminine journalism that appeared to prevail among my participants when summing up her own expertise: 'basically food, fashion and shoes, plus the kind of things that make girls happy and sad. That's my bag really.'

Participants from women's magazines tended to take the female composition of their readership for granted, but journalists who worked for newspapers were more likely to reflect upon this gendering process. Interview data from newspaper journalists was helpful as they were more able to explicitly define the parameters of their specialism, often in relation to other, more 'masculine' areas of the newspaper, such as news, business and sport. They described a journalistic field polarized along gendered lines, suggesting that the features and fashion of feminine journalism was the natural destination point for female readers, while men would turn to more 'serious' sections of the newspaper. Newspaper features editor Jenny expressed this gendered bifurcation very strongly when discussing reading patterns, explaining that her supplement was, 'for women readers basically, if you're taking the traditional

reader it's the man who buys the paper for the financial pages and the news and it's the woman who gets the magazine and reads it all week'. Another newspaper feature's editor, Nancy, supported this view, suggesting that 'the husband is bringing in the newspaper and he reads the news section and the features section is passed on to the wife'.

While other participants were more wary of depicting gendered reading in such simplistic terms, there was a universal perception that fashion and features content was the main attraction for a female readership. Participants often cited market research to support this view. Trixie, the editor of a newspaper supplement, commented:

Within the paper it's meant to be the USP for 18–45 year old women and it is the reason to purchase, they call it. There was a massive research project done over the summer and it was confirmed as the main reason to purchase amongst 18–45 year-old women. So that's what it is, it's a drive to purchase editorially.

Participants defined the nature of their specialism using a familiar system of gendered binaries, an embodied private sphere of consumption that was set against a masculine public sphere. This relational approach to the demarcation of their field necessarily excluded many types of editorial material. Magazines and supplements were viewed as part of a portfolio of products that women could access to fulfil their various interests. The presumption was that women would not seek content relating to the public sphere from publications that were coded female, but instead would access such material through other media sources. Therefore, subject matter relating to politics, civic life and international affairs was judged unsuitable for the subfield. While participants were keen to impress upon me their belief in their readers' varied lives, interests and responsibilities, they deemed many of these interests unsuitable for inclusion within journalism aimed at women. Features editor Sadie explained that her monthly magazine did not cover political stories because:

I just think those kind of stories ... don't really fit very well in the mix and I think you can read newspapers and I think you can watch the news. I'm not saying our readers aren't interested, they're intelligent people, but I think they get that stuff from elsewhere.

Cleo, the editor of the same magazine, shared this commissioning principle, telling me, 'we don't do investigative reports into war-torn areas; that's not why women buy magazines'.

Even when participants gave examples of material they considered to be 'serious' it usually related back to the body or the private sphere, often concerning sexual and domestic violence and reproductive rights. Cleo, a monthly magazine editor noted: 'we did a lot of political campaigns. We did a lot of campaigns to help women who'd been raped. We did a campaign against domestic violence.' Feminine journalism's gendered address refracted politics or foreign affairs through what magazine editor Beatrice termed a 'filter of style or consumerism'. This filtering meant that most issues were approached through the medium of consumption. As Beatrice commented: 'we've commissioned a piece on the American election, but through the fashion scene, so we've got a writer looking at how the American designers are reacting to the fact that there's an election'.

Participants from the weekly magazines⁷ revealed a slightly different editorial criterion that saw a juxtaposition of news, fashion and consumption content. Mandy, the former deputy editor of two such weekly titles, described this mix: 'one minute you've got your £20 shoes from New Look and JLO or whatever and suddenly you've got women who are binding their feet in China'. Participants dubbed this approach 'news and shoes' and credited it with much of the success of weekly titles, as Janice, the editor of a weekly, explains:

I think what's most unique about it is this mix. I think that's what people love. It's really modern that you can go from a spread on something

that's happening in Afghanistan, to a spread on Kate Moss' relationship, to a four page on hot new gladiator sandals.

Despite the stress participants from weekly titles placed on news coverage, the image-oriented, commodified nature of the reporting did not disturb the subfield's central discourse. Instead, women's interest in news and current affairs was conceptualized as part of their general preoccupation with consumption. News was placed on a level with 'must-have handbags' as a necessary commodity, as these comments from Estelle, the deputy editor of weekly magazine, make clear:

It's just like you might watch GMTV in the morning and then you might pick up *The Guardian* and while talking about a serious subject you might be looking in a shop window at the next pair of shoes you'd like. That's what women are today. You can be intelligent as well as wanting nice things in your life.

The selection of news stories was predicated on an ability to conform to the glossy editorial values of such weekly magazines, and photographs dominated news coverage. Participants revealed that the choice of images played a crucial role in story selection, as Mandy explained: 'its image led, it's so visual. Yeah we'll do a story about the crisis in Sudan or whatever, but it will have to be accompanied by a really beautiful or sensational image.' The submersion of news and current affairs beneath an overwhelming discourse of consumption was most clearly expressed by Mandy, a former newspaper journalist who had gone on to work in magazines. She expressed a great deal of frustration with the editorial hierarchy she found in magazines and the lack of importance placed on news stories, illustrating this with an anecdote about a reader's response to a story about rape:

We had a story about a girl who had been gang raped, and ok we gave her a bit of a makeover just to make her look nice, and a girl wrote in saying 'oh it's terrible that she got gang raped, but can you tell me where she got her dress from?' So that's the sort of reader you're dealing with. I

think they do get a bit confused at the end of the day it's all about shopping.

Despite Mandy's contention that the reader was 'confused', her description of the editorial values of both the magazines that she had worked for suggested that, in fact, the reader was entirely correct and it was, indeed, 'all about shopping'.

My interview data suggests that contemporary commercial journalism aimed at women 'continues a process begun over a century ago of approaching and appealing to women as domestic consumers, rather than as fully-fledged citizens of a public sphere' (Chambers et al., 2004: 227). The impossibility of separating women and consumption meant that explicitly female journalism was presupposed to be concerned with a very limited set of subject matter. My participants were careful to note that women were in fact citizens concerned with the public sphere, but they were also insistent that journalism that was coded female could not facilitate these concerns. Instead, they were adamant that women should look outside the subfield to a wider journalistic field that was implicitly masculine. Therefore, despite their caveats, my participants painted a picture of a subfield that continued to define itself against a masculine public sphere and to associate women with consumption, the body and the private realm.

Many commentators have noted that women's magazines are confined to the private sphere, approaching public concerns only through the medium of the personal (McRobbie, 1978; Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987; Ballaster et al., 1991), and my interview data suggests that this characterization can be extended to the feminized sections of newspapers. The further encroachment of feminine content into newspapers appears to have polarized rather than blurred gendered divisions. This polarization enabled participants to place news and feminine journalism into separate gendered spheres and so reinforce feminine journalism's unique purpose. This dichotomization was one of the defining discourses of my interview data and produced

testimony striking in its reversion to traditional, patriarchal divisions and concerns. Such interview data supports Gill's contention that 'a key feature of the post-feminist sensibility has been the resurgence of ideas of natural sexual difference across all media from newspapers to advertising' (2007b: 158). This was most visible in an interview with supplement editor Sandra, who explicitly defined the sections of the newspaper she worked for in terms of a masculine public sphere and feminine private sphere. Recalling her paper's coverage of the Iraq war, she said:

The newspaper did its job of reporting the news very, very well and I thought well actually this is brilliant for (supplement title) because it throws us back onto our strengths, we can't change the whole world, we can't stop this war happening, but we can look after our little world ... it's about making the best of your relationships, looking after your family, cooking nice food, keeping the garden looking nice and the house. That little bit you have control over and you can create.

Sandra went on to characterize her supplement as 'the comfort zone' and to suggest that it made sense only in relation to the hard news, violence and conflict of the rest of the newspaper. The banishment of the concerns of the public sphere and the overwhelming dominance of consumption meant that feminine journalism's role was defined entirely through the private and personal realm. This kind of testimony confirms Aldridge's analysis of the feminization of newspapers (2001); she concluded that the turn towards intimate, confessional writing did not threaten the traditional binaries that define journalistic discourses. Citing the continued structural dominance of news and the regressive, conservative message of feminized publications such as the *Daily Mail*, she contended that the confessional, intimate culture of journalistic femininity 'is not about the erosion of the public/private and rational/emotional dualities of modernity, but a yet further manifestation of attempts to sustain them' (2001: 96). Far from attempting to dissolve gendered binaries, my participants relied upon them to provide their professional expertise.

A SPACE OF PRIVILEGE? THE LIMITS OF FEMININE JOURNALISM

An exploration of the roots and recent history of feminine journalism reveals a preoccupation with shopping and fashion that has worked to create a very powerful discursive formation around femininity and consumption. This formation expresses itself in particular ways in a post-feminist context, but it has been a consistent feature of the media landscape since the Victorian era. The links between consumption and empowerment that define contemporary representations of femininity are longstanding and have helped to structure the journalistic field. Since the 1900s consumption has offered women journalists success and access to the printed public sphere. In turn, such journalists have helped to create a discourse which suggests that this space of privilege is open to all women. My wider research suggests that the sets of expertise my participants identified around fashionable consumption are extremely lucrative in terms of advertising revenue and so offer considerable success, prestige and privilege. However, the narrow nature of this journalistic repertoire and its strict definition in opposition to a masculine public sphere also limited the careers of participants. They recounted a narrative of success within feminine journalism, but were unanimous that moving beyond this journalistic specialism was very hard. In a professional sense, associations with consumption simultaneously offered success and privilege and were sources of limitation and restriction.

Feminist critiques of popular journalism suggest that this experience of consumption as at once enabling and limiting is mirrored and recreated within the representations such journalists produce. As I have illustrated, women's magazines offer a very narrow representational regime which has been key to defining contemporary feminine subjectivities. Consumption may offer a space of privilege to women who conform to the ideals of this narrow regime and who can afford to access the

products necessary to inhabit this space. However, my research would suggest that even such women can find consumption's space of privilege limiting and restricting. For the vast majority of women the realization of successful femininity offered through feminine journalism and other products of consumer society remains a never-ending labour, always just out of reach. The history that I have sketched suggests that women's magazines and other forms of commercial journalism aimed at women remain a crucial site in the inscription and circulation of feminine subjectivities.

NOTES

- 1 I am aware that the term feminine journalism is problematic, implying as it does an acceptance of a pre-existent group of 'feminine' journalists and readers with a shared set of innate and distinct interests. However, despite these problems I have chosen to describe this type of commercial journalism aimed at a female readership as feminine journalism, rather than female or women's journalism, precisely because I wish to distinguish between the sexually differentiated, commercially oriented version of femininity presented within the subfield and the entirety of female experience.
- 2 Semi-structured interviews with forty journalists working for women's magazines and newspapers conducted between October 2007 and February 2009. Job titles ranged from fashion and editorial assistant to editor. All the names of my participants have been changed.
- 3 Post-feminism is a notoriously contested term that incorporates many, often conflicting, discourses; indeed, 'it seems to have entered wide use without necessarily any clear agreement about its meanings and it exhibits a plasticity that enables it to be used in contradictory ways' (Negra, 2004). Post-feminism can at once be used to describe a rejection and backlash against feminism (Faludi, 1993) and as a more positive term describing the intersection of feminism and post-colonialism (Brooks, 1997). The term becomes a marker of periodization, used to describe the end of second-wave feminism (Hollows, 2000) and as a descriptor for a type of third-wave 'sex-positive' feminism (Baumgardner and Richards, 2004). However, it has perhaps been most widely used to 'describe mainstream redefinitions of feminism' (Projansky, 2001) which have emerged in popular culture since the early 1980s, and it is this final definition which is most useful for the

current discussion. In fact, the term is best used as, Charlotte Brunsdon suggests, 'in an historically specific sense to mark changes in popularly available understandings of femininity and a woman's place that are generally recognized as occurring in the 1980s' (Brunsdon, 2000: 297).

- 4 Female journalists are increasingly present within the pages of magazines, both visually, often acting as models in fashion pieces, and textually, discussing their lives and bodies in articles, while fictional post-feminist media products often feature fashion journalists. Carrie Bradshaw, the heroine of television series *Sex and the City*, is a journalist who we see writing for *Vogue*, while *Ugly Betty* is set in *MODE* magazine; the heroines of films such as *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (Petrie, 2003), *13 Going On 30* (Winick, 2004), *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006) and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (Hogan, 2009) are all magazine journalists and their relationship with consumption provides much of the dramatic content of these films.
- 5 The fashion closet is a cupboard or room in which the sample clothes and shoes used for magazine fashion shoots are stored. This space features prominently in many post-feminist texts, and is seen most notably in Carrie Bradshaw's visit to the *Vogue* fashion closet ('A *Vogue* idea', 2002) in Season 4 of *Sex and the City* and Andy Sachs's makeover in the fashion closet of the fictional *Runway* magazine in *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006).
- 6 Ferguson's 1983 study remains the only significant attempt to consider the production of women's magazines in any detail.
- 7 2005 saw the launch of weekly glossy *Grazia*, which was followed in 2007 by *LOOK*. These weekly magazines featured more news content than was common in women's magazines and demonstrated the interconnection between magazines and newspapers. Nicola Jeal, who acted as consultant editor in the run up to *Grazia*'s launch, was also responsible for the launch of the newspaper supplement *Observer Woman* and initially *Grazia*'s fashion team was responsible for *Observer Woman*'s fashion content.

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PART 3

Sexuality

Clare Hemmings

For a *Handbook of Feminist Theory*, one might wonder what is distinct about ‘sexuality’ as an organizing concept that warrants a separate section, where other historically or theoretically comparable concepts – ‘race’, ‘class’, ‘age’, ‘disability’ – are not accorded the same visibility. One answer is, of course, pragmatic: that the editors of the Handbook form a particular group that have agreed – at a given time and in a given space – to embark on *this particular* project. The group did, of course, also identify areas that ‘had’ to be included for the Handbook to be coherent – what sense would a *Handbook of Feminist Theory* make without sections on epistemology, representation or the economy, for example? – but we largely resisted an approach that either sought to cover all the bases or was focused on identity over a more thematic perspective. My *willingness* to edit a sexuality section is in itself important, of course, even if it begs the question of the terms of inclusion or exclusion that mark the

parameters of any such project, precisely because such a project relies on the labour of editors and writers in ways that are not always visible in the final product. In a UK context in which writing chapters or editing groups of chapters is explicitly devalued by the terms of the top-down research exercises by which we are bound if we are to obtain government funding, my willingness to edit a section on sexuality is not nothing indeed. It means there will be a section, I will edit it, and others will write, which – combined with my colleagues’ labour here – will result in the book being produced. Further, since the project as a whole is one in which the editors all work at the Gender Institute at LSE, the likelihood of a real fight in which the priority given to sexuality by this section is challenged might well open Pandora’s box in unforeseen (or perhaps all too foreseen) ways. Perhaps I took a tone of insistence – sexuality ‘has’ to be there not only because that’s what I want to focus on, but also, more

importantly, because it organizes something in relation to feminist theory differently. Perhaps to question the role of sexuality as distinct here would be to raise questions of the relationship between materiality and representation, personal and political life, the different weight disciplines or fields carry within the broader project of 'academic feminism' in ways too charged to negotiate in a meeting. Such debates continue to position sexuality as 'cultural' rather than material or economic, for example, following Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser's formative arguments about this question (Butler, 1997a; Fraser, 1997). Their weight after all, is not ours alone, and is unlikely to be resolved in any productive way by 'refusing' my (after all rather selfless) offer.

But still, I did stick to sexuality, as I so often seem to do. When asked for a short biography for writing or a talk, I tend to describe my areas of interest as 'transnational sexuality studies and feminist studies'. This is both descriptive – I write in and on both and am committed to both, even if I would be hard pushed to say what either definitively *are* – and performative: it separates as it connects the two sites and asks the question of whether the 'transnational' in 'transnational sexuality studies' travels over to inflect 'feminist studies' as well. I could very easily have staked a different claim in editing a section of the Handbook, could have expressed a preference instead for a section on 'historiography and/or institutionalization', could have prioritized the 'studies' in 'feminist studies' then, transnational or otherwise. But I didn't: I staked a different claim, and this introduction to the section that emerged from that commitment both tells a story about why I might have thrown my cap into this particular ring and introduces you to the pieces included here that tell stories of their own, both about what sexuality is and why it is important in relation to feminist theory.

If my round-about, semi-institutional story thus far seems unsatisfying, at odds in its tone with what I am describing as a commitment

or claim, it is perhaps because in wondering 'Why "Sexuality"?' throughout the process of reading, editing and writing, my object has kept on slipping. A careful reader will note that in this collection of seven chapters alone 'sexuality' can be taken to refer to sex acts, reproduction, labour, discourse or regulatory concept, psychic structure and excess, normative frame, that which connects bodies and probably more that elude me. (Did I forget pleasure?) As careful authors invested in the importance of 'sexuality' for any description of social life, we all seek here to carve out sexuality's role in both cementing and challenging existing meanings – often at once – and in considering how sexuality relates to those 'other' categories of meaning that pertain in what Gilbert Caluya, Jennifer Germon and Elspeth Probyn would describe as today's globalized world. In doing so, and as I describe further below, we make use of a range of theoretical and empirical sources, position ourselves as variously (inter)disciplinary and insist to varying degrees on the importance of transnational or intersectional frames. And yet I remain struck by the elusive character of what we term 'sexuality' and the ways in which each chapter inflects its current and historical valence in quite distinct as well as overlapping ways. Indeed, if we follow Lauren Berlant's complex understanding of sexuality, it is precisely its centrality and flexibility that means it endures even as, or particularly when, historical formations of Western kinship appear to have been left behind (2007; 2011).

In relation to feminist theory, one of the reasons 'sexuality' remains both elusive and pivotal is its theorization in relation to gender. It may be helpful to remind ourselves that sexuality has long been considered intimately linked to – or inseparable from – gender, that privileged object, however complemented or multiplied – of feminist theory.¹ In a variety of socialist feminisms and their antecedents, and as Rosemary Hennessy charts so clearly, sexuality – primarily via reproduction – is theorized as locking women (and men) into familial

structures that facilitate gender inequality. Thus, in a materialist analysis, sexuality is to woman what paid labour is to the working man: the centre of her life and the primary site of her oppression. Writers and thinkers such as Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1982) and Carole Pateman (1988) build on a Marxist tradition to foreground the centrality of what Judith Butler (1990) calls 'the heterosexual matrix' in the formation of gendered as well as sexual norms. As Mary Evans points out in the main Introduction to this Handbook, feminist theory has two main sources of theoretical development that pre-date poststructuralism. That other great strand – psychoanalysis – also privileges sexuality in its narrativization of gender, firmly locating gendered development as precipitated by seeing and knowing sexual difference (Irigaray, 1985; Mitchell, 1974). Sexuality and gender are thus locked together in a different way: through an inability to conceive of gender outside of our desires for others and for social recognition. While both strands remain controversial for feminist theorists, particularly psychoanalysis in its insistence on gendering as central to subjectivity rather than something imposed from without, they also point to how and why it is that sexuality and gender remain hard to disentangle contemporarily. The contributors to this section also draw on these traditions, highlighting the importance of sexuality as state-regulated (Puri; Caluya, Germon and Probyn; Spruce), as gendered and raced labour (Andrijasevic; Hennessy; Wright) or as a question of identity (Spruce; Hemmings; Wright). In Jyoti Puri and Rutvica Andrijasevic's work, in particular, the questions of subjectivity and regulation are folded together in order to provide a fuller account of why these traditions are both important and should be combined. The work collected here also points to a couple of neglected issues raised by my account of the relationship between sexuality and gender in feminist work thus far: the nature of social transformation *vis a vis* sexuality and

gender in both strands; and the problematic fusion of sexuality and gender as an exclusive coupling.

In both Marxist and psychoanalytic traditions, and importantly most often when they are combined, social transformation of gender and sexuality are intertwined. Thus for activists and theorists past and present sexual experimentation/difference of a variety of kinds has the capacity to challenge and transform gendered norms or oppression and may even be critical to how broader social change can be brought about. If we free sexuality from reproductive norms we may also liberate 'gender' to signify difference. From free love advocates to radical psychoanalysts, from feminist challenges to the family to queer experimentation, and across claims for sexual rights ranging from those to abortion, respect for sex workers, and homosexual recognition, reclaiming sexuality as not only reducible to its dominant forms has been key not only for a redefinition of sexual subjectivity but to imagining broader social transformation. To take the example of Emma Goldman's careful theorization of the importance of sexuality at the start of the twentieth century, sexual freedom offers a challenge to oppressive gender relations and opens up a value system at odds with capitalist greed (thus providing affective reasons for rejecting its hollowness). Goldman also provides an account of prostitution in terms of labour and exploitation without the prudery commonly associated with feminist positions at the time.² We could track her contributions forward as part of a historiography that includes theories of homosexuality from sexology to radical psychoanalysis to queer theory in one strand, or one including theories of sexuality and gendered labour right up to sex work activism, or through lesbian feminist propositions of alternative communities and interventionist politics. Goldman would have approved of the tactics if not of the censorship that attends anti-porn activism, for example.

But, as suggested in the flagging of my second strand, a consideration of regulation

and transformation in respect of sexuality and gender may take a rather different approach. As queer theorists in particular have insisted, if sexuality and gender combine in these traditions to produce modern power, if, indeed, our current situation relies on their sutured naturalization, then we might want to put our energies instead into prizing them apart rather than reinforcing their privileged attachment. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick most famously, perhaps, charting an accurate history as well as an 'epistemology of the closet' (1991) requires an analytic separation of sexuality from both gender and feminism. Building on the work of Michel Foucault (1978), Sedgwick insists that to reduce a history of (homo)sexuality to its normative gendered modes is to erase a history of sexual alterity, making it exceptional rather than fundamental to the establishment of modern power and identity. Also important for queer theory here is the desire to 'rescue' gender from its demonized status within feminism as always and only a patriarchal tool (due to this suturing), to free it up as an unstable category that can be inhabited or adapted for pleasurable and transformative ends.³ Whatever the pertinent critiques of such accounts as rather unfair to feminism in their reduction of its understanding of both gender and sexuality as 'merely regulatory' (Weed and Schor, 1997),⁴ the main point – that sexuality and gender may not only be each others' normative alibis – remains an important one, I think. Such work, if we think forward from Mary McIntosh's inaugural (1968) piece 'The Homosexual Role', and, later, John D'Emilio's (1983) 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', stresses the importance of homosexuality in particular as having a life and social significance in the capitalist West *apart from* gender. It is recent, it is modern and, while it certainly overlaps with modern gender, it also has a distinct regulatory and liberating life in respect of capital and political discourse. Importantly too for the discussion that follows, it is McIntosh in particular who flags that to provide homosexuality with a

history is to challenge its universal status across space as well as time.

My initial historiography of sexuality's privileged relationship to gender within a feminist frame begs further questions about exclusion, of course. In particular, Black feminist theorists have critiqued a socialist and radical feminist centring of the family as the primary site of women's oppression (Davis 1981; Amos and Parmar, 1984), questioning the exclusivity of the coupling of gender and sexuality that a focus on reproduction produces in the first place. Citing the family as a possible place of support to resist racism for Black women and men, and exploring the ways in which gender and sexuality are themselves always 'raced' and classed, writers such as Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson (1986) pose a direct challenge to such exclusivity. Instead they point to the ongoing effects of denying the *history of sexuality* with respect to imperialism, and different subjects' relationship to that history.⁵ As part of her exquisite tracking of the ways in which 'gender' relies as centrally on essentialist constructions of biological racism as it does on essentialist constructions of 'sex', Donna Haraway also challenges the universalism that attends the insistence upon sexuality's unique organizing power with respect to gender (1991). And in line with this call for a more accurate feminist history of sexuality, writers have carefully explored the significance of colonialism in the development of modern, gendered sexuality and the pivotal role of sexuality in defining a range of colonial projects (McClintock, 1995; Levine, 2000). It is important to stress here, I think, that these approaches should not be seen as efforts to displace understandings of sexuality's relationship to gender (or simply to multiply it), but as fuller developments of what and how gender and sexuality signify in the first place.⁶

For me, it is these questions – of a complex history of sexuality as both regulation and resource, of a category differentially occupied by subjects in time and space, of

how we *approach* the question of sexuality and its relationship to gender – that remain pertinent. Even if they do not pertain only to sexuality's relationship to gender and feminism but are also asked by scholars in other fields, they are nevertheless important and precise questions. The authors of the chapters in this section of the Handbook join others within feminist sexuality studies to ask after the global political conditions under which 'sexuality' signifies, in what ways and to what ends. These scholars have in common that any account of social life is thinner without such attention to sexuality, and in many cases that attention reveals aspects of life and history that otherwise remain obscure. Thus Rosemary Hennessy's careful tracking of a materialist feminist history of sexuality brings together theorists and activists commonly held apart in feminist or queer historiography, changing not only how we view the past but also intervening in current debates that pit sexuality against materialist analysis. Michelle Wright's writing back in of Black women's exclusions from both feminist sexuality studies and African-American/diaspora studies precipitates her attention to the alternative historiographies that fiction allows. The authors gathered together here are also fundamentally concerned with how sexuality functions discursively to regulate bodies and practices. Thus Gilbert Caluya, Jennifer Germon and Elspeth Probyn explore ways in which sexuality functions as part of wider global control of movement across borders and policing of gendered bodies, while Emma Spruce explores the importance of a queer feminist perspective on sexual asylum legislation and practices. Spruce's work points to the problems of adopting a singular model of identity when considering different transnational experiences of sexuality and, importantly, talks back to queer approaches by asking how they can learn from feminist perspectives, while Caluya, Germon and Probyn focus on the impact of sexual regulation on intersexed discourse and bodies. Also concerned with regulation at macro and micro

levels, Jyoti Puri places sexuality at the heart of how states function, not only in terms of governance but also in terms of irrationality. Puri's work here raises the important question of what Butler has called 'the psychic life of power' (1997b), a question Andrijasevic and I are also intrigued by. Andrijasevic's concern here is with thinking through representation and subjectivity to challenge the opposition of agency and coercion that typically structures accounts of sex trafficking. My own chapter foregrounds subjectivity and affect in my revisiting of progressive accounts of sexual meaning that assume that normative kinship models have been left behind.

In all chapters the relationship between regulation and freedom, constraint and pleasure, remains key, as one might expect, and, indeed, I wonder if this dual 'pull' on sexual meaning is one of the reasons for its slippery character. Yet, even though it would be hard after reading the chapters in this section to say precisely what sexuality *is* and how it relates finally to feminist theory, one thing is certain: that it is critical to understanding how the macro and the micro interact precisely because of how sexuality draws us to others and is experienced in the body. This point of intervention that sexuality necessitates may be one reason for the interdisciplinary range and methodological or epistemological innovation that these papers collectively demonstrate. The authors in this section draw on an impressive array of source materials, from legal documents to activist texts, from fiction and film to campaign advertising, from academic sources to organizational texts. But their interdisciplinarity is more than the breadth of the common archive constructed in feminist queer vein (Cvetkovich, 2003). It reaches further into the development of what I would call a feminist queer methodology that pits texts and readings against one another to see what is revealed through that confrontation. For Wright, Andrijasevic and Spruce, for example, the question of narrative is not only related to the showcasing of multiple source materials but offers a way of expanding how we think about Black feminist

history, representations of sex workers and queer identities respectively. Wright reads fiction for how it opens up alternative histories to the dominant ones that stultify imagination and passion; Andrijasevic analyses narrative formations in order to open up the question of subjectivity in trafficking; and Spruce interrupts progress narratives of gay and lesbian identities as part of how legal rulings might be challenged. Fiction and fictionalization are important in my piece too, in my suggestion that through reading and imagining we might foreground gaps in dominant modes of reproduction. For Caluya, Germon and Probyn, as well as Puri, the objects of analysis are the most social scientific perhaps: gender mainstreaming texts, case studies, legal rulings and organizational developments. Yet here, too, the points of intervention draw on interdisciplinary traditions within cultural studies, discourse analysis and – for Puri – psychoanalysis in order to foreground the relationship between embodied and social experience. Finally, and in keeping with the development of critical interventions in feminist sexuality studies as I have outlined them here, all contributors open up the possibility of multiple histories to the contexts that they engage, drawing explicitly or implicitly on the tradition of critical historiography in order to mark the difference it makes (to the present and our sense of the past) to make sexuality central.

While I have tried to show how and why sexuality might be thought of as having a distinct history and life in relation to feminist theory – as well as the various challenges to that distinction that have also been folded into queer feminist inquiry – perhaps in the end it is the sense of excitement generated by these pieces that best validates my initial claim to this particular field as worth of separate representation in this *Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Whatever else it is or is not, feminist sexuality studies is vibrant, engaged and alive, and seeks to intervene in innovative and transformative ways in what we might call the complexities of global life. I hope you enjoy these pieces as much as I have.

NOTES

- 1 See Wiegman, 2012 for an analysis of our attachments both to gender as a privileged object within feminism and, importantly, to its intersectional undoing as the transformative contemporary feminist move.
- 2 Goldman's work on sexual freedom ranges from her insistence on love and marriage as unrelated (1911), critiques of existing understandings of prostitution (1909) and elaboration of the significance of birth control for women's emancipation (1916). She also defended the rights of homosexuality to freedom of expression, corresponding with leading sexologists Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter and Magnus Hirschfeld.
- 3 This shift from gender and sexuality as linked in kinship modes to sexuality as having a distinct life, cross-cutting both oppression and freedom in a range of ways, is best represented in Gayle Rubin's two influential articles. The first, 'Traffic in Women' (1975), proposes sex/gender as a system governing kinship within which women are the objects of patriarchal exchange; the second, 'Thinking Sex' (1984), explores the limits of universal structures of oppression and freedom with respect to sexual practices and identities.
- 4 See also the debate between Ian (Janet) Halley and respondents in the special issue of *Duke Journal of Gender, Law and Policy* (Wallace et al, 2004), in which Halley prioritizes a more open queer approach over a constraining feminism in relation to the law. Most of the responses query Halley's characterization of feminism as singular and repressive.
- 5 Bhavnani and Coulson's critique was of Barrett and McIntosh's (1985) article 'Ethnocentrism and Socialist-Feminist Theory', in which they revisit their (1982) work in light of the Black feminist critiques of white feminist theory. Bhavnani and Coulson insist that in retaining the emphasis on the family and reframing the accusation of racism as 'ethnocentrism', Barrett and McIntosh's work risks reinstating rather than displacing whiteness as the norm.
- 6 I am thinking here in particular of Laura Ann Stoler's scholarship, which situates Foucault's history of sexuality more specifically as a development of colonial regimes (1995).

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(It's not all) Kylie Concerts, Exotic Cocktails and Gossip: the Appearance of Sexuality through 'Gay' Asylum in the UK

Emma Spruce

In 2010 a landmark decision in the British Supreme Court 'unanimously rejected the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) view that it could refuse asylum if it would be "reasonably tolerable" for the applicant to avoid future persecution by concealing their sexual identity' (Gower, 2011: 1). This ruling, hailed as 'a clear victory' by gay rights campaigners (Canning cited in Geen, 2010, para. 9), included the paragraph:

[t]o illustrate the point with trivial stereotypical examples from British society: just as male heterosexuals are free to enjoy themselves playing rugby, drinking beer and talking about girls with their mates, so male homosexuals are to be free to enjoy themselves going to Kylie concerts, drinking exotically coloured cocktails and talking about boys with their straight female mates. (Anon., 2010: 31: 36)

Trivially invoked in this 'clear victory' is a set of stereotypes – explicitly about male homosexuals, and implicitly about the meaning of sexuality. These are placed within a context that – despite its naming as British – reads as if

it should be universally recognizable. This chapter interrogates the implications of the heightened visibility of sexuality in human rights, where gay asylum has been at the forefront of both domestic and international debates, by exploring recent changes in asylum law and looking at how a discussion of these changes might be brought into fruitful dialogue with feminist theory.

To respond to the appearance of sexuality it is crucial that both theory and policy are drawn upon, with the strengths of each being brought to bear on the limitations of the other. Particularly in discussion of 'public/private', 'intersectionality' and 'culture', feminist theory has developed theoretical tools that allow us to begin to analyse the impact of "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" issues ... finally finding a place on international human rights, law and policy agendas' (Kollman and Waites, 2009: 2). Drawing together new threads from sexuality studies and queer theory, as well as cultural geography and migration studies, this chapter also seeks to challenge the enduring heteronormativity of

the asylum system and the insufficiency of current analyses to account for the fast-moving legal changes. Unlike the majority of academic analyses, the experiences of asylum-seekers and refugees neither begin nor end in the courtroom and feminist theory can be used to encourage looking beyond this ‘moment’. In turn, changes in policy can underline the ways feminist theory needs to remain engaged with practice and responsive to shifting representations of gender and sexuality.

The chapter progresses in three sections, initially introducing gay asylum and examining the definitions of sexuality which are operationalized within legal judgements before moving on to look more explicitly at the existing interaction between feminist theory and approaches to asylum. I conclude by exploring the overt appearance of sexuality in the legal proceedings and the opportunity this provides to build on, challenge and reinvigorate feminist approaches to refugee law and policy. Although the UK is given more attention, as it is the context I am most familiar with, I also draw on examples from Anglophone case law in Australia, Canada and the USA, and on United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) guidelines. This is intended to illustrate the arguments which I believe are consistent across approaches to asylum in the Global North, but it means that this chapter is emphatically not designed to provide an overview of the legal context for asylum on the basis of homosexuality. The law has been changing at a remarkable speed and its implementation varies from country to country.¹ Instead of providing a legislative guide, this chapter focuses on the role that feminist theory has had in promoting questions of gender and sexuality in migration and explores changes in the law that may be celebrated on an individual basis but continue to need interrogating in order for their broader impact to be assessed.

SEXUALITY AND ASYLUM

The right to seek asylum is not an uncontested quiet fact debated over only by policy

buffs and academics. Instead, asylum is a topic for discussion. Perhaps disproportionately to the number of those who seek asylum in the UK, asylum law, policy and narratives lend themselves to the original sense of the word ‘topic’; they are perceived as an issue of the ‘topoi’, of the commonplace, and so asylum has ramifications beyond the relationship between state and asylum seeker (Menjívar, 2009: 416; Tyler, 2006). There is a multitude of forums through which asylum is spoken about – government briefings, international guidelines, precedent-setting cases, activist work, advocacy and individual stories – all reported in both specialist and popular forums that in turn feed back into the legislative product (Parker, 2007). This section explores the way gay asylum has come into being and then offers an analysis of the ways that sexuality has been conceptualized in legal frames.

The Evolution of Gay Asylum

‘Gay asylum’ is the term most commonly used for refugee applications that are oriented around the minority sexuality and/or non-normative gender of an individual. These claims are generally articulated through refugee law on the basis of membership of the ‘particular social group’ (PSG) homosexuals. ‘Race’, ‘religion’, ‘nationality’, ‘political opinion’ and ‘membership of a PSG’ comprise the five grounds that were established for seeking asylum in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Anon., 1951), and they remain the frame through which all asylum claims must be filed today. Relative to the other terms, the definitional breadth of PSG has led to it becoming the save-all category that is used to plaster over the dissonance between the original conception of refugee law and the contemporary context of changing social mores.² This is exemplified by the use of PSG applications for women escaping domestic violence and other ‘private’ harms such as genital cutting which *could* be conceived as a political stance against a normative femininity but are not.

Overuse of PSGs has been criticized, as it results in 'the artificial creation of PSGs, what could be described at times as the creation of "intellectual constructs"' (Edwards, 2010a: 28), where groups are narrowly conceived to stop precedents being set which might encourage an increase in applications. The vagueness of the definition given to PSG, along with the masculinist interpretations of the other categories (especially political opinion³), has led to PSG being used in preference to the other grounds for cases that link to gender and sexuality.

In the UK 'it is well-established that sexual identity can be the basis for a successful asylum claim' under the category of 'membership of a PSG' (O'Leary, 2008: 88). The first significant ruling to establish this was *Islam (A.P.) v. Secretary of State for the Home Department; R v. Immigration Appeal Tribunal and Another, Ex Parte Shah (A.P.)* (Anon., 1999), where it was held that two women from Pakistan who had left their abusive husbands and fled to the UK could be considered as members of a PSG. In this case Lord Hoffman stated that: 'the concept of a social group is in my view perfectly adequate to accommodate women as a group in a society that discriminates on grounds of sex, that is to say, that perceives women as not being entitled to the same fundamental rights as men' (Anon., 1999: 16). In the same case Lord Steyn established that homosexuals could also be considered as members of a PSG, and the entire judgement drew heavily on the definitions of PSG outlined in the American gay asylum case *Matter of Toboso-Alfonso* (Anon., 1990). From the very beginning, then, it was clear that sexual and gender norms had imbricated roles in refugee law. In gay asylum cases particularly, it became easier to see the way that incredibly narrow definitions of sexuality and gender had been inscribed into the legal system as advocates struggled to make coherent homosexual stories out of fragmented lives.

Despite a long history of excluding immigrants based on perceived homosexuality and a generally more hostile legal environment

for gay equality (Morgan, 2006: 138–39), the USA actually established precedent for positive asylum rulings on sexual orientation as PSG membership four years earlier than the UK through the case mentioned above (Anon., 1990). In both *Toboso-Alfonso* and the dicta on gay asylum in *Islam and Shah* (Anon., 1999) the focus was on gay men but the precedent was established for all 'homosexuals', and so lesbians were also nominally covered. The majority of industrialized nations who receive asylum seekers now recognize that applications can be filed on the basis of homosexuals as a PSG (Dauvergne and Millbank, 2003: 300–301). The position for bisexuals or those of other minority sexualities remains much less documented; however, here too there have started to be some positive claims (Rehaag, 2008).⁴

Sexuality as (mostly homo) sexual orientation/practice/identity/preference is the focus of this chapter but, in asylum claims, sexuality may also appear as that which is constrained or enabled through cultural practices. For example, rulings for those whose cases centre around fleeing from female genital cutting (FGC) have admitted evidence that FGC is 'used to control women's sexuality' (Anon., 1996: 366). Certain marriage practices⁵ are also debated in the legal forum as expressions of sexuality considered tantamount to oppression and indicative of condemnable local gender relations. These determinations indicate that sexuality is a flexible concept, at one point invoked as cultural product that needs regulating (or at least is subject to 'judgement' from the West), and at another articulated as a natural human characteristic that can have cultural practices imposed onto it, infringing on the natural state (again, understood through a normative and Western lens).

Degree of Take-Up

Although there has been a decade of asylum explicitly acknowledged as contingent on minority sexual orientation, the actual number of people applying on these grounds

remains very difficult to determine. Despite repeated promises the UKBA has so far failed to make data on this publicly available (Geen, 2011a; 2011b) and similar challenges have been noted in other countries both in terms of immigration statistics and in the percentage of gay asylum hearings that are published or reported (Rehaag, 2008). In the British context, both the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLIG) and Stonewall have suggested that gay asylum has a higher rate of refusal in comparison to other applications. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the structural challenges which make it difficult for women to seek asylum,⁶ lesbian asylum seekers are both numerically fewer and less successful than male counterparts, and this is mirrored among other minority sexualities not read as 'gay male' (Chelvan, 2011; Miller, 2005: 141; Rehaag, 2008: 69).

Despite the challenges around accessing quantitative data⁷ there is actually a remarkably large volume of literature relating to gay asylum rulings, primarily written in the discipline of critical legal studies. This is perhaps because although, 'since the 1990s, there has been a rapid growth of attention to sexual and gender diversity in law, and particularly in socio-legal studies' (Kollman and Waites, 2009: 8), refugee law remains one of the fastest evolving fields and so appears more open to 'new' social questions. The disciplinary route of this work, however, means that there is not much analysis of the role of sexuality in the lives of asylum seekers outside the parameters of the courtrooms and beyond their treatment in legal texts. In order to fully explore the dimensions of changing social and legal norms a more interdisciplinary and intersectional approach is needed, which can better account for the particular experiences of migrants with minority sexualities, an argument that is expanded on below.

Typologies of Homosexuality

This section addresses the way in which (homo)sexuality is understood and presented, particularly within asylum hearings.

Sexuality/gender/sex, innate homosexuality and the conflict over the prioritization of behaviour or identity are the three frames utilized here. Although this approach is not intended to be exhaustive it allows a systematic consideration of some of the most frequently occurring definitional contestations that appear in asylum cases oriented around sexuality and begins an exploration of the way that feminist insights can be brought to bear on them.

Sexuality/Gender/Sex

In definitional terms, feminist theory and asylum advocacy seem a world apart. While—the UNHCR is still working to emphasize the socially constructed nature of gender that it sets against sex as 'biological determination' (UNHCR, 2002: para. 3), most contemporary feminist theory 'denies the assumption of sex or gender as "natural"' (Peterson, 2004: 40). One of the challenges of using insights from feminist theory to critique the heteronormativity of refugee law in cases that draw on sexuality, then, is that the work by feminists may seem too abstract or radical to be employed in legal arguments. Thus, despite the fact that queer theorists such as Judith Butler have moved to discussions of 'sexuality and gender as separate but interconnected variables' which allow 'the more invisible ways in which power imposes gender and sexual meanings' (Berger, 2009: 662) to be explored, physiological sex remains crucial to legal and policy formulations as a sort of base line from which gender might emerge.

The biological sex/social gender division described above in the UNHCR guidelines and evident in much refugee law results in gay asylum representations presuming a natural biological sex onto which a social gender may be laminated. This veers between what seems like complete denial of gender as a variable that may impact upon experiences of sexuality and the naming of gender variations as necessarily an expression of homosexuality. In the latter treatment transgenderism is all but erased⁸ and the proof of gay identity is sought through gender non-normativity (lesbians

must be butch, gay men should be effeminate). In the former, reports on country contexts looking at the situation for gay men are expected to translate directly onto lesbian experience (Neilson, 2005).⁹

The conflation and erasure of sex/gender in gay asylum cases has been responded to by a number of feminist scholars who have underlined the continuity between lesbian and heterosexual female, rather than necessarily gay male, experience. Lesbian asylum seekers' 'lives are constrained by their gender, and, as a consequence, advocates for lesbian asylum seekers have begun to adjudicate their cases within a gender-based framework of persecution' (Berger, 2009: 675; Morgan, 2006). In this move the focus returns to gender and the common sexuality (as 'homosexuality') is rendered less pertinent (Neilson, 2005). The argument centres on the idea that 'both lesbian and female heterosexual applicants face similar cultural, economic, and legal restrictions along gender lines that encourage them to live their lives out of the public sphere, and, as such, the harms they experience are often of a private rather than public, character' (Berger, 2009: 675). The difficulty of addressing private harms raises the public/private discussion that will be elaborated on below. Prioritizing gender has its own problems, however, as there is a risk that in emphasizing the continuities between women of all sexualities the system of 'compulsory heterosexuality' remains operational and 'the lesbian possibility ... is denied' (Lewis, 2010: 434). Challenges that are specific to women with minority sexual orientations are erased through this process and crucial information in an asylum claim may therefore not be included.

Focusing on gender to the detriment of sexuality also leaves a binary sex/gender system in place where essentialized categories of maleness or femaleness are left conceptually intact. By asserting the commonality of all (or even most) people born female, as distinct from all people born male, a set of identifiers is operationalized which limits the

ability to treat people as individuals who are likely to have a much more complex arrangement of gendered characteristics. This approach discards the benefits that can be achieved by indicating multiple challenges to the normative system. Although the gap between theory and implementation might mean debates that refuse to take sex as a static descriptor seem incompatible with law, which focuses on visibility and 'knowability', crafting theory to follow this legal frame would involve compromising on the radical potential that feminist analysis holds (Waites, 2009: 152). An alternative is to ensure that the feminist critique of asylum is embedded in a broader project of feminist legal theory that encourages conditions that would allow feminist theory to be heard in the mainstream without being subjected to a weakening process of assimilation.

Born this Way

As was mentioned earlier, sexuality in asylum claims is sometimes understood as innate but at other times is presented as a culturally specific construct. In gay asylum cases the tendency has been to refuse the 'constructed' arguments in favour of innateness as this has made it easier to defend applicants. Claims filed under membership of a PSG rely on 'the characteristic ... [being] seen not only as inherent but also as having some greater significance to the individual through its innateness' (Hinger, 2010: 371). Here Sarah Hinger is not talking about an imperative that is explicitly written into asylum legislation but instead responding to the low rate of successful claims where, until recently, asylum was frequently refused in the UK 'if it would be "reasonably tolerable" for the applicant to avoid future persecution by concealing their sexual identity in their country of origin' (Gower, 2011: 1). This legal requirement makes no sense in the broader context of asylum, where *political opinion* or *religion* are both well established as valid grounds for refugee status; innateness in these cases is not a necessary, or in general even a possible, characteristic. Homosexuality, however, has

struggled to be taken as worthy of international protection and the term 'reasonably tolerable' has aligned with interpretations of homosexuality as 'merely' sexual practice to delegitimize cases from countries which did not have laws specifically addressing homosexuality or where there was documentation of some sort of 'gay scene' (Millbank, 2002: 155, n.48).¹⁰

Aside from the double standard inherent in the perceived importance of innateness to gay asylum claims, there is another critique to be made here. For over forty years academics have been arguing that sexuality, in terms of sexual identities, is historically, geographically and culturally contingent (Cantu et al., 2005; Foucault, 1985; Padgug, 1979). As well as being seen as crucial to gay asylum cases, emphasizing innateness is also a strategy some gay rights advocates use to respond to fears about homosexuality as an epidemic.¹¹ The application of a test of innateness to asylum cases, however, means that individuals who do not fit (or have not had access to the scripts in order to learn) the dominant Western understanding of an innate homosexuality will not pass the threshold of plausibility and so are likely to be refused asylum.

The gendering lens available through feminist theory indicates that the requirement of innateness has particularly pernicious effects on female asylum seekers. Those applying under the 'PSG homosexuals' criteria who have children and/or have been married find it extremely difficult to meet the requirements of an innate (homo) sexuality, present in a single form from birth. The only way to reconcile children or heterosexual relationships for these asylum seekers seems to be to argue that they were forced into them. Although this may be true in some cases, there is ample evidence that for some people their attraction to 'the same sex' is something that they did not experience, or were not conscious of, until later in life. Emphasizing innate single-sex orientations completely denies the possibility of bisexuality and entrenches a categorical and

binary model of human sexuality.¹² This can exacerbate the difficulty for asylum seekers who are not able to adhere to this standard and, again, may have particularly exclusionary effects on women. Since the legal framework for migration is conceived according to both heterosexual and patriarchal norms this frequently means that lesbians – often characterized as dependents (Luibhéid, 2008b: 297) – may have particular difficulties taking up migration strategies that rely on family reunification. In the discourse of asylum law an active and uncontrollable male sexuality is more easily articulated as necessitating protection than female sexuality, which is understood as more easily governable by, and less important to, the individual. This observation has led Jenni Millbank to state that: '[w]hile I do think that expression of one's sexuality is fundamental, the term "innate need" exemplifies a highly gendered construct of male sexuality, present in much legal discourse, as undeniable and uncontrollable. This stands in stark contrast to female sexuality, which is constructed as passive and readily suppressed' (2002: 174). Rather than being gender neutral, then, the appearance of sexuality in refugee law and policy is revealed as highly gendered.

Who We Are?

Barry O'Leary, one of the UK's best-known gay asylum barristers, has stated that '[i]dentity and not just conduct should be the basis of the determination of any claim by a lesbian or gay asylum seeker' (O'Leary, 2008: 91). This is in response to a fixation in early gay asylum applications on sexual practice as the proof of homosexuality which led to invasive questions such as whether during sex with another man the applicant '[adopted] a male or female role' (Australian case quoted in Berg and Millbank, 2009: 204), and a lack of sexual encounters in the 'safe' destination state being used to question homosexuality (Miles, 2010: 16, 26). To be a homosexual in these conceptualizations was to have same-sex sex, a reductionist

argument that also became recourse for refusing gay asylum cases if reports indicated that it was possible to have sexual encounters in a home country. The result of a simplistic adherence to sexuality as either identity or behaviour (practice) is that it can be used to exclude anyone who falls outside a stringent homonormative¹³ script.

The preference for 'homosexuality as identity' arguments is far from universal, however, and dissenting opinions have been particularly evident among feminists working on migration and critiques that focus on lesbian asylum specifically. Since its inception feminist theory has engaged in debates about the fixity of the identity 'woman' and the way that dominant groups tend to have definitional power which, intentionally or not, leads to the double marginalization of certain bodies. Black feminists and lesbian feminists especially have argued that the signifier 'woman' has been used in both wider society and certain spheres of feminism in a way that erased their experiences. In this feminist history, then, there is an indication that 'training provided to Immigration Judges ... [that] ... repeated the mantra ... "*It is not what we do, but who we are*"' (Chelvan, 2011: 1) needs further problematizing. 'Who we are' is not easily definable and the move to try to codify gay identity for legal forums is just as likely to fall into the trap of an essentializing focus as any other criteria.

Queer theory has supplemented this feminist argument about the violence of definitions by emphasizing that the naming of sexualities has been incredibly Eurocentric and demonstrating that expecting those who engage in same-sex practices to identify with pre-designated terms that have been generated in specific Anglo-American contexts excludes many people who suffer persecution for their sexual choices. 'Queer scholars argue that all social discourses – including some scholarly works by politically progressive feminists – more often privilege, if not exclusively promote, heteronormative ideas, practices, and institutions' (Manalansan,

2006: 225), and as such must be challenged before they are applied to, most pertinently here, legal forums. These critiques have begun to be incorporated into analysis where 'rather than seeing identities as fixed definable characteristics of migrants, feminist migration studies have increasingly emphasized the constructedness of identities, and the ongoing nature of this process' (Silvey, 2004: 498). This fledgling move to complicate understanding of identity in migration needs to be further incorporated into analyses of gay asylum.

Feminist theory does not resolve the debate over whether practice/behaviour *or* identity is the 'best' way of identifying those in need of protection and we are unable to know in advance the gains, or indeed losses, which may be a result of adhering to portrayals of sexuality as innate. However, what it can offer us is a vocabulary to discuss the way both understandings exclude certain bodies and reproduce existing stereotypes. As Butler notes:

[f]ractionalization, understood as the process whereby one identity excludes another in order to fortify its own unity and coherence, makes the mistake of locating the problem of difference as that which emerges *between* one identity and another; but difference is the condition of possibility of identity or, rather, its constitutive limit: what makes its articulation possible at the same time what makes any final or closed articulation possible. (Butler, 1997: 37)

And so, while the questions over the representation of difference that feminist theory has struggled with internally remain unresolved, this constant renegotiation and challenge makes feminist approaches both resilient and open to broader questions of difference in other contexts. By refusing to make any experiences contingent on – or causal of – gender or sexuality, the objective of contesting the value placed on normative femininity and hegemonic masculinity is strengthened. Working with feminist notions of sexuality could be the starting point from which an increasingly nuanced approach to law and policy is developed.

FOCUSING ON FEMINIST THEORY

The Academic Response

Gay asylum is not the first site within which feminist theory has been used to explore migration, and the gendering of migrant experiences has proven a relatively tangible avenue of research for feminist social scientists (Koffman, 2000; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Before turning to the potential that feminist theory holds for further examining sexuality in asylum cases, it is important to look at the existing interaction between feminist theory and migration and the work that has already been done to challenge the 'foundational categories that are biased toward male bodies, experience, and knowledge claims' (Peterson, 2004: 39). As Rachel Silvey argues: 'feminist migration research has done more than reflect transitions in feminist theory. As a body of work, it has developed innovative theoretical approaches for exploring the power relations enmeshed in the changing migration patterns and processes associated with post-1989 economic globalization' (2004: 490). In 2006 Katharine Donato et al. declared that they were 'pleased to report that the state of gender and migration studies is fundamentally healthy' (2006: 6) but the partiality of the actual application of gendered analyses (Edwards, 2010a), along with the emerging recognition of the importance of sexuality to migration, suggests that the descriptor 'healthy' may have been premature. In the past few years there have been a number of projects to map the interaction between various elements of asylum (as migration) and feminist engagement that indicates the emergence of a body of work rather than isolated contributions.¹⁴ However, the depth of dialogue is questionable given that 'it has been only recently that a few migration scholars have tried to adopt ideas about the generation of inequality from gender studies at a larger scale' (Bürkner, 2011: 181).

The asserted neutrality of law and policy has been one of the key difficulties in carving a space for feminist theorizing in processes

such as asylum that are largely governed by the legislature, and challenging this impenetrability has been the primary focus of much existing feminist work. Illustrating the way that a "reasonable" person, for instance, is presumed to be a male in asylum law as well as in gendered social structures' (Salcido and Menjívar, 2012: 336), and forcing the link between academic feminist analysis and 'on-the-ground ... discussions about how gender and citizenship intersect' (Salcido and Menjívar, 2012: 336) has been a crucial intervention. Making the invisible visible has been necessary to establish the validity of gendered analyses, and this is reflected too in work undertaken which looks at the racial assumptions of law and policy (Crenshaw, 1991; Morgan, 2006; Razack, 1998). Millbank cites an asylum application that was refused because '[t]he decision-maker was so focused on defending the rightness and formal neutrality of the punishment that the excessive, discriminatory and unlawful nature of that retribution was completely ignored' (2002: 167). This starkly demonstrates that the hallowed neutrality of the law still negatively impacts upon those who were very much not imagined when the laws were written.

Contributions from Feminist Theory

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the refusal of a public/private split, the inclusion of a vocabulary of intersectionality and the emergence of cultural analyses of migration represent three avenues of analysis that are indebted to feminist theory. Although these approaches have often bled into each other and have been used and developed in other disciplines, without feminist theory they would not be as they are in character or in content and so they warrant further exploration here.

Public/Private

In the last twenty years a number of states have ruled positively on asylum applications

from women who were escaping domestic violence (Barreno, 2011). Prior to this 'domestic violence' had been considered a private affair – a jurisdiction that was not open to legal incursion domestically, let alone internationally. Obtaining positive asylum rulings on this basis should still be considered a significant response to the challenge that feminist theory has posed to the gendered structure of legal reasoning, although a note of caution must be sounded as rulings remain few and far between. The extent to which gendering human rights requires a paradigm shift has been explored by Jacqueline Bhabha, who emphasizes that: '[a] gender-based approach to rights has transformed thinking about what counts as rights violations, problematizing not only the simplistic division between public, state-induced harms and private domestically caused problems, but also the very notion of the "political"' (2002: 161). Despite greater recognition of the way that the boundaries around what is 'public' have been constructed along gendered (indeed, sexist) lines,¹⁵ the critical strength of this analysis remains crucial in migration research and provides one of the necessary sites of ongoing feminist engagement. After considerable feminist effort the inclusion of a limited number of domestic violence asylum rulings indicates that there is now some permeability in the way public/private is written into asylum. However, looking at sexuality demonstrates the partiality of this as homosexuality – considered acceptable only if a private issue – becomes publicly visible through both persecution and protection. Looking at the responses to (homo)sexuality in asylum law makes this particularly clear as the emphasis has often been on the idea that sexuality is a matter of private concern and that only those who 'flaunt' it are at risk (Miller, 2005: 150). The 2010 ruling on discretion (Anon., 2010) may have made it less feasible to use a legal frame to force people into closeted sexualities, but as all legal texts require human interpretation we should remain critical of the way this is applied. As discussed below,

individual opinions of what comprises acceptable public displays of affection for homosexuals are still likely to be impacting asylum claims which document the punishment for transgressing these boundaries (Jansen and Spijkerboer, 2011; Johnson, 2007: 108). It is this kind of implicit homophobia in the law's application that has led to the suggestion that it is now not the law, but the judges' imaginations, which need to evolve (Millbank, 2002).

Intersectionality

Since its initial articulation by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to show that 'feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color' (1991: 1242–3), intersectionality has been referred to as one of the most significant contributions that feminist theory has made to broader academic discussions (Davis, 2008: 67; McCall, 2005: 1771). Alice Edwards charts the impact of feminist engagement on refugee law and policy chronologically, noting that, since 2004, the UNHCR has adopted an 'Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming' (AGDM) policy which represents 'a logical progression from "gender mainstreaming"' to one that recognizes 'intersectionality, or the multiple forms of discrimination which affect women's lives' (Edwards, 2010a: 39).

The translation of intersectionality into migration scholarship has also been optimistically hailed as an 'approach that encompasses a systematic double view on structure and everyday culture' (Bürkner, 2011: 187). This balancing of the individual and society suggests that intersectionality could be used to subvert the stringent categorical approach to identities in the legal system. It could be used to emphasize the particular and challenge the sweeping generalizations that are currently a regular feature of asylum judgments. As Hinger explains:

[s]imply recognizing the complexities and multiple factors involved in individual asylum cases can play

an important role in combating essentialism. Insofar as a court's opinion stands as the authoritative narrative of a person's claim and, in turn, a person's identity, recording the complexities and details of a case may do important work in allowing the law to record a fuller story. (2010: 403)

In the definitional and discursive flexibility that accompanies asylum applications lodged under persecution of a PSG there has been some space for feminist interventions to contest generalizing judgements. There has been increasing recognition that multiple intersecting factors have to be incorporated into analyses of migration and 'a gradual and incremental movement by immigration advocates and government officials and judges to accept the intersectionality of gender and sexuality' (Berger, 2009: 681) when looking at the motivation for seeking asylum. However, the translation of theory into a practice for the everyday has been much less successful. As Edwards notes, even for the UNHCR's streamlined interpretation of intersectionality 'there is no single statement to explain what [the AGDM] policy actually entails' (2010a: 38). The absence of minority sexualities in the majority of conceptualizations addressing intersectional human rights shows that the pull towards political neutrality weakens the potential of intersectionality and continues to silence those who are deemed less acceptable.

There is also a risk in the conceptual stretch of PSG discussed above – that it results in proliferating incredibly narrow categorizations that co-opt intersectionality to justify not applying precedents to others who might benefit but do not share every characteristic of the ruling. For example, the construction of PSGs such as 'young women of the Tchamba-Kunsuntu Tribe who have not had FGM, as practiced by that tribe, and who oppose the practice' (Anon., 1996: 357) will be difficult to translate directly to a wide range of cases. In this way it can be argued that PSG recodifies the necessity of categorizations in asylum law without interrogating the way in which the boundaries of these categories are themselves policed, resulting

in human experience being defined by the occupation of multiple categories that themselves remain discrete.

The Cultural Turn

Hans-Joachim Bürkner has argued that 'the social return obvious in intersectionality studies was paralleled in other fields of feministic migration research by the growing impact of critical theory' (2011: 187). Gendered analyses are also key to the cultural turn within geographies of migration (King, 2012: 143). In these accounts we can see 'a qualitative and narrative turn in migration studies, and the urgings of new mobility studies to account for the embodied and emotional dimensions of migration' (Gorman-Murray, 2009: 441) which mirrors and responds to a critique of the monopoly that hard economic and quantitative data had held on studies of asylum. Cultural geography, as well as queer geography, socio-legal studies and a number of other 'culturized' disciplines, has proved fecund ground for academics seeking to provide both a broader and a more nuanced analysis of experiences of migration (Ahmad, 2009; Berg and Millbank, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Luibhéid, 2008a). This research has often turned up results that demonstrate the intractability of gender and sexuality.

Aside from emphasizing the importance of gender and sexuality, cultural analyses of migration have expanded fields of research to incorporate discussions of how immigrant stereotypes allow 'economics and politics [to] congeal in figures that are mobilized in debates over what being European means – debates that are revived primarily in relation to migration' (Fortier, 2006: 314).¹⁶ Discursive approaches to knowledge production around migration mean that the *meaning* of policy and law is presumed to lie not solely in the pronouncements it makes but also in the way that language is used (Johnson, 2011; Menjívar and Kil, 2002; Parker, 2007). As Susan Berger indicates: '[following Foucault] it becomes important to look at the

ways in which dominant political and cultural discourses of gender and sexuality are formulated in specific and particular contexts; how some, then, may become universalized across time and space; and what role the state plays in producing these hegemonic discourses' (2009: 663). The recognition that policy and legislative pronouncements have a significant role in the understanding of what it means to be an asylum seeker gives a new impetus to critical studies' attempts to hold those who have a role in producing discourse, such as national governments, to account for perceptions of immigrants that result in hostility and persecution.

GAY ASYLUM AND FEMINIST THEORY IN DIALOGUE

So far in this chapter I have sought to provide an overview of the insights from feminist theory that have been particularly influential in migration studies and have examined the ways that debates over the meaning and content of (homo)sexuality are referenced or refuted through gay asylum claims. This third section draws these insights together and moves them on to ask where feminist theory needs to go further in engaging with legal and policy shifts.

One Size Fits All

From the initial contact with border staff through to cases heard in court rooms and support garnered through publicity campaigns, asylum seekers are required to tell us a story, to convince us of their legitimacy. Following analysis of gay asylum cases in Australia and Canada, Millbank observed that:

[t]he refugee forum is unique in legal settings in that it relies heavily upon personal stories. Stories are the basis of a claim and the foundation of virtually all the applicant's evidence. Hearings are often composed almost entirely of a personal narrative by the applicant of her or his experiences. (2002: 154)

This prioritization of stories is sometimes lauded as one of the only legal forums to focus on the narrative of the applicant and, arguably, does allow for the turn to the cultural that has expanded the tangibility of infamously opaque legislative processes. However, storytelling in exchange for access or inclusion is by no means an equal-opportunity process and the dynamics of this require further exploration.

As well as the testimony from the asylum seeker, there is also extensive use of 'expert witnesses' (generally academics) and 'country assessments' (prepared by civil servants) in asylum cases.¹⁷ These 'professional' stories are taken as more objective than those of the asylum seekers and are themselves further hierarchized according to their status as insiders or outsiders (Chazaro, 2005). The expert witnesses tend to have research knowledge of the geographical region, and may originally be from the state, but they are commonly based in the higher education establishments of the destination state. In an article outlining 'guidelines' for anthropologists, Anthony Good declares '[u]ltimately, Google is the expert's greatest resource – apart, of course, from the professional experience which qualifies him/her as an expert in the first place' (2003: 6), giving us a stark illustration of the physical and psychic distance that the 'expert' may have from the context they are speaking about. This can only be exacerbated in gay asylum cases where knowledge of gay scenes and lived experience are often incredibly difficult to access for those not actively engaged. 'Through the process of telling and retelling, quite flimsy or generalized assertions as to a country situation ... become established and embedded institutional knowledge' (Millbank, 2002: 156). As Millbank further notes, 'while such knowledge may be updated by later information in the same vein, its closed and generalized form renders it difficult or impossible to reimagine differently' (2002: 156), which gives the expert testimonies great weight in the asylum decision.

The varying legitimacy of voices, then, is problematic in all asylum cases but may be further complicated in gay asylum hearings for a number of reasons. Many people with non-normative sexualities are used to being careful about when they deploy their 'gay' narratives: 'claimants may ... have talked only to a handful of people, or none at all, about their sexual orientation prior to making a refugee claim' (Berg and Millbank, 2009: 198), yet 'sexuality, and more specifically homosexuality, requires an act of revelation for it to be "shown" and consequently, "known"' (Fortier, 2001: 418). For those who are leaving home states because of a fear of persecution on the basis of homosexuality the sensitivity around coming out is likely to be exacerbated. Unwillingness to tell the 'right' story from the beginning is in turn going to have a negative impact upon the asylum hearing, where the honesty of the applicant's account is key (Johnson, 2011). The 'lack of awareness and understanding as to the difficulty of concealing and denying one's sexuality' (Johnson, 2007: 109) which is demonstrated in the majority of asylum rulings indicates the trouble heterosexuals have in recognizing the role straightness has in informing or legitimating their behaviour. For example, until there is a critical awareness of the way that public displays of affection are invisible if engaged in by heterosexuals, while similar expressions in public among same-sex people become sexed and linked to flaunting sexuality, different standards will be used to judge minority sexual practices.

As well as the neo-paternalism and colonialism that is implicit in the valuation of 'our' voices as being more objective and reliable than 'theirs', testimonials are also problematically framed through homonormativity which adheres to a white, western, male standard (Duggan, 2003; Luibhéid, 2008b). As Berger again argues: 'strategies and tactics ... may benefit their clients in the short run and help build cross-border linkages but also may perpetuate a truncated view of third-world women and thereby

reproduce, albeit inadvertently, an imperial gaze that universalizes discourses around gender and sexuality' (2009: 661). In this way homonormativity leads to homonarrativity – that is, only one kind of story can be told and it can be heard or interpreted in only very limited ways. Going outside normative parameters is penalized through rendering the applicant unreadable and 'unhearable' – not a desirable state when so much of our legal vernacular lies around getting 'a fair hearing'.¹⁸

Civilizing Nationalism

The inviting in of homosexuality to human rights requires critical attention with 'asylum and refugee policy [functioning] in practice as extensions of foreign policy' (Salcido and Menjívar, 2012: 360). As Matthew Waites has indicated: '[t]he prominent claims concerning women's sexuality and same-sex sexualities in the discourses of both western liberal interventionists and Islamic governments gives urgency to the task of analysing related aspects of contemporary sexualities in a global context' (2008: 66). For this reason, looking at gay asylum discourses can reveal some of the pernicious tropes about the 'uncivilized other' that appear to be integral to successful asylum claims. In gay asylum the political dimension is most clearly seen through two expressions. The treatment of asylum applications that come from countries deemed safe or allies and the narratives of progress in cases that are successful are both usefully read for the way they tie into human rights in conjunction with the global politics of the admitting state. This reading expands the focus of analysis from one which prioritizes unsuccessful or contentious rulings to a more critical stance which asks what letting in any particular asylum seeker does as part of a broader foreign policy.

The integral role of the adoption of civilizationist discourse by applicants and their representatives in gay asylum claims has been confirmed through the resistance to

'acknowledg[ing] individual claims as valid if social conditions no longer conform to a depiction of the primitive Other' (Hinger, 2010: 385). Victoria Neilson makes this argument by looking at the attitude towards asylum seekers during the Cold War, when: 'it was relatively easy ... for the United States to grant asylum to political dissidents, because such grants served the dual purpose of helping individuals who had suffered abuse to begin new lives and simultaneously advancing a political agenda of supporting regime change in communist countries' (2005: 442). In the contemporary frame, positioning a liberal and modern Christian West against repressive Islamic regimes has overtaken the Cold War conflicts, and gay asylum claims fit well into this structure.¹⁹ In order to streamline the asylum process, most states 'fast-track' applicants if they come from 'safe countries'. These countries tend to be Christian and, as in the case of gay asylum seekers from Jamaica, can often mask very homophobic contexts (Bowcott and Wolfe-Robinson, 2012). The designation of safe countries has not considered attitudes towards same-sex practices or gender variation and, although this is starting to be addressed, in the past it has resulted in quick deportations of asylum seekers whose applications were never properly considered (Miles, 2010: 34).

A critical reading that brings together international gay rights and global politics indicates that we should be conscious and cautious of the support garnered for foreign policy objectives through the use of human rights. It is apparent that the political role of asylum is intensified through the addition of gay rights that has been characterized as a Western concept both in the West and by countries arguing against gay rights by referring to cultural or religious sovereignty (Saiz, 2004). Although focusing on gay rights in general rather than asylum claims specifically, Jasbir Puar has written repeatedly on this topic and demonstrates the potential productivity of challenging 'the racism of the global gay left and the wholesale acceptance

of the Islamophobic rhetoric ... [which] fuels the war on terror' (2007: xi; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c). This analysis of the convergence of gay rights and the utility of civilizationist discourses has parallels with the surge of attention on women's rights under Islamic regimes as the West struggled to justify its invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Kollman and Waites, 2009: 7).

Going Places

Feminist geography has been crucial in arguing for 'a greater appreciation of the politically constructed dimensions of space and place as they operate in migrants' lives' (Silvey, 2004: 497). Academic discussions about asylum remain incredibly static, however, in that they focus almost universally on the moment of the hearing and/or judgement. Owing to the lack of attention paid to their extra-judicial experiences, once asylum seekers are not being directly interpellated by the court (whether because they have been awarded refugee status or because they are awaiting rulings or deportation) they are rendered as invisible subjects. The impact of 'social inequality and fragmented social spaces ha[s] not received the analytical attention [it] deserve[s]' (Bürkner, 2011: 190), and has repercussions that are likely to be exacerbated among individuals with non-normative genders or sexualities whose intersectional identities are not adequately considered in policy contexts. Returning to asylum's geo-political function, the effacement of asylum seekers once they become refugees is tied up in the imagination of the host nation. In the UK, the incorporation of some gay refugees into the national body allows the state to imagine itself as safe, free and progressive (Tyler, 2006). Unless this is unpacked, positioning the destination state as the solution constrains the ability of policy to address ongoing challenges in refugee's lives, an approach that would draw attention to domestic racism and homophobia. If there is a desire to challenge heteropatriarchal nationalism through policy interventions,

feminist theory must engage with the slippery intangibles of the processes that define who can belong to a nation and the histories of colonialism and sexism upon which they are built. Even for challenges that do not pertain directly to gender or sexuality, support networks of migrant communities from home states may be unsuitable because of fear of exposure or repercussions for friends and family. This potential double exclusion as migrant and minority sexuality means that increased analysis of the extra-judicial experience of gay asylum seekers is imperative.

Asylum seekers, having become mobile in the process of reaching the destination state, are required to cede their mobility upon arrival. The state can move them as, when and to wherever they want, and then make them stay there. Anne-Marie Fortier has begun to explore the way in which:

[t]he relationship between mobility and immobility ... is not only one between migrant and non-migrant subjects, but also one that is integral to a politics of citizenship where migrant subjects themselves must be disciplined into programmatic structures of engaged citizenship and political participation that rely on sedentariness and presence: a physical and emotional presence ... and a detachment from 'roots' that erases certain histories in favour of others. (Fortier, 2006: 318).

In the UK asylum system the obligation to yield locational autonomy in exchange for the possible inclusion into the nation occurs both through the use of detention centres and in the process of rehousing or settling refugees into government-controlled accommodation which they have very little choice over. Feminist theory as a critical perspective helps to reveal the structural power held and exercised by the state in the lives of asylum seekers; it draws across the different paths of migration to read them with and against each other for differences and similarities that may underline the importance of sexuality. In this way, for example, parallels in the explanations given by gay asylum seekers and other gay migrants

about why they needed to relocate highlight that non-normative sexuality is frequently understood as causal. Recognizing the centrality of relocation to the survival strategies of those whose sexuality is not congruent with the local norm, then, helps to reveal that moving is key for many more people whose gender or sexual preferences result in 'forced' migration beyond those who seek asylum (Gorman-Murray, 2009: 443; Gorman-Murray, 2007).²⁰ By looking at the centrality of mobility for those with minority sexualities, rather than taking gay asylum seekers as a unique phenomenon, other systems of privilege can be explored and lazy assumptions about what is 'tolerable' can be challenged. The key benefit of applying feminist theory to gay asylum, then, is that it can encourage an expansion of the critical lens through which the experiences of gay asylum seekers can be viewed. In this way, the demand for new avenues of academic exploration and alternative strategies for advocacy are strengthened and the development of a less exclusionary and more nuanced approach to gay asylum may be pursued.

NOTES

- 1 There are some legal resources for same-sex immigration at www.immigrationequality.org/ (USA focus); www.ilga-europe.org/ (European focus); www.uklgig.org.uk/ (UK focus)[Accessed on 01 December 2012].
- 2 Indeed, PSG was a last minute addition to the grounds for asylum and so from the beginning fulfilled this 'cover-all' role. See Hathaway, 1991 and Fraser, 2005 for more detail.
- 3 The work done to reveal the gendered nature of the definition of 'political activity' in refugee law was one of the earliest contributions of feminist theory to migration studies. See Crawley, 2000 for a discussion of the way in which political activity is gendered.
- 4 In the broader context Waites has demonstrated how '[b]isexuality tends not to make sense as a "sexual orientation" in the terms of the gender dualism in existing human rights conventions and dominant international discourses' and provides a thorough analysis of the way terminology

- around LGBT politics remains exclusionary for those who fall outside narrowly defined definitions of gay or lesbian (2009: 151).
- 5 Unsurprisingly the practices evoked are uncommon in the West. For example, the polygamous marriage of the applicant in Anon., 1996 contributed to the illustration given of a society where gender-based persecution was endemic.
 - 6 Unfortunately this discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Crawley, 2000 and Luibhéid, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c for more on this.
 - 7 The lack of quantitative data also makes it difficult to contextualize and challenge popular discourses about waves of immigration and the 'ease' with which asylum seekers can construct a false claim, and so pressing for greater transparency is key to future work. See Gray 2010.
 - 8 For example, the legal and media response to two individuals in Malawi who were treated as a 'gay couple' despite Tiwonge Chimbalanga explicitly identifying as a woman (Blaze, 2010).
 - 9 In the asylum claim *MK v The Secretary of State for the Home Department* the following testimony was included: 'in general terms, lesbian women do not frequent "the hole" [a gay cruising site in Albania] and do not join LGBT organizations. Therefore there is lacking the opportunity for them to be harassed or persecuted by the police' (Anon, 2009: 71 para. 341). This quote reveals an unwillingness to consider factors which could lead to persecution beyond the gay male 'model' which is being used as a benchmark, and highlights the stark consequences for those not fitting in to the dominant model.
 - 10 There are also interesting parallels between this argument and Butler's defence of the 'merely cultural' which has been denigrated as a 'self-centred and trivial form of politics that focuses on transient events, practices, and objects rather than offering a more robust, serious and comprehensive vision of the systematic interrelatedness of social and economic conditions' (Butler, 1997: 34; Fraser, 1997).
 - 11 For example, this understanding has undeniably helped to rehabilitate homosexuals as acceptable teachers and parents. See Duggan, 2002 for a critique of this rehabilitation and her analysis of a broader neoconservatism in the US gay community.
 - 12 See Berg and Millbank, 2009; Kollman and Waites, 2009; Rehaag, 2008; and Waites, 2009 for further discussion of the bifurcation that many approaches to gay rights entail.
 - 13 Duggan has defined homonormativity as 'a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (2003: 50).
 - 14 The special issue 'Gender Equality and Refugee Women', *Refugee Quarterly*, 29(2) (2010); and the issue 'Queer/Migration', *GLQ*, 14(2-3) (2008), both contain strong contributions. See Edwards, 2010b.
 - 15 See Chinkin, 1999 for an excellent discussion of the operation of public/private in International Law.
 - 16 Although Fortier's work focuses on European belonging, these policing mechanisms can be observed in other locations.
 - 17 Although initially observed in the cases examined from the UK, further research indicated that the reliance on 'expert testimonies' and 'country assessments' are consistently used in asylum rulings in Australia, Canada and the USA.
 - 18 Both Campbell, 2002, who looks at how standards of evidence are gendered in rape prosecutions in international law, and Volpp, 2011, who explores the appearance of culture to 'explain' crimes in immigrant families, provide strong demonstrations of the way legislative forums delegitimize the experience of non-white, non-native and/or female witnesses and applicants.
 - 19 See Waites, 2008.
 - 20 Ahmad, 2009 suggests that sexuality must be analysed as key to all migration, including heterosexuality.
- There is a large body of work on the 'rural exodus' of homosexuals in the West and the existence of places with high concentrations of those with non-normative sexualities, of which San Francisco (USA) is the archetype, confirms that spatial movement as a strategy is central to the imagining of 'free' gay space. For a critique of this see Fortier, 2001.

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Globalization and Feminism: Changing Taxonomies of Sex, Gender and Sexuality

Gilbert Caluya, Jennifer Germon and Elspeth Probyn

INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that we now live in a globalized world, although there is significant debate about what this means. While the term may be relatively recent, the intermixing of cultures and bodies through trade and migration – forced or not – isn't new. European expansionism established transnational corporations, such as the British East India Company, to capitalize on new products while the forced mass migration of coloured labour through the trans-Atlantic slave trade cultivated newly colonized areas for production (see Jaggar, 2001). But long before European contact, Aboriginal people in Australia's north were connected through fish trade with Sulawesi, and 'sea country' continues to be marked by these interchanges (Morphy and Morphy, 2009). What is new is how quickly and intensively ideas are taken up around the world both by individuals and by institutions.

Arjun Appadurai has highlighted the disjuncture between economy, culture and politics

in globalization by breaking up global cultural flows into five dimensions or '-scapes': ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes and ideoscapescapes. His use of '-scapes' figures 'the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes' (Appadurai, 1996: 33). Appadurai's various case studies offer insightful analyses of how these various 'scapes' crisscross, augment, strengthen, intervene and contradict each other in producing the disjunctures of the global cultural economy. His theory has been extended to incorporate new population groups such as 'youthscapes' (Maira and Soep, 2005) and 'genderscapescapes' (Durham, 2011), new industries such as 'securityscapes' (Hultin, 2010) and 'eduscapescapes' (Luke, 2006; Caluya et al., 2011) and new categories of analysis such as 'bodyscapescapes' (Parrini, 2010).

The organizational structures supporting the flows across these scapes intensify cross-cultural contact and produce new arrangements and governance around intimate matters. These global scapes raise new questions about the movement of gender, of sexed bodies and of sexuality. In the West¹ sex,

gender and sexuality are usually conceptualized as interdependent but distinct binary identity categories (female/male, woman/man, gay/straight): ‘distinct’ since they nominate separate axes of identification, but ‘interdependent’ since sex and gender are supposed to align while sexuality is defined by the gendered object of desire. In the last decades queer and feminist theorists have deeply problematized the binary structure of these identity categories (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). In addition, much work has troubled the ‘ampersand’ model of identity whereby further factors are added on to identity structures, such as white and woman and middle class, or more commonly articulated as a string of minoritarian positions: Black and lesbian and from the Global South (Probyn, 1996). A global perspective recognizes that even deconstruction of binary identities remains locked within a universalizing schema.²

Such global processes are creating new taxonomies of sex–gender and sexuality even as they consolidate existing ones, something we consider in this chapter. The ongoing desire for sex–gender and sexuality as either/or propositions, stimulates – among other things – the global expansion of medical taxonomies, terminologies and techniques into cultural institutions such as the International Olympic Committee. We take the phrase ‘sexual taxonomies’ from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s reading of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, where he traced the sexual ‘*specification of individuals*’ in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1978: 42–3, italics in original). Psychiatrists and doctors in the latter half of the nineteenth century ‘entymologized’ a panoply of new sexual beings, such as zoophiles, sexual inverts, auto-monosexualists, homosexuals and heterosexuals, for example (Foucault, 1978: 43). Here Foucault was less interested in the ‘pathologization’ of sexualities than their discursive constitution through psychiatric and medical literatures. As he put it, ‘[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species’ (Foucault,

1978: 43). In Sedgwick’s reading, although these earlier shifts produced ‘new sexual taxonomies’ (Sedgwick, 1990: 9) at that time, the categories of homosexual and heterosexual outweighed many other sexual categories (Sedgwick, 1990: 8). While this history is true for the West, it is not necessarily true for the rest of the world. In this chapter we explore how sex–gender–sexual taxonomies are changing in relation to globalization. Whereas Foucault and Sedgwick use ‘sexual taxonomies’ to refer to the discursive transformation of categorizations of sexualities, we extend this to think more broadly about transformations of sexuality, sex and gender and the ways these are interrelated in globalization processes.

In what follows we outline two quite different case studies that encapsulate the uneven flows of gender and sexuality within a globalizing world. Specifically, we trace these transformations through two contrasting global governance regimes: the first case study focuses on the transformation of sexuality through international human rights and human security regimes, while the second turns to international sporting agencies to trace how sex and gender are fixed through gender verification testing. Focusing on global institutions and regimes allows us to underscore the hegemonic side of globalization. Of course this is not a full picture of globalizing processes – we could have chosen any number of examples – and neither do we presume that these cases encapsulate all possible permutations of the themes we explore. What these two cases allow us to do is highlight how the global dissemination of different Western discourses and practices – political, legal, medical – radically transform sex–gender–sexual taxonomies around the world.

SECURING INTIMACIES: THE GLOBALIZATION OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND GAY RIGHTS

When the hidden Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that supposedly justified the

invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan did not emerge, a new vindication had already been fostered: women's rights. The supposed lack of women's rights in Muslim societies and cultures and the misogyny of Islam became the justification for the War on Terror (see Battacharyya, 2008; Eisenstein, 2007). More recently, gay rights has emerged as a significant issue in the international arena. In 2011, UK Prime Minister David Cameron suggested tying foreign aid to countries according to their adherence to human rights, including how they treat gay and lesbian people. In Western media, African and Islamic countries have been singled out as opponents to such a political agenda. Both examples reflect the messy global articulations of intimacy in the early twenty-first century. On the one hand – despite significant disagreements in the international sphere on many political subjects – the politics of intimacy is one of the few sites that have garnered global ratification through international agreements surrounding sex and trafficking in women, paedophilia and Internet monitoring. On the other hand, women's rights and gay rights continue to be mired in seemingly intractable divisions surrounding questions of security, sovereignty, war, rights and culture.

In this section we examine the global securitization of intimacy and its capacity to change sexual/gendered taxonomies. In one sense, the 'securitization of intimacy' signifies the processes by which political issues involving intimate domains – gender relations, sexual identity, intimate relationships, parenting, family – increasingly become security issues.³ At another level, the securitization of intimacy reflects attempts to protect the human security of gendered and sexual minorities from state terror. In both instances, the securitization of intimacy is entangled in extraordinary violent measures by states to deal with the threat of non-normative intimacies.

In Western media the internationalization of women's rights is often seen as a positive outcome of globalization, despite, as Walby (2000) points out, inconsistencies and uneven

development across nations and international agencies. This popular narrative highlights the rapid global expansion of feminist debates about equality and rights in the post-World War II period – marked by the growth of international women's NGOs in the 1970s onwards – and 'gender mainstreaming' in international governance structures and policies as significant to the enactment of laws protecting women across the world. Although international gay and lesbian organizations were established around the same time as international women's NGOs, the emergence of 'gay rights' on the international political agenda has taken longer. Proponents of 'gay rights' – sometimes, but not always, these are articulated as 'gay and lesbian rights' or 'GLBTQ rights' – portray them as an extension of human rights, pointing to similarities with women's rights struggles in terms of opposition based on cultural, traditional or religious belief. A few months after David Cameron's announcement to cut foreign aid to countries refusing to adhere to gay rights, US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, in her address to the International Human Rights Day in Geneva, announced the Obama administration's directive to US embassies to combat criminalization and persecution of GLBT people abroad and a Global Equality Fund to support civil society organizations in this fight.⁴

However, the spread of women's rights in the international sphere is predicated upon the dissemination of a Western women's equality history. For example, women's timelines in popular culture, such as those created for International Women's Day or the 'international' suffrage movement, tend to stress the temporal milestones of women's achievements in the Global North.⁵ These feminist origin myths portray North America, UK and Western Europe as the pioneers of women's rights, which are benevolently taught to the rest of the world. Simultaneously, these Western-centric myths also establish a liberal obsession with democratic enfranchisement as the primary marker of gender equality. This is achieved in such a way that it increasingly

becomes impossible to imagine women's rights outside a Western liberal political framework. Take, for instance, the adoption of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly in 1979, which proved a watershed moment for international women's rights. The Convention affirmed equality between men and women in political and public life as well as health, education and employment. This in turn fostered the development of several international women's rights NGOs to uphold its principles. Yet at the same time CEDAW took aim at non-Western cultures and traditions. In CEDAW, the terms 'culture', 'custom' and 'tradition' (terms associated with the non-West in the colonial anthropological imagination, as opposed to 'society', 'progress' and 'modern') are portrayed not merely as obstacles to women's rights but as vehicles of gender oppression.⁶

The global spread of such a political framework situates the Western liberal political tradition as *the* legitimate cultural expression through which women's rights can be articulated internationally. In this framing, women's rights are human rights derived from the autonomous, self-possessed individual. Such a political subject – which has always been a political fiction in the West in any case – does not reflect how most cultures perceive either subjects or social relations. Women's rights in this scenario are derived from the 'natural right' of this liberal individual as opposed to, say, a divine right sanctioned by sacred texts. At the same time, the distinction between women's rights and gay rights is based on a paradoxical distinction in Western understandings of sexuality and gender as separate axes of identification, which is not necessarily shared by Latin American, Polynesian, South Asian, South East Asian and First Nations cultures. The global push for women's rights came to supercede various sex/gender/sexuality systems, which in different ways allowed for certain kinds of freedom – as well as different constraints – for non-normative sexualities and genders (see Oyewumi, 1997; Schmidt,

2001; Longman, 2002; Lugones, 2008). These different systems are increasingly being replaced by a Western binary sex/gender/sexual system (male/female, man/woman, straight/gay). In short, the globalization of women's rights and now gay rights attempts to universalize Western liberal political frameworks, which in turn impact on non-Western sex/gender/sexuality systems, continuing an older colonial ordering of intimacy.⁷

Consequently, this sets the stage for an ostensible opposition between, on the one hand, feminism and gay liberation and, on the other, decolonization. Various non-Western nations claim women's rights and gay rights to be at odds with their right to cultural self-determination. Women's rights were, and still are, hotly contested in debates about child brides, forced marriage, genital cutting, widow-burning and the veiling of women.⁸ Western white feminists (both liberal and radical) argued for the universalism of women's rights as human rights. On the other side, many non-Western states took a culturally relativist approach to argue that gendered-sexual systems and practices were culturally bound and therefore women's rights and gay rights impinged upon their right to cultural and national self-determination. These debates formed the crucible within which Third World feminism and postcolonial feminism were forged (see Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988). However – in the Western public imagination – the Third World remains synonymous with backwardness in matters feminist, stubbornly bound to misogynistic ethnic and superstitious religious traditions.

Such arguments are being replayed in more recent international debates around 'gay rights'. Unlike the universally recognized identity of 'women', the phenomenon of 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'homosexual' identification is not universal. The bakla of the Philippines, the kathoey of Thailand, hijra in India and two-spirit peoples of some First Nations in North America are simply not translatable to Western models of identification in their

current form (see Towle and Morgan, 2002). How a sexual act is interpreted, what meanings it engenders, how it relates to identity (if at all) and how others relate to it are all culturally circumscribed. Even within the West, the proliferation of non-normative sex-genders and sexualities – gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intergender, intersexual, queer – reflects the inherent paucity of Western oppositional models of gender and sexual subjectivity. Such models are barely able to explain let alone contain the panoply of sexual tastes, appetites, practices and affective investments in the erotic. What are we to make, for example, of the conscious rejection of sexual identity categories by racial minorities in the West, such as the refusal of black American men who have sex with men to identify with ‘gay’ (see Stockton, 2006)? Or the fact that non-‘gay’ identified men constitute a staple of performers in the American gay porn industry?

In short, the assumed universalism of ‘homosexuality’ as an identity category is a highly problematic feature of the globalization of ‘gay rights’. On the one hand, it exerts pressure on non-Western gender-sexual minorities to identify through this lens and, on the other hand, it displaces or transforms local understandings of sex-gender-sexuality (see Massad, 2007). The globalization of ‘gay rights’ should be understood as an extension of the ongoing colonial ordering of intimacy (Stoler, 1995; 2002), which includes the initial establishment of laws banning same-sex sexual activity in the colonies. Of course, some non-Western sexual minorities are more than willing to assume a ‘gay’ discourse and identity, actively seeking material and symbolic association with Western sexual minorities (see Benedicto, 2008). In highlighting the hegemonic role of what Massad (2007) called the Gay International, we do not deny the agency of non-Western people nor argue that sexuality is being ‘homogenized’ across the world. Manalansan (2003) has shown how the queer Filipiniano diaspora negotiate globalization through the quotidian struggles of their everyday life by producing

hybrid linguistic and cultural formations marked both by their sexuality and by migration. However, attention to resistances and hybridities need not replace examinations of the hegemonic formations within which such resistances and hybridities take place and make sense.

The securitization of women’s rights augured a new era in international rights-based politics.⁹ In the context of international relations, feminist scholars were at the forefront of radically redefining the scope of security from a gendered perspective (Henry, 2007). This redefinition of security formed part of a larger human security movement, which shifted attention from traditional security topics (war and conflict) towards non-traditional security sites (HIV/AIDS or global warming); from human rights to human security; from the state as the locus of security towards the individual as the bearer of security (see Henry, 2007; Basch, 2004; Tickner, 1992). Feminist scholarship in particular has highlighted bodies as a locus of power. Charlotte Bunch, for example, uses the term ‘intimate security’ to underscore how issues of bodily integrity (such as reproductive rights and violence against women in the family) are central to women’s security (Bunch, 2004: 32).

As we flagged at the outset of this chapter, women’s rights have been and continue to be used as rhetorical justification for armed and other forms of conflict. In addition, issues such as veiling, women’s enfranchisement, child brides, genital cutting, forced marriage and polygamy continuously circulate in State and public debates as justifications for the War on Terror. Across the West the ‘burqa debate’ emerged in the post-9/11 security environment to frame Muslim communities as inherently sexist and therefore antithetical to modernity. All this, while debates about the status of women in Shariah law are employed to legitimize the War on Terror through media commentaries on Afghan women’s (dis)enfranchisement (see Ho, 2007; Oliver, 2007). This was joined by claims of some security scholars that terrorism

results from the discrepancy of male–female ratios or polygamous relations in Muslim societies (see Thayer and Hudson, 2010; Hudson and Den Boer, 2004). Within Western nations the ‘burqa debate’ includes representations of Muslim men as sexually repressed misogynists and/or rapists. These everyday images at times serve to justify regimes of homeland security measures that radically undermine Muslim privacy, homes and families through extraordinary ‘stop-and-search’ police powers, surveillance tactics and indefinite detention (Puar, 2007; Caluya, 2011). In these ways, the War on Terror is repackaged as a fight for women’s self-determination (the right to vote, the right to education, the right to choose whether to engage in various veiling practices, etc.) (Ho, 2007; Oliver, 2007).

In seeking to end violence against women, children and sexed, gendered and sexual minorities we should also be mindful of the multiple effects of our feminist-inspired strategies, particularly in terms of their effects on other rights. The globalization of women’s rights and, more recently, gay rights through international organizations and institutions can have unforeseen consequences at international and intra-national levels (see, for example, Woodcock, 2004; 2009). In our next case study, we shift from one global stage to another – the international sports arena. Here we query the ways in which abstract notions of what constitutes the female athletic body are rendered material in the ongoing quest to ‘fix’ gender. In sport this is done in the interests of a supposedly level playing field.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF ‘DSD’ TAXONOMIES IN INTERNATIONAL SPORTING BODIES

In 2010, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) revised its protocols for gender verification testing in women’s sport. The International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) followed suit in 2011.

These changes stemmed in part from the (mis) treatment of and subsequent media circus surrounding the young South African runner Mokgadi Caster Semenya. On 19 August 2009 the – then 18-year-old – South African middle-distance runner outstripped the field in the women’s 800-metre race at the 12th IAAF World Athletics Federation track meet. Semenya’s finishing time of 1 min. 55.45 sec. set a new personal best and a new world title, but the victory was short-lived. Two of Semenya’s competitors called her sex–gender into question and in so doing generated a full-scale media spectacle. It was not the first time that Semenya’s sex–gender had been called into question, but the ensuing media response on this occasion highlighted just how powerful social and cultural investments in binary understandings of sex–gender are (see Behrensen, 2011; Brady, 2011). In the days after the race it emerged that Semenya had been ordered by the IAAF to undergo gender verification testing to determine whether her sexed embodiment might disqualify her from competing as a woman.

Her treatment at the hands of global media outlets was both appalling and breathtaking in its scope. The triadic relation between the material, semiotic and affective dimensions of sex–gender played out on Semenya’s body, bringing into sharp relief the sexed–gendered–raced limit of being human (Shilliam, 2011). An Australian tabloid, *The Daily Telegraph*, leaked the preliminary test results in a headline that screamed: ‘Caster Semenya has male sex organs and no womb or ovaries’ (Hurst, 2009). The dominant narrative reproduced over and over again rendered Semenya a ‘freak of nature’, to use an antiquated phrase from the medical literature on intersex. That corn rowed hair, muscular build and vocal pitch, together with the speed and the force of her propulsion, brought her acceptability as a sporting body into question because they brought her gender into question. World-class women athletes have long caused anxiety, particularly, suggests Tavia Nyong’o, ‘gorgeously muscle-bound black ones’ (Nyong’o, 2010: 96). The media obsession with gender

controversy was underpinned by colonial discourses of femininity. That obsession overshadowed reportage of Semenya's success on that fateful day, just as it did more recently at the 2012 London Olympics.¹⁰

While the press were consumed with the idea that Semenya was in some sense a 'masquerading man', the concern of international sporting bodies lay elsewhere. What was at stake to the IAAF was not whether Semenya was 'really a man' but whether she 'really was a woman' – or, rather, enough of a woman (Brady, 2011: 4). At no stage was the seeming 'naturalness' of the categories of male or female brought into question, despite the IAAF having to contend with the fact that those categories are neither straightforward nor exhaustive (Brady, 2011: 9). By the time of the 13th World Athletics Federation championships in September 2010, Semenya had been declared eligible to compete. She was permitted to retain her world title and to continue to compete in women's events. It is said, however, that she was compelled to undergo hormone therapy for her 'disorder' throughout the period of her suspension (Behrens, 2011).

If the global media furore surrounding Semenya's case reflects a pernicious global endorsement/enforcement of the binary gender system, the response from international sporting bodies reflects a growing capacity for global authorities to intervene not simply in the discursive constitution of gender categories but also into the sexual and gendered materiality of athletes' bodies. In order to understand fully the response by international sporting bodies, it is essential to survey the history of gender/sexual taxonomies with reference to the category of 'intersexed' persons.

In the mid-1950s sexologist John Money codified 'gender' into the English language as a new conceptual realm of sex (Germon, 2009). He borrowed the concept from linguistics to explain how someone whose embodied sex was not obviously female or male could develop a rock-solid identity as a woman or a man. Money's refiguring of gender – from

linguistic tool to human attribute – enabled him to expand the traditional physiological markers of 'sex' by adding two psychosocial signifiers: assigned sex and gender of rearing (Hausman, 1995; Money et al., 1955a; 1955b). This was not simply a conceptual move; it provided a rationale for a set of clinical practices known as intersex case management (ICM) that were designed to support intersexed people into one of two unequivocal gender identities. In this regard the ideological is quite literally made material. At the same time Money extended the explanatory reach of his ideas to account for how *everybody* acquired a gender (Money et al., 1955a; 1955b). Thus the concept served to substantiate the idea that a person's identity and behaviours were a natural and inevitable outcome of one of two natural and inevitable types of bodies: female and male. The evidence base: those people whose bodies exceed a binary oppositional logic.

Forty years later a small group of people who had been subjects of Money's case management model began to organize politically under the banner of the Intersex Society of North America. The ISNA drew on the political and discursive technologies of earlier rights-based movements to challenge the idea that intersex was a pathological condition in need of a cure. Echoing feminist critiques of the medicalization of women's bodies, activists agitated for an end to cosmetic genital surgeries performed on infants and young children on the grounds that sexual variation is not life-threatening in and of itself (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Some activists began to claim the term 'intersex' as an identity category and to pursue state and legal recognition as legitimate claimants of rights protection. This was a politics of self-determination articulated through a discourse of bodily integrity and freedom of choice. Calling the efficacy and ethics of ICM into question put intersex firmly on the agenda as a sociocultural issue.

The historical moment in which intersex politics emerged paralleled an explosion of new media and global communication systems.

These, along with traditional forms of print and television media, provided crucial vehicles for the widespread dissemination of a counter-discourse that challenged medical orthodoxies about the nature of sexed embodiment. Alliances forged between activist groups and academics led to a burgeoning body of scholarship – much of it feminist, some of it by intersex activist/scholars – that took the clinical practices of ICM as its object. Those critiques bolstered activist efforts and contributed to extending understandings of intersex beyond a clinical frame and into public discourse (see Dreger, 1998; 2000; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Hausman, 1995; Holmes, 1995; Morland, 2005; Roen, 2008).

The successes of intersex activism produced what can only be described as a medical backlash in the first decade of the new millennium, one with a rather strange twist. While clinicians had proved open to rethinking some aspects of their case management practices, from a medical perspective the question remained *when* and *how*, not *whether*, to intervene. In 2003 the ISNA established a medical advisory board made up of health professionals sympathetic to the organization's aims. As the alliances with medical professionals grew closer, the ISNA's rhetoric and agenda underwent a marked change. Where once the ISNA took aim at the hegemony of medical discourse, increasingly it engaged with medicine on medicine's own terms. Within the context of this dialogue, some clinicians began to express their concerns about the 'over-depathologization' of intersex brought about by more than a decade of intersex politics (Dreger, 2007). The ISNA's coalitional partners increasingly saw the organization's activist history as an impediment, and over time so did the ISNA.¹¹ While it was not the only intersex organization lobbying for change, it remained the dominant voice of intersex politics for over a decade. However, its increasing acquiescence to a medically driven agenda stimulated new levels of debate within intersex communities and

challenges to the ISNA's representational capacity. Out of those debates came a flourishing of transnational organizing and coalition building, and the consolidation of internationally focused intersex organizations such as Organisation Intersex Internationale (OII).¹²

The ISNA's final¹³ and arguably most controversial initiative was to author a revised set of clinical guidelines (Consortium on the Management of Disorders of Sex Development, 2006a) and a handbook for parents of intersex children (Consortium on the Management of Disorders of Sex Development, 2006b) that articulated a new taxonomy for intersex (Germon, 2009; Rosario, 2009). The umbrella category of intersex had been usurped – people were no longer intersexed now, they suffered various 'disorders of sex development' (DSD). Intentionally anti-political and anti-identitarian, the logic of DSD returned the 'problem' of intersex to the body and thus to the individual. When something is disordered it requires fixing, which, in this context, operates on a double register: the quest to fix (as in repair) intersex bodies is an attempt to fix (as in stabilize) a normative gender (Karkazis, 2008).

The discursive pull of the new language proved compelling; in fact, the DSD terminology 'went viral'. In the process medical science was reinscribed as the rightful authority on matters of intersex and the rightful managers of the kind of sexual difference referred to here. The global spread of DSD was aided by two things: firstly, by the fact that it came as a package – just as gender once had – since it provided taxonomies, terminologies and technologies; secondly, by global communication systems. Within five years DSD terminology had been thoroughly institutionalized into global medical discourse, popular culture and, most recently, the gendered discourse of sport. The language of DSD is today embedded in the policy documents of IOC and the IAAF, reinvigorating gender verification testing in the process.

Gender verification testing (GVT; alternatively known as sex testing)¹⁴ is intended to

ensure a level playing field for women by weeding out ‘masquerading men’.¹⁵ For a long time GVT relied simply on the visual inspection of bodily sex–gender. Women athletes were made to disrobe in front of a panel of physicians; not surprisingly, many complained that this was both humiliating and degrading (Behrensen, 2011; Stephenson, 1996). Visual inspection did not yield conclusive results and nor did the chromatin testing that all women athletes were required to undergo at the Mexican Olympics of 1968 (Behrensen, 2011). Later testing for circulating androgen levels proved no more effective at identifying this elusive phantasmic ‘imposter’ (Wonkham, 2010). GVT is and remains at heart a futile exercise. It is plagued by the fact that there is no single bodily signifier of sex. Routinized testing was abandoned by the IAAF in the early 1990s and by the IOC in 1999, although both organizations maintain the right to subject individuals to testing should their sex–gender be called into question.

From the outset, gender verification testing in sport has had the most pernicious effects on women athletes whose tests reveal them to be intersexed. Many have been stripped of medals and titles and have had their reputations and careers left in tatters after ‘failing’ such tests (Stephenson, 1996; Behrensen, 2011). GVT often plays out in very public circumstances, as evidenced by the media spectacle surrounding Caster Semenya following her win at the World Athletics Federation meet in Berlin in 2009. So too, in the case of another 800-metre middle-distance runner Santhi Soundarajan, who was stripped of her silver medal at the Asia Games in 2006.

In January 2010 the IOC had convened a meeting of international experts on ‘Disorders of Sex Development in Athletes’, and reported the outcomes on its news website. Previously, when athletes were identified as intersex through verification testing, sporting organizations simply used the results to make decisions about an individual’s eligibility to compete and their entitlement to prizes and

titles. Not any more. Today the IOC and the IAAF actively intervene in the materiality of intersex athletes’ bodies. The first of seven ‘conclusions’ to be endorsed at the January meeting states ‘that sport authorities, in conjunction with the relevant medical authorities, have a *responsibility to follow up* on cases of DSD that arise under their jurisdiction’.¹⁶ That follow-up includes establishing treatment plans for athletes found to be intersexed ‘if treatment is necessary (recommended)’. The meeting also agreed ‘to establish strategically located centres of excellence at which athletes with DSD can if necessary, be diagnosed *and treated*’. Finally, it endorsed the establishment of eligibility rules to deal with situations where a person was either undergoing treatment or had refused treatment.¹⁷ Later that year the IAAF Council issued a press release outlining decisions made at its meeting of November 2010. The press release stated that the international sports community would continue to work closely with medical and scientific experts to devise a set of new regulations to *manage* women athletes who were identified as producing higher than average levels of androgen. The press release continued: ‘the IAAF will also complete in the coming months all necessary technical and logistical arrangements required to set up a *global system for the management of future cases on a worldwide basis*’.¹⁸

The extended reach of the taxonomy of DSD means that today – in the context of international sports – such treatment is promoted as an obvious and logical extension of verification testing. The effects of such testing extend into women athletes’ bodies in new ways through this compact between global biomedicine and international elite sport. Applying medical solutions to social ‘ills’ is nothing new, of course, and nor is criticism of such practices. Feminists have long been engaged in critiquing the medicalization of women’s bodies and sexualities (see, for example, Bordo, 1993; Sherwin, 1992; Shildrick, 1997). As this case study demonstrates, the need for such critical work

continues, as does the need to refuse reductionist understandings of the gendered human body.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have taken the issue of ‘globalization and feminism’ outside of its usual framing – which often is marked by Marxist and post-Marxist critiques of consumption – or more broadly within anti-globalization politics (Marchand, 2003). The political economics of women’s situations around the world continue to be crucial. However, in this chapter we have taken another avenue of research that relies on feminist critique and politics and yet mobilizes it in new and pressing directions. Put simply, the idea that war is again being waged and in places supported by feminist arguments in the name of women’s rights or equality, and that women’s sporting bodies are being medically ‘treated’ in the name of equality, puts paid to any easy politics of feminist global solidarity. These issues – as widely recognized by many – up the ante for feminism and queer theory as theories and as the basis for a politics (for example Grewal, 2005; Puar, 2007). As J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) so astutely argued, we urgently need an ‘empirical investigation and a theoretical re-visioning’ of current feminist problematics and of global situations (Gibson-Graham, 2006: xxxiii). This will also require a cogent review and critique of the discursive formation of certain feminist tenets that have become embedded within seemingly opposing ideologies (see Probyn, 2008a; 2008b). Far from a dismissal of feminism, this requires feminist scholars to be vigilant about how feminist ideas and concepts spread.

We continue to argue for and to articulate feminism as a basis and as a means of envisioning a ‘politics of the possible’:

If politics is a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions on an ultimately undecidable

terrain, a politics of possibility rests on an enlarged space of decision and a vision that the world is not governed by some abstract commanding force or global sovereignty. (J.K. Gibson-Graham, 2006: xxxiii; and cited in Engel, 2010)

The need to deconstruct ‘abstract commanding forces’ extends to feminism. We use the above case studies to refocus on the changing taxonomies of sex–gender–sexuality across the globe. This is to produce not a dispassionate objectivity but instead a more passionate consideration of the reconfigurations of sex, sexuality and gender through various global processes. There are many challenges faced by feminism in a globalizing world. Its keystone concepts (such as gender, embodiment, inequality, etc.) are often hijacked by governments around the world as well as by international agencies to other effects than one would hope for. When war is waged in the name of women or when the ‘management’ of gender means disqualifying chemically and surgically *unmodified* bodies in the name of a level playing field in international sport, you want to throw up your hands in despair. There are other responses, of course: as Probyn (2011) argues in the case of the government regulation of images of women’s bodies designed to ‘protect women’, anger can be invigorating.

Our main contention and intervention here is to remind feminist scholars of the speed with which the effects of research can and do travel globally. This is, for us, the most compelling aspect of globalization: it is how sex, gender and sexuality are involved empirically in many of the most significant issues of our day. Equally, sex, gender and sexuality as concepts travel and rearrange the understanding and implementation of some of the most fundamental regimes – from the worldwide policing of and for terrorism to policing and modifying the bodies of elite athletes. As we have tried to draw out, the effects of the global movement of gender are experienced materially and affectively in uneven but still forceful ways in our everyday lives.

NOTES

- 1 By 'the West' we mean Western Europe, North America and Australia.
- 2 Later in the chapter, when we turn to the case study of 'DSD' – 'disorders of sexual development' – we develop a more in-depth critique of supposed universal identities through the optic of hyphenated 'sex-gender' or 'sex-gender-sexuality'.
- 3 This sense of 'securitization' derives from the constructivist school of security studies, often referred to as 'the Copenhagen School', to describe the processes by which an issue is discursively constructed to become a security issue, i.e. as an issue that poses a direct threat to the security of the state and its society (see Waever, 1995; Taurek, 2006).
- 4 Full video and transcript of Hilary Clinton's speech are available at www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/06/hillary-clinton-gay-rights-speech-geneva_n_1132392.html (accessed 8 December 2014).
- 5 See, for example, the International Women's Day timeline (www.internationalwomensday.com/about.asp), which is recreated on the UN Women's timeline of the event (dev.unwomen.org/news-events-2/international-womens-day/milestones/), and for a British version see the University and College Union poster created for the same event (www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/5/q/womens_poster_final_2012.pdf). See also women's suffrage timelines on onlinewomen.org, an online inter-Asian women's network (www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/suffr_chrono.htm), or DePaul University's 'international timeline' of women's suffrage developed as a school teaching resource (condor.depaul.edu/tps/International_Suffrage_Timeline.htm). All webpages accessed 7 January 2013.
- 6 The preamble for CEDAW claims that 'a change in the *traditional* role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women'. Article 2 (f) of the Convention states that parties should take all appropriate measures 'to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, *customs* and practices which constitute discrimination against women'. Furthermore, Article 5 of the Convention states '[p]arties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and *customary* and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women' (CEDAW, emphasis added).
- 7 The expansion of Western sex/gender/sexual systems does not lead to a globally homogenous gay identity. We are well aware of the expansive literature that explores various forms of sexual hybridity and transculturation in non-Western cultures (e.g. Leap and Boellstorff, 2004). Neither do we deny that non-Western sexual identities can be traced through local genealogies (e.g. Jackson, 2000; 2009) and that non-Western sexual subcultures actively seek global connections (e.g. Benedicto, 2008). While such approaches importantly portray non-Western sexual cultures as active rather than passive in the face of globalization, this should not blind us from analysing the hegemonic formation. It is politically significant that 'gay' identity travels globally rather than 'kathoey' or 'bakla', and that most queer Filipinos regularly watch American gay films but not vice versa.
- 8 For example, see the debates surrounding liberal feminist Susan Moller Okin's argument that cultural relativism protects sexist practices in non-Western cultures (Okin, 1999; see also Nussbaum's response in the same volume). There is an extensive amount of responding literature (some feminist, some not) that we cannot hope to cover here, but see Jaggar (2005) and Volpp (2001) for two differing contemporary critiques of the Okin–Nussbaum position.
- 9 The success of these feminist struggles in international security is exemplified by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognized the importance of gender to international peace and security. Following in the footsteps of other 'gender mainstreaming' strategies in the UN and other international institutes, resolution 1325 would incorporate women generally in the UN Security Council as well as pushing for their involvement in peace negotiations, peace-keeping operations and post-war reconstruction efforts. This association of women with peace, of course, rests on essentialist representations of gender roles, the very thing CEDAW was supposed to challenge.
- 10 Caster Semenya was flagbearer for the South African team at the opening ceremony, a gesture of both pride and defiance. During her race Semenya remained at the back of the field for the most part, overtaking all but one of her competitors in the final moments to take out the silver medal to Russia's Mariya Savinova's gold. Immediately, the tabloid chatter went into overdrive. 'The controversy never seems to escape Caster Semenya' opined the *London Online*, without any apparent irony (Stafford, 2012). Speculation about why she had not won was rife: Did she throw the race? Was it 'scandal avoidance' (Warren, 2009)? Was she 'mentally

- scarred' from all the attention in 2009 (Ralph, 2012)? Had the rumoured hormone treatment 'dulled her brilliance' (Ralph, 2012)? Under these terms, winning silver seemed to provide proof of the need to intervene in Semenya's so-called 'disorderly sex' and, by extension, proof that Semenya really was somehow a gender cheat. Speculation that she may have thrown the race reduced her achievements to a kind of wilful failure and therefore akin to cheating in some sense. Semenya herself expressed pride at winning silver at her first Olympic games, reminding her inquisitors that 'it doesn't matter if you are at the front or the back. Really, the race was very fast. What matters is how you finish the race' (quoted in Ralph, 2012).
- 11 See www.ISNA.org.
 - 12 Founded in Quebec Canada in 2003, OII has become the largest intersex organization in the world. It operates as a decentralized network that aims to give voice to intersex people of diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural contexts through a multi-lingual web platform.
 - 13 ISNA disbanded in 2007 and re-emerged as Accord Alliance, a conservative coalition made up of some former ISNA executives, doctors and parents of intersex children. The ISNA.org website remains online for archival purposes.
 - 14 It is perhaps more accurate to describe such testing as female verification, since men are not subject to testing.
 - 15 The only recorded case of an alleged impersonator involved Heinrich Ratjen, who competed as Dora Ratjen at the Berlin Olympics of 1936 and was placed fourth – although the information about Ratjen's sex status did not come to light until some time later (Heggie, 2010; Stephenson, 1996).
 - 16 www.olympic.org/news?articleid=76409, emphasis added. Accessed 20 January 2012.
 - 17 www.olympic.org/news?articleid=76409. Accessed 20 January 2012.
 - 18 www.iaaf.org/aboutiaaf/news/newsid=58749.html, emphasis added. Accessed 20 January 2012.
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Thinking Sex Materially: Marxist, Socialist, and Related Feminist Approaches

Rosemary Hennessy

INTRODUCTION

Why does materialism matter for how feminist theory understands sexuality? The simplest answer is that materialism, and specifically the philosophy of historical materialism, aims to explain the world in order to transform it. Feminist approaches to sexuality draw upon materialist perspectives because they share a basic premise: theories of social life that begin with what humans need to survive are best able to foster actions to redress injustice. Historical materialism recognizes that the process of meeting survival needs and intervening in their unjust organization entails relations that are economic, political and cultural. As a historical discourse that is a component of culture, sexuality is an integral feature of social life. Materialist theories of sexuality recognize that sexuality is one way that human capacities for sensation and affiliation, psychic identification and desire are made meaningful, and as such it is intimately involved in shaping subjects and power relations. It is

also a potent technology for securing relations of power across practices and institutions to a variety of social and political ends.

There are several feminist understandings of materialism that differently inflect how sexuality is understood, and I address them in a long note at the end of the chapter.¹ Because feminist theories of sexuality draw upon the efforts of pioneering women and men who insisted on the importance of sexuality to socialism's materialist perspective, the chapter begins with a brief history of some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century socialist free thinkers whose ideas on sexuality shook up western Marxism. I then consider the historical flashpoint of the 1970s, when feminist theory came into its own and a historical materialist paradigm deeply informed feminist debates on sexuality. The next section focuses on the cultural turn in the late twentieth century when feminist theory more profoundly probed the question 'what exactly constitutes the material history of sexuality?' I then address queer theory's powerful contribution to sexuality studies,

especially as it draws upon materialist feminist critiques of neoliberal capitalism's investments in sexualized bodies, subjects and politics. In the chapter's final section I gesture toward new directions in feminist studies that are returning to historical materialist concepts to advance a better understanding of sexuality as a value-producing component of capitalism, a technology of imperial projects and commodity cultures and an affect-laden feature of organized struggles toward social alternatives.

SOCIALISTS AND SEX RADICALS

It is not hard to see why sexuality became a political issue for feminists in the nineteenth century, given the enormous effort that went into policing women's reproductive capacity, sexual activity and desire (Jackson and Scott, 1996: 3). However, feminist campaigns in the developing world were constrained by the material circumstances in which generations of women lived, with limited opportunities for economic independence and control of their fertility and the prevailing sexual morality. Socialist theory that situated women's oppression within a materialist framework was most famously elaborated by Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1970). He argues that the sexual division of labor is rooted in the emergence of private property as women's bodies and sexuality came under the control of men, and he predicts that women's full emancipation will arrive only with the socialization of housework and childrearing. In the socialist movements of the Second International (1889–1914), Engels' arguments went unquestioned.

The Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai was a rare exception. She argued that the sexual problem cannot be solved unless there is reform of the human psyche and in turn a transformation in basic socio-economic relations. She called for materialist analysis of the historically varied forms of love and sexuality and for continued social and economic

struggles to simultaneously address the structure of gender and sexual relations (Kollontai, 1977). Against the grain of middle-class women's purity campaigns, she claimed that the only way to end prostitution was to eliminate the conditions that compel women to seek out sex work as a way to survive.

The early twentieth century was a pivotal time when the woman question in socialism was highly contested, dismissed by some as premature or divisive and promoted by others as fundamental. Over the course of the following decades, feminists who aligned with socialist principles would challenge the limits of Marxist theory and the refusals of socialist political organizers to include women's concerns in their agendas. The efforts of these early socialist feminists to address sexuality were shaped by the contradictory situation of women in the industrialized sectors of the world. Women were being recruited into wage labor and a modernizing urban life that loosened the grip of patriarchal control over their bodies, minds and movement at the same time as they were confronting the persistence of that control at home and in the public sphere.²

As the historian Mari Jo Buhle argues, the topic of women's sexual emancipation brought turn-of-the-century socialists to a crossroads. In the United States and Europe two camps on the question of women's sexuality emerged: those who defended pure womanhood, opposed prostitution and launched social purity campaigns that targeted 'white slavery' and temperance; and those who fought for women's sexual freedom and reproductive rights (Buhle, 1981: 256–87). Some of the latter group were followers of sex theorists such as Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis; others moved in circles with early modernists such as Crystal Eastman, Mabel Dodge Luhan and Dora Russell, or supported the ideas of women's reproductive rights advocates, among them Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in the US and Stella Browne in the UK, who refused to disconnect these issues from the labor movement.³

The nineteenth-century free love movement was an antecedent of sex radicalism. It emerged from the utopian socialism of the 1820s and 1830s and influenced the anarchists and sex radicals of the 1890s and the birth control movement of the twentieth century.⁴ By the early twentieth century many women who were also socialists were taking up the banner of sexual freedom and promoting 'free love' as part of a broader campaign for women's rights.⁵ Among free thinkers, the sex radicals were distinguished from feminists because they saw the feminist focus on suffrage to be at the expense of emancipating women's 'true nature'. Figures such as the anarchist Emma Goldman voiced the sex radical free-thinker position in opposing the institution of marriage not because it impinged upon women's rights but because it stifled women's passion and capacity for erotic love (Goldman, 1970; Gornick, 2011: 70).

Capital expansion in the twentieth century took place through the violent militarization of two world wars and the growth of a global military-industrial complex; the restructuring of colonialism; a widespread attack on labor movements; and the intensification of consumer culture. The advancing modernization that followed in its wake provoked sweeping cultural changes that registered in adjustments to the meanings of gender, sexuality and race. Between the wars the woman question and sexual politics that had once been pressure points in radical circles on the Left were marginalized and, by the Great Depression years of the 1930s, they were almost completely subsumed under class issues. In the United States radical voices such as Mary Inman's were rare. Her *In Women's Defense* (1940) challenged Popular Front conventions that reaffirmed bourgeois conceptions of women's sexuality (Rabinowitz, 1991: 5). However, as Paula Rabinowitz's work on the 1930s reveals, popular fiction was one outlet for radical women writers. In the work of Tillie Olsen, Agnes Smedley and Mary McCarthy sexuality was often a battleground in which a narrative of class

struggle and women's efforts to establish an intellectual voice were played out against the pull of psychiatry and motherhood (Rabinowitz, 1991). Mid-century western Marxist intellectuals, many concerned with the political and social implications of the Holocaust, turned their attention to rethinking the path to social transformation and the role of sexual culture in it. Among them were the Austrian Wilhelm Reich, whose controversial experiments and writings, such as *The Sexual Revolution* (1936), ultimately met with state repression and censorship after he moved to New York to escape the Nazis. The Cold War kept activism by sex radicals and feminists in check or underground, but several leading intellectuals did pioneering work that left a lasting legacy. In the late 1940s and early 1950s Alfred Kinsey was publishing his empirical research on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1998) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey et al., 1953). The wide range of human sexual practices his studies disclosed provoked considerable public controversy and hinted at a brewing sexual revolution. Two other landmark works of this era are Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1952, rpt.1989), which undid the biological foundation of womanhood and became a touchstone for an emerging new stream of feminist thought, and Herbert Marcuse's synthesis of Marx and Freud in *Eros and Civilization* (1966, rpt. 1974), which was embraced by sex radicals and activists in the 1960s. For the most part, however, the public debates that women's sexual emancipation had provoked in the early twentieth century would simmer after the war, erupting in the 1960s to drive a wedge into feminist and socialist orthodoxies in the New Left.

SEX AND CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY

The upsurge of sexual liberation in the 1960s coincided with world-wide uprisings in

which feminists and others embraced Marxist concepts as a powerful guide to revolution. In heated theoretical discussions lines were being drawn between a socialism that was focused on economic and colonial injustice, a youthful rebellion that was more individualized and attentive to sexual and cultural politics, and the ideas of a marginal few who saw the divide between economics and culture as a hurdle to be overcome by a materialist analysis of sexuality under capitalism. Sexuality featured prominently in feminist redefinitions of 'the personal as political' in consciousness-raising groups and in critiques of patriarchy that feminists around the world placed on a political agenda that included sexuality among other issues that had previously been seen as private.

During these energized and frenzied years, the theoretical and political lines between radical feminism and socialist and marxist feminism were more blurred than later accounts might suggest. Many feminists turned to the ideas of sex radicals from earlier generations. Margaret Sanger's autobiography was re-issued in 1970, as was Emma Goldman's, and in 1972 the US feminist Alex Kates Shulman published a collection of Goldman's writings and speeches. That same year Eleanor Leacock's now classic introduction to Engels' *Origins of the Family* was published. Works such as Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) indicate the degree to which feminists who ultimately broke from Marxism nonetheless were engaged in thinking through how historical materialism might advance a better understanding of sexuality as a social rather than a natural phenomenon. Feminist analyzes of sexuality in the early years of the New Left also were being formulated out of alliances that traversed the Black Power movement, student and labor movements and the liberation struggles in Vietnam, China and Cuba that both took for granted and recast certain Marxist assumptions. Although the New Left devoted considerable attention to capital investments in ideology and non-market relations, many

efforts to advance a more ample politics ignored women's interests and the topic of sexuality. Much of the most important theoretical work of this period was the result of women's efforts to redress this neglect by taking into account the relationship of patriarchy to capitalism.

Marxist feminist scholars working in and outside the university in the 1970s conducted cross-cultural and historical studies of earlier forms of kinship and the role of gender in the division of labor (Leacock, 1972; Reed, 1970; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974). Their analyzes cleared the way for theories of sexuality as a component of social reproduction.⁶ In 1975 Gayle Rubin published her essay 'The Traffic in Women', which put forward a materialist and structuralist analysis of the 'sex-gender system'. Her formulation de-naturalized sex and gender in a manner that emphasized their integral relation to one another and offered a concept that would profoundly influence feminist theory, even though the essay's effort to align historical materialism and theories of kinship never quite coheres.⁷ A decade later, her essay 'Thinking Sex' would pursue a sexual libertarian stance and leave behind her earlier argument that sexuality is an integral feature of social reproduction, broadly understood.⁸ By the end of the decade, materialist efforts to theorize sexuality were blossoming. The first issue of the socialist feminist journal *Feminist Review*, which appeared in 1979, featured Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh's elaboration of Christine Delphy's concept of materialist feminism. It was followed three years later by a special issue on sexuality featuring many facets of sexual politics that the Women's Liberation movement had made visible.

During these years feminists pursued materialist analysis in theoretical work that was propelled by a sense of urgency and an awareness of devising theoretical paradigms with direct ties to social movements that were themselves charged sites of debate over concepts. Lisa Vogel aptly characterizes the consequent theoretical divisions within

Marxist and socialist feminism in terms of two approaches (1995: 23–9). One focused on two parallel systems that fuel the development of history: the class struggle and the sex struggle. The other, more closely aligned with Marxism, took the position that social reproduction is the central dynamic of history. Here ‘reproduction’ refers to the entire process of domestic labor, exchange and consumption, as well as the cultural and political structures that accompany them. Both approaches would shape theories of sexuality throughout the decade. The first evolved into a conceptual framework that supported parallel movements focused on women, sexuality and race, and eventually morphed into an identity politics that had little relation to materialism. The latter would re-emerge as a valuable theoretical standpoint for materialist investigations in the new millennium.

In the early phase of these debates socialist feminists formulated what came to be called ‘dual systems theory’, an approach that situated sexuality within the social relations of both patriarchy and capitalism. Dual systems theory has been critiqued for, and some would say it has since been abandoned because of, its failure to enable analysis of capitalism and patriarchy that is both sufficiently general and specific. What remains significant about this work, however, is its effort to think sexuality in relation to capitalist and patriarchal organizations of social life. Central to these debates was the concept of ‘capitalist patriarchy’, which appeared in the work of many feminist scholars. It is evident in the Egyptian feminist Nawal El-Saadawi’s introduction to the English translation of her book *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980) where she refers to class domination and men’s domination as the principal problems women face.⁹ Two US collections from that time that focused on debates over the dual systems perspective are *Women and Revolution*, edited by Lydia Sargent (1981), and *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, edited by Zillah Eisenstein (1979).

The Sargent collection is organized around a series of responses to an essay entitled ‘The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism’ by Heidi Hartmann, earlier drafts of which appeared in 1975. Hartmann maps out some of the premises of historical materialism as they conceptualize the material base of patriarchal control over women’s labor power and sexuality. While she does not overcome the impasses in this ‘unhappy marriage’, she does call for continued theoretical work to make patriarchy a more robust analytic category, and she encourages feminists to turn to Marxism as a well-developed theory of social change. The Eisenstein collection has two essays specifically focused on sexuality. One, by Linda Gordon, offers a history of feminist struggles for birth control; the other, by Nancy Chodorow, draws upon Gayle Rubin’s concept of the sex–gender system to theorize the sexual politics of mothering.

Capitalist Patriarchy also includes four collective statements, one of which, the Combahee River Collective statement, first published in 1977, is a notable example of theorizing by US black feminists that addresses sexuality as a key component of socialist feminism.¹⁰ Members of the collective had been meeting since 1974 and working on projects addressing sterilization abuse, abortion rights, rape and health care. They assert that their position is socialist ‘because we believe the work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products and not for the profit of the bosses’, and they call for a ‘feminist and antiracist revolution’ that takes into account the specific class situation of black women (Eisenstein, 1979: 366). Like other socialist feminists, they acknowledge a debt to Marxist theory but argue that it needs to be reworked to address the specific situation of black women. They call attention to sexuality as always racialized and reject lesbian separatism as a viable strategy because it ‘negate[s] the facts of class and race’ (Eisenstein, 1979: 367). Also in this collection is a history of the Marxist Feminist

groups 1–5 which notes the attention they gave to sexuality, including norms defining legitimate and illegitimate sex, birth control and the systematic sterilization imposed by the US government on Puerto Rican, Native American and other third world women.

Some feminist theorists, among them Rosalind Coward and Ann Foreman, integrated the insights of psychoanalysis into a historical and materialist feminist approach. Ann Ferguson's *Blood at the Root: Motherhood, Sexuality, and Male Dominance* (1989) is a socialist feminist argument that draws upon this work to theorize what she calls 'sex-affective production', a system of production of human desires connected to sexuality and love, centered in the household, but semi-autonomous from the capitalist economy. Following the post-Marxist theorists Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari's theories of desire, and pursuing Gayle Rubin's concept of sex-gender systems, Ferguson argues that sexuality is a bodily energy that is socially produced and integrated into relations that meet human needs for social bonding. In contrast, Michèle Barrett's *Women's Oppression Today* (1980) is a Marxist feminist argument for understanding gender and sexuality as ideological cultural practices integral to the relations of production and reproduction in capitalism. In addition, she makes a case for acknowledging both the continuities and discontinuities between gender identity and sexual practice. Her approach is indebted to analyzes of patriarchy developed in radical feminist writings and to the concepts of 'reproduction' and ideology in the work of the French Marxist Louis Althusser (Barrett, 1980: 10).

The absorption of feminism, ethnic studies and, eventually, sexuality into the academy was a key feature of globalization's commodification of difference in response to the threatening ruptures to capital that social movements against imperialism, patriarchal oppression and racism were posing. Student uprisings on campuses across the US, Europe and Latin America called for the university to be accountable to the needs of the people and

for structural changes in curriculum. The university answered by absorbing difference, institutionalizing diversity represented by segmented interest groups, and by establishing multicultural programs, thereby neutralizing the systemic analysis of radical critiques that tied cultural difference to class. Indeed, as Joan Sangster and Meg Luxton so aptly point out, in the ensuing years 'class was often named but remained a theoretical ghost, an absent presence' (2013).

As feminism established a foothold in the academy and impacted public discourse the voices of women of color increasingly challenged the presumptive white and middle-class subject of feminism. One example of the ensuing debates is evident in Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh's 1985 response to black feminists' critiques of the racism in feminist theory and social movements. The exchanges published in the UK-based socialist feminist journal *Feminist Review* underscored the pitfalls of feminist paradigms that overlook racism and presume racially homogenous formulations of issues that have a bearing on sexuality, among them family, abortion and other reproductive rights.¹¹

In the late 1960s through the early 1970s many grassroots gay and lesbian organizations understood homosexuality in relation to feminist and antiracist politics. From its founding in 1969 the Gay Liberation Front produced theoretical work that was deeply influenced by socialist thought and committed to forwarding coalition politics (R. Ferguson, 2012: 217).¹² Several groups saw sexuality as correlated with gender and the sexual division of labor and linked gay oppression under capitalism to the role of the family and the subjection of women. Few lesbian groups in the 1970s turned to Marxism, however, as most tended to identify patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression. Nonetheless, several, among them The Furies, based in Washington DC, did develop materialist critiques of heterosexuality as an institution and an ideology. In 1975, addressing a Socialist Feminist conference at Antioch College in Ohio, Furies

member Charlotte Bunch asserted that any politics aimed at confronting heterosexuality would have to be class politics. The class issue Bunch raised was axiomatic for many feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but tying it to heterosexuality was provocative (Bunch, 1987: 180). In 1978 Monique Wittig also sparked public controversy in the United States and France with her explosive assertion that 'lesbians are not women'.¹³ Her critique situated 'lesbian' as a political standpoint that makes visible the violent regime of heterosexuality and refuses to be subjected to it (Turcotte, 1992). Unlike Adrienne Rich, whose essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' (1980, rpt. 1994) would make a similar argument, Wittig called her position 'materialist'. The term signaled that her thinking was part of a broader feminist network in France, Canada and the United States that grew out of a critique of historical materialism. In her formulation, materialism meant that women's oppression and the regime of heterosexuality are not based in biology or nature but rather in social and historical institutions. Like Christine Delphy, she took Marxism to task for hiding the 'class conflict between men and women' and for not attending to what it means for members of oppressed classes to be subjects (Wittig, 1992: 18). In calling for a materialism that addresses subjectivity and sexuality, she rearticulated terms from a Marxist left that was increasingly turning to ideology as an 'imaginary' formulation and applied them to the category 'woman'.

SEX PANICS AND THE CULTURAL TURN

The early 1980s were a pivotal period for feminism. The New Left was becoming incorporated into the professions and the historical forces that summoned it to attend primarily to culture were drawing more and more feminists away from the systemic analyses of Marxist and socialist feminism.

Liberal feminism proved incapable of challenging the class divide between women. One symptomatic example in the US registered in the fact that both inside and outside the academy socialist feminist responses to the recruitment of middle-class women into the workforce were calling for socialized collective responsibility for childcare, but they were not the dominant voices in debates over sexuality (Sangster and Luxton, 2013).

Increasingly sexuality was being understood and debated in individualized terms as a practice and as pleasure discrete from labor and care, and gay activists were increasingly affirming homosexuality as a single issue discrete from race, gender or class. The sex panics of the 1980s largely consolidated this shift. They ranged over many topics, among them the regulation of pornography, legal protections for gay people, the scope of reproductive freedom for women and the content of safe-sex education. The 'sex wars' waged in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom drew battle lines between positions that emphasized sexual danger and those that argued for valorizing sexual pleasure. The first camp continued to embrace radical feminism's emphasis on women's oppression and sexual violence; unfortunately it joined feminist interests with the gathering forces of a radical Right waging anti-pornography campaigns. In the second camp were pro-sex supporters. While the debates suggest the degree to which sexuality was serving as a linchpin in the turn to cultural politics, they also generated important theoretical work, some of which advanced socialist feminist approaches.¹⁴

The 1982 Scholar and Feminist IX Conference 'Towards a Politics of Sexuality' held at Barnard College in New York City has been seen as a defining moment in pro-sex history. Its aim was 'to expand the analysis of pleasure' and 'create a movement that speaks as powerfully in favor of sexual pleasure as it does against sexual danger' (Vance, 1984: 3). The collection of papers from the conference includes authors such as Dorothy Allison, Amber Hollibaugh, Cherríe

Moraga and Hortense Spillers. Rubin's essay 'Thinking Sex', which appears here, challenges the assumption that feminism is or should be the privileged site of a theory of sexuality (Vance, 1984: 307). The introduction by the editor, Carole Vance, takes a more measured stance, acknowledging the continued importance to feminists of attention to the sexual dangers women confront and of theorizing women's pleasure. The absence of any socialist or Marxist feminist analysis in the volume would seem to imply that these analytical perspectives have fallen through the cracks between danger and pleasure.

However, the collection *Powers of Desire* (1984), edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson and published by *Monthly Review* the year after the Barnard Conference, demonstrates that socialist feminist analysis of sexuality was very much alive. The editors' introduction provides a broad descriptive history of socialism's concern with sex, and essays by Kathy Peiss and Allan Berubé link specific periods in capitalism's development to the emergence of sexual subjects. John D'Emilio's soon-to-become-classic essay 'Capitalism and Gay Identity' was first published here, tracing the appearance of homosexuals and the release of sexuality from a procreational mandate as capitalist wage labor expanded. The collection marks a significant development in socialist and Marxist approaches to sexuality in that it offers detailed analyses of the relation between changing sexual formations and historical adjustments in labor and capital mobility.

The end of the twentieth century ushered in a new phase in theorizing sexuality. As cultural materialism increasingly influenced academic feminist theory, research across disciplines pursued investigations of historical formations of sexuality.¹⁵ When class was addressed it was often understood as social status or as a set of cultural practices that comprise one axis in the trinity of race, class and gender that by 1989 was defining the prevailing 'intersectional' methodology of academic women's studies, a paradigm that

either neglects class or replaces class analysis with analysis of class culture. Nonetheless, as feminism has taught us again and again, suppressed knowledges are not irretrievably lost. Although they were often marginalized, Marxist and socialist feminists did continue to investigate sexuality as a regulatory regime and a site of agency for gendered and racialized subjects in capitalism's class-based division of labor.

Important investigations of sexualized domestic labor were published in the mid-1980s, among them the German feminist Maria Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986), which links the historical processes of colonization and 'housewifization' that sexualized women as 'breeders' and 'consumers' in distinct yet related imperial formations. Hazel Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1987) is another noteworthy materialist feminist publication from that period. Carby begins her readings of nineteenth-century black women writers with analyzes of two very different but interdependent sexual ideologies that operated upon white and black women in the antebellum US South. Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments* (1988) also investigates sex and gender ideology, here in the context of emerging medical discourse and novelistic representations of sexualized labor in the Victorian family household.

Beginning in the 1980s, in part as a response to capital's intensified invasion of bodies and subjects, intellectuals increasingly attended to what came to be called 'bio-politics' and its role in the construction of sex and sexuality. The work of Michel Foucault led the way and profoundly influenced evolving materialist feminist approaches to sexuality. The English translation of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, volume I (1978) provoked an avalanche of theoretical work that pursued his argument that the gradual deployment of sexual discourses installed new forms of disciplinary power exercised through norms and 'technologies' of the subject. Foucault's genealogical approach to history and to power

abandoned the theoretical pre-suppositions of his Marxist teachers, principally the notion that class relations have some determining force in binding propertied interests to prevailing ideas and cultures. Foucauldian materialism sees power as a diffuse set of force relations that operate through norms and forms of governmentality to which there is no necessary class logic and no stable 'outside' from which to launch a transformative opposition. In this analytic, sexuality is continually enmeshed in relations of power.

Despite Foucault's neglect of gender, feminist approaches to sexuality were deeply influenced by his attention to discourse and the body. Some, such as Ann Stoler, launched critiques of his stunning oversight of the colonial imprint on the history of sexuality (Stoler, 1995).¹⁶ Others articulated his insights with those of earlier feminists. Notable among them is Judith Butler, whose *Gender Trouble* (1990) brings into critical conversation Monique Wittig's materialist critique of heterosexuality and notion of the lesbian as 'not woman' with Foucault's concept of the discursively constructed subject to advance a performative theory of gender and sexual identity. Butler's 1994 interview with Gayle Rubin teases out Rubin's engagement with Foucault as well as with Marxism and underscores these two formidable feminist theorists' ties to materialist analysis. *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory* (1989), by Frigga Haug et al., appropriates some of Foucault's insights for a more overtly socialist feminist approach to sexuality. Written by a socialist feminist collective based in Hamburg and West Berlin, the book makes a case for 'memory work' as a critical practice that entails writing narratives about becoming a feminine sexualized subject and reading them with and against a group's theoretical reflections.

The emergence of cultural studies as a broad-ranging field of inquiry in the 1980s was inspired by materialist efforts to address working-class and everyday cultural formations, and it eventually included innovative feminist research on popular culture as a key

component of young women's sexual desires and identifications. Much of this work teased out tensions between the oppressive impact of consumer culture and the incitements to sexual agency that pop culture offered women and girls. Janice Radway's research on women readers, *Reading the Romance* (1984), discloses romance reading as an escape from the dissatisfactions of women's everyday sexual relationships. Angela McRobbie, who was affiliated for several years in the 1980s with the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, did path-breaking research on working-class English adolescent girl culture which was later collected in her *Feminism and Youth Culture* (1991). McRobbie continues to analyze new configurations of femininity in popular cultural forms and to tease out the possibilities for women's sexual agency they offer. In the last decades of the twentieth century feminists increasingly paid attention to the double-edged limits and possibilities that capital's commodification of bodies and consciousness poses for women. Susan Willis's *A Primer for Daily Life* (1991) extends the theory of the commodity to an analysis of consumer culture's impact on children's desires and negotiation of gender differences, and she also looks to the utopian openings that nonetheless persist in childhood ritual and play. The US philosopher Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight* (1993) is another example of materialist feminist work on the body that flourished in the 1990s. Bordo assesses the contemporary obsession with the sexualized body as evident in cosmetic surgery, dieting and physical fitness training and situates this cultural phenomenon in the changing relations of gender and labor for men and women.

During the 1990s historical work in sexuality studies, some of it feminist and loosely influenced by post-Marxist and Foucauldian historicism, was also analyzing the inflection of sexuality by nation-state regimes and drawing attention to sexual and racial formations outside the over-developed world and across several zones of empire as they shaped

state policy and the tourist industry (McClintock, 1995; Alexander, 1997). During these years feminist research on sexuality also drew attention to the interface of sexuality and labor in the circuits of global mobility. Notable examples include the special section of *Social Text* (McClintock, 1993) edited by Anne McClintock on the sex trade; Lillian Robinson and Ryan Bishop's analysis of sexual cultures and the Thai economic miracle (1998); and Kamala Kempadoo's research on Caribbean tourism and the sex trade (Kempadoo, 1999). With the demise of the Soviet Union socialist feminists were coming to terms with the paradoxical impact of socialism on women's culture, labor and sexuality in their everyday lives (Haug 1991). Cynthia Enloe's 1993 investigation of 'postwar postpatriarchy' in Bosnia, El Salvador, Russia, Vietnam and other countries makes incisive connections between the politics of sexuality and militarism in the wake of the Cold War. Throughout these years the Mexican feminist theorist Marta Lamas, who founded and directed the journal *Debate feminista*, was also writing about the social production and commodification of women's sexualized bodies and developing projects devoted to women's reproductive health and the health needs of independent sex workers. By the late 1990s and into the first decades of the twenty-first century feminists were organizing and writing about the extreme sexual violence accompanying warfare and the ravages of neoliberal capitalism. One notable example is the work of journalists and researchers, many materialist feminists, working in collaboration with activists on both sides of the US–Mexican border, who have continued to address the murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (Fregoso and Bejarano, 2010; Ravelo and Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, 2006; Wright 2006).

One of the major effects of late twentieth-century theoretical attention to sexual discourse was the development of feminist critiques of heterosexuality. Although the institution of heterosexuality featured in the

work of lesbian feminists twenty years earlier, by the 1990s it had a distinctly post-structuralist twist, meaning that the focus had shifted to the instability of heterosexuality as an effect of language, representations and practices. Judith Butler's argument for gender and sexual identity as performative practices became a defining paradigm for many feminist scholars. Postmodern thought shaped feminist attention to sexuality in cosmopolitan centers across the west. The Chilean feminist theorist Nelly Richard's work in the 1980s and 1990s, translated into English in the volume *Masculine/Feminine* (2004), also engages post-structuralism and materialism to investigate the intersection of gender and sexual identity. She explores the figure of the transvestite, whose representation exploded during the Pinochet regime against the background of prostitution and poverty and Chilean gay culture that was disrupting the rigid structures of city life. A more explicitly materialist feminist critique of heterosexuality grounded in the Marxist and socialist feminism of the 1970s was put forward by British sociologists Stevi Jackson (1999) and Diane Richardson (1996).

QUEER NEOLIBERAL NORMS

In the early 1990s the term 'queer' began to circulate in activist and social movement discourse, displacing 'gay pride' and 'gay liberation' with a more diffuse emblem of non-normative resistance. The insurgence of 'queer' was spurred in large part by the frustrations of organizing around HIV-AIDS, and it was groups such as ACT UP in the US and its offshoot Queer Nation that early on promoted 'queer' as the banner of a liberation politics that confronted the oppressive norms of race, gender and sexuality. 'Queer' had an uneasy and at times oblique relation to sexual liberation's more materialist analysis and activism, and some queer-identified groups had members with Marxist intellectual roots. For example, the organization OutRage!, formed in 1990 in the UK, drew on members

of the Marxist-leaning Gay Liberation Front to fight against police brutality and advocate for gay and lesbian civil rights. Manifestos and agit prop also at times merged queer and identity-based politics. For example, the manifesto of ACT-UP's offshoot Queer Nation targeted the violent effects of sexual norms and institutions while at the same time explicitly endorsing a sexual politics that aimed to 'make every space a Lesbian and Gay space' (Anon., 1990). 'Queer' quickly travelled across the circuits of knowledge production in the cosmopolitan centers of the global north and south and moved into academic writing as the sign of a critical confrontation with heterosexuality and a rescripting of identity and politics. Queer theorists employ many of the reading strategies of deconstruction as well as Foucauldian materialist analysis to critique the violent regimes of the normal that reproduce cultural distinctions – specifically, though not exclusively, the distinction between 'homo' and 'hetero'. The critical force of queer theory lies in its successful denaturalizing of these and other cultural forms. In disclosing the fluid and intersecting play of differences that undermines the stability of identities and norms, it draws upon Foucault's argument that sexuality is a historical and discursive effect in a diffuse field of power relations.

Undoubtedly queer theory generated new lines of inquiry in feminist and lesbian and gay studies, but, from its earliest formulations, its relation to feminism was vexed. Some materialist feminists found its neglect of capitalism problematic. Other feminists complained that queer approaches were displacing feminism's attention to gender and failed to address the persistence of patriarchal gender oppression. Counter charges claimed that sexuality requires an analytic distinct from feminist preoccupations with gender.

Like the uneven emergence of sexuality as a topic of concern for feminists, intellectual and political claims in the name of 'queer' were conditioned by historical developments. Queer theory was born during a

new stage of capitalism that has come to be called 'neoliberalism,' and it is to some degree its byproduct. At the same time that 'queer' was redefining sexual politics in the streets and the study of sexuality in the university, neoliberal policies were loosening state regulation of capital accumulation and privatizing industries, social welfare and an affective life of respectable consumer citizenship. The once-fixed boundaries policing normative sexuality according to a hetero-homosexual distinction were also relaxing as gay chic was being absorbed into cosmopolitan culture and opening lucrative markets. The result was the incorporation of homosexuals into a widening class divide and the creation of a limited version of equality for a narrow and domesticated gay sector. Although the neoliberal cultural imaginary came to include respectable queer subjects and gay families, and big business found new queer markets, norms regulated by sexual abjection continued to supplement capital accumulation.

In its early years, queer critique that addressed these contradictions was almost non-existent. By the mid to late 1990s, however, as the impact of neoliberal capitalism intensified, analyzes began to appear that recast the insights of queer theory into a historically based materialist analysis that addressed capitalism's expanding commodity culture (Hennessy, 2000; Gluckman and Reed, 1997; Morton, 1996). Some of that work built upon critiques of 'heteronormativity' that began to circulate when Lisa Duggan and Michael Warner first introduced that term in 1998. Chrys Ingraham's 1999 analysis of the wedding industry disclosed heterosexuality's institutional and ideological power, as does the anthology she later edited, *Thinking Straight* (2004). Several important studies in the next decade attended to the coalition of forces underlying the redistribution of wealth that neoliberal policies were accomplishing and their impact on sexual, racial and gendered subjects. Lisa Duggan's *Twilight of Equality* (2004) is a notable example. Another line of inquiry

combined feminist and queer theory with the post-Marxist materialism of Foucault and Deleuze to address the regulation of bodies and subjects in the wake of burgeoning nationalisms. Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), for instance, extends the critique of homonormative ideologies to 'homonationalisms' that shore up US imperial ambitions by distinguishing 'properly hetero and homo' citizens from perversely sexualized and racialized Arabs, Muslims and Sikhs.

Much of this new research in sexuality studies was pursuing critical avenues opened by decades of activism in the streets, and some important studies reflect on the implications of the institutional assimilation of queer and feminist social movements (Wiegman, 2012; R. Ferguson, 2012). The 2005 special issue of *Social Text*, which marked the fifteenth anniversary of queer theory, charts needed developments in a materialist queer theory. Among those they name are the militarization of state violence and the escalation of the US empire; the clash of religious fundamentalisms; the erosion of civil rights; the pathologizing of immigrant communities; shifting forms of migration; and the return to domesticity as a prophylactic against economic redistribution and cultural dissent (Eng et al., 2005). This list could also serve as a map for new directions in materialist feminist theoretical work on sexuality, with the addition of concerns that are likely to continue impacting women and LGBT populations, such as reproductive and sexual health, human trafficking, sex tourism, sexual violence and the role of sexuality in collective efforts to build alternative ways of life.

The most notable examples of twenty-first century materialist work in queer studies affirm a debt to feminist theory and social movement and insist that no politics will get us very far without a critical purchase on the ways that gender and sexual formations feature in capitalism. They are joined by a growing number of feminist sexuality studies pursuing 'theoretically informed' research

rather than the more philosophical 'theory per se'. The former develops concepts through investigations of specific historical or social problems rather than putting forward more generalized theories. Much of this research does not actually advance a historical materialist or socialist feminist analysis or investigate sexuality's relation to labor, but it does enable a fuller understanding of the operation of sexual norms in nation-state institutions and imperial policies, and to some extent engages intellectuals from outside the global north. Among the few recent studies of sexuality that do situate their arguments quite firmly within historical materialist feminist theory is Kevin Floyd's *The Reification of Desire* (2009), which returns to Georg Lukács's concept of reification to locate the roots of queer politics in the emergence of twentieth-century consumer culture and sexualized masculine identities. *Hegemony and Heteronormativity*, edited by the Berlin-based scholars María do Mar Castro Varela, Nikita Dhawan and Antke Engel (2011), reclaims the early twentieth-century Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to explain both the co-optation and subversive potential of 'queer' as a political stance.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The historical urgencies of the present and foreseeable future call for analyses of sexuality that will delineate its ties to the contradictions and uneven developments of capitalism – the cultural values that legitimize greed and unmet need and the openings that nonetheless persist for erotic attachments that are integral to aspirations for an alternative way of life. Both young and established scholars in the new millennium are doing theoretically informed work on neoliberal capital's continuing expansion and the role of sexuality in organizing efforts against it, and some of the most valuable scholarship is elaborating an international and transnational materialist feminist analysis.

Noteworthy among studies of the impact of globalization in the afterlife of colonialism is work that addresses what it means to develop a critical perspective on the transnational circulation of queer identities in advertising, film, performance art, the internet or in the political discourses of human rights (Binnie, 2004; Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, 2002). Some of the strongest recent work examines the sexual legacies of imperial culture in specific national contexts. The Canadian historian Joan Sangster has championed a more solidly marxist feminism that works with and against Foucauldian concepts to draw out the history of sexual regulation in Canada. Her *Regulating Girls and Women* (2001) investigates the process by which the law in Ontario, Canada constituted women and girls as sexualized subjects and took them into the courts through issues such as incest, sexual abuse, prostitution and delinquency. Some recent materialist work investigates sexuality as a feature of neocolonial legacies: for example, as a feature of the emotional labor of care work and the global sex industry; in the mapping of bodies and practices in the two-thirds world and its confrontation by indigenous cultures and colonial heritages; and in the sexual politics of transnational organizations such as the World Bank.¹⁷ Another important line of investigation addresses sexuality as a feature of state policy and the policing of migration and diaspora, as, for example, in the disciplinary tactics of customs officials against lesbians and gay men or in the regulation of asylum and tourism (Cantú et al, 2009; Luibhèid and Cantú 2005; Luibhèid, 2008; Reddy, 2005). A recent new direction in sexuality studies addresses varied forms of affective and sexual affiliation among migrant workers from diverse regions of the world. Nyan Shah's (2012) research on the intimacies developed among South Asians, Afghans and African Americans who came to the western regions of the United States and Canada and confronted the state's efforts to exert repressive pressure on non-whites is one example.

Scholarship on changing state and family formations within and across the global north and south also has drawn attention to sexuality as a feature of changing sexual practices in private and public spaces and institutions (R. Ferguson, 2012; González-López, 2005; Valentine, 2007). Much of this research continues to be informed by the influence of post-Marxist materialism. Lisa Rofel's *Desiring China* (2007) is one instance which draws upon Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari to address the constitution of desire in post-socialist China, where new forms of subjectivity, including gay identities, adhere to the practice of becoming transnational citizens.

Intellectuals working outside the United States and Europe are making notable contributions to materialist histories and analyzes of sexual cultures and identities, and future theoretical inquiry will no doubt build upon their contributions. Feminists are conducting historical and ethnographic research on sexuality in relation to modernity, media, non-capitalist economic projects and indigenous cultures in Nicaragua, Mexico, Iran and India (Howe, 2013; Stephen, 2002; Najmabadi, 2005; Kotiswaran 2012). The journal *positions* frequently publishes research on sexuality by emergent Marxist or materialist feminist scholars from Asia and the Asian diaspora. Their special issue, 'Beyond the Strai(gh)ts: Transnationalism and Queer Chinese Politics' (2010), edited by Petrus Liu and Lisa Rofel, focuses on a new generation of Chinese intellectuals who have turned to queer sexuality as a discourse through which to analyze a more complex and transnationalized world after the demise of class struggle and national liberation as politically effective metanarratives. Stevi Jackson, Liu Jieyu and Woo Juhyun's collection, *East Asian Sexualities*, contributes to these debates with studies from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. As Petrus Liu contends, many Asian scholars are producing theories of sexuality that are incompatible with Foucault and that

suggest that future work in sexuality studies will need to address the assumption of Chinese – as well as other Asian and African – exceptionalisms (Liu, 2007). The question ‘Do non-western cultures have histories of sexuality that cannot be described by western categories?’ remains a provocative one for materialist theories to answer without forfeiting attention to sexuality as a major vector in global capitalism’s impact on national economies, cultures and organized resistance.

How sexuality features in the creation of alternative worlds is a topic broached by some of the most important new directions in materialist, feminist and queer studies, and it draws upon utopian aspirations that have been a recurring feature of the radical activism of Gay Liberation, queer politics and Marxist thought. Some of this work explicitly makes a case for reclaiming a queer utopian horizon (Muñoz, 2009), while other investigations probe the affective affiliations that can generate new possibilities of life even in the context of extraordinary neglect and surveillance (Povinelli, 2011). Researchers in and on the global south, many from materialist and socialist feminist standpoints, are raising new theoretical questions about sexuality and sexual identity as features of social movements that are confronting neoliberal transnational policies and bio-politics: as features of the landless workers’ movement, the food sovereignty movement and the Occupy and indignad@s movements (A. Ferguson, 2012). Research on HIV-AIDS-related activism and on labor and community organizing is also probing the erotic dynamics of social movements and suggesting that materialist theories of affect are useful for assessing the role of sexuality and sexual identity in organizing efforts around basic needs and sustainable futures (Gould, 2009; Hennessy, 2013).

My own most recent research has focused on what I call the ‘affect-culture’ of labor organizing by workers in the factories for assembly-for-export in northern Mexico. Over the past fourteen years, as I supported

Mexican workers’ campaigns for freedom of association, health and safety and clean air, land and water, I began to see sexuality and gender as strong attractors whose cultural meanings feature both in capital’s accumulation of surplus labor and in collective organizing for a better life. Workers’ testimonies affirm that the human capacity for affective attachment is essential to sustaining an organizing effort. While at times it may be articulated in conventional formulations of sexuality and gender, it also can spill into collective bonds that defy available cultural categories. In *Fires on the Border* (2013) I address the affectively laden ability to collaborate as a surplus that is never completely harvested by capital and that supports the common ground that organizing occupies. The affect-cultures of labor and community organizing in Mexico have a particular history, but the erotic identifications and attachments that have been integral to collective struggles for dignity and justice there also disclose features of sexuality and the erotic energies that supplement it that also pertain to organizing efforts elsewhere.

A reinvigorated materialist and feminist analysis of sexuality will continue to amplify our understanding of sexuality’s relation to the reproduction of social life, to the ways that bodies and well-being are impacted by political economy and culture and to the animation or erosion of collective social movement toward life-enhancing alternatives. Such a feminist analysis will not of itself mend the violence of capitalism that has so badly frayed the social fabric of communities around the globe, but without it feminist theory risks becoming irrelevant, unable to explain the conditions that shape the desires and needs that organize peoples’ lives. The rich archive of Marxist and socialist feminist analysis of sexuality’s material history is radical knowledge because it exposes the deeply rooted relation of sexual norms and practices to capital’s political economy and imperial ambitions. As such, it is an indispensable

resource as feminist theory continues to offer conceptual maps for the making of a better world.

NOTES

- 1 The very term 'materialism' is a site of debate in feminist theory. Marxist feminism has the closest theoretical ties to the philosophy of historical materialism, even as it also expands this analysis of social relations to take into account the ways capitalism relies upon patriarchal and imperial domination. I use a lower case 'm' for 'marxist feminism' throughout the chapter to signify this critical engagement with Marxism. A key distinction of marxist feminism is the priority it gives to relations of labor necessary for survival, a process in which culture, including gender and sexuality, prominently features. Marxist feminists approach the oppression of women, sexual dissidents and people of color as integral to capitalism and pay special attention to the ways ideologies of race, gender and sex legitimize the devalued labor that feeds capital accumulation.

Socialist feminism is a term that gained traction in the 1970s, although since the nineteenth century women had been part of socialist movements and promoted women's issues as vital to them. By the mid-twentieth century socialist feminism began to bring together the insights of radical feminism's critique of patriarchy with Marxism's historical materialist class analysis. While socialist feminists call for the transformation of capitalism, they are reluctant to theorize gender and race as components of a single integrated capitalist system. Socialist feminists maintain that patriarchal sex-gender relations are semi-autonomous from capitalism, and they support the political importance of an autonomous feminist movement (Ferguson, 1989; 1991; Vogel, 1995: 40–46).

Materialist feminism is a term that also emerged in the mid to late twentieth century, coined by the French feminist Christine Delphy in 1975 (Delphy, 1980; Jackson, 1996). Materialist feminism initially signified a feminist intervention into Marxism that embraced its materialist premises but reoriented key concepts such as class and labor. By the end of the 1990s, however, materialist feminism's ties to historical materialism had considerably loosened to the point that a good deal of work that deployed this term had become post-Marxist, meaning that its analyzes tended to focus on culture, ideology or state formations and rejected the Marxist concept of capitalism as an integrated system or social totality in which culture is linked to relations of property and

labor. Indeed, some materialist feminist analysis does not address capitalism per se at all, devoting attention primarily to political or cultural practices formulated as discipline, governmentality or bio-politics. For critiques of this approach, see Conaghan, 2009; Giménez, 1997; Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997: 'Introduction'.

For Marxist and socialist feminists, class is the fundamental social relation through which capital is accumulated, and this accumulation depends upon cultural values that include sexuality. This understanding of class is quite different from the commonsense notion which marks distinctions in status among groups rather than a social relation between those who own and control capital and those who do not. While feminist materialist approaches have differing conceptions of class, each takes sexuality to be a historical discourse that draws upon gender and race in producing social subjects, embodied subjectivities and political standpoints.

- 2 For examples, see *The Modern Girl around the World* Research Group, 2008.
- 3 On Flynn, see her autobiography (Flynn, 1973); also Rowbotham, 1992: 151–62; and Tax, 2001. On Browne, see several of her pamphlets reprinted in Rowbotham, 1977 and her collaborative text on abortion (Browne et al., 1935).
- 4 Notable sex radicals of the late nineteenth century in the United States included Victoria Woodhull, Angela Heywood, Lois Waisbrooker, Lucinda Chandler, Ida Craddock, Lillie D. White, Dora Foster, Dr. Alice Stockham and Lillian Harman.
- 5 Other birth control champions included Kate O'Hare and Agnes Smedley (US), Marie Stopes (UK) and Katō Shidzue (Japan). Many other women who set up birth control clinics and saved women's lives around the world remain hidden from history.
- 6 See the Canadian scholars Benston (1969), P. Morton (1971), and Seacombe (1974); also the Italian feminist Maria Dalla Costa and her collaborator, then US-based Selma James, who together with other feminists launched the wages for housework movement (1972).
- 7 For critiques of Rubin's essay from a Marxist feminist position, see Hartsock, 1985: 293–304; and Hennessy, 2000: 179–89.
- 8 See Rubin, 2012 for her reflections on the significance of these two essays.
- 9 See Hatem, 1987 for an assessment of Marxian approaches to women's sexuality in this period that consider patriarchal class formations in the Middle East.
- 10 The other three statements are from the Socialist Feminist Conference in Yellow Springs, OH; the Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union; and an analysis of Marxist-Feminist Groups 1–5.

- 11 See the response to Barrett and McIntosh by Bhavnani and Coulsen, 1986.
- 12 Among groups that set out to develop Marxist or socialist (though not feminist) analyzes of sexuality were the Los Angeles Research Group; the Lavender and Red Union (Los Angeles); Red Butterfly (New York); the Gay Left Collective (UK); and the Gay Socialist Action Project (New York City). See also Mieli on Italian Gay Liberation and the Gay Left in the UK.
- 13 Her lecture 'The Straight Mind', delivered to the Modern Language Association that year, was published two years later in *Questions Féministes*.
- 14 Jackson and Scott, 1986 include a section on these debates as well as a section on related debates regarding the commercialization of sex. See also Vance, 1984.
- 15 For notable examples see Chauncey, 1995; D'Emilio and Freedman, 1997; Lovell, 1987; Newton et al., 1983; Newton and Rosenfelt, 1986; Stansell, 1987; Walkowitz, 1982; 1992.
- 16 Critiques of Foucault's neglect of gender also can be found in Diamond and Quinby, 1988 and Hekman, 1996.
- 17 On global care and sex industries, see Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Hoang, 2010. On transnational sex practices, see Bedford, 2009; Garza Carvajal, 2003; Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, 2007; Green, 2001; Green and Babb, 2002; Liu, 2007; 2010.

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Transnational Black Feminisms, Womanisms and Queer of Color Critiques

Michelle M. Wright

INTRODUCTION: WHY WE ALL NEED A SPACE AND TIME OF OUR OWN

As we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, representation and theorization of women and queers of color in academic discourses on the African Diaspora appear to be at a stalemate, both flourishing and 'stuck' at an impasse. These voices are flourishing, with a proliferation of scholarly discourses in women's and queer studies, yet they continue to be marginalized within dominant discourses on Blackness in the West. Writ large, transnational Black feminisms, womanisms and queer of color critiques seek to expand our definitions of Blackness in the West to always include Black bodies that also identify as female, queer or otherwise outside of Black Western communities' sexual and gender norms. I mention feminism and womanism here as two separate systems of belief. Whereas most white Western feminisms tend to assume that all women, no matter what their socioeconomic, racial, ethnic or national

status, share common concerns and causes, 'womanism' rejects this premise and denotes an approach to women of color movements that is explicitly sensitive to and aware of the socioeconomic, historical, cultural and political differences that can often divide white women and women of color on issues of gender (Walker, 2004). In a very similar way, 'queer of color' critiques argue that these same categories produce differences between themselves and representations of 'queerness' that implicitly exclude Blackness (Ferguson, 2003).

This scholarship has made great strides from its earliest contemporary invocation in the 1970s, when a critical mass of Black women and Black queer-identified scholars began to matriculate and receive doctoral degrees in universities across North America, Western Europe and West Africa. Today, a broad range of academic journals and publications reflects their work and accomplishments in inspiring many women (and some men) to reflect upon the social and state regulation of gender and sexual

norms, codified violence against women, the lack of equal opportunities for women across all nations, and the disturbingly endless renewal of so-called 'scientific' studies that assert that gender inequality is the effect of 'Nature' and not human manipulation (a stance that is notably similar to some scientific claims on racism). Perhaps most importantly, Black feminist and queer critiques of their exclusion from and/or denigration in mainstream academic discourses have finally achieved a foothold in undergraduate and graduate education curricula, no longer being dismissed as needlessly hostile or self-involved.

As history has shown us, the importance of accurate representations is not simply a matter of theory but can become a matter of life and death when inaccurate and grossly distorted theories become practice, or 'praxis'. For example, early nineteenth-century US gynecology used live Black female bodies for surgical experiments, arguing that the 'Negress' – although clearly anatomically corresponding to the white female body – was less capable of sensation and therefore pain and suffering (Ojanuga, 1993). Similarly, as many scholars of Black studies are aware, the Black female Khoikhoi native Saartje Bartman, aka the 'Venus Hottentot', was displayed around the West for the entirety of her short adult life as an animal of curious proportions, deprived of both human interaction and any recognition of her suffering (Holmes, 2007; Crais and Scully, 2009). In both of these examples, the Black female body is seen as worthy of study, but the Black female mind is predetermined as beneath consideration, a tragic reflection of her dehumanization in racist 'scientific', political and legal discourses of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century white West.

In other words, the ways in which we theorize and represent gender, race and sexuality in the university more often than not will serve as the basis for research and, possibly, state laws and practices informed by that research. In white Western nations it

is most often those bodies seen as possessing an inferior gender (female), sexuality (non-heterosexual) and/or race (most often 'Black') that are marginalized socially, economically and politically by the state. Women, non-whites and queers are always the numerical minority amongst the political, social and economic elite and thus are most vulnerable to violent crime, poverty and under-representation within the polity. Furthermore, the biological and medical sciences continue to view these bodies as the 'ab-norm' despite the fact that their combined numbers will always comprise a majority of the state's population (Schiebinger, 2003). There is every reason, then, for all scholars who work on Blackness in the African Diaspora to ally in their condemnations of these bigoted state policies and scientific 'findings'.

Yet, in looking at the current canon of scholarship on the Black Diaspora today, we in fact see two sets of scholarship published alongside one another: one which represents Blackness through a heterosexual and/or heteropatriarchal masculine norm, and one which seeks to subvert this norm as it produces its own proudly feminist, womanist and queer viewpoints. These two sides rarely communicate with one another: women of color and queers are either simply not mentioned in most volumes theorizing Blackness or else they are mentioned briefly and (implicitly or explicitly) assumed to be represented through the viewpoints and experiences of the heterosexual male. This is a strange and sad state of affairs, a sobering reminder of the degree to which minority collectives often seek to replicate the white state through the deployment of a heteropatriarchal logic on their own populations.

This essay first provides a genealogy of Black feminist/womanist transnational thought by tracing the inspirations, arguments and influences of key thinkers, before moving on to the obstacles still faced by these discourses in matters of representation. I will use the organizing lenses of

space, place and time to analyze the ways in which these academic discourses implicitly and explicitly explore, as the African American historian Paula Giddings has asserted, ‘when and where’ (Giddings, 1984) Black women and queers enter into the annals of (Western) history.¹ The conclusion of this essay will look at places where space and time are denied to Black feminist representations of Black women to argue that emerging queer of color critiques, which re-imagine space and time, offer up new possibilities for not only locating non-heteronormative forms of Blackness in the past but also representing them in the here and now. Finally, I point out how these new efforts at locating Black queers and women of color in Diaspora spaces and times integrate those space–times into the African Diaspora and thus into the world as a whole across national, ethnic, gender, sexual, class and ‘racial’ lines.

Theoretically, concepts of space are understood to always be informed by concepts of time. For example, if one is discussing the geographical space of the ‘Soviet Union’ it can be understood that the space under examination exists only between 1917 and 1989. Therefore the space of the Soviet Union is always implicitly modified by time (by the years 1917 to 1989). Indeed, whenever one denotes a space, chances are high that either the speaker or his or her interlocutors will assume a particular timeframe. The same is true when one conceptualizes time; when an historian uses the term ‘Modern era’, for example, he or she almost always means an era that happened only to majority white nations in the Western hemisphere (implicitly referring to a particular space), regardless of other famous examples of Modernity outside the West. In the Black feminist, womanist and queer of color discourses that follow, it is space that is most explicitly used to discuss the challenges that women and queers of color face in the West, and that space is most often located in the contemporary moment.

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL MARGINALIZATIONS IN NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY WHITE WESTERN DISCOURSES

At least since the early nineteenth century, emphasis on space and time can be found throughout Black feminist and womanist scholarship of the African Diaspora as well as in academic, lay, and media discourses as whole. In particular, both past and present sexism and misogyny fundamentally argue that women belong in the domestic space, not the public arena, and racists tell members of racial minorities to go back to ‘where they came from’ even when those people were born in the same nation–space as the racist. Indeed, one can usually identify deeply bigoted discourses and practices by seeing how they attempt to limit certain bodies to marginal spaces. In some cases this may take the form of prohibiting particular bodies from spaces where important decisions are made (as within a legislature, a church or mosque); in other cases those ‘unwanted bodies’ are provided with a secondary space of lesser importance so that they might participate with the group, but be reminded of their inequality. In other instances bodies are regulated by time, denoting when they can or should be in certain spaces and not in others, such as cleaning or laboring only when important bodies are not present. These regulated bodies are most often female and/or belonging to persons of color because traditional heteropatriarchal discourses on a nation’s history often marginalize and erase – and/or simply prevent the possibility of – female and minority achievements and accomplishments by seeking to keep them outside of important spaces at certain times.

This oppressive practice extends to metaphorical spaces and times, which are equally, if not more, important, especially the space–time of history and progress. Western depictions of minority spaces (particularly of Asia, South America, Africa, South Asia and the Middle East) locate them in the past, or

outside of the timeline of progress. Critics, historians and theorists such as Martin Bernal (1987), Paula Giddings (1984) and Edward Said (1978) have memorably pointed to the ways in which dominant Western discourses on world history have repeatedly distorted and/or marginalized the presence of Blacks, women and even whole civilizations. For example, Bernal shows how pre-eighteenth-century Europeans both knew about and circulated information on East and North African contributions to Ancient Greek Science, Mathematics and Philosophy which their nineteenth-century successors hotly denied. Likewise, Giddings shows that the earliest insurrectionist movements in the United States were organized and operated by Black women and not Black men, as so many traditional histories depict in textbooks and online. In other words, women and queers of color are under-represented not because of a lack of achievement but because acknowledging Black and female achievements en masse is noxious to the concept of a white Western civilization born from the history and contributions of Ancient Greece. Instead, by virtue of race, gender and sexuality, they are barred from this space-time of white Western civilization as backward, unreliable and/or irrational.

When Western histories do make space to discuss these space-times ostensibly 'outside' of the Western progress narrative, they often fill the space needed for accurate representations of non-Western civilizations with their own racist fantasies or projections. As Edward Said famously argues, Western depictions of the 'Near East' are not so much composed of objective observation, but are white Western male projections of what they desire that space to be, and include, for instance, the mythical pleasure spaces of the harem, the 'natural' and effeminate sensuality of the young Middle Eastern male found in the public spaces of streets and squares, the hostile and irrational conduct of the Middle Eastern politicians practiced on the battlefield, in the home and in spaces dedicated to statecraft (Said, 1978). This exotic

space of the 'Orient' is both located as elsewhere and in another more romantic and primitive time.

CREATING SPACE: NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMANIST AND FEMINIST ORGANIZATION IN THE US AND EGYPT

The two earliest examples of feminist/ womanist organization in the African Diaspora are found in the United States and Egypt in the nineteenth century. As Paula Giddings narrates:

After the end of Reconstruction, Black women were prepared to create organizations and institutions that reflected their feminist concerns. In 1880, Mary Ann Shadd Cary led the way, organizing the Colored Women's Progressive Association. One of the association's goals was to "assert" equal rights for women, including that of suffrage. (Giddings, 1984: 75)

By stressing the term 'progressive' in their organizational name, along with Giddings' own use of the term 'assert', we can see how US Black women had to push and strive to create a space for themselves not made readily available by white feminist organizations. Importantly, it was also during this time of organizing that Black feminist consciousness gained its character as a movement distinct from white feminist organizations and those arguing for equal rights on the part of the larger black collective. Giddings continues:

[...] the argument for woman suffrage went beyond the universal-rights concept to address the specific needs of Black women. This trend, seemingly initiated by Cary, resulted in a more broadly based involvement of Black women in the suffrage struggle. As Cary's proposal also signified, Black women were ready to begin institutionalizing their claims to economic, social, and political equality. (Giddings, 1984: 75)

In other words, Black women organizing in the United States discovered early on that their voices, although female, had no space

in white feminist arguments even though white feminists understood their privileged position as ‘universal’ for all women (Davis, 1981; Hine, 1994; McDowell, 1995; Hunter, 1997).

The politics of space and spatial representation for women of color feminists can also be found in East Africa at around the same time. In the late nineteenth century Egyptian women, prompted in part by the anti-colonial struggle against Britain, began articulating a feminist consciousness in which they sought liberation from the *harem* system of Egyptian society. In finding a voice for their feminist consciousness, Egyptian women faced a double-edged sword. The *harem* system dictated both a social segregation of the sexes and the strict control of women by male family members as a means to remove doubt of a woman’s sexual purity upon marriage. Yet, even as Egyptian women gained strength in their feminist organizations the prevailing belief that women were ‘naturally’ sexually deviant meant they had to observe the social customs of segregation and of veiling in order to avoid sexual exploitation (Cole, 1981; Badran, 1988; Khater and Nelson, 1988).

Giddings’ explication of the double exclusion faced by Black women in the US also applies to the situation described above in Egypt. Although their bodies symbolically bridged two sociopolitical movements (women’s suffrage and Black civil rights, and women’s liberation and Egyptian nationalism respectively), rather than being able to bring those two spaces together these women of color effectively found themselves marginalized in or exiled from both:

If the countertide had come from just one direction, it would not have been so brutal, but it also included conservative elements of the black community as well – particularly regarding the achievements of women. This is at variance with the abiding faith of our progress, our legacy as agents of change, even our survival. (Giddings, 1984: ii)

Giddings underscores that, at this time in the United States (and, we can also see, also in

Egypt), when men of color were under the rule of white regimes, women of color were not only barred from consideration in white spaces and times but also found their demands for equality in the Black community judged to be, rhetorically speaking, ‘untimely’ and taking up too much space.

It is important to note that, while few and far between, there are in fact some communities that make time and space for women of color. Perhaps most famously, Dutch and Surinami feminist Gloria Wekker explores what she defines as an Afro-Surinamese practice of *mati*. In *mati* marriage is rejected in favor of male and female sexual partners. Exploring the life and experiences of an eighty-four-year-old Afro-Surinamese woman, Misi Juliette Cummings, Wekker explains:

As far as marriage was concerned, contrary to theoretical beliefs that have been circulating for decades according to which working-class Caribbean women see marriage as highly desirable but virtually unattainable, Misi Juliette and many of her younger sisters strongly rejected this for not giving them enough autonomy. In the domain of sexuality Juliette’s behavior unhinged the certainty that the core of sexuality is reproductive heterosexual intercourse. Even though there was no dearth of the offspring she produced, her sexual joy was overwhelmingly located in her connections with women. In addition, it was abundantly clear that her sexual activities with women were not passive and nongenital. (2006: 171–2)

Mati quite literally legitimizes the notion of an intimate shared space for women where men need not be agents or representatives of that household, whether socially, economically or even politically (and vice versa). Yet Wekker does not idealize this practice (although some of her supporters and detractors have, towards their own ends).² She points out that even as the practice of *mati* allows women and men to have control over their own spaces and their own time outside of the institution of marriage, preferences, for example, for ‘light-skinned’ partners over ‘darker-skinned’ ones indicate that not all bodies enjoy equal consideration and respect at all times and in all spaces.

RESPONDING TO THIS DOUBLE EXCLUSION: THE INFLUENCE OF MARXISM ON BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT IN THE 1970S AND 1980S

While the practice of *mati* is inspiring and informing, it is difficult to understand how it might be transplanted into those spaces to which Giddings refers where women seeking agency and representation apart from men are resisted and denounced. Indeed, in the United States there is already a built-in resistance to the notion of females as heads of household – a bigotry one finds repeated in *both* white racist and Black male nationalist arguments. Despite its being refuted every few years or so, the 1975 ‘Moynihan Report’ is still used in media and academic arguments to assert that African American families suffer poverty and crime because Black women have usurped Black men’s natural leadership roles in the home. The report reads that by asserting agency in a *space* that does not belong to them (as head of household) black women stunt or even reverse the (temporal) *progress* of the entire collective. In other words, this racist and misogynist logic argues that when the ‘wrong’ body occupies a space, time reverses itself because this occupation is anti-progressive or uncivilized. As Madhu Dubey has noted in *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (1994), both the Black Panthers and conservative white men were in eerie agreement about the negative effects of Black women with agency: ‘Black nationalist leaders not only echoed this masculine emphasis, but identified the black woman as an active agent of the black man’s economic and social emasculation’ (1983: 17).

Beginning with their rise in the late 1950s, Black Western and African nationalist movements in the US, the Caribbean, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya dictated that this new era was a ‘time’ for Black male leadership, and that Black women needed to wholly remove themselves to the domestic space to take up supportive roles as wives and mothers. When it comes to gender and sexuality, anti-colonial

movements and organizations such as the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam (the latter two in the United States) differed very little from white Western nationalism. Both ideologies shared the same concepts of how men, as leaders and innovators, were the agents of time and therefore deserved a monopoly on all spaces that symbolized power and leadership. These nationalisms understood women as ‘outside of time’ – that is, not as part of history or progress except in their supportive roles to men. The new Black nations imagined (as in the US) and achieved (as in West, East and, eventually, North, Central and South Africa) in the mid to late decades of the twentieth century offered little hope for advancement, much less equal power, to the women who were nonetheless told they were now truly ‘liberated’.

By imagining a ‘Black nation’ that would be ordered along the same logic as the white Western nations they so bitterly criticized, organizations such as the US Black Panther Party as well as early post-colonial African liberation movements explicitly foreclosed a space and time for women that was not always already dictated by men. Unsurprisingly, many women of color looked outside men of color nationalist movements that did not have time or space for their concerns. In the case of the Black female revolutionaries of the 1970s and 1980s, Angela Davis, Elaine Brown and Assata Shakur stress how racism and capitalism disable, denigrate and otherwise disempower Black women, but also discuss and analyze misogynist and sexist practices within their own Black communities. As one of the founding members of the Los Angeles chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1968, Angela Davis writes in her autobiography:

whenever we women were involved in something important [the men] began to talk about ‘women taking over the organization’ – calling it a matriarchal coup d’état. All the myths about Black women surfaced. Bobbie, Rene and I were too domineering; we were trying to control everything, including the men – which meant by

extension that we wanted to rob them of their manhood. By playing such a leading role in the organization, some of them insisted, we were aiding and abetting the enemy, who wanted to see Black men weak and unable to hold their own. (1974: 181)

Worthy of note is the work of the US women of color writing and sociopolitical action group the Combahee River Collective, led by Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, Audre Lorde and Demita Frazier, which, while drawing on the same Marxist and anti-colonial critiques, also condemned the specific behaviors and machinations of Black patriarchy in their communities, writing that ‘a combined antiracist and antisexist position drew us together initially, and as we developed politically we addressed ourselves to heterosexism and economic oppression under capitalism’ (Combahee River Collective, 1983: 45).

The representations of Black womanhood in the West articulated by these writers and activists provided much of the schematic background that would go on to inform Black womanist writing in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, France, Germany and Britain. While figures such as Davis point to specific Marxist influences in forming this writing, more generally it was approached through both critiquing and combining the work of Marx and Engels with that of contemporary (black) revolutionaries and activists such as Frantz Fanon, Huey Newton, CLR James and George Padmore. While it is often ignored by contemporary Black Marxist theorists across disciplines, Marx and Engels – and Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin after them – do provide a Marxist feminist critique of what they determine to be ‘bourgeois capitalist norms’ – in which all women should be wives and mothers, raising children and tending to the household rather than out in the public sphere (Gimenez, 1975: 61–80). This argument asserts that however one sees ‘women’s work’, raising children and tending to the household (cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc.) is nonetheless work, and unpaid labor at that. Not unlike the way

capitalism estranges the working man and woman from their labor by placing them on assembly lines (where they become a mere part of the process, not the creator, producer and seller of the product), it is argued that women who do labor in the household are also denied the right to control their labor because society rejects any claim that they should be paid for their work. The state and society make it difficult for women to control the terms of their labor, often assuming that working-class women who wish to spend more time outside of the home are ‘bad’ mothers and mates.³

Marxist theory not only validates Black women as equal laborers whose work should be recognized but also acknowledges the racial oppression they suffer. In *gestalt* Marxist arguments, Blackness in the West is understood as the result of Western capitalism which, in its drive for profits from products such as tobacco, sugar, cotton and rice, first enslaved and then found other means to exploit Black Africans and their successive generations in both the West and in Africa. Fanon and Padmore go beyond Marx and Engels’ exhortations to ally themselves with the white working classes of Europe by explicitly linking the Black economic experience in the West writ large with the white Western shift from cottage industries to the rise of transnational corporations and the military industrial complex in the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

Seen another way, Marxist theory does what white feminism and Black nationalism largely fail to do: provides a space for Black women in time. Black women enter time because Marxist theory organizes history through different eras of society’s organization of labor and power.

Unfortunately, this is the *ideal* of Marxist feminist writers. Sexism and misogyny – as well as racism – can be found in Marxist, Socialist and Communist practices. While for decades the Soviet Union and Cuba have touted the large proportion of female doctors they train, these doctors, unlike their male counterparts, are still expected to prioritize

marriage, keeping house and raising children. In Communist states such as the former eastern bloc and China, the few women who did enjoy positions of power in the early decades have all but disappeared – along with the right for feminists in those nations to voice their concerns. This is one of the reasons why many of the Black female theorists named above, including Angela Davis and Audre Lorde, used aspects of Marxist theory but did not commit to it wholesale.

A SPACE AND TIME WHOLLY TO OURSELVES: WOMANISM IN THE 1980S AND 1990S

Influenced by, but not wholly dedicated to, Marxist theory, a second narration of women of color theorizing themselves in the West took place in the 1970s and into the 1980s. The 1960s and 1970s saw a rise in immigration to the West from its former colonial regimes, bringing in poor women of color seeking work (especially in North America, but also in Europe and parts of Central and South America) just as a critical mass of educated white women entered the professional labor force. In a perverse echoing of the colonial era, women of color now found themselves trapped in the domestic space previously occupied by the white female. As middle- and upper-class white women went to work, women of color cooked, cleaned and raised those women's children. Scholarship such as Black British cultural theorist Hazel Carby's 'White Woman, Listen!' (1989), US Caribbean lesbian theorist Audre Lorde's essay collection *Sister Outsider* (1984), and US theorist bell hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) provide the first racialized and gendered critiques of dialectical materialism, noting that in racist capitalist societies women from the elite often move on to occupy positions just as oppressive to racial minorities as those of their male counterparts, even if those same women suffer from misogyny and sexism in their own circles.

'Womanism,' a term that US writer and activist Alice Walker is understood to have coined, argues that in the space-time of contemporary bourgeois white capitalist societies in the West women of color enter from outside the West only to take up roles reminiscent of those forced on to Black women in the colonial space a century ago. An irony emerges: in the 'modern' space of the West the woman of color is given a space that takes her back in time to an equally oppressive age. It is as if this domestic space – once occupied by the white woman, now the woman of color – is never empowered, only passed down to the woman who is too poor and too vulnerable to escape it.

Hazel Carby's 'White Woman Listen!' details the specific ways in which white women's own timeline of progress has almost always been exclusionary towards the Black female subject. She opens by underscoring the ways Black women have been excluded by the space and time of white male and white female histories and what she calls 'herstories':

The black women's critique of *history* has not only involved us coming to terms with 'absences'; we have also been outraged by the ways in which it has made us visible, when it has chosen to see us. *History* has constructed our sexuality and our femininity as deviating from those qualities with which white women, as the prize objects of the Western world, have been endowed. [...] We cannot hope to constitute ourselves in all our absences, or to rectify the ill-conceived presences that invade herstory from *history*, but we do wish to bear witness to our own herstories. (1989: 45)

Carby does not see white Western spaces as open to Black female agency; instead, she observes 'absences', places where they should be yet from which they have been removed. Perhaps equally devastatingly, Carby also criticizes depictions of Black women where they are written into white histories and herstories as stereotypes rather than fully realized human beings.

Absences also mean silences, so, in spite of the power of these critiques, there is often a stark difference between the woman of color

scholar who is writing the critique and the women of color *of* whom she writes. One is armed with a laptop and, most often (no matter how small), an audience, whereas the other toils away in silence, perhaps without legal status or recourse to family or friends. They work within two very different spaces. The first is contemporary – one can find reams of woman of color criticism on the web and, should one have the time, go hear a woman of color critique speak on these matters in a public (i.e., not domestic) space reserved for the topic. The second, as noted above, is anachronistic: the woman of color as maid/nanny/cook/cleaner is called upon to do demanding tasks over long hours, a type of labor we often assume to be out of step with the democratic ideals of the modern era. She is forced to occupy a space that is not her own, forced to work but never able to claim her labor as her own, because both space and labor exist for the pleasure of another (perhaps even a woman of color feminist scholar).

The next section focuses on a theoretical and practical problem central to this essay's purview: how the breadth and diversity of transnational womanisms and feminisms creates a breadth and diversity of views that cannot possibly all fit into one space (i.e. a book on the topic). There are too many different spaces (from nations to neighborhoods) and too many different times (histories) to consider. Additionally, as we have seen, there is no one theory that speaks to all the different needs and considerations one can find in transnational womanist and feminist theories – not to mention queer of color critiques, with which the essay concludes. Scholarly writing – even websites and public speeches – reach limited audiences; fiction, however, reaches much larger ones. As the next section will show, by being able to create and communicate the multiple spaces and times where women of color characters can cogently and clearly communicate their lives, Black women fiction writers push open new doors for articulations of transnational Black feminisms and womanisms.

THE IMAGINATION OF MULTIPLE SPACE-TIMES: AFRICAN DIASPORA WOMEN'S FICTION IN THE 1990S AND 2000S

Black women's fiction and creative non-fiction writing from the United States, the Caribbean, Britain, France and Germany in the 1980s and 1990s has played an important role in contemporary theorizations of race, class, gender and sexuality from the 1990s to today. Coming from such 'post-colonial' writers as Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Alice Walker, Michele Cliff (Jamaica), Paule Marshall (US/Barbados), Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria/Britain), Sylvia Wynter (Canada/Jamaica), Toni Morrison (US), Andrea Levy (Britain), Ika Hügel-Marshall (Germany), Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua and Barbuda), May Ayim (Germany) and Calixthe Beyala (France), these essays, novels and poetries explore the real and imagined lives of women who are often lost to history. Figuratively and metaphorically speaking, these writers create and explore moments in space and time where and when a black woman's consciousness interprets the world. They reveal ways in which millions of working poor, working-class and even middle-class women may occupy the 'glocal' (global and local) spaces. The 'glocal' can be achieved in fiction because its narratives operate as both a fictional story and a metaphor for sociopolitical forces at large. These discourses are often the boldest of all in reimagining multiple spaces – times for Black women in the world, or what Gayatri Spivak (via Martin Heidegger) refers to as 'worlding' (Spivak, 1985). By locating the minority female subject at a series of intersections – as a economic, gendered, ethnicized, sexualized and political being – these fiction writers underscore that although marginalized in masculinist discourses, women of color nonetheless *do* impact and are impacted by 'glocal' forces.

In Buchi Emecheta's celebrated autobiography *In the Ditch* (Emecheta, 1971) and

subsequent *roman à clef* *Second Class Citizen* (Emecheta, 1974) (heavily patterned on *Ditch*), the intersecting yet often conflicting demands of the Black British Nigerian woman show how cultural norms routinely disempower those bodies they fail to consider as sufficiently complex or important. In Emecheta's texts, Yoruba culture demands that the moral wife and mother devote her days to the raising of children and the tending of her husband. Yet London's twin role as the hub of opportunity for immigrants and a prohibitively expensive locus demand Buchi/Adah be both a full-time wife and mother and a worker in its labor force. However, in performing these multiple roles to provide for her family as well as raise and care for them she simultaneously finds herself failing Yoruba expectations of supporting her husband as sole breadwinner, putting him at risk for ridicule and emasculation. Buchi/Adah's status as a Yoruba woman and a Black woman in London also begin to conflict when she is encouraged by co-workers to view her salary as her own and to resist her husband's demands for total obedience and subservience.

These contradictions reveal the degree to which the Black female subject is figuratively rent apart by inadequate societal expectations, unable to remain within a stable, empowering and enabling identity. According to theorist and literary critic Okonjo Ogunyomi:

If the feminist literary movement desires the illumination of female experience in order to alter the status quo for the benefit of women, the African women writer's dilemma in a feminist context becomes immediately apparent. Black women are disadvantaged in several ways: as blacks they, with their men, are victims of a white patriarchal culture; as women they are victimized by black men; and as black women they are also victimized on racial, sexual, and class grounds by white men. (Ogunyemi, 1985: 67)

Particularly, Buchi/Adah finds herself divided by the demands of the different spaces which she occupies – the kitchen, the bedroom, the employment office, the

compound of her Yoruban in-laws and the homes of her London friends – each of which refuses to recognize her roles in any other spaces.

The transnational feminist critique in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* are clear: Buchi/Adah is forced to occupy different spaces in different times: primarily as a 'traditional' Nigerian women within a middle-class household and as a Black African immigrant woman within the capitalist work space of London. Importantly, neither space nor time – both of which are wholly allocated to her labor (including the serving of her husband's sexual desires) – provide her with agency or control. As such (both in her texts and in real life), Buchi Emecheta carves out a living for herself (arguably her own space-time) as a celebrated novelist, educating her audiences by conveying the double space-times Black woman immigrants in the West must often endure. While one cannot herald Emecheta's bestselling works as the coming of a grand revolution, her use of the creative form has reached tens of thousands of readers who reference her work to understand their own lives and how, through the creation of a writing voice, they might create a space and time in which they have agency.

I begin with Emecheta because she is a rarity, an author who has reached both lay audiences and the academy in profound ways with her unstinting view of hardship where, nonetheless, she demonstrates that agency can be imagined and acquired. Most literature that explores Black women's hardships offers the same unstinting and insightful theorizations, but do not end happily. However, before ending this section on Black transnational literatures and moving to queer of color critiques it is important to note how even texts that do not end happily can sometimes provide enough ambiguity and ambivalence to create space-times of agency and opportunity, no matter how unlikely.

Through her novels, Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé explores what Hazel Carby has termed the 'triple oppression of gender,

race, and class', as the result of the diversity of Black women's identities (for instance, as a black woman, mother and woman in the workforce). Furthermore, she complicates this idea by opening it up to Black women in the West who also enjoy economic privilege. In *Heremakhonon* (Condé, 1999), Condé's Guadeloupian-born, Parisian-by-choice, bourgeois anti-heroine Veronica Mercier travels to a fictional African nation to enact a journey of return to the 'homeland' as a Black diasporic subject. Yet Veronica's race and gender place her within a completely different space-time, one quite distinct from the linear progress narratives authored by Black men who write of "returning" home to Africa and being "rejoined" to the "authentic Blackness" that, to them, is synonymous with a Black African heteropatriarchal collective. This difference reminds the reader that something as seemingly universal and spiritually fulfilling as a (symbolic) homecoming to ancestral lands can often be a very gendered experience. While men of color may rejoice to find themselves in a collective space in which men that look like them are in charge, women of color may question how a "homecoming" that expects them to subordinate themselves can be empowering and/or enabling. Finding herself marginalized as a woman, she attempts to use sex as a means of attracting powerful male partners, but is raped by a lover who does not distinguish between her identity as his intimate partner and the Black African women he and his troops have savaged. For strongman Ibrahim Sory, Veronica occupies only one space: that of her body, existing to await the times of his sexual pleasure. Veronica's bourgeois status, which has paid for an apartment in Paris as well as an independent life where she is free to make her own choices about sex and marriage, provides her with luxury and the freedom to travel in Africa, but not much more. Ironically, it is to Paris, and not Africa, that she makes her 'return' by the end of the novel.⁴

Heremakhonon has been read as a tragic, dystopian novel by critics such as Suzan Z.

Anadrade, Nora C. Cottile-Foley and Phillip D. Bailey, who conclude that it underscores the idea that Black women can find no place in the world. However, a closer look at the final passages of the book (upon Veronica's 'return' to Paris) do not appear to align so easily with these assumptions:

One day I'll have to break the silence. I'll have to explain. What? This mistake, this tragic mistake I couldn't help making, being what I am. My ancestors led me on. What more can I say? I looked for myself in the wrong place. In the arms of an assassin. Come now, don't use big words. Always dramatizing. Spring? Yes, it's spring in Paris. (Condé, 1982: 167)

While these final thoughts are hardly triumphant, they do not appear defeatist. One hears both dramatic regret ('this tragic mistake') and self-teasing for 'always dramatizing'; a shrug over a mistake ('What more can I say?'), but, more importantly, the suggestion that, whereas Africa may have been the wrong place, Paris ('Yes, it's spring in Paris') may possibly be the 'right' place to which she can return.

Condé's depiction of Africa as the 'wrong place' is powerful yet ambivalent. On the one hand, this essay notes how dominant discourses try to argue that the bodies of women as well social and economic minorities do not 'belong' in certain spaces, and it is possible to read the passage above as no more than Veronica (as a Black woman) echoing this oppressive and bigoted idea. On the other hand, Veronica, as a Parisian woman from Guadeloupe, does not appear to express devastation and/or disempowerment. The fact that the novel begins and ends with Veronica traveling first from Paris and then 'back' suggests that Paris, not Africa, is the space to which she 'belongs', the 'home' to which she 'returns' after all. Unlike her reflections on Africa, Veronica is often nostalgic for Paris and the specific attitudes, habits and ways of its multicultural denizens. When Veronica imagines Paris in the novel, it is as an enabled and empowered denizen greatly engaged in her environment and

intimate with the cultural habits that mark the Parisians of different *arrondissements*.

Condé's intervention is bold yet effective. Black nationalist discourses tend to read the West, at best, as an ambivalent space – the home of the colonizer, where Black men must always experience some form of colonization at white hands. Alternatively, *Heremakonon* contrasts the violence and silencing Veronica endures in her attempt to reconnect with her symbolic 'home' in Africa against the pleasure and anticipation Veronica feels when thinking of her home in Paris. While Paris is not Paradise, Condé in effect argues that women of color can find times and spaces that 'fit' them. For a cosmopolitan gadabout like Veronica, Paris is a place of voice and agency for her multiple selves.

Yet before all Black women rush to Paris, *Heremakhonon* must remind the reader that Veronica, unlike her neighborhood street sweeper, who is a Black man, belongs to the Black bourgeoisie and clearly enjoys enough economic privilege to take trips to Africa and return when she chooses. The street sweeper has no such opportunities, and while Veronica looks forward to seeing the sweeper again one wonders if the latter would feel the same. After all, the space in which Veronica greets the street sweeper is one of leisure and pleasure for her, but one of tiring and unpleasant labor for him. Despite the proliferation of views and critiques in transnational black feminisms and womanisms summarized above, the problem of space and place for Black women of all socioeconomic classes remains. While the creation of other narratives, herstories and timelines that represent Black women in the African diaspora provide an accurate and agential presence, Black women remain absented, misrepresented.

Fiction allows for the expression of ambivalence and complexity in a different way. US scholar Mae Gwendolyn Henderson has termed this type of view point the 'dialogic' point of view, arguing that to be a Black woman is already to occupy three different collective identities (as Black, as a woman

and as a Black woman) and thus conferring multiple 'voices' with which to speak:

What is at once characteristic and suggestive about a black women's writing is its interlocutory, or dialogic, character, reflecting not only a relationship with the 'other(s),' but an internal dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity. The interlocutory character of a black women's writing is, thus, not only a consequence of a dialogic relationship with an imaginary or 'generalized Other,' but a dialogue with the aspects of 'otherness' within the self. The complex situatedness of the black woman as not only the 'Other' of the Same, but also as the 'other' of the other(s) implies, as we shall see, a relationship of difference and identification with the 'other(s)'. (1993 119)

WHEN AND WHERE DO I ENTER? QUEERS OF COLOR AND HORIZONTAL SPACE-TIMES IN THE 2010S

While Henderson offers us a good rule of thumb in refusing to frame one's minority identities as always already oppressive, we must also consider the intent on the part of the speaker when speaking from a 'dialogic' subjectivity. For instance, it is not beyond belief to think that a biracial Hispanic Catholic Black Egyptian Muslim transgender lesbian is also outdoorsy and perhaps more obsessed with raising horses than with her theoretical dialogic potential for millions. When she speaks, must we assume that she speak for all aspects of her subjectivity?

There is another consideration before we celebrate 'Black womanist dialogism', and that is finding the voices. To 'add' just one category to Henderson's model, that of queerness, we already find obstacles in our path to their voices: it is hard for those spaces to be found, at least in Black communities. Black feminist theorist bell hooks relates this dilemma for Black queer histories in the US (which, I should note, are also true for the entirety of the African Diaspora):

Unfortunately, there are very few oral histories and autobiographies which explore the lives of

black gay people in diverse black communities. This is a research project that must be carried out if we are to fully understand the complex experience of being black and gay in this white-supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist society. Often we hear more from black gay people who have chosen to live in predominantly white communities, whose choices may have been affected by undue harassment in black communities. We hear hardly anything from black gay people who live contentedly in black communities.⁵

There are two different ways in which Black queer discourses have responded to this challenge, and it is the second of them that is the focus of the end of this essay. The first way is by establishing and retrieving black queer discourses from black communities (predominantly in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean). This is being partially met by the gathering of oral histories in scholarly volumes and, as queer theorist and performance artist E. Patrick Johnson has done with *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (2008), in public performances of those narratives of black gay men in the United States and Australia. I write 'partially' because hooks is painfully correct in noting the enduring paucity of narratives from earlier generations – these identities, far fewer found than logically existed, are retrieved through social histories of black queer urban life (such as in James F. Wilson's *Bulldaggers, Pansies and Chocolate Babies* (2010)) or documentaries and autobiographies of 'out' Black celebrities of the early twentieth century (such as those on early twentieth-century US blues singers Bessie Smith and Moms Mabley and Civil Rights activist Bayard Rustin).

The second way is to return again to the imagined space for Black queerness through fiction, such as in the Black queer Scottish poet, playwright and novelist Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* (2000). Through imaginations of alternative spaces and times, Kay's novel is able to locate a Black transgender identity within the white West, albeit in a way that hooks understands as insufficiently representative (because these discourses represent non-heteronormative, or 'queer', identities through interactions with whites).

At the beginning of *Trumpet* Joss Moody, a Black Scottish jazz trumpeter, is discovered upon his death (or, more specifically, upon the coroner's initial observation) to be biologically female by his community (Kay, 2000). Joss's life is primarily recalled by his white female widow, who knew about and supported Joss's simple yet convincing transgender performance, and their adopted son, Colman, now an adult heterosexual Black male, who did not know. In *Trumpet* the life of a queer Black European is produced through the recollections of a white heterosexual and queer woman and a black heterosexual son, underscoring the way in which Black queerness is created through intersections with other collective identities – whether those identities are aware of it or not. Kay also provides us with a reminder of the ways in which sometimes one set of minority identities can oppress others – as when Joss uses his masculine privilege to control the domestic spaces he shares with his wife and son, often abandoning them for the public arena to perform his music, despite their complaints of loneliness and isolation.

What queer narratives do is open up new spaces that are adjacent to the Black queer ones others may occupy (including all Black men, women, Black women and white men). More specifically, they imagine and create spaces shared with those whom they understand to be their peers rather than their superiors or inferiors. While sometimes this means emphasizing relationships that are ostensibly between equals (lovers, friends, allies), it can often mean deliberately destabilizing relationships seemingly fixed into a hierarchy: rather than the father being superior to the son in all ways, the son may possess knowledge or power equal to that of the father. In the case of *Trumpet*, Kay shows us how the life of a Black (queer) transgender musician is not lost, but retrieved through familial and professional relationships. Joss is not and never was isolated in space or time because he shared so many of those spaces and times with others – when he so chose.

Trumpet is admittedly a small move. Nonetheless, it points the way to understanding and seeking out queer of color bodies we might assume to be isolated and/or lost from our archive. Its notion of moving into ‘horizontal’ spaces and times where queers of color can be seen and heard is a mainstay of queer of color literature. Importantly, this horizontal movement is not simply a creative mechanism that could be turned into a plan for activism. There is a startling comparison between the ways in which popular queer literature – especially the paperback novels of the 1950s mainly written by heterosexuals to titillate ‘straight’ audiences (but consumed by black and white queers in large metropolitan centers in the West) – paralleled the end of World War II, with the demobbing of (closeted) gay and lesbian servicemen and women. Having discovered others ‘like them’ while in service, many stayed in the cities in which they were discharged (hence the birth of San Francisco as a ‘gay capital’) or else moved to other urban centers where, unlike in their tiny rural birth towns from which they originally hailed, they could find some joy and satisfaction, if not peace, in their public and private lives.

USHERING IN THE NEXT DECADES: ‘QUEERING’ BLACK TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSES AND THE LEGACY OF AUDRE LORDE

Black German queer and feminist/womanist theorist Fatima El-Tayeb takes up this concept of finding spaces and times through ‘horizontal’ peer organizing in her *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*:

In order to support my argument with specific claims, I will present a number of border-crossing case studies focusing primarily on Western Europe. [...] Building on works addressing specific national contexts, I suggest that the complex interactions of race, religion, migration and colonialism haunting the presence of minorities of color in Europe might be best explored through a

shift away from a *vertical* look at one ethnic group, covering various generations and their move from home to host country, toward a *horizontal* perspective crossing various ethnic and national divides. (2011: xxii)

For El-Tayeb, ‘queering’ ethnicity means reinterpreting and even changing one’s space-time: the ‘Veronicas’ of the Diaspora could ally with Adahs and the Angela Davises (perhaps even with the Josses) through street protests and community organizing. They need not wholly confine themselves to the spaces dictated by patriarchy or capitalism but, like Marxism, could seek out allies even on the shop-floor, if not on the street. By changing one’s space and how one spends time in it, women and queers of color can transform, El-Tayeb argues, both disempowering spaces of labor and oppressive public spaces (such as Tianamen Square) into spaces for alliance and empowerment.

This does not mean, of course, that ‘queering’ one’s identity through space and time will not be met with obstacles – the obstacles are formidable and often violent, sometimes horribly and deliberately fatal, as often seems intended on the part of the murderer. To violate spaces that the elite have reserved for themselves and to act as if in a different time in those spaces often begets such vicious retribution that one cannot help but ruminate on the importance of continuing to violate those spaces. After all, it was only some hundred years ago that many white women were first allowed into the (albeit mostly daytime) public sphere in the West unaccompanied by men. The first to violate heteropatriarchal space-time were harmed and humiliated; however, the gains that have been made by this repeated ‘violation’ have brought some women a measure of socioeconomic independent and political representation.

Change can happen, and few are a greater testament to that for women and queers of color than Audre Lorde, who, as poet, activist, teacher and essayist, trained women and queers of color in the 1980s and 1990s in activism (Professor Fatima El-Tayeb was one such associate). For instance, the late May

Ayim and the very vibrant and alive Katherine Oguntoye have testified to the importance of Audre Lorde's 1984 teaching visit to the Free University of Berlin, where Lorde first encountered Black Germans. Rather than teach and attempt to organize them 'vertically', Lorde served as an interlocutor, as a student and teacher who learned about their lives and stressed the importance of seeking one another out and sharing their different yet united voices as Black German women. Out of these meetings and organization came associations that are still active today – ADEFRA (AfroDEutscheFRaUen, or Black German Women) and the ISD (Initiative Schwarz-Deutsch, or Black German Initiative). Numerous scholarly anthologies, collections of poetry and essays, films, conferences and other group and individual efforts have emerged and continue to emerge. In interviews and testimonials on websites, on the printed page and in conference minutes Black German women and queers of color testify to how Lorde's teachings about horizontality enable and empower these organizations and their public and private lives. By finding public and domestic spaces where they could meet and commune with other Black Germans, they also took themselves, they report, away from white German interlocutors who engaged with them as if they were 'African savages' – i.e., back in a mythical colonial time not unlike the mythical time painted and written about by white Western Orientalists.

As argued at the beginning of this essay, Black transnational womanist, feminist and queer of color critiques have made great strides in securing newer and more diverse representation into media, discussion and the written word. While their concerns are still habitually excluded from scholarship on the Black Diaspora that does not identify itself as feminist or queer in its concerns, points of intersection have begun to emerge. If this notion of peer networking, or queering ourselves, continues to gain ground in young activist queer and feminist circles across the Diaspora, we might one day find this essay a quaint relic from another space and time.

NOTES

- 1 History itself is a Western concept – or more specifically, the theory (long since disproven by Western scientists and philosophers like Einstein and Derrida) that time and space flow in a neat linear progress.
- 2 See Blackwood, 1999 and Brown, 2007.
- 3 See Woolf, 1938; Beauvoir, 1953; Emecheta, 1971; hooks, 1981; Friedan, 1983.
- 4 Ironically, because most Black Caribbean and Black African creative and scholarly texts by men frame Paris as the 'home of the colonizer' and thus a space where Blacks can only feel colonized, not liberated.
- 5 I first came across this quote in Black queer theorist Dwight McBride's essay 'Can the Queen Speak?' (Carbado, 1999). The original citation is hooks, 1989: 120–26.

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States' Sexualities: Theorizing Sexuality, Gender and Governance

Jyoti Puri

The embodied being of what counts as the state is not a neutral body, but is instead a thoroughly sexualized one, whose sexual operations are invested with political power. (Aretxaga, 2005: 265)

Look a little more closely at the word 'state' in its political significance as polity, commonweal, commonwealth. Place it alongside that other meaning of 'state' (and of 'fantasy') as loss of authority, and it appears that the private and public attributes of the concept 'state' are not opposites but shadows – outer and inner faces precisely – of each other. (Rose, 1996: 8)

This article grapples with the imperatives of sexuality and state-based governance from a feminist standpoint. It calls on but also complicates a long history of feminist engagement with the state, which, despite counter interventions, tends to rewrite the state as monolithic, rational and distinct from society. Troubling such distinctions, Jacqueline Rose's epigraph juxtaposes the political, public connotations of 'state' with 'state' in the sense of the psychological, the private, to underscore the materiality of the state as well as its fragilities and fantasies.

Pursuing a line of thought implicit in Max Weber's writings on its legitimacy and authority, Rose reconsiders the state as subjective, irrational and ideational.

Drawing upon Rose (1996), Begoña Aretxaga's epigraph extends the subjective state to include the domain of sexuality. By seeing the state as subjective, Aretxaga theorizes its thoroughly sexualized aspects; or, put differently, she can consider how sexuality becomes instrumental to state power. Writing about the practice of strip-searching political prisoners in 1992 in the high security prison of Maghaberry in Northern Ireland, Aretxaga notes that power and desire co-mingle to unleash violence and hurt on Irish women's bodies that cannot be justified as rational or necessary. Stressing the irrational, excessive dimensions of the state, Aretxaga suggests that the mass strip search of Irish women political prisoners is the convergence of state fantasy and technology to sexually subjugate through a replication of heterosexual rape that also produces ethnic difference.

My interest in the sexual subjective aspects of the state was initially inspired by the movement to decriminalize homosexuality in the context of India. While the mobilization against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, the law that criminalizes same-sex sexual activity, extends back further, in the past decade the movement was crystallized around a 2001 public interest litigation to exclude consensual private same-sex adult sexual activity from the law.¹ In this reach for legal justice, what became apparent are the constraints on sexuality rights activism that result from recourse to the state. This is to say, the process and substance of the struggle to decriminalize homosexuality was, at least initially, shaped by what would be persuasive to state institutions, especially the judiciary. What became equally apparent as a result of the encounter between sexuality rights activists and state institutions and agencies, and is perhaps more compelling, is the state's recourse to sexuality in order to govern, leading me to suggest the concept of the sexual state.

Elaborating on the sexual state, in this article I offer a framework for critically analyzing the conjunctions of sexuality and state, while locating it within a larger context of feminist thought. That sexuality's recursiveness for the state extends beyond the movement toward decriminalizing homosexuality is also the broader conceptual and analytical task informing this article. For that reason, after laying out the multiple genealogies that undergird an analysis of sexuality and the state, I turn illustratively to the shutting down of dance bars in the western State of Maharashtra, India, which affected mostly young women from socially marginalized groups. My purpose is to indicate the usefulness of the critique of the sexual state in coming to grips with the state's preoccupations with regulating sexuality. However, before unfolding feminist genealogies and the conceptual framework, I present five suppositions by way of clearing the ground.

First and foremost, I take it that sexuality is of defining interest for feminist studies. In her influential essay 'Thinking Sex' Rubin (1989) questions feminisms' theoretical collapsing of gender and erotic desire, while arguing that feminist analysis ought to take seriously the study of sexuality. That sexuality is not the same as or a corollary of gender is a point that also resonates in the axioms around which Eve K. Sedgwick's book, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), is developed. While the precise relationship between sexuality and gender is both contextual and contingent on feminist approaches, worth underscoring here is that feminist thought which highlights sexuality over gender, or for that matter race or social class over gender, still counts as feminist. Second, sexuality pertains not just to individual subjects and social groupings but also to institutions and structures. Here, I draw parallels between the gendering of social institutions, such as the military and judiciary, and the heteronormative institutions of marriage and institutionalized religion, for example. Third, nation and state are not the same; much like the dynamics of gender and sexuality, they are historically related, but not inherently or naturally linked. Following from these points is the fourth premise that the state does not regulate sexuality only by constraining, managing and producing desire, sexual practices and their meanings for individuals and groups. Rather, the domains of sexuality and gender also saturate state institutions, agencies, ideologies and practices, a point that is anticipated by both Aretxaga (2005) and Rose (1996). Lastly, to theorize the sexual state means weaving together what I am broadly calling sexuality studies, governmentality studies and feminist studies' post-colonial strands. Even though not all the feminist work that I showcase below can be checked as post-colonial, post-colonial feminisms' attention to the imbrications of state, nation, race, sexuality, gender, colonialism and more has been especially valuable. Thus, although this article goes on to explore a specific case, the argument reverberates beyond India and other post-colonial settings.

CONCEPTUAL GENEALOGIES

Theorizing sexuality, gender and governance begins with rethinking Weberian notions of the state as monolithic, modern, rational and distinct from society. Political anthropologists have been at the forefront of poststructuralist approaches to the state or, in the words of Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2001), disaggregating and denaturalizing it. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer's (1985) influential approach to the state as cultural production, Philip Abrams' (1988) demystification of the state into a system *and* an idea and Foucault's (1991) reflections on governmentality that undo the dualities of state and civil society have unsettled monolithic and homogenous notions of the state. As a result, the state is understood as a historically contingent, culturally produced set of structures and institutions characterized by ontological myths of endurance and indispensability. Scholarship so influenced sees 'the state' as cultural effect, marked as much by materiality as by its imaginations, riven with contradictions and inconsistencies and lacking clear boundaries that demarcate it from civil society (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Gupta, 1995; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Joseph and Nugent, 1994; Ong, 1999; Scott, 1998; Steinmetz, 1999).

These 'culturalist' approaches further suggest that the state can be seen as an intense, rather than the defining, site of governance.² What has become increasingly clear as a result of this scholarship on the state is the inadequacy of mechanically deploying nineteenth-century political dualisms of state/civil society, public/private, power/resistance, colonial/post-colonial or Western/non-Western while assuming the state to be a monolith, described as weak or strong, shrinking, strengthening or disappearing in the horizon of transnational capital. For that reason, Nikolas Rose (1999) and others have persuasively argued for theorizing governance away from the state toward more flexible and capacious analyzes equal to the complex and dynamic articulations of power.

While the ongoing reconfigurations of states and the expansion of other sites of governance rightly complicate earlier analytic models, states and nations are hardly becoming obsolete in political analyzes of power and politics. Although the urgencies of retheorizing the state and, for that matter, sovereignty away from the nexus of state, territory, and juridicality³ are clear, what is also undeniable is that 'the state' continues to endure in our language and imaginations as well as in systems of surveillance, regulations and power. The state may not be the sole source of power, as Foucault (1978) cautions, but its institutions, structures, discourses and practices form especially dense nodes of governance and regulation.

Bringing the state into the fold of 'culture', as contingent on its imagined, representational, discursive aspects, does much to reimagine the state and rethink the materiality and rationality typically consistently assigned to it. As Ann Stoler (2004) usefully argues, while nations and nationalisms are consigned to the realm of affect and emotion, rationality is routinely assumed of the state. Feminist scholars such as Aretxaga (2005), Rose (1996) and Stoler (2004) have been at pains to point the subjective, irrational dimensions of the non-monolithic state. This is not to suggest that the state is a subject or an actor, but to see 'it' as a complex assemblage of structures, discourses and practices that are fragmented, contradictory, marked as much by the subjective as by reason. Developing the role of affect in the functioning of the late colonial state in the Dutch East Indies, Stoler (2004) challenges the idea of the rationally minded, bureaucratically driven state where affect and sentimentality are seen merely as smokescreens of state power, otherwise seen as based in reasoned calculations or as the excesses of racist ideologies of colonial rule. She argues that the Dutch state's concerns with affect and sentimentality, in fact, were not missteps of rule or metaphors for something else; rather, social policy on educational reform, citizenship requirements,

marriage laws, political stances and the tone and content of archives produced about these issues were charged with calibrating sentiment and affect as crucial dimensions of colonial rule.

Despite such interrogations by Aretxaga, Rose, Stoler and others of the subjective, disaggregated, denaturalized state, gender and sexuality remain invisible or at best implicit in state/governmentality studies, while much feminist thought continues to grapple with the state and governance in limited ways. Taking state/governmentality studies as a whole, attention to gender, and especially sexuality, is rather the exception than the norm.⁴ Feminist scholarship on the state is far too rich and vast to condense here, but one persistent tendency has been to highlight the impact of state governance and policies on (implicitly heterosexual, normatively gendered) women. Thus, the state, and its particular institutions, is seen as wielding power over various aspects affecting the bodies, lives, labor and mobility of women. This approach was usefully expanded, especially through contributions on post-colonial contexts, into theorizing the state as not only impacting gendered bodies and lives but also itself being structured by the imperatives of gender and power (Enloe, 1990; 2000; Hasan, 1994; Kandayoti, 1991; Mernissi, 1991; Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996; Peterson, 1992; Stevens, 1999; Young, 2003; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989). The significance of state policies and effects on women, the gendered, race-, religion-, and class-based inequalities of citizenship and the masculinist politics of state institutions such as development and the military are underscored in these contributions.

Notwithstanding such mediations and exceptions, which are expanded upon below, feminist contributions on the state remain limited in two ways. First, the state is frequently, and perhaps unwittingly, reproduced as a monolith, marked by unity and coherence. Conceptually and empirically the state is often homogenized as an 'it', a tendency that Philip Corrigan, borrowing from Aime

Césaire, has called 'thingification' (1994: xvii). Second, issues of sexuality, analyzed in terms of reproduction, family, marriage, tradition/modernity, sexual labor and more, remain a corollary of gender and tacitly posed within a heteronormative framework. Thus, feminist engagements with the state tend to take gender, variously understood as women, masculinity or feminization, as its focal point. In contrast, sexuality and gender figure more fully in feminist theorizing on nation, while either neglecting state institutions, discourses and practices or subsuming the state to nation – for example, in references to 'nation-state' even though the focus is more explicitly on nationalisms and nations (Berlant and Freeman, 1993; Eng, 1997; Gopinath, 2005; Mosse, 1985; Parker et al., 1992; Stoler 1995). Whereas considerations of heteronormativity (even homonormativity) and the normalization of gender have been generative for feminist analyzes of nation, they find far less traction in terms of the state. Ignored in much of the analyzes are what V. Spike Peterson (2007) underscores of Western contexts, that not only sex/gender systems but also heterosexist reproduction and hierarchical relations were integral to the process of state formation. Questioning this neglect of sexuality and state, M. Jacqui Alexander observes that:

A great deal of analytic work has been done by feminists in different parts of the world on demystifying the state's will to represent itself as disinterested, neutered, and otherwise benign. We now understand how sex and gender lie, for the state, at the juncture of the disciplining of the body and the control of the population and are, therefore, constitutive of those very practices Much less work has been done, however, on elaborating the processes of heterosexualization at work within the state apparatus and charting the ways in which they are constitutively paradoxical: that is, how heterosexuality is at once necessary to the state's ability to constitute and imagine itself, while simultaneously marking a site of its own instability. (1997: 65)

The point, then, is to question not only the state's role in regulating sex and gender but also how this regulation helps constitute the

state and its imaginations. As Alexander acerbically notes, the state is neither neutral nor neutered.

FEMINIST FRAMINGS OF SEXUALITIES AND STATES

Offsetting the neglect described above are illustrative feminist contributions energized by attention to the interplay of sexualities and states. What sets these contributions apart is not just attention to the regulation of sexuality – for example, the ways in which state institutions, agencies and discourses seek to normalize heteronormativity – but also how these institutional sites are shaped by the mandates of sexual regulation. Indeed, this literature is distinguished by efforts to demonstrate and undermine the co-constitutions of sexuality and state. My purpose here is not to exhaustively map this feminist scholarship but to signal it as a distinct area of intervention and to draw attention to its useful strands.

One significant aspect is attention to the processes and procedures through which states not just regulate but, in fact, produce the domains of sexuality. Thus, sexuality and its meaning and parameters are actively produced by, among others, state institutions, agencies and discourses. This is not to suggest that the assemblage we abbreviate as the state is the only or even the primary site of producing sexuality. Rather, it is to note, as Jacqueline Stevens (1999) does, the intimacies between state forms and sexuality. She argues that gender, sexuality and race, among others, are not pre-political categories of affiliation that play out in the arena of the state. Rather, in her book *Reproducing the State*, Stevens speaks to the mechanisms through which gender, sexuality, race and nationality are actively brought into being as a result of the state and its practices and policies. Davina Cooper extends this argument by suggesting that '[i]t is not simply that the state affects the forms modern sexuality and its struggles take, but also that the

nature of the state is influenced by sexual identities, ideologies, and culture' (1993: 257–8). The mutual constitutions, indeed the co-productions, of sexuality and state are at issue in these contributions.

Seen in this way, the state's investments in the heteronormative start to become more obvious and the reasons to disrupt these investments become more compelling. Heterosexuality and its normalization as natural become the reference points for state-based governance. Speaking to the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act in the Bahamas, Alexander (1997; 2005) compellingly shows how legislation reinvents heterosexuality by creating a subordinate group of lesbians, gay men, sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS. In a skillful argument, Alexander shows how the state restores the heterosexual privileges of the domestic patriarch by conflating disruptive, violent heterosexuality – narrowly defined to include incest, wife-beating and sexual abuse – with same-sex desire and, thereby, criminality with homosexuality. Writing against the grain of such governance practices, Lisa Duggan exhorts a 'queering of the state' (1994:1) by unraveling the state's investment in the reproduction of heteronormativity and the preferential treatment of heterosexuality. Writing in response to the state- and national-level political influence of the Christian right wing in the US, Duggan suggests the need to 'disestablish' the state of heteronormativity. She argues compellingly that, just as the state cannot support a particular religion, it ought not to uphold heteronormativity. With that, she not only brings the state and heteronormativity in the same field of critical analysis but also unravels the ways in which heteronormativity is crucial to the proliferation of governance in the sphere of sexuality and sociality.

That issues of race and social class are imbricated in these intimacies of sexuality and state-based governance becomes amply clear in other feminist interventions. Some of the scholarship on immigration, such as Eithne Luibhéid's (2002) work on US immigration

and border-control regimes, although not strictly 'post-colonial,' addresses the workings of state agencies and institutions that rest on discourses and practices of sexuality and gender. Therefore, foreign women suspected of being lesbians, sex workers or unwed pregnant women were actively denied entry into the US. At the same time, Luibhéid (2005) points to the privileging of heteronormative and class-based mandates, namely through the legally binding affidavits of support between immigrants and their sponsors that govern immigration. Luibhéid effectively calls attention to the triangulations of state, nation and sexuality that undergird immigration, while underscoring the state-based policies and practices that produce, normalize and stabilize sexuality, a point that resonates with Stevens' (1999) efforts to show sexuality and gender as effects of the state.

Parallel to the state's investments in the heteronormative are preoccupations with same-sex sexualities. Taking a variety of forms, these preoccupations can result in the expansion of the state, unequal citizenship, questionable policies, criminalization and more. Speaking to the growth of the bureaucratic state and its interest in homosexuality in the US around the mid-twentieth century, for example, Margot Canaday (2011) offers the notion of the 'straight state' as a point of departure. Emphasizing state formation and a preoccupation with homosexuality, Canaday calls attention to the expanding reach of the state and specifically the roles of the Bureau of Immigration, the military and federal agencies for disbursing welfare benefits in institutionalizing policies regulating homosexuality and, in the process, producing it as a category of differential citizenship. Not surprisingly, then, differential citizenship, or what David Evans (1993) has called 'sexual citizenship', becomes heightened as the means through which to secure equal political and cultural rights from the state. Yet, as Jeffrey Weeks (1988) and Diane Richardson (1998) have underscored, citizenship itself becomes associated with heterosexuality and, in fact, male privilege.⁵

Questions of gender, or more specifically male privilege, become matters of investigation in some critical feminist interventions on sexuality and the state. For example, Christine Keating (2007) uses the concept of the 'post-colonial sexual contract' to order to capture the collusions between majoritarian male consent and the nascent independent and centralized state in the context of India.⁶ She argues that consent for the social contract was obtained in exchange for sexual domination over women; sexualized and gendered (as well as racialized) inequalities were foundational to the state as social contract, as a fraternal order among men. Speaking to the Progressive Era (1880–1920) in the US, Kristin Luker (1998) highlights the turning point of the state's control of sexuality and, in this case, the role of feminist reformers. Describing the regulation of prostitution, Luker traces the impact of the feminist social reformers and others who helped create new regulatory state apparatuses, thereby not only impacting the discourses and practices of sex work but also the changing face of the state – one that shifted from a 'maternalist' to a 'male' orientation.

CONTOURS OF THE SEXUAL STATE

To these efforts to theorize the subjective state and a non-subject-oriented, structural understanding of sexuality the concept of the sexual state can be especially handy. Not only does it enable a coming to grips with the impact of the state on the regulation of sexuality in terms of sexual subjects, what gets produced and stabilized as sexuality, but it also invites an understanding of how the regulation of sexuality stabilizes and produces the state. More specifically, by the sexual state, I refer to critical explorations of the ways in which sexuality is foundational to state-based governance and helps constitute state-effect (after Mitchell, 1999), or the idea of a stable, monolithic, enduring entity. As much of the feminist literature explored

above also emphasizes, the mediating effects of gender, race, social class and nation are entirely relevant.

To theorize governance and sexuality through the lens of the sexual state means attending to the imperatives of heteronormativity without, as post-colonial feminisms caution, over-amplifying this concept beyond its geopolitical histories. In other words, while heteronormativity may carry much usefulness as a critical concept in some US or Western European contexts, it may have limited resonance in others within and outside of these geopolitical spaces. Perhaps, therefore, E. Frances White's (2001) reaffirmation of George Mosse's notion of sexual respectability in terms of African American women's bodies and Geeta Patel's (2012) introduction to the idea of the heteroproper within the context of post-colonial India can be helpful. In my focus on the decriminalization of homosexuality, also in the Indian context, I favor the twin concepts of sexualized respectability and sexualized disposability over the grammar of heteronormativity.

At stake in these critical considerations of sexuality and state are deeper understandings of the centrality of sexuality to state-based governance as well as critiques of state power. My purpose is not to suggest an overarching theory of the state, or sexuality for that matter, but to underscore states' preoccupations with sexuality and the ways in which governing its various aspects helps shore up the substance and coherence of the state. The idea is to see how the mandate to govern sexuality helps normalize and naturalize the state. What is sexuality, what is normal sexuality, what is appropriate, indeed, respectable sexuality, under what circumstances, for which gendered subjects, at what ages, how to manage this messy aspect of human life, how to channel it toward socially productive ends, how to contain sexual excesses that might be inherent to sexuality are all key points that give coherence to the state. I seek to bring these questions of sexuality and state into the same field of analysis to show their co-constitution and to

underscore sexuality as an essential and substantial component of state power. For this reason, inasmuch as Aretxaga's (2005) attention to the crises of strip searches of Irish women political prisoners, for example, is useful, the banal, quotidian, unremarkable aspects of state institutions, discourses and practices cannot be overlooked, a point that becomes more vivid in the case of the shutting down of dance bars in the western part of India.

SEXUAL MORALITIES OF THE STATE

On 21 July 2005, the Maharashtra state legislature passed a statewide ban effectively shutting down what were called dance bars and potentially putting out of work some 75,000 women employed as dancers. Dance bars were establishments with liquor and entertainment licenses where fully clothed, mostly working-class and marginal-caste women danced to popular Hindi (also Bollywood) music before a socially and economically mixed male clientele. They were a staple primarily of the State of Maharashtra and not widely known elsewhere. While dance bars had remained on the periphery of popular local and national discourse, they gradually emerged into broader public consciousness with the film *Chandni Bar* (2001) and Suketu Mehta's ode to Mumbai, *Maximum City* (2004). But what exploded them into the mainstream media and popular consciousness was the April 2005 declaration by the then Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister for the State of Maharashtra, R.R. Patil, that dance bars ought to be shut down. Although initially the prohibition was to affect only dance bars outside of Mumbai, within days it included the ones in the city as well. What was paradoxical is that these dance bars had not only flourished for a couple of decades by then but had done so under the regulatory gaze of the state, in the form of licensing, taxation, routine interaction with the police and more. Yet, within a course of a few months, by 14 August 2005, dance bars were abruptly closed.

The sanction specifically affected women performing in these dance bars, even as the bars and what are called permit rooms could still continue to sell food and liquor. Also left untouched were bars, clubs and places of entertainment associated with the elite or establishments with a rating of three stars and higher, where women continued to perform. Dance bars ranged from the seedy to the well appointed, and their clients included working-class men and men from the wealthy business and trading communities of Mumbai. Women danced fully clothed to popular Hindi music and received compensation primarily in the forms of tips from this mostly male audience. It was up to the bar dancers to decide whether other sexual services, such as sexual intercourse, were part of their labor and it was not in the interests of the bar owners to impose such work as a requirement. In their turn, the bars owners received a sizeable amount of the dancers' daily earnings in exchange for providing them a relatively safe working environment and protection from sexual harassment and violence.

FEMINIST INTERVENTIONS, FEMINIST DISCOURSES

Not unexpectedly, feminist and pro-women groups came to play a critical role in this sudden clamor about bar dancers.⁷ Their first challenge was how to respond to the state-led initiative to ban bar dancing, since little was widely known about bar dancers or the specifics of the bars beyond a handful of popular representations or informal conversations. In effect, Patil and his supporters were able to make unsubstantiated and not immediately verifiable allegations that the majority of bar dancers were from Bangladesh, therefore posing a national security threat and not qualifying for rehabilitative measures. One available study quoted by the Maharashtra State Women's Commission was based on a sample too small to carry any heft. Subsequently, two studies conducted by feminist researchers,

'Background and Working Conditions of Women Working in Dance Bars in Mumbai' (SNDT-FAOW 2005) and 'After the Ban: Women Working in Dance Bars of Mumbai' (SNDT-FAOW 2006), helped fill in the critical gaps. Based on a survey of 500 women across fifty bars in Mumbai, the first study (SNDT-FAOW 2005) established that more than 80 percent of the women had migrated into Mumbai from other Indian states in search of a livelihood. Nearly 42 percent were from caste-based communities where unmarried women rely on some form of sexual labor as the primary earners in their families. What also needs to be noted here is that the women involved had low levels of education, with as many as 42 percent being illiterate, and, despite some ambivalence toward their profession, women took pride in their hard work and had self-respect. A second follow-up study (SNDT-FAOW 2006), released almost eighteen months after the ban and which related to the profound impact on bar dancers and their livelihoods, lives, family members, housing, health and more, further fueled political differences among feminist and pro-women's groups in terms of how to respond to the state-led ban.

The primary split was between feminists or pro-women individuals and groups who took an anti-ban position and those who supported it. For example, the Dance Bar Virodhi Manch (Anti-dance Bar Forum), a collective of twenty-four NGOs, supported the ban owing to concerns with trafficking: 'It [dance bars] is only a symptom of the basic disease of trafficking in women and minor girls ... Our ultimate aim is a total prohibition in the whole country.'⁸ This, despite the fact that the 2005 study had clarified that women were not trafficked into the profession, contrary to the government's allegations and popular reports. It also reported that three of the 500 (0.2 percent) women in the study were under fourteen years old, 6.8 percent in the survey were under eighteen years, and the average age of women in the survey was between twenty-one and twenty-five years.

A later report in the English-language newspaper *Times of India* suggested that the Anti-dance Bar Forum saw dancing as easy money and was skeptical about bar dancers as poverty-inflicted, as quite a few of the dancers were believed to have amassed great extralegal wealth, a point reinforced by Patil and other state officials.⁹ The 2005 study rebutted these myths by reporting that the women were entirely dependent on a share of the tips received from customers, unlike other salaried employees, and that there was much variation in earning among bar dancers, with 70 percent earning less than Indian Rs. 15,000 (approximately \$330) and 25.8 percent earning Rs. 15,000–30,000 (approximately \$330–660) per month. Others, however, sought to distance themselves from these dubious representations of bar dancers while endorsing the ban. Their concern was about the legitimization of sexual, gendered and caste- and class-based exploitation in bar dancing. Meena Gopal (2012) notes that several Dalit-Bahujan sought to end the caste-based sexual exploitation of women from marginal castes.¹⁰ Highlighting the quandaries posed by the vulnerable bar dancers, Nalini Rajan wondered: 'Should feminists press for the reemployment of the girls in the dance bars, or forgo that stance as 'false consciousness', and labour for the girls' rehabilitation in more 'respectable' professions?''¹¹

That the banning of dance bars imperiled the lives and livelihoods of the dancers and their families and unfairly singled out this form of labor from the larger commerce of sex-based entertainment and services were among the imperatives that led some feminist groups to oppose the state government's provision. What distinguishes anti-ban feminist positions from the pro-ban ones was the degree of ambivalence that colored solidarity with bar dancers. While pro-ban positions were often flattened through unambiguous stances on anti-trafficking and favoring non-sexual forms of paid labor, anti-ban positions had to negotiate murky feminist terrain. In her overview of the two SNTD-FAOW studies of bar dancers discussed above, S. Anandhi

(2010) describes the conceptual shifts in feminist critiques inspired by the bar dancers from marginal classes and castes, thereby melding the sharp lines between dancers and feminists, academic and sexual labor, privileged and marginalized expressions of agency. This meant acknowledging that sexual labor is *not* exceptional as a site of women's exploitation, concerns about sexual morality or the male gaze that women generally face. Perhaps the most influential shift in feminist thought described by S. Anandhi was an emphasis on dancing as principally a matter of livelihood on a par with other forms of paid work. Echoing this stance, Flavia Agnes (2005), the most outspoken and prolific feminist voice on this issue, suggested that the ban's threat to the dancers' livelihood and dignity tipped her decision to provide them legal counsel despite her longstanding anti-trafficking activism.¹² Agnes worked closely with Varsha Kale, who is President of the Bharatiya Bar Girls Union but not a bar dancer herself, and documented much of the political and legal struggle before, during and in the aftermath of the shutting down of dance bars, while arguing strongly for the reinstatement of bar dancers.

Responding to the exigencies of the stated ban on bar dancing, feminist and pro-women positions thus came to be aligned in favor of the ban or against it. What did get short shrift in these pro-women and feminist responses to the ban on bar dancing is an analysis of the state. The pressures to respond to the state-led ban, ironically, deflected a thoroughgoing critique of the state. It is not that the state is not visible in feminist analyzes. Indeed, one reason to support the cause of bar dancers and oppose the ban is to thwart the conservative sexual moralities being imposed by the state. For example, Sonal Makhija (2010) historicized the ongoing moral anxieties of the state and its impulse to 'reform' and 'purity', while Rajan (2007) stressed the need to oppose the state government's representations of the dance bars as sites of vice and corruption. Agnes (2005) bluntly indicted the 'hypocritical

morality' of the state and the sexism of state legislators that is common across party lines. Another aspect of feminist attention to the state came in relation to the 2006 judgment by the Bombay High Court, which ruled against the state government's shutting down of dance bars. The bar owners' association had filed a writ in Bombay High Court challenging the prohibition against dancing in the bars, in which Agnes and the team of lawyers at Majlis, an all-women legal and cultural organization, intervened on behalf of the bar dancers.¹³ That the Bombay High Court ruled on behalf of the bar dancers as well as against the diktats of the state government was keenly observed. Despite this awareness, what is elided is more careful and complex attention to the conjunctions of state and sexuality, and the pluralities of what counts as the state. Moreover, sexuality becomes implicitly constituted as a domain through which individuals and groups are regulated and the state becomes its questionable source. In other words, sexuality becomes the point through which the opposition between state and society is reaffirmed, as is the split between subjects and institutions.

ANALYTICS OF THE SEXUAL STATE

Leaning on these feminist debates and indictments of the state, I suggest bringing sexuality, subjectivity, state and sociality within the same analytical field by offering a critique of the sexual state. Although the contestations between state institutions, bar dancers, bar dance owners, the judiciary and feminist and pro-women constituencies call for a fuller analysis, in the interests of being succinct I highlight central aspects of this critique. The first aspect has to do with rationalities of state power and its recourse to sexuality, which is to say that paying attention to the performativity of sexuality to state governance is crucial. By this, I refer to the ways in which governing sexuality in myriad, banal, sometimes uncommon ways is what preserves the ontology of the state. As an assemblage of

institutions, discourses and imaginations, 'the state' has no essence and the rhetorics and practices of governing sexuality are what lend it the appearance of substance. Yet, there is a crucial distinction between tackling the performativity of sexuality to state power and seeing it, as was widely believed of the shutting down of dance bars, as alibi for political gain or financial profit. The state legislature's upholding of a conservative sexual morality was seen as a ploy to advance political fortunes, to curry favor with the public. It was also widely reported that the impetus to shut down the bars was a result of the breakdown of extralegal fiscal agreements between the dance bar owners, state officials, police and others. State bureaucrats, politicians and police were known to be deeply embedded in the sexual economy of dance bars. While this nexus is hardly irrelevant or unimportant, the sexual dimensions of the economy, the political manoeuvring and the changing strategies of regulation cannot be seen as simply derivative. *Despite* all of the financial stakes, the bars are banned by state legislature. Indeed, the domain of sexuality – its regulation, its potential for cultural chaos, its centrality to economies of gender and its significance to finances, demographics and population and health and disease – is foundational to state governance and power. Sexuality's greatest instrumentality is its association with the irrational, the excessive, the disruptive and the ability to engender chaos that must be harnessed over and over again. At this historical moment, when post-colonial states and national states elsewhere are undergoing rapid reconfigurations in relation to transnational governance, national privatization, multinational corporations and others, the management of sexuality is especially relevant.¹⁴

Insofar as the ban is not principally a façade for financial or political gain, and is an effect of the sexual state, the question is: why dance bars? At work here is an exchange between one regime of managing sexuality and another, a transition from one form of regulation to another. It was a legislator from

a district south of Mumbai who first demanded an end to dance bars in the area, citing concerns about the moral corruption of the young. Patil quickly agreed that dance bars were 'corrupting rural youth' and 'damaging the culture of the State'.¹⁵ Why were dance bars, in comparison to other forms of sexual entertainment and pleasure, especially injurious? The answer, I believe, lies in state and popular discourses of what made them distinctive, namely discourses of extraction and excess. Unlike other forms of sexual labor, such as sex work, it was believed that dance bars do not simply provide sexual services to men but are uniquely about wringing money and gifts out of men by misleading promises of love and romance. Popularized by Mehta (2004) and widely reported in mainstream media was the idea that women performers will cultivate regular clients by first flirting with them in the bars and then amplifying their attentions outside the bars to extract the maximum possible compensation, while clients become emotionally obsessed with the women, showering staggering amounts of money on them and occasionally even marrying them. If the work of bar dancing is seen as inherently extractive and excessive, then the men were represented as needing to be saved from themselves. Alternatively cast as gullible and besotted, the men – but also their wives and children – were seen as requiring the intervention of the state's regulatory mechanisms. Bar dancing was seen as among the worst forms of sexual commerce precisely because, as Makhija (2010) noted, the indeterminacy of exchange between dancer and customer is most unsettling to the state.

If the (re)regulation of the sexual, subjective and affective dimensions of bar dancing gives some insight into the state's preoccupations with sexuality, then it also indicates how such sexual preoccupations help constitute state-effect. This is to say, the otherwise fragmented, contradictory, inconsistent assemblage of institutions, discourses and practices are given the appearance of a coherent and monolithic unit. Anti-ban feminist observers

have rightly lauded the judiciary's overturning of the legislative provision to shut down the bars, but the state remains more deeply fragmented and inconsistent on the issue. For example, Patil initially proposed an ordinance banning the bars, but the state governor refused to sign it, thereby requiring the introduction of a bill that was signed into law. Opposition party members also raised objections to the bill, while emphasizing the need to rehabilitate the bar dancers. But despite these differences and most of all the oppositions between the state government and the judiciary, what is remarkable is that the state's function in regulating sexuality, producing and then managing the link between sexual labor and public morality or ensuring the sexual respectability of the collective was not in question!

The state as fragmented and inconsistent aspects whose appearance is preserved through governing sexuality is also exemplified in Bombay High Court's 2006 judgment *Indian Hotel & Restaurants Association vs. The State of Maharashtra and Others*, which declared the ban against dance bars as unconstitutional for two reasons: it violated the right to practice a profession, occupation or trade; and it violated Article 14, the Right to Equality.¹⁶ Even though the ruling emphasized the right to practice a profession, occupation or trade and questioned the targeting of bar dancing over other related professions, it did not fundamentally interrogate the state government's or the state's role in governing sexuality. Thus, the judgment found fault with the legislative premise that bar dancing is obscene, immoral and exploitative even though such performances are permissible in other sites and women can continue to work in dance bars in other capacities, but the legislature's role in regulating sexuality or its suturing to public morality was not doubted. The judges concluded that:

However, considering that the object of the Legislation is to prevent dances which are obscene, vulgar or immoral and hence derogatory to the dignity of women and to prevent exploitation of women, we find that there is no

nexus between the classification and the object of the Act. The Act bans all dancing including the dances which are permitted in the exempted establishments and which are governed by the same rules and conditions of licence. If women other than as dancers can work in the prohibited establishments and that does not amount to exploitation, we do not see as to why when women dance to earn their livelihood, it becomes exploitation. (2006: 253)¹⁷

ON REFLECTION

After the Bombay High Court's ruling in favor of reinstating dance bars the state government filed an appeal in response to which the Supreme Court issued its verdict on July 16, 2013, upholding the lower court's decision and the reinstating the dance bars. Remarkably, the state government has refused to issue licenses, threatened to make them prohibitively expensive, and do everything in its power to not re-open the dance bars, as a result of which feminist concerns and debates on the issue still continue to simmer. The state government's ban brought to the forefront feminist ideological, political and strategic differences but also helped an earlier generation of feminist activists rethink their positions, as perhaps most poignantly observed by Agnes (2005) and Anandhi (2010). Agnes (2005) acknowledged not only her longstanding activism with the anti-trafficking movement and her role in protesting beauty contests, demeaning portrayals of young women in Hindi films and so on but also how she was influenced by a younger generation of colleagues for whom representations of women's bodies and sexualities were not quite the same lightning rod. In her review, Anandhi (2010) thoughtfully reflected on the conceptual shifts that were triggered by the bar dancers, their claims to livelihood and the legitimacy of their sexual labor among feminist scholars and activists who participated in the SNTD-FAOW surveys. She aptly drew parallels between feminists and bar dancers (notwithstanding that these might not be mutually exclusive categories) as follows: 'The bar dancers were

also constantly negotiating, as feminists would do, with notions of autonomy, financial independence, decision-making, not just in their work, but in their lives, with their families and with other constituents of society' (2010: 53).

To these critical feminist contributions and the SNTD-FAOW surveys, without which this analysis would not have been possible, I would like to add criticism of the sexual state in order to deepen our understanding of the state government's investment in banning the dance bars. In a nutshell, this approach points toward the ways in which the domain of sexuality saturates state institutions, agencies and discourses. This is to say that the ban on dance bars is not a façade for political or financial negotiations but a central aspect of what defines and sustains the state. By banning the dance bars, the state government sought to replace one form of sexual regulation by another, even though the substitution was not insignificant. Whereas bar dancers were previously affected primarily by harassment from the police and, indirectly, through legal and extralegal fiscal arrangements between bar owners and state officials, the ban rendered the vast majority of them unemployed. Whereas concerns about sexual morality are ever imminent in terms of state institutions and discourses, they became particularly salient in relation to dance bars. What set the bar dancers apart from other sex industries was the discourse of extraction and excess, but in ways that were partly the cause of the ban *and also its effect*. If the ban brought this discourse to the forefront, then it also amplified it in the public discussions that ensued.

For feminist scholarship the concept of the sexual state points toward a more complicated engagement with and critique of the state. This becomes relevant to a wide swathe of feminist concerns, including sex work, reproductive policies, the welfare state and gendered and sexual citizenship, which are invested in reifying neither sexuality nor the state. First, the sexual state suggests the importance of understanding and unraveling

the co-constitutions of sexuality and state. Going beyond questions of the state regulation of sexuality, it encourages analyzes of the ways in which state institutions, discourses and practices messily, contradictorily and sometimes unevenly produce meanings and parameters of sexuality. These meanings are constantly being mediated by the differentials of gender, caste, class and race. It is no coincidence that the sexual labor of bar dancing comes to be seen as extractive and excessive, thereby demanding a different regulatory order. The vigor with which bar dancing was condemned by state agents had everything to do with the fact that bar dancers are primarily from marginalized economic and caste groups and could be demeaned as migrants from Bangladesh or victimized as trafficked and underage labor. The sexual state then also suggests analyzing with equal attention the ways in which sexuality performatively constitutes the state. Or, put differently, it points to the ways in which sexuality and its regulation and preoccupations help perform state governance.

Second, the concept of the sexual state indicates a contradictory, contested, fragmented, indeed, subjective view of the state. By this, I do not mean that the state is a subject or subject-like; rather, that unreason, irrationality, excess and affect are also attributes of state institutions, discourses and practices. The contributions by Alexander, Aretxaga, Rose and others noted at the outset repeatedly draw attention to the contradictions, irrationalities and subjectivities of the state that can be ignored only at our peril. Exposing the otherwise fragmented and inconsistent state's recourse to the domain of sexuality will strengthen existing feminist critiques of state power, especially ones that tend to inadvertently rewrite the state as monolithic and rational. Remaining attached to imaginations of the state as implicitly monolithic only serves to obscure ontologies of state power and our collective role in preserving them.

Third, an analytics of the sexual state points toward a structural, and not solely

subjective, view of sexuality. Inasmuch as some state agents sought to prohibit a particular form of sexual labor and deliberately rendered thousands of women jobless, what also needs to be questioned are the state's preoccupations with sexuality, the calibrations between one form of sexual regulation and another and the deliberations between sexual normality and sexual excess. This structural view of sexuality helps deepen our understandings of the ways in which it is used to enhance the reach of state governance and give state power the appearance of coherence and continuance. The policies and discourses of the ban, including the Bombay High Court's 2006 decision, helped reconstitute state-effect, or the idea of a monolithic coherent state. What papered over the significant differences in the constituent parts of the state assemblage is the foundational assumption that regulating sexual morality and sexual labor are essential functions of the state.

Fourth, the concept of the sexual state exhorts a more thoroughgoing critique of state power. A contradictory, fragmented view of the state does not necessarily suggest attenuated state power; in fact, the contrary is true. Yet, seeing state power as fragmented means acknowledging that it is not always already heteronormative, that power can assume different modalities, such as ensuring sexual respectability and sexual propriety and reigning in what is seen as sexual threat while deflecting attention from its own sexual excesses. At the same time, state discourses and institutions, their contradictions and messiness, can also open up 'the state' as a site of feminist intervention. Such interventions may not be limited to seeking recourse from one state institution to restrict another – for example, soliciting the intervention of the judiciary on the legislature – but also by deepening critiques of the state's mandate to govern sexuality and its aspects and relentlessly pointing to the state's preoccupations with governing sexuality. Even though the fractured, contradictory aspects of state power and its recourse to sexuality will not come as

a surprise to a versed feminist audience, the concept of the sexual state suggests that our grammar may not have caught up with our critiques. It also suggests that it is our task, so far rather unevenly shared, to unravel not just the centrality of gender but also of sexuality to governance in feminist investigations of intimacy, governance and sex work.

NOTES

- 1 For more on the law and the mobilization against it, see Puri, 2012.
- 2 On the spatial imaginations of the state as an overarching container of governance, see Ferguson and Gupta, 2002.
- 3 For example, Hansen and Stepputat, 2005b is aimed at undoing the triangulation of state–territory–sovereignty in order to reconsider how the ability and will to deploy violence and execute life and death have been reconfigured in the contemporary world.
- 4 For a notable exception, see Jessop, 2008.
- 5 Reflections on sexual citizenship consider sexuality from the angle of the state and nation, but do so in limited ways. For one, cultural or political forms of citizenship are only one aspect of states' impact on persons within their territory, including queer subjects. Secondly, considerations of sexual citizenship tend to focus on the state's impact on sexual subjects while seeing the state as a stable and coherent given.
- 6 On this point, also see Das, 2007.
- 7 It is entirely possible that some of the bar dancers identify as feminists or pro-women. But, here, I am interested in the ways in which bar dancers came to be the grounds on which differences among feminists and pro-women constituencies were articulated.
- 8 www.articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2005-06-01/news/27502339_1_dance-bars-mumbai-police-act-notification, accessed 22 May 2012.
- 9 www.articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-03-16/india/27888130_1_dance-bar-bar-girls-bar-owner, accessed 22 May 2012.
- 10 Dalit and Bahujan are forms of self-identity embraced by those who were formerly known as the untouchables castes.
- 11 www.beta.epw.in/download_link/63455/PDF/p.1, accessed 26 May 2012.
- 12 www.indiatogether.org/manushi/issue149/bardance.htm, accessed 29 May 2012.
- 13 For more information on Majlis, see www.majlislaw.com/en/top/about-us/about/ accessed 29 May 2012.

- 14 For an especially useful discussion on this point, see Berlant, 1997.
- 15 www.flonnet.com/fl2209/stories/20050506001104700.htm, accessed 25 May 2012.
- 16 www.indiankanoon.org/doc/1434517/, accessed 15 September 2011.
- 17 The judgment is available online: www.indiankanoon.org/doc/1434517/ accessed 29 May 2012.

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The Figure of the Trafficked Victim: Gender, Rights and Representation

Rutvica Andrijasevic

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, critical scholars in gender, migration and post-colonial studies have been engaged in attempting to dislodge the figure of the sex trafficking victim from its position of primacy in public, policy and academic debates. This is the figure of a young, innocent and foreign woman tricked into prostitution abroad. She is battered and under continuous surveillance so that her only hope is in police rescue. In the words of Jo Doezema, one of the earliest critics of the media imaginary of trafficking, representation of sex trafficking is centred on ‘the paradigmatic image of a young and naïve innocent lured or deceived by evil traffickers into a life of sordid horror from which escape is nearly impossible’ (2000: 24).

Critical migration scholars have advanced the concern that tougher actions to combat trafficking – developed on the wave of public outcry against sex slavery – have resulted in more stringent anti-immigration measures and have shifted migration towards irregular

channels managed by third parties and agencies (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud, 2007; Anderson et al., 2009). This, scholars argue further, has made migrants dependent on third parties’ organizing of cross-border travel; has given third parties greater control over the costs, terms and routes of travel; and has left ample space for abuse and profiteering (Salt, 2000). Critical feminist and post-colonial scholars have expressed concern that the figure of the victim of trafficking conceals women’s migratory agency and that, in conflating sex work migration with sexual slavery, the mainstream trafficking rhetoric portrays migrant women in the sex industry as involuntary migrants, thus hiding both the actuality of women’s migratory projects and the fact that sex work is, for some migrant women, an income-generating activity (Kapur, 2005).

In order to counter the discursive strength of the figure of the victim of sex trafficking, critical scholars have broadened the debate on trafficking from sexuality to that of labour and focused on matters of rights and agency

rather than those of victimhood and violence. In doing so, the emphasis has been placed on the similarities in working conditions and exploitation that migrants experience in low-wage sectors such as sex, domestic and agricultural work. In turn, this has brought to the fore the debate on rights entitled to migrants independent of the sector of the economy they work in. The importance of reframing the debate in terms of rights has made visible sex workers' mobilizations and their position as active citizens. In fact, at the *European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration* – organized by sex worker activists and allies – in Brussels in 2005, sex workers positioned themselves firmly within the institutional debates on sex work, labour and migration through the endorsement of the *Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* and the *Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto* (Andrijasevic et al., 2012).

The body of work that stresses the agency and rights of migrant women in the sex sector has put forward a convincing critique of the passive and enslaved trafficking victim and has replaced the latter with the figures of the active migrant and the political protagonist. Despite such a shift, however, the figure of the trafficking victim continues to dominate public and policy arenas. In this chapter I am interested in the persistence of the figure of the victim and will suggest that, while crucial, the shift to agency and rights overlooks matters of representation. Representation is key, I argue, to understanding the historical, cultural and political embeddedness of the figure of the victim. In order to identify how the figure of the victim operates and the work it does in the European context, I suggest that the figure of the victim is not a 'free-floating' one but is rather produced through specific codes and conventions. These issues become visible in particular by bringing to the fore the nexus among sexuality, gender and narrative. I build on feminist scholarship on sexuality and representation in film, visual media studies and historical studies of East/West

Europe to explore the ways in which representations are embedded within and produced through narrative tropes and discursive constructions about women's sexuality that are culturally and historically specific.

At the same time, I argue that the emphasis placed on agency works to enforce the victim/agent binary and in turn diverts attention from how the two coexist (Phillips, 2013). This, by extension, leaves unattended the questions of the ways in which victim and agent positions are intertwined and of the extent to which the contradictions produced by this coexistence are key to the formation of women's subjectivities. In order to tackle the issue of women's subjectivities I turn to narratives and suggest that women's narratives – used by scholars as evidence to counter the figure of the victim – are also a set of representations rather than empirical counter-truths to the figure of the victim. Through this double take on representation I show the limits of the victim/agency framework through which the research field has become increasingly structured and raise doubts about the extent to which the focus on agency can carry the weight of correcting and replacing the figure of the victim.

AGENCY: THE BACKGROUND DEBATES

The need to forefront agency emerged from a combination of factors. Politically, it responded to a heightened prohibitionist presence in public policies aimed at criminalizing the sex industry on the basis that the industry is harmful and exploitative of women. Academically, it reacted to the tendency brought about by the prohibitionist perspective to reduce sex work to the matter of violence against women and thus to simplify, both methodologically and analytically, investigations of how sex work is organized and experienced.

Prohibitionists, also referred to at times as abolitionists or radical feminists, stand

by the position that sex work equals violence against women and that it constitutes an act of objectification of women's bodies that reinforces patriarchal structures of domination (MacKinnon, 1989; Dworkin, 1997). Given that they see sex work as violence and not as work, they make use of the term prostitution rather than sex work to refer to paid sexual services and performance. Abolitionists see men's sexuality as violent, dominant and functional to maintaining patriarchal power, and paid sexual services as a 'particularly lethal form of male violence against women' (Farley and Kelly, 2000: 54) and even as rape (Raymond, 2004). One of the most important abolitionist feminists, Kathleen Barry, describes prostitution as follows: 'I am taking prostitution as the model, the most extreme and most crystallized form of all sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation is a political condition, the foundation of women's subordination and the base from which discrimination against women is constructed and enhanced' (Barry, 1995: 11). Since paid sexual services are always and necessarily degrading and damaging to women, as they reduce women to bought objects, for abolitionists, consent in relation to sex work is impossible (Jeffreys, 1997; Hughes, 2005). This means that abolitionists make no distinction between coerced and voluntary sex work, as no woman can be understood as consenting freely to her own exploitation and oppression. To paraphrase Carol Wolkowitz's commentary on radical feminists' take on prostitution, such theorists believe that sex work results in a profound self-hate and that – because prostitution turns women into objects – a prostitute cannot be seen as a subject and is incapable of self-determination (Wolkowitz, 2006).

Sex worker rights' activists counter this view of the woman working in the sex sector as a passive victim. From their perspective sex work is seen as a form of emotional and sexual labour and hence the term sex work refers to the payment for sexual services or performance. What is sold in sex

work is not the self but a service, as the client pays for the sex worker's time and not indiscriminate access to her body. Since this perspective takes prostitution to be a form of paid work and a voluntary contractual exchange between adults, it advocates distinguish between women who choose to enter prostitution and those who are forced into it. In positing sex work as a form of labour and an income-generating activity, sex worker rights' activists contest the claim that sex work is invariably forced and degrading and argue that women choose sex work out of economic need and/or the feeling of control it gives them over sexual interactions (Delacoste and Alexander, 1988). Additionally, sex worker rights' activists contend that it is the lack of rights and protection for workers in the sex sector that cause abuse and exploitation rather than men's demand or the existence of a market for commercial sex per se (Pheterson, 1996; Kempadoo et al., 2005; Sanghera, 2005). Given these similarities between sex work and other types of low-waged labour, sex worker rights' activists concentrated their theoretical and political efforts towards the struggle for the improvement of sex workers' working conditions and labour rights.

Feminist contentions over sex work had an impact on the development and definition of the term trafficking. In 2000, at the United Nations' (UN) convention Against Transnational Organised Crime – the UN General Assembly adopted a definition of trafficking in persons. As Anne Gallagher, one of the leading global experts on human trafficking and then the Advisor on Trafficking to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, put it, the process of negotiating the Trafficking Protocol was an 'unusual' affair (Gallagher, 2001: 1002). If the crime prevention system of the UN is usually of little interest to the international non-governmental (NGO) community, on this occasion it had to deal with unprecedented levels of feminist NGO interventions. The definition known as the Trafficking

Protocol distinguished trafficking from smuggling. Trafficking is the involuntary and non-consensual process where traffickers recruit and transport a person with the purpose of exploiting her/his labour at destination, while smuggling refers to a voluntary and consensual form of migration where a smuggler's role is restricted to facilitation of irregular movement of persons across borders.¹ Feminist NGOs formed two main coalitions. The first, the International Human Rights Network, headed by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) based in Bangkok, argued that sex work is a form of legitimate labour and needs to be viewed in relation to other sectors that rely on low-skilled non-sexual labour, such as manufacturing, domestic work and agriculture. The second – the Human Rights Caucus headed by the USA-based Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW) – maintained that sex work is a violation of women's human rights and that prostitution equals trafficking, and argued that the sex sector is different from other sectors since it is characterized by exceptional levels of exploitation and abuse. The definition of trafficking adopted by the UN does not engage the issue of legitimacy of sex work and leaves this decision to national legislators. Importantly, while it mentions explicitly prostitution as a form of sexual exploitation, it also inserts it within the broader frame of other types of forced labour and services (Gallagher, 2001).

The adoption of a definition of trafficking that acknowledges a number of end-purposes other than sexual exploitation partly reflects the position of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Rhadika Coomaraswamy who – following the report on the worldwide research on trafficking in 1996 – suggested conceptually distinguishing prostitution from trafficking (Chew, 2005). The report brought together the perspectives of gendered migration and sexual labour and argued that the sex sector is, along with other unskilled and informal sectors, a

site where trafficking takes place (Wijers and Lap-Chew, 1997). The position that situated its analysis of sexual labour and gendered migration within the context of globalization and feminization of migration drew its insights from the collaborations between Third World feminists and sex worker rights' activists, based in particular in the global South. Developed since the late 1990s, such perspectives have offered a complex analysis of the global sex trade and have shown both the agency that migrant women exercise in the sex sector as well as the extent of abuse they suffer owing to structural factors steeped in unequal power relations (Kempadoo, 2011). This move away from the language of sexual slavery adopted by abolitionists and towards a nuanced understanding of the gendered and racialized codification of the global workforce is firmly grounded in the experiences of sex workers and migrant women. As per transnational feminist interventions, lives and agency exercised by oppressed and marginalized groups have provided the basis for a critique of dominant narratives of prostitution and sex trafficking and a standpoint from which to articulate alternative conceptions and modes of knowledge (Grewal, 1994; Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Mohanty, 2003).

Following the adoption of the Trafficking Protocol, the early critical insights advanced by Third World feminists and sex workers rights' activists gained renewed analytical and political currency. An array of scholars working on issues of migration, labour and gender have put forward sharp critiques of the criminal justice analytical framework that relies on the conceptual differentiation between trafficking and smuggling and the identification of both with transnational organized crime. Studies of how, where and with whom women have undertaken their cross-border travel, whether they have had previous migratory experience and what prompted them to leave their countries of origin have all shown women's active role in planning and organizing their migration. These studies

have also shown women's agency in terms of travel and revealed the complex set of aims and desires that prompt women to migrate, such as pursuit of financial independence, escape from domestic violence or abuse and search for love and autonomy (Gülçür and Ikkaracan, 2002; Andrijasevic, 2003; Sharma, 2003; Skilbrei and Tveit, 2007). A common concern among these scholars and activists is the way in which a criminal justice perspective places responsibility for trafficking and exploitation on organized criminal networks and in doing so hides the extent to which states' restrictive immigration, border and visa policies have criminalized the mobility of certain groups of people and created conditions that foster vulnerability and exploitation of migrants (Jordan, 2002; Chapkis, 2003; Kapur, 2005; Anderson, 2007; 2009). These concerns extend additionally to the notion of sexual slavery, which overlooks the complexity and interdependence of the factors that permit exploitation and neglects forms of agency migrant women enact despite confinement imposed on their spatial mobility and social interactions owing to third party control and/or residency and employment restrictions (Brennan, 2004; Ribeiro and Sacramento, 2005; Mai, 2009; Andrijasevic, 2010; Cheng, 2010).

In focusing on the material working and living arrangements of migrant women in the sex sector, critical scholars tackling trafficking from the perspective of migration, gender and labour have destabilized the very basis on which the notions of trafficking and of the victim are based. In bringing to the fore the agency women exercise with respect to both planning and carrying out of their migratory project and managing working conditions in the sex sector, scholars have disputed the separation between voluntary and involuntary migration, and hence between smuggling and trafficking. They have further shown that coercion and force might also occur in voluntary and legally regulated migration – such as domestic, agriculture and construction work (Anderson and O'Connell

Davidson, 2003; Anderson and Rogaly, 2005) – and have questioned the extent to which it is useful to draw a stark line between trafficking and other forms of abuse, and the exploitation of migrant labour (Rogaly, 2008; O'Connell Davidson, 2010).

REPRESENTATION AND VICTIMHOOD

Despite these efforts to challenge the figure of the passive trafficking victim through the investigation of the material lives of migrant women in the sex sector, issues of representation have, curiously, received less in-depth analytical attention. Writings on representation and discourses pertaining to trafficking have consolidated and to some extent expanded the critique of sex trafficking rhetoric being organized around the binary of passive female victims and merciless male traffickers. Scholars – in their analysis of the anti-trafficking campaigns and the rhetoric of modern slavery that depicts women as kidnapped from their homes, coerced into migration and then imprisoned in brothels – have argued that such representations create a false dichotomy between 'ideal' and real victims (Hoyle et al., 2011) and exclude those women who do not fit the narrow definition of the ideal victim (O'Brien, 2013). Studies of media coverage, for example in Norway, have pointed to the objectification and sexualization of Nigerian women working in the sex sector (Jahnsen, 2007). Studies of the stripping industry in the USA have exposed the hypersexualization of the Black and Latina women and the racialized dimension of the discursive construction of sex work (Brooks, 2010). Representation of prostitutes as prototypical female victims (Jacobsen and Stenvoll, 2010) and of traffickers as members of Russian Mafia (Stenvoll, 2002) have been found to position the state as the protector and both 'victims' and 'criminals' as not belonging to 'our' society. This in turn, has triggered fears of a massive influx of migrants and of

the westward expansion of criminal networks, and has given rise to anti-trafficking campaigns functioning as tools for the prevention and control of irregular migration (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud, 2007; Schatral, 2010).

Yet, while these studies offer extremely important insights into the ways in which representation foregrounds the figures of victims and criminals, in what follows I suggest paying more detailed attention to the gendered and sexualized categories that underpin the narrative structure of victimhood. These insights, enabled by feminist scholarship in film and literary studies, illustrate well the cultural codes upon which the figure of the victim rests and the reasons why this figure continues to retain its discursive power. The tragic story of a woman, sexually innocent and economically naïve, whose life and dreams are smashed by the harsh realities of sexual slavery, is a common narrative trope in both textual and visual accounts of trafficking (Arthurs, 2012). This narrative structure of the loss of innocence reproduces the early twentieth-century genre of the fallen woman, popular especially in the films of that period. As mapped by Lea Jacobs (1995), those films were characterized by a strong cautionary tone and a warning about the tragic fate awaiting young women who left home to follow an acting career in Hollywood, the latter symbolizing the popular anxieties about sexual trespass. The history of the trope of the fallen woman stretches further back in time, and can be found in the literary antecedents of the story that permeated nineteenth-century popular culture such as opera, narrative painting, stage melodrama and fiction in Britain, America and Europe.

The cautionary tone about leaving home and the loss of sexual innocence typical of the fallen woman genre reappears in the contemporary narrative of sex trafficking, as the latter warns women who wish to migrate to the West that their migration is likely to lead into forced prostitution and slavery from which they will be unable to escape. In a

number of anti-trafficking campaigns in Eastern Europe, this situation is conveyed through the visual metaphor of the doll: a puppet suspended by hooks and cords or a doll-toy packaged and displayed in a box (Andrijasevic, 2007). Feminist scholars working in the field of literature and art have suggested that the representation of women as dolls is a standard part of the patriarchal repertoire of Western culture, a type of culture-text that is invoked time and again in order to confine the threat of female subjectivity (Meijer, 2002). As I have argued in my own work, the gravity of this situation is further signalled through the image of an inanimate women's body or the implicit reference to death, which insinuate that death is the only possible way out of the situation of abuse and sexual slavery (Andrijasevic, 2007; Arthurs, 2012). The implicitly proposed alternative is not to migrate, as home is depicted as the safest option for young women (Sharma, 2003). This type of representation of home – as devoid of dangers such as abuse, violence or prostitution – reproduces traditional images of femininity that position women outside of the labour market and inside the reproductive and private sphere. To rephrase this, in the words of the art critic Griselda Pollock – who has studied the image of fallen women in modernist paintings – such traditional representation has bound women to the sphere of the 'familial, heterosexual domesticity' (Pollock, 1988: 78).

In her work on film and sexuality Annette Kuhn (1985) suggests that, far from being attributes that 'naturally' characterize victims, body, sexuality, passivity, private sphere and reproductive labour are all codes forming a chain of signifiers that come together to create a specific meaning in representation. These signifiers are not attached to the female body randomly and are at the very core of Western science and knowledge that assume that a male subject is constructed in opposition to his 'Other'. This model rests on the classical Western system of dualistic oppositions – active/passive, culture/nature,

reason/body, public/private – organized according to the logic of difference and where the difference is always expressed in terms of the negative (Braidotti, 1994). The masculine and the feminine are hierarchically organized and therefore not interchangeable. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the term trafficking is highly gendered insofar as men are structurally perceived as smuggled and women as trafficked. This raises issues about the ways in which cultural codes around sexuality and gender underpin the apparently neutral UN definitions and foreground the figure of the victim. The question of codification and semiotics then brings to the fore the extent to which ‘women as victims’ is shored up in representations of sexuality and structurally reinforced through gender dualism. Importantly, however, the figure of the victim is not universal and identical in all contexts. Rather, the complexity of the figure of the victim lies in ‘her’ embeddedness in a set of specific cultural and historical forms. In today’s Europe, victims of trafficking are overwhelmingly identified as Eastern European. While it can certainly be argued that this is due to the fact that the majority of the migrant women working in the sex sector in Western Europe are indeed from Eastern European and Balkan countries (TAMPEP, 2009).² I contend that the identification of Eastern European women with victims of sex trafficking is not simply a matter of numbers but is rather deeply entrenched within the discursive construction of Eastern Europe and its peoples.

In his historical study of Eastern Europe Larry Wolff argues that, even though the political map between East and West Europe has changed since 1989, the idea of Eastern Europe persists (Wolff 1994). While during the Renaissance the main distinction was between South and North Europe, with the Enlightenment and the location of intellectual centres in Western Europe, the main axes of differentiation shifted to that of West versus East Europe. With the emergence of the term civilization in the eighteenth century,

Wolff argues further, Western Europe appropriated for itself the notion of civilization and – through the work of intellectual artifice and cultural creation – ‘invented’ Eastern Europe as its backward and barbaric other. For Wolff, this conceptual division still survives in public culture and mental maps. It can be traced too, I argue, in the discursive construction of sex trafficking, where Eastern European women are seen as victims and Eastern European men as perpetrators of trafficking. The process of ‘Othering’ operates in this case through the opposition between people of East and of West Europe, whereby the former societies are seen as more patriarchal and violent and the latter as more progressive and democratic. The portrayal of both victims and traffickers as Eastern European and of women as victims of the patriarchal social relations in their countries of origins places sex trafficking rhetoric firmly within an East/West European representational framework and highlights the ongoing discursive power and social currency of meanings operating through it. The workings of this hierarchical opposition can additionally be seen in the differentiation between voluntary and forced prostitution and the racialization of the two categories, whereby consensual prostitution is assumed to be performed by Western sex workers capable of self determination and situations of coerced prostitution are associated with passive and inexperienced migrant and Third World women (Kapur, 2008).

As we can see, therefore, the figure of the victim of sex trafficking is always already historically and culturally coded. It is precisely this codification that, in the contemporary European context, posits the victims as Eastern European. In order to highlight the working of such codification within the symbolic systems of culture and language, feminist theorists have stressed the difference between ‘Woman as representation’ and ‘women as experience’. They have argued that women as historical beings and subjects of social relations are not to be confused with

Woman who is 'purely a representation, a positionality within the phallic model of desire and signification' (de Lauretis, 1987: 20). 'Woman as representation', then, in opposition to 'women as experience', works as a signifier bound by the symbolic order whereby the female occupies the position of the sexualized and racialized 'Other'.

The figure of the victim of sex trafficking – coded as female, passive, unfree and an object of violence – constricts women from Eastern Europe within a confining and disabling order of representation. Consequently, this implies that cultural codification sets the terms of the representation of social groups. As Gayatri C. Spivak argues, the fact that members of certain social groups – such as her own chosen case of widow self-sacrifice in Bengal – are not considered subjects, results in the lack of a subject position from which to speak and restricts the imaginary via which alternative subject positions may be articulated (Spivak, 1988). Paying attention, then, to the sexual, gendered and cultural signifiers of representation makes visible the ways in which, in Europe, the figure of the victim of sex trafficking is already framed through a codified set of categories. These draw on existing symbolic and historic registers and limit the extent to which women from Eastern Europe can be imagined and represented as subjects.

REPRESENTATION AND ITS AMBIVALENCES

In the previous section I demonstrated how the image of the victim of trafficking has been constructed through sexual, gender and cultural codification. And yet, the stereotypical images of Eastern European women as victims (and of men as criminals), though well established, are far from stable and definite. Images, whether in terms of representation or self-representation – as I show in this section by drawing on feminist and queer studies of cinema, sexuality and narrative – are productive of contradictions and traversed

by ambivalences at both social and subjective levels.

As Richard Dyer explains, stereotypes as aesthetic and social constructs condense a large amount of complex connotations into simple and easy to grasp images (Dyer, 1993). Stereotypes are static and their fixity is achieved through the organization of the plot around an implicit narrative pattern and identical plot function (1993: 15). In being organized around a static narrative pattern, stereotypes function as a mode of ordering and simplifying the complexity of social life as well as a way of preserving the boundary between social groupings. This is especially so in situations where differences between social categories might not be clearly discernable: 'The role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unaware; and to make fast, firm and separate what in reality is fluid and much closer to the norm that the dominant value system cares to admit' (1993: 16). These considerations are particularly relevant for the figure of the victim of sex trafficking in the European context. The simplicity of the narrative pattern is most visible in the fact that the plot never varies: the deception is followed by coercion into prostitution; subsequently, the plot moves into the tragedy of sexual slavery, which in turn is resolved through the rescue of the victim by the police, an NGO or a benevolent client. Importantly, while Eastern European women are likely to be white and hence racially not immediately distinguishable from Western European women, it is precisely the stereotype's separating function that draws a line between the two groupings. The representation of Eastern European women as victims differentiates them from their European counterparts and signals the limited extent to which Eastern Europeans have progressed in their movement towards democracy and capacity for political participation (Andrijasevic, 2010).

To return to Wolff, this differentiation is ambivalent and unstable. It is grounded in what he has called the two-fold construction

of Eastern Europe as 'Europe but not Europe', in that Eastern Europe has been defined both in opposition to Western Europe and as different from the Orient. The idea of Eastern Europe has evolved, Wolff argues, as 'an intellectual project of demi-Orientalisation' located in the intermediary geographical and cultural space between Western Europe and the Orient (Wolff, 1994: 7). It is this ambivalent positioning as European and non-European at the same time that results, I suggest, in Eastern European women's dual identification as both victim and agent. An instance in which this can be observed is the Yani case, in which The Netherlands' Secretary of State for Justice denied residency permits to six self-employed prostitutes from Poland and the Czech Republic. The position of the Dutch state was based in the argument that women were not autonomous workers since it was impossible to establish whether they migrated to and worked in the sex industry in The Netherlands of their own free will.³ This decision was overruled in 2001 by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which argued that The Netherlands was in breach of the Right of Establishment under the European Agreements that gives nationals of the accession countries the right to free movement and self-employment in the EU.⁴

It could certainly be argued, as some scholars have (Hubbard et al., 2008), that the trafficking rhetoric is used by states, as in this case by The Netherlands, to enforce control over migrants' mobility and labour and that this in turn results in the exclusion of sex workers from the protection of the law. However, I would like to suggest that the perspective of exclusion fails to observe the ambivalences and contradictions that are part of the process of European enlargement and hence of the juridical and discursive redrawing of European space, peoples and citizenship. As the example of the ECJ's ruling in the case of free movement of workers shows, the focus on victimhood overlooks the increased impact of market logic on commercially mediated sexual relations as well as on social and political life more broadly

(Bernstein, 2007; Jacobsen and Skilbrei, 2010). In contemporary Europe, then, the transformations and uncertainties brought about by changing national identities, borders and citizenship are mitigated, in part, through the sex trafficking rhetoric. It is through the image of the dead woman's body – as Elisabeth Bronfen shows in her book on death, femininity and the aesthetic – that culture articulates its desire for immutability and the threatened order is negotiated (Bronfen, 1992). The association of femininity and death, Bronfen suggests, is common in the repertoire of Western culture and appears as a popular theme especially in the literature and painting from the Age of Sensibility to the Modern period. In the context of ongoing transformations, then, a dead feminine body works in a manner similar to that of the stereotype to secure the fantasy of a social order where differences between self and the other, West and East Europe, are still in place.

The instability and ambivalence that permeates cultural representations urges us to re-examine both the notions of a victim and agent as well as the oppositional frame within which these operate with respect to migration and sex work. Much of the criticism feminist scholars, myself included, have advanced in relation to the figure of the victim of sex trafficking has focused on the stereotypical representation of femininity and the objectification of passive and violated women's bodies. These observations, while important, are, however, limited in their assumption of a separation between the mainstream representation of a victim (A) and the material-living-informed alternative image of women as agents (non-A). The work done in feminist and queer cinema studies offers insights into the limits of this framing and suggests that such juxtaposition between the two positions is untenable in as much as the production of subjectivities is always intertwined with mainstream images. In her work on semiotics, feminism and cinema, Teresa de Lauretis has illustrated how subjectivities are produced through the

binding of fantasy and affect to mainstream images, and the ways in which this process directs a subject's desire, pleasure and satisfaction (de Lauretis, 1984). Consequently, this blurs the boundaries between the subject and the object of the gaze and brings attention to the multiple and contradictory instances through which subjectivities emerge and take shape.

These insights into the working of representation and the constitution of subjectivities are key for the debate on victimhood and agency in migration and sex work. As we have seen in the public debates on prostitution and trafficking, the figure of the victim is opposed to that of the sex worker usually on the basis of whether the figure has been deceived and coerced or has chosen to work in the sex sector prior to migrating. This view of victimhood and agency makes use of a static perception of the self and does not take into consideration that subjectivities are dynamic and shift and change through migration and sex work. In common with my own developing approach in this chapter, a minority of theorists have argued for approaching sex work in terms of a process of subjectivity formation. Studies of non-migrant women's street sex work in England (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996) and of club and street sex work in Peru (Nencel, 2000) have shown that women interviewed did not see themselves as sex workers but rather as mothers and as virtuous women; instead, it was always others that they worked with whom they identified as whores.

While not citing these early works, new studies have emerged of late that offer exciting insights into the transformation and constitution of subjectivities through processes of migration and sex work. These studies could be seen as a continuation of past attempts to overcome the limits of the victimhood/agency analytic framework in that they bring to the fore the array of hopes, investments and desires that migrants associate with life and work abroad. Additionally, these works outline with much

attention the negotiations and manoeuvres migrant women engage in in order to deal with the material and symbolic constraints on their lives as well as their own and their families' aspirations for a better future. For example, Sealing Cheng's (2010) work on Philipina migrants in the entertainment sector in South Korea illustrates the ways in which migrant women frame their sexual-economic exchanges in emotional terms so as to juggle the situation of working in a club and being nevertheless (seen as) respectable. Similarly, my own work on Eastern European migrant women in street prostitution in Italy (2010) and the work by Christine Jacobsen and May-Len Skilbrei (2010) on Russian women working in the sex sector in Norway show the effort women put into resisting being identified as a prostitute, the multiple and contradictory positions they occupy (such as those of a mother, daughter, victim and migrant as well as sex worker) and the ways in which they simultaneously embrace, resist and rework existing representations of femininity and sex work. These findings on the dynamic and contradictory constitution of subjectivities have prompted scholars to argue that many trafficked migrants occupy ambiguous positions that cannot be resolved by identifying them either as victims or sex workers (Mai, 2011; Yea, 2012).

While these studies sit uneasily with those scholarly and activist positions that see victimhood as belonging to the dominant representational regime and as enhancing the 'oppression paradigm' through which sex work gets repeatedly distorted and simplified (Weitzer, 2010: 15), they are in my opinion crucial in order to outline a more flexible analytical framework where contradictions in women's narratives can be engaged and worked through. Against the tendency to deploy the narratives of migrant women in the sex industry as evidence of agency and hence a straightforward challenge to the notion of victimhood, I suggest that we consider these narratives as instances of self-representation. It is useful

to return here to Spivak's essay – and her provocative affirmation that the subaltern cannot speak – through which she launches a representational challenge to empiricism (Spivak, 1988). To engage in such a challenge is not to suggest that, in as much as their accounts are stories, migrant women's experiences in the sex industry do not matter. It is rather that these accounts – in a manner similar to that of the figure of the trafficked victim – are also a set of representations that cannot stand un-interrogated as a counter-truth.

Ken Plummer's work on sexuality and narrative is helpful here as he suggests that sexual stories are not facts or signs of truth but rather topics to investigate in their own right. Similarly to other stories, sexual ones are held together by a plot, a motivation and a sequence of time and characters (Plummer, 1995). This is particularly salient in relation to accounts of migrant women in the sex industry, where the stigma of prostitution, intimate and erotic encounters and the desire for love or/and marriage emerge as pivotal elements in women's narratives and their self-representations.⁵ While critical scholars have put much effort into shifting the attention from sexuality and stigma towards labour and rights in relation to sex work and trafficking, it seems to me that there is a need for a renewed focus on sexuality in order to map and study the shifting modes of identifications that women doing sex work engage in. Such a perspective could open space for the investigation of the division of the subject in the imaginary as well as in the social and allow for a more nuanced reading of the hold of heterosexual and reproductive norms upon the constitution of the subject. The importance of subjectivity in relation to sexuality is key to feminist struggles for rights and political participation: whether sex workers and/or migrants assert themselves as political actors and take part in collective mobilizations will depend not only on their working conditions but equally on whether they see themselves as workers in the first place.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have discussed the ways in which work by feminist theorists and sex worker rights' activists has been crucial in challenging the figure of the victim of trafficking and in broadening the debate from matters of organized crime and violence against women to those of agency, rights and labour. The rhetorical and discursive dominance of the notion of trafficking as modern slavery and the tendency of politicians and NGOs to speak for women is apparent. It is therefore no surprise that the majority of critical engagement with the figure of the victim has taken place in relation to the material conditions of women's lives and work and by foregrounding women's voices as sources of knowledge, action and politics. To begin investigations from the lives of marginal and oppressed groups and their histories and struggles produces – as feminist standpoint theorists have argued – a less distorted view of the social and political world and contributes to transform the dominant modes of research and knowledge (Harding, 1987; 1991; Code, 1993).

And yet – as someone who has been working on this topic since the late 1990s and has participated both as a scholar and an activist in the efforts to show the inadequacy of the figure of the trafficked victim to portray contemporary women's migration for the sex sector and replace it with that of migrant women as agents, workers and claimants of rights – I have become increasingly sceptical about the analytical frameworks favoured in such critical scholarly interventions. My doubts concern in particular the methodological and epistemological premises of this work. Critical scholarship derives and builds its insights on the evidence-based case studies of women's migratory experiences and on the working and living conditions in the sex sector. It seems to me that the emphasis on the material conditions of women's lives and work has reinforced the victim/agent dualism and the juxtaposition of 'representation' and 'reality'. Instead of continuing to engage

representation only marginally, owing to its being perceived as a mode through which the mainstream image of trafficking is propagated and enforced, I have argued for making representation a key area of intervention and analysis. As I have shown in the case of Eastern Europe, representation is central to understanding the extent to which trafficking discourses are historically and culturally codified as well as the ways in which dominant images, especially around heterosexual and reproductive norms, are incorporated into women's self-representation. The most recent developments in the field have adopted an interdisciplinary approach to sex work and migration that takes into consideration both materiality *and* representation, as well as their mutual interdependence, in order to overcome oppositional modes of thinking and to move beyond the agent/victim divide in scholarship and activism.

Interestingly – in her second and updated introduction to one of the key feminist edited volumes on human trafficking – Kamala Kempadoo notes that, although the field of analysis has broadened and approaches have become more sophisticated, no paradigm shift and no groundbreaking theoretical approach has been brought to the study of sex work and trafficking in recent years (Kempadoo, 2011). Instead, the contrasting approaches between feminist activists and scholars have drifted further apart and the differences have become more fiercely contested. While Kempadoo's evaluation of the current situation in feminist theory and activism is quite accurate, the analysis undertaken in this chapter on matters of representation outlines the arena of subjectivity as a possible new direction in which the field might develop. To make subjectivity central within research on sex trafficking will require feminist scholars to tackle, in more depth and more critically, the category of 'agency' in relation to sex work and migration. This would then allow theorists to build on the work of feminist scholars working on affect and sexuality (Berlant, 2011; Hemmings 2012), foregrounding ways in which marginal

subjects invest and attach to normative agendas. As well as the ambivalences of desire, and the complex subject positions that these processes give rise to, the extent to which these attachments might undermine political mobilizations and/or facilitate the constitution of new political subjectivities – precisely owing to the overlap of positions commonly seen as separate – are some of the new and exciting directions in which the study of subjectivity in relation to sex work and representation might take us.

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NOTES

- 1 For trafficking to be legally acknowledged, the three-elements chain, namely, the act (or recruitment, transportation), the means to enforce the act (threat, use of force) and the outcome (exploitation) need to be present. The definition of trafficking in persons is provided by the Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and reads as follows: 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs' (www2.ohchr.org/english/law/protocoltraff.htm, accessed 3 January 2013).
- 2 Across the European Union (EU), migrants constitute the majority among sex workers. The distribution varies, however, as migrants make up

a 70 per cent of total population of sex workers in 'old' EU member states and only 15 per cent in the 'new' member states (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria). The average is higher in countries such as Italy, Spain, Austria and Luxembourg, where migrants comprise 80 per cent to 90 per cent of overall sex workers. The disparity between 'old' and 'new' member states is due to the fact that 'old' ones offer better earning potential than the 'new' member states, which are of lesser economic interest to migrants and have imposed, as part of the EU accession process, tight immigration and residency regulation on non-EU nationals. As the main areas of origin of migrants in the sex industry are non-EU eastern European and Balkan countries (37 per cent) and from the 'new' EU member states (32 per cent), we see that the main migration movement in Europe is intra-European, namely from eastern to central and western Europe. Other regions of origin of migrants in the sex industry are Africa (12 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (11 per cent) and Asia Pacific (4 per cent).

- 3 www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:61999J0268:EN:HTML#SM, accessed 20 November 2012.
- 4 'Accession countries' is the synonym for what used to be A8 countries, namely the eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2011. While A8 nationals were, until April 2004, restricted in taking up employment anywhere in the EU, they could exercise the right to free movement and labour mobility in the 'old' EU member states if, as in the Yani case, they were self-employed. In case they were not, their labour mobility remained partial until April 2011.
- 5 The topic of love in relation to migration and constitution of subjectivity is of particular relevance here. On the function of the topos of love in life stories of migrant women see Alexandrova, 2007 and on love and sexuality as an analytical framework through which to challenge the heterosexual and economic logic of the mainstream migration scholarship see Mai and King, 2009.

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Sexuality, Subjectivity ... and Political Economy?

Clare Hemmings

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, Mandy Merck asked cultural theorists to consider the relationship among ‘Sexuality, Subjectivity, and ... Economics?’ anew, insisting quite rightly that the first and last terms continue to be posed – both within and outside of queer and feminist studies – as mutually exclusive. In her important piece, Merck sought to reconnect these terms by revisiting the debate about the ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’ nature of sexuality between Judith Butler (1997) and Nancy Fraser (1997) in *Social Text*, and by exploring more recent interventions, particularly those with a transnational focus. Yet while able to identify examples of their mutual entanglement, Merck admitted being unable to work out a consistent basis on which these terms might be linked. In 2012 this difficulty continues, both for me and for feminist and queer studies, even when we open up the disciplinary closure of ‘economics’ to consider the relationship between sexuality and ‘political economy’. This article is concerned with

why this relationship remains elusive and proposes alternative interdisciplinary modes of imagining sexuality and political economy that centre the question of the psychic life of kinship.

There are several reasons why I think feminist and queer scholarship struggle with how sexuality and political economy come together. The first is that, for all the attempts to think beyond reproductive kinship forms and oppositional identities, feminist and queer scholarship continues to understand sexuality in terms of a heterosexual/homosexual divide. The second is that, because of this tendency, it remains hard to move beyond a transgression/co-optation dichotomy, within which lesbian and gay subjects carry a disproportionate burden of representation. This is a somewhat universalizing statement to begin this article with, and I hope to persuade you of its validity as my argument progresses. However, for the moment, consider the following points to take forward. In terms of a heterosexual/homosexual divide, we know that theorists

have done an excellent job of critiquing the history of this opposition (Sedgwick, 1990; Katz, 1995; Angelides, 2001), have challenged a reliance on identity politics that reinstates this divide's epistemological and political effects (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990) and have developed alternative approaches that seek to unfix the relationship between ontology and gender of object choice (Butler, 1993; Sedgwick, 1993; Wesling, 2008). Further, post-colonial queer theorists, among others, have highlighted the Western life of the heterosexual/homosexual divide, insisting on both alternative paradigms of sexual meaning (Vance, 2002; Rofel, 2007; Long, 2009) and on the use of this divide as a violent regulatory mechanism with respect to migration (Luibheid, 1998; Puar, 2007; Butler, 2008). Yet, even in its most deconstructive mode, queer theory seems unable to avoid repositioning homosexual identity as static (even if as Western) and is consistently drawn back to same-sex desire as a uniquely queer kind of evidence (even if leading to a different identity formation).¹

As I will detail more fully in my own discussion of the debate between Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser in *Social Text* in the 1990s (Butler, 1997; Fraser, 1997), my second introductory point is that the continued reliance on a heterosexual/homosexual opposition both skews our perception of historical change with respect to the relationship between sexuality and political economy and marks lesbian and gay subjects with disproportionate evidential value with respect to the same. Thus, for Butler, Fraser and subsequent queer and feminist commentators, our move away from the suturing of the economy and reproductive kinship can be measured solely by demographic changes in family structure and the increase or otherwise of gay and lesbian rights and freedoms (Smith, 2001; Budgeon and Roseneil, 2004). Further, new forms of global capitalism can be registered and analysed through the relative co-optation or transgression of lesbian and gay subjects in

relation to markets and conservative agendas (Hennessy, 2000; Duggan, 2003).²

In my view, while doing lots of important work in its own right, queer and feminist work attending to sexuality and political economy remains caught in the oppositions that structure both the history and present of this field of enquiry. One of the reasons that this is so hard to shift is that we rely on an empiricist paradigm within which visibility politics and a singular, progressive understanding of historical change in the structure and function of sexuality take precedence over more complex models of sexual meaning. Thus, we tend to overstate the transgressive or co-opted nature of particular sexual subjects and provide a more teleological account of material changes in the relationship between sexuality and political economy than is necessary or necessarily the case. In addition, because of this paradigm what Fraser terms the 'politics of recognition' (Fraser, 1997) can be imagined as adequate to sexual inequality's redress, although – as I illustrate below – it actually functions to produce the problem of identity oppositions it purports to help us move beyond. Instead, in this article, I propose that we pay much closer attention to the role that fantasy and familial attachment play in securing the relationship between sexuality and late capitalist political economy, as well as in offering ways of challenging that relationship.

The next section of this article returns to the Butler and Fraser debates, not to rehearse familiar arguments but to track their differing views about how far we have moved away from reproductive kinship, the relationship of gay and lesbian subjects to political economy and the vexed question of co-optation or transgression. This attention is important, despite these debates having taken place fifteen years ago, because it helps us identify lingering difficulties in contemporary discussions of the same issues which have yet to be resolved. This is followed by an engagement with the work of Lauren Berlant and Teresa de Lauretis, two

authors I believe are helpful for exploring the relationship between sexuality and political economy otherwise.³ Both authors are intimately concerned with the role of desire and fantasy in shoring up a gendered reproductive heteronormativity in the present and in teasing out the important ambivalences that characterize its temporal repetition. Both authors are interested in sexuality in its fictional as well as empirical modes, and in the importance of the one for the other. Although both Berlant and de Lauretis have been key for theoretical developments within the interdisciplinary Humanities, their importance for understanding political economy remains under-explored. In thinking through the ways in which investments in heterosexual norms dovetail with a continued belief in capitalism as providing satisfactions, I bring together Berlant and de Lauretis's rather different work on 'scenes' as helpful both in analysing the ties that bind us to reproductive norms and in imagining otherwise. This shift through my text from 'sexual identity' to 'desire and fantasy' might, if you like, return us to the important middle term in my reframing of Merck's question, to the importance of 'subjectivity' in the relationship between 'sexuality' and 'political economy'.

PART ONE: FROM MARGIN TO CENTRE

In 'Merely Cultural', Butler responds to Fraser's argument in *Justice Interruptus* (Fraser, 1996) that homosexuality is a cultural rather than economic inequality and, as such, one that can be redressed by formal recognition rather than economic redress. Butler seeks to refute this by challenging Fraser's assumption that harms experienced by gays and lesbians are always and only about recognition (Fraser, 1997: 272–3) and by highlighting the centrality of heteronormative regulation to the pre-modern and modern state and economy. For Butler, in contrast, failure to recognize lesbian and gay

subjects is central to the ways in which economic resources are imagined and distributed within and across nations, and to accept sexual inequality as 'merely cultural' reproduces the divisions that result in inequality in the first place. In turn, Fraser critiques Butler for failing to account for the changed nature of capitalism in late modernity, with its broader range of kinship structures that signals an uncoupling of the economic sphere's reliance on reproductive familial norms (Fraser, 1997: 283–7). In the process, argues Fraser, Butler over-emphasizes gay and lesbian capacities to disrupt the economy on the basis of being 'outsiders within', while denying the precise social and economic changes that have in part been brought about by the social movements she cherishes.

My concern here is not with who I think wins these debates, but with the commonalities between them that make theorizing sexuality's relation to political economy otherwise so very hard.⁴ Despite claiming otherwise, both see the structural constraint of sexuality in relation to political economy as sutured to kinship forms. For Fraser, this means that as we move away from a closed relation between economic regulation and heterosexual familial forms, sexuality itself is untethered from the economy. For Butler, continued marginality of gay and lesbian subjects references a continued link between the economy and the reproductive family. Importantly, for both theorists, the marginalized subjects that stand outside of heteronormative state and economic imperatives, elude recognition by the former, or are happily incorporated as part of the latter, are gay and lesbian subjects. Neither writer considers other sexual identities or contexts of sexual inequality and so heteronormativity reiteratively cites heterosexuality, however kinship is imagined to have changed. Both authors read sexuality's relation to political economy through a heterosexual/homosexual divide. In a sense, Butler and Fraser want to have it both ways. Butler wants lesbians and gay men to remain quintessentially marginal while also wanting the gains of social

movements to be recognized politically; Fraser wants to insist on heteronorms as having shifted, yet provides no explanation for her assumption that gay and lesbian subjects will nevertheless remain the ones in need of recognition. Thus, as suggested in my introduction, the weight of sexuality's relationship to the political economy falls squarely on the shoulders of gays and lesbians, as if all questions of sexual meaning could be answered by their presence or absence in the public sphere of the visible or by a settling of the question of whether such subjects transgress, embrace or fuel late capitalism.

I can easily understand why Butler wants to resist Fraser's progress narrative in this debate, one in which the interventions of social movements have made Western democracies ever more accepting of minority sexual identities to the point where they are free to take up or reject the other things capitalism may have to offer (including the benefits of other – economic – inequalities). Whether intentionally or otherwise, Fraser positions gay and lesbian identities as well as inequalities as *de facto* residual, as a lingering hangover of reproductive times to be remedied by increasing recognition by the state (until this is no longer necessary). However, in wanting to counter such a narrative, Butler hyperbolizes a gay and lesbian subject caught in a familial nightmare, doomed forever to be on its outside, marginal in relation to the benefits of a heterosexual subject of economic progress. In the process, too, as Fraser is the first to note, Butler seems to corner herself in a framework that lacks historical specificity, and is reluctant to see contest over the meaning of both structures and actors. In my view, both Butler and Fraser become caught on a historical timeline that must see sexuality as one thing or the other: changing (for better or worse) or staying the same (for better or worse). The constant is the lesbian or gay subject, and, as we will see, one effect of this is to make the co-optation that both would want to ward against more rather than less

likely: through, rather than despite, the process of recognition.

Let me now move to discussion of the resonance of these debates within the broader terrain of concerns with sexuality and political economy. To begin with, Fraser's work on recognition dovetails with sociological accounts of 'the transformation of intimacy' that articulate new family formations in tandem with new employment structures and modes of capitalist expansion. Despite key differences about whether or not to celebrate the current relationship between sexuality and political economy, writers such as Anthony Giddens (1993), Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Zygmunt Bauman (1998) conceive of history as proceeding through a progressive series of transformations governed by changes in the organization of capitalism, which in turn give rise to and are also shaped by gay and lesbian and feminist subjects and movements. In terms of marginalized sexuality, we move from private to public, from closeting to identity and from shame to pride, which is the point at which recognition can be claimed. To characterize this account as a progress narrative does not tell us anything about the political feelings of those subjects, of course: Fraser is absolutely clear that they are as likely, if not more, to be invested in a mainstream that has allowed for the flourishing of previously disallowed opportunities, particularly for lesbians and gay men not on the economic bottom rung. Indeed, this argument is a familiar and pervasive one. Progressive gains can be cited at the level of 'publics', including global increases in civil partnership or same-sex marriages, hate crime legislation, the rolling back of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell', the development of sexual asylum possibilities for gays and lesbians and the extension of 'queer leisure' within the global tourist industry. As these gains are partial, activists, lawyers and academics continue to work hard to try to secure greater freedom from homophobic violence in a range of contexts, clear in the belief that legislative and public recognition of LGBT

identities ameliorates harms and provides an opportunity for greater social participation for those subjects.

Even in contexts where the progress narrative's end-point of identity is challenged, where pride or visibility are critiqued and the exclusive nature of lesbian and gay nomenclature highlighted, the progress narrative itself is not necessarily any less strong. Indeed, queer theory's emphasis on deconstructing identities can figure easily as 'the next stage' in such developments, as suggested in the introduction, particularly in its understanding of those identities as anachronistic (both historically and globally).⁵ To extend this line of argument, queer theorists are currently concerned with the mobilization of gay and lesbian identities as markers of achievements of Western democratic inclusion, underlining the dangers of identity politics very firmly indeed. As commentators have rightly explored, such identities are currently being mobilized as emblematic of secular achievements in contrast to the unfreedoms of 'pre-modern' religious states (particularly Islamic ones), and through the demonization of particular subjects – most often Muslims – as homophobic through and through, and therefore unable to participate in 'the modern' even through migration (Puar, 2007; Waites, 2008). As the wealth of writing about European 'citizenship tests' has also shown, lesbian and gay subjects are positioned – and can position themselves – as border patrollers of who can count as part of 'the modern liberal nation', irrespective of the paradoxes such a position may engender in relation to their own recognition (Stychin, 2003; Binnie, 2004). Butler too has intervened in these more recent developments, arguing that, as lesbian and gay subjects become less marginal, their recognition is having increasingly counter-progressive effects at the border, consolidating nationalism and xenophobia (Butler, 2008). Of course, Fraser herself might well remind readers that she never promised that recognition would lead to gays and lesbians being less rather than more invested in Western

capitalism, but that such recognition should nonetheless be granted. However, for Butler, in a set of reflections that implicitly updates her 1997 critique, recognition can never be neutral, but actively brings about new identities forged through the late modern state's gaze.⁶

Such approaches – Marxist feminist as well as post-colonial queer – foreground the work sexual identities do in relation to the state and its various apparatuses, the ways in which they are mobilized in the service of heteropatriarchal, colonial and capitalist interests, but in adapted forms suited to our times. Yet they continue to prioritize a heterosexual/homosexual divide even as they contest its effects and challenge lesbian and gay marginality. A slightly different strand of this argument emphasizes the ways in which lesbian and gay identities function as commodities that travel and can also be exchanged. For Rosemary Hennessy (2000) and Lisa Duggan (2003), circuits of neo-liberalism capitalize on and extend marketization of identities to make 'gayness' a commodity, while, for Lisa Rofel (2007), the emergence of lesbian and gay identities in China cannot be understood outside of the profound ambivalences that characterize China's status as a transition economy. No longer 'merely marginal', one might say, lesbian and gay subjects participate in a global set of signs that capitalism also has access to and uses for profit and exploitation of the most economically disadvantaged: thus, lesbian and gay tourists, like any other, expect service provision in the poor countries they visit, and to pay for and be provided with the very best of times. Thus, to extend the 1997 debates between Butler and Fraser, we might say that in late modernity a contemporary Western political economy produces differentiated subjects of capitalism whose function is not to reproduce and care for a labouring, exploitable population at no cost to the state, or at least not always or only, but to participate actively in markets.

Rosalind Gill points out that accounts of neo-liberalism – even where critical, but

particularly where they are not – often understate the extent to which new global formations are gendered. This is true both in terms of the tensions women continue to have to negotiate in relation to ‘home-making’ and work – despite claims of radically changed kinship structures, women continue to do the majority of domestic labour in late modern democracies – and also in terms of how they are marketed to as subjects (Gill, 2008). In her work on gender and media, Gill focuses on the importance of irony as an alibi for advertisers who continue to represent women (and men) in heterosexist, objectifying modes, an irony radically undercut by the continued difficulties women face in securing the equality they are continually reassured they have already achieved (Gill, 2007). For Gill, as for Angela McRobbie (2009), post-feminism posits a sexually liberated, feminine young woman inheriting the promise delivered by now anachronistic equality agendas. Heterosexual femininity itself is thus repackaged as freedom in neo-liberalism’s sexual and political economy. To fail to feel liberated is thus to be emotionally out of synch with the sexual plurality neo-liberalism insists we currently inhabit.

We might wonder why sexual identities distributed across a heterosexual/homosexual axis remain so significant, if being commodified is primarily a question of being marketed as the next good thing to come out of late capitalism? It might make as much, if not more, sense to privilege an open sexual and gendered plurality instead, as this would guarantee the largest range of consumers now that traditional kinship structures have lost their salience. However, perhaps what makes sexual and gendered commodification in late modernity so particular here is its marketing and circulation as part of an unalienable contemporary Western right previously, and often still, denied. In this light, in their focus on commodification of identities, Hennessy and Duggan are pointing to something very

important about what attention to sexuality and political economy’s intersections reveals about late capitalism – namely that the marketing of gay and lesbian identities in particular (rather than desire more generally) allows Western subjects to participate in the fantasy of ‘trade offs’ in the face of what we know about the stark inequalities that global capitalism engenders and props up. In other words, it is precisely because of the continued (fantasy of) marginality of lesbian and gay identities within a heterosexual/homosexual opposition that these identities work so well to allow consumption to operate unabated. On the one hand, gay travel, clothing and so on rely on underpaid labour globally – which, importantly, we also know, rather than are ignorant of, in this time of globalized communication – while on the other, gayness is a repeated celebration of overcoming oppression and so its recognition remains constructed as an advance, even once it has been achieved. The same may be true of the marketing of a ‘previously constrained femininity’ through such banalities as ‘being worth it’. In my view, then, it is not simply that marginality has become mainstreamed within markets, but that marginality becomes the condition for a fantasy of continued ethical or even progressive orientation to those markets, all the while (previously) marginal subjects remain free to enjoy its benefits. In this respect, ‘recognition’ might be said less to showcase the move away from marginality and into the mainstream than to be one powerful means through which that tension in the present is mediated.

My analysis of both Fraser’s and Butler’s legacy in relation to how to think through – and ameliorate the effects of – the relationship between sexuality and political economy reveals several questions to take forward. I believe that these accounts emphasize too strongly historical shifts from reproductive kinship models and towards other kinds of economic entanglements, and in doing so overlook the continued folding together of both models. In empiricist mode, they underestimate the role fantasy and attachment play

in securing sexual subjects' relationship to political economy and the importance that imagining ourselves (barely) beyond kinship has in our relationship to the market. Thus, as I have argued, a marginal relation to kinship remains formative of how gay and lesbian subjects take up positions in late modernity, even as we might think their centrality to forms of regulation (consumer or nationalist) marks their distance from that marginality. It is important to be able to attend to the role that sexual identity production plays in the relationship between sexuality and political economy, of course, but not to read back from these identities as the fullest extent of sexual meaning, in part because this is an extraordinary burden for gay and lesbian subjects to have to bear. Fraser's progress narrative and her political technique of recognition fail to get at multiple or ongoing experiences of sexual inequality for those subjects, restrict redress to what can be seen and so ignore vast areas of inequality that do not inhere in identity at all (Fraser, 1999). If we want to begin to undo the mutually reinforcing relationship of late capitalism and sexual meaning we need to look deeper than identity and its effects. In part two, I suggest that one way forward is to reframe sexuality in terms of 'scenes' that we act in and that act on us in ways that are both miserably predictable and interestingly ambivalent.

PART TWO: SCENES OF ATTACHMENT

Thus far, I have been exploring ways in which the relationship between sexuality and the political economy is represented as a shift from traditional to plural kinship forms through a discussion of Fraser and Butler's work, but also via more contemporary feminist and queer developments. The role of fantasy is already at play here in terms of imagining others who are not neo-liberalism's Western democratic subjects as still mired in traditional kinship forms, still subject to patriarchalism or tied to reproductive (and affective) labour. Indeed, a progress narrative

of a move away from reproductive kinship models as part of a heteronormative political economy in Western democratic contexts requires that this not have happened everywhere (yet), and thus the particular ways in which reproductive kinship models do continue to structure many Western democratic contexts as well are easily overlooked. To risk repetition in order to restate one of the main points of my argument here, such 'old' frames are better characterized as folded into 'new' ones, as part of how sexuality and political economy are sutured. More importantly perhaps, the way in which fantasy shuttles back and forth between past and present, nostalgia and optimism, not only more accurately characterizes how kinship figures in the present, but also points to rather different ways of thinking about sexuality and the political economy.

In this endeavour, I am drawn to two queer feminist theorists who have articulated sexual subjectivity as taking place within historical and politically situated 'scenes'. Both my chosen authors – Lauren Berlant and Teresa de Lauretis – argue that it is desire and attachment, more than a heterosexual/homosexual axis, that articulate contemporary subjects in relation to political economy. Both stress the importance of fantasy for understanding sexuality's continued centrality to late modernity, and carefully excavate the ways in which sexuality's narration, its repetition in time, sutures it to reproductive temporality. Berlant clearly articulates her position in relationship to contemporary neo-liberal precarity and emphasizes the role of 'intimate publics' in maintaining the fiction of a contract between the subject and the state. Although she does discuss Butler at different points in her oeuvre, Berlant does not reference the *Social Text* debates and makes no reference to Fraser. Neither does de Lauretis, who is more tangentially connected to debates about the relationship between sexuality and political economy, in part because she is even more firmly rooted in the Humanities than Berlant. However, in her detailed discussion of how narrative and

visual frames suture gender and sexuality to reproductive, Oedipal norms, her work emphasizes sexual operations beyond the empirical in very helpful ways for my argument here. Further, both Berlant and de Lauretis conceive of psychic and intersubjective attachments as a kind of normative glue, but also as sufficiently unstable to open up possibilities for imagining sexuality otherwise. My own interest in both theorists also emerges from a belief that contemporary questions of sexuality's relationship to political economy can only be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective that does not confuse object of analysis with disciplinary convention.

Berlant intervenes in the debates I have been tracking through what I consider to be a quite remarkable turn. For Berlant, what she terms 'intimate publics' no longer underpin our relationship to the state in straightforwardly gendered, heteronormative ways, not primarily because kinship structures have altered as they become less necessary to capitalism, but because the state no longer stands in direct, reciprocal relationship to the subject (Berlant, 2008; 2011). There is no reciprocity between the state and a citizen with the rolling back of welfare provision and the crumbling of state-supported services such as health and retirement provision (Berlant, 2007a; 2007b), and there is no longevity to the relationship between the employer and employee, who may be hired and fired, or who may never have stable employment (or any employment) as a way of marking time and subjective coherence over a life course (Berlant, 2006). For Berlant, this state of precarity means that the promises of upward mobility previously shared by working-class and migrant labourers in the United States and Europe now function fictionally. Instead, the promise of later happiness resonates as an empty dream that our attachments actually work to undermine, are indeed 'a central part of the reproduction of the difficulty of their singular lives and lived struggle on the bottom of class society in the first place' (Berlant,

2007a: 278). We agree to participate in a story about 'the good life' that substitutes for real social advancement in an era in which social relations are ever more untethered. Rather than contemporary precarities resulting in a diminishing importance of 'the intimate' as what undergirds the social contract, then, our current late capitalist political economy of misery and immiseration for those on the economic bottom rung reinvests the intimate sphere with a significance that it is always bound to fail to deliver: it is thus a 'space of disappointment, but not disenchantment' (Berlant, 2008: 2).

Berlant describes this promise and our attachments to it as a 'relation of cruel optimism [that] exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (Berlant, 2011: 1). For Berlant, this is one way of accounting for why subjects with nothing to lose continue to attach to normative agendas that act counter to their interests. The subjects in Berlant's contemporary over-invest in small moments of intimacy, long for a stable set of familiar or familial relationships in which they can believe and try to pull together the fragments of their attachments into something that can provide them with the reciprocity they crave. Her interest in the Dardennes brothers' films *Rosetta* and *La Promesse* is illustrative: their characters are often on the threshold of adulthood, trying to piece together relationships – usually with strangers – that resemble (in a tragic kind of mirroring) the familial forms that elude them. They know they cannot turn to family for the reassuring familial affects they need to participate in a life that remains just out of reach (Berlant, 2007a).⁷ What is particular to Berlant here is that the attachment to the figuration of the familial is redoubled because of its emptiness rather than undermined, a position a million miles away from Fraser's pragmatics. State recognition for these subjects is entirely off the agenda and, although Fraser would no doubt argue that it is redistribution that is needed here, for Berlant it is the attachment to 'aspirational normativity' (Berlant, 2007a: 275)

itself that forecloses the political disruption necessary for imagining anything else and thus invest in the possibility of social transformation of any kind. In other words, Berlant insists that people attach even more firmly to the norms that are a nostalgic fiction for something that never was, let alone ever will be, precisely to the extent that they face no other prospect of recognition. If Berlant is right (and I believe she is), then the lack of even the possibility of recognition for the most economically vulnerable propels intimate attachments that thwart the necessary conditions for a will to redistribution. The psychic dimensions of sexuality here are extraordinarily powerful in shaping and propping up a political economy also on its knees.

It is not any old intimacy that is craved here: it is reciprocal care and love. The less the characters in Berlant's careful readings can see opportunities on the horizon, the more they invest in relationships that cannot carry the burden asked of them. These fantasies are absolutely about kinship, as Berlant's characters try to force relations with strangers and even enemies into familial mirages, the more so as the proper scenes of 'the family' devolve. Rosetta's angry refusal to play along with her alcoholic mother's attempts to recreate a typical familial dining scene thus cannot be read as a rejection of the affects such a scene might ordinarily be said to generate. Rosetta is tenacious in that respect, refusing to relinquish her attachment to the good life, however tenuous, and it is clear Berlant (2007a) admires her for her foolishness. However, in Berlant's (2002; 2006; 2007a) scenes, sharing only doubles the sorrow as family members bleed you dry and new attachments turn to violence, coercion or disappointment. Yet, Berlant says, we cannot help but repeat our attachments in familiar scenes, not because there is a single psychic origin to our bad object-choices but because it is a last hope of comfort that enables endurance or survival, providing the possibility of 'a space of collective relief from the ongoing present in which living on

is an activity of treading water and stopping loss amid unreliable dependencies' (Berlant, 2007a: 292). Kinship is alive and well for all of us, it seems. In its contemporary intersection with political economy, sexuality might thus be better rendered not as a site of co-optation or transformation, but as one of deflection and survival, integral to the workings of the political economy but in utterly new, and frequently quite devastating, ways.

Let me move now to Teresa de Lauretis, whose work on sexuality, fantasy and narrative in the late 1980s and early 1990s prefigures the debates I have been tracing here, and whose insights lend themselves to the arguments I have been tracing despite not engaging global political economy directly. De Lauretis's work spans literary and film theory, queer, and feminist theory, and her consistent emphasis on desire as a scene of possibility – both for social co-optation and for non-reproductive imagination – provides a useful complement to Berlant's rather more miserabilist vision. For de Lauretis, fantasy is fundamental for thinking about sexuality, particularly in its relationship to narrative as the mode through which social meanings are given shape. The heroic tale, as Judith Roof (1996) has also argued, includes overcoming obstacles and 'claiming the loved one' as part of how the 'happy ever after' is imagined. Sexuality is thus embedded in the narrative momentum of what constitutes a successful life: remaining alone is always 'bitter-sweet'. For de Lauretis, the narrative structure of fantasy is central to how reproductive sexuality is maintained, not because it keeps women in place, but because it has nothing to do with women. Drawing on the work of Luce Irigaray (1985), de Lauretis argues that this fantasy (and the materiality that follows – it is that way around) is linguistically and structurally male, and that '[w]ithin the conceptual frame of that sexual indifference, female desire for the self-same, an other female self, cannot be recognized' (de Lauretis, 1988: 156). For de Lauretis (1984), then, women have always been absent from reproductive kinship (its structure and narratives) because

they can occupy it only as shadows, fictions that represent men's visions and desires for repetition of the order they benefit from. Via Monique Wittig (1992), de Lauretis proposes a rather different way in which 'lesbians' are outside of reproductive sexual norms to Butler's, then: not because they are not heterosexual but because they are not women. In this sense, de Lauretis's question concerning increased freedom of sexual subjects would not be the extent to which we have moved away from reproductive kinship structures, but the extent to which our fantasies have moved away from their gendered narrative structure.

If we read de Lauretis with Berlant, then, we might well say that political economy and sexuality remain firmly sutured in reproductive modes, not in relation to kinship structures particularly, but in terms of the psychic hold of reproductive narrative form in our imagination of the good life. Yet de Lauretis is less pessimistic in her articulation of the affective hold of heteronormativity than Berlant, even though she is relentless in her insistence that we can never fully escape Oedipal re-enactments at a variety of levels. For de Lauretis, the very psychic structures that call us into narrative and attach us to certain scenes as familiar (as well as familial) consistently threaten to tip into failure or excess. Thus, de Lauretis rewrites Laura Mulvey (1975) to suggest that the processes of identification in the scenes in which we participate may certainly favour a masculine orientation but they also open up a gap, precisely because they are scenes rather than fixed relationships. The subject of masculine identification may well not be male, for example, and the role of spectator(s) that attends scenes of sexual desire (even if only imaginatively) may alter surface meanings and give them a different history.

The possibilities for de Lauretis are creative in that they allow us to think about sexuality as a 'staging' of multiple attachments that opens up space for alternative alignments precisely because desiring scenes are malleable rather than merely dense carriers

of Oedipal repetition as the basis of a heteronormative economy. In her reading of the film *She Must Be Seeing Things*, de Lauretis (1991) takes a dual approach to opening up the formal narrative basis of scenes of desire. First, she identifies the film's exploration of gendered, heteronormative and colonial histories of lesbian, as well as straight, desire through what we might call 'lesbian camp'. Second, she analyses the protagonists' integration of visual and narrative fantasies into their relationship in ways that scramble historical continuity and play with different perspectives, until the viewer (and reader) can no longer be certain of a singular history or present of desire. In part because of the pleasure in identification and desire that cannot be fully contained, in part because of the non-exclusive nature of desiring scenes, de Lauretis insists that subjectivity, narrative and reproductive economies are not always in synch, and encourages her reader to exploit this ambivalence to productive effect.

For de Lauretis, then, the task we face in uncoupling desire from its reproductive repetitions is emphatically not an empirical one; it is one that involves devising 'strategies of representation which will alter the standard of vision, the frame of reference of visibility, of what can be seen' (de Lauretis, 1988: 171). Neither can the basis of such a politics be identities that repeat the histories of narrativisation we need to move away from. Instead, in addition to representational tactics that allow for sustaining non-reproductive attachments, de Lauretis proposes the development of sets of imaginative practices that 'constitute a sort of habit or knowledge of the body' (de Lauretis, 1994: xx).

In her emphasis on fantasy and identification as the core of sexuality's relationship with political economy, de Lauretis segues with Berlant in important ways, I think. Although Berlant remains primarily focused on the relationship between desiring attachments and neo-liberal exploitation, she too draws our attention to the unfinished and ambivalent nature of those attachments at

certain points in her work. Indeed, Berlant chides Butler for her over-emphasis on the finality of childhood learning of attachments through vulnerability and dependence, suggesting, in ways that remind me of de Lauretis, that childhood exists in the present only as memory, which is always partial and at once obscure and hyperbolic (Berlant, 2007a: 293–7). Whereas investing in familial affects is bound to disappoint, intimate attachments are scenes you can always get back into, precisely because their outcome is not fixed. The cruel nature of their appeal is also what makes them productive sites of possibility.

While Berlant represents Rosetta's miserable situation as quite simply overwhelming (Berlant, 2007a), in 'Two Girls, Fat and Thin' (Berlant, 2002), she narrates the fates of her heroines Dorothy and Justine rather more openly, if not optimistically. For Berlant, the girls' complex, sustained attachments to (food) consumption and poor relationships also allow them to foster a growing attachment to one another. At the end of the narrative, the two girls fall into bed with one another and curl up together, exhausted. Berlant is clear that neither the text nor her reading constitute 'a lesbian ending, exactly', but, like de Lauretis, she remains intrigued by the possibility of alternate meaning nestling within that 'exactly', concluding that 'this mutual fall into bed is not nothing' either, '[i]t's something else' (Berlant, 2002: 267). To follow de Lauretis this might be the beginning of a 'sort of habit or knowledge of the body' (de Lauretis, 1994: xx) that has a range of possible meanings. Indeed, it may not mean the same thing to its two participants, the text's author or its readers – Berlant and then me and now you. Combining Berlant and de Lauretis, one might hazard that in a sense this is late capitalism's affective gamble: to try and secure attachments to norms through mechanisms that are 'deeply ambiguous, compromised and unstable' (Berlant, 2007a: 297). In addition, precisely because attachments are ambivalent or excessive or both,

even within the most grim of circumstances, sometimes, '[n]onetheless, flourishing happens' (Berlant, 2008: 31).

CONCLUSION

Thus far in this piece I have tried to show how queer and feminist understandings of sexuality's relationship to political economy can remain hampered by the terms of debate they inaugurate. In their overly strong emphasis on shifts from reproductive kinship to new domestic arrangements and a continued reliance on a heterosexual/homosexual opposition, such accounts reinforce the visibility paradigms that place an undue burden on gay and lesbian subjects (as either transgressive or affirming of capitalism). Further, they rely on progress narratives that order time and space in the most conventional and uni-dimensional ways. This matters, because it prevents us having a more nuanced account of the multiple ways in which sexuality and political economy come together currently and understates the central role that fantasy currently plays in securing attachments to the 'good life' that late capitalism promises, even as that life is less and less possible to attain or even believe in. In revisiting Merck's question about why it is that 'Sexuality ... and Economics' (Merck 2004) are so difficult to theorize together, I have paid close attention to that elusive term 'Subjectivity' in her original title, particularly as it pertains to the role of subject formation in the suturing of the other two terms. In discussing Berlant and de Lauretis's work, I hope to have shown that the psychic and representational dimensions of sexual meaning that make up subjectivity are fundamental to how political economy works even as it crumbles, and may offer keys to imagining that relationship otherwise. Just as attachment is always unstable, so too, of course, is neo-liberalism's gamble that we will continue to invest in intimate paradigms that cannot any longer (if they ever could) bear the weight of the demand upon them.

It thus seems all the more important to conceive of the gaps in sexuality's relationship to political economy as more than mere interruptions in the psychic structure of kinship. Thus, in closing, I want to think again about sexuality, narrative and temporality in de Lauretis and Berlant. For de Lauretis, as we have seen, desire is fundamentally temporal: it moves through time, propels action at the narrative level, looks forward, reaches out and precipitates pleasure and disappointment (de Lauretis, 1984: 105–6). Similarly, for Berlant, what is 'cruel' about 'optimism' is that it hopes for a future stability, or normality, that has never been and will never come to pass. In this sense, the temporality of desire and attachment is normative and even Oedipal, keeping us on a single track in line with reproductive economies, promises of 'the good life', a fiction for all but the most powerful subjects. However, both de Lauretis and Berlant also conceive of the space of alterity – a space that were it to thrive would change the nature of both sexuality and political economy as well as their relationship to each other – in temporal terms, through this elusive term 'practice'. De Lauretis, we will recall, does so in terms of a 'practice of love' that is also (to become) a habit, something repeated time and again, perhaps to inculcate a different coherence the subject comes to crave. Interestingly, Berlant uses similar language when she advocates a 'practice of intimacy that does not refer to the birth or childhood family, property, or inheritance' (Berlant, 2002: 267). Although its alternate referents remain unclear, such a practice produces 'a possibility that the habits of history might not be reproduced' (Berlant, 2006: 31). Berlant understands 'capitalist normativity' as a question of 'productivist pacing' too (2006: 26), suggesting that it is at this level that interventions may occur, should we but recover from the result of reproductive repetitions, awaking like Justine and Dorothy from our 'exhaustion' (Berlant, 2002: 267).

Berlant presents her characters' narratives in terms of survival: but this too 'is not

nothing', in my view. Rosetta gets the sleep she needs to carry on through mantra-like repetition of her attachments to 'the normal life' (Berlant, 2007a), for example. To endure, to keep on through time, is the only way of maintaining the possibility of a future; one has to endure to participate in restagings rather than repetitions. In addition, to stay in the game in order to do so is not perhaps so wildly optimistic a fantasy to close on, precisely because 'staying attached to life involves gathering up diverse practices for adjusting to the singular and shared present' (Berlant, 2011: 57). Attachments might provide glimpses of other ways of being, even if only temporarily, and these may become part of the history one takes forward as practices; in conjunction with the routine banalities reproductive repetition engenders, certainly, but still. And perhaps, too, shared ambivalences in that shared present can be the basis of something like community, the basis for a different set of values that underwrites any challenge to neo-liberalism. Only then, surely, might there be the possibility of a desiring life that is not 'merely survival' but can attach to promises that may be kept and might eventually even add up to 'something else'.

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Subjectivity, 5: 121–39 (2012), Sage, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

NOTES

- 1 See Paul Boyce's work for an exploration of the ahistoricism of such approaches, that curiously forget colonial influences as they seek to recover an alternative sexual paradigm (Boyce, 2006).
- 2 This trajectory has a venerable history, drawing on and extending Marxist feminist arguments that illuminate the function of 'the sexual sphere' as underwriting economic exchange (Rubin, 1975; Pateman, 1988; Wittig, 1992), and Marxist and psychoanalytic arguments about the radical significance of homosexuality in challenging

- consumerism and capitalist drudgery (Marcuse, 1955; Hocquenghem, 1993).
- 3 Direct citation of both authors will follow in the main body of the text.
 - 4 Merck (2004) considers Fraser to have carried the day; Lisa Adkins (2002) errs on the side of Butler in her critique of the visibility politics of 'recognition', and Anna Marie Smith (2001) takes both to task for their ahistoricism in relation to the kinship/economy interface.
 - 5 I detect an early anxiety about this in Rosemary Hennessy's critique of the 'queer theory' special issue of *Differences* (De Lauretis, 1991), where she expresses concern about the lack of attention to what makes 'queerness' possible, as well as the 'who' of an emergent deconstructive ethical and political high ground (Hennessy, 1993).
 - 6 Lynne Segal (2008) traces the development of Butler's thought concerning identity, contextualizing changes as to do with an increased concern with 'the political' over 'the performative'. I am more convinced by Kaye Mitchell's response to Segal that changes primarily concern the political life of performatives rather than a prioritization of the former (Mitchell, 2008).
 - 7 Berlant's 2007a essay is republished in Berlant, 2011, pp. 161–189.

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Economy

Ania Plomien

INTRODUCTION

A section on the economy in a *Handbook of Feminist Theory* that engages with themes and issues of relevance in the twenty-first century may or may not strike one as an obvious choice. The non-obvious view is based on the pronouncements that the ‘woman question’, at least as far as economic issues are concerned, is no longer relevant. A recent example of this is the cover of *The Economist* (2009; January 2010 print edition) depicting Rosie the Riveter with a bold large-print call-out claiming ‘We did it!’ and a tagline ‘What happens when women are over half the workforce’. The issue contains an article titled ‘Women and Work. We Did It!’ that refers to ‘the rich world’s quiet revolution: women are gradually taking over the workplace’, or how ‘women have taken control of their own economic fates’ through a process which has ‘produced so little friction’.¹ Certainly, the last few decades have witnessed change in all

aspects of economic life of relevance to gender and gender relations in many places across the world. However, even with qualifiers such as ‘the rich world’ and ‘the workplace’, the reality is far from such representations of women as ‘taking over’ and ‘being in control’ when it comes to possessing economic security, participating in economic decision-making and bearing economic power. And while these dimensions of economic life vary in how and how much they matter in different contexts, the fact that they continue to matter everywhere justifies sustained attention to the economy. Feminist economic theory today is just as important as it was in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Mary Wollstonecraft (1792/2010) articulated pioneering arguments for full citizenship rights for women and directly challenged women’s unequal economic position, and when John Stuart Mill (1848 and 1996) placed the disadvantage of women within a larger economic analysis and based it on a

theory of male domination. With both the political economy and gender relations subsequently falling off the radar of neoclassical economics – which dominates contemporary economic theory (Barker, 1999) – for this and other reasons work questioning the material reality of people's gendered lives in relation to the economy is an obvious choice for a *Handbook of Feminist Theory*.

Anchoring a concept such as 'the economy' is not a straightforward task, as it involves technical, normative and political judgements. It also needs a form of analysis which is quite unlike the assumption of mainstream economists in both the academy and the polity that discussion of 'the economy' can assume neutrality, scientific objectivity and value-free practice. The latter framing tends to be applied to a narrow conception of the economy in theory and in practice, focusing on production of goods and services exchanged through markets and reflected in the system of national accounts. And the participants in such an economy are assumed to be rational, independent and self-interested agents who make choices about the use of scarce resources, which, at the aggregate level, maximize efficiency and welfare for the society as a whole. Feminist economists generate a more comprehensive (and accurate) concept of 'the economy' by grounding economic theory in materiality and engaging with the question of how economic relations actually work. The object of analysis becomes provisioning more broadly (not just markets), paying attention to production and reproduction, specifying the processes related to the non-monetized household sector, recognizing the interdependence and the related self and underscoring the importance of the gendered structure of economic relations, power relations and institutions (Strober, 1994, Harding, 1995, Nelson, 1995). This allows for 'a conception of *human* behavior that can encompass both autonomy and dependence, individuation and relation, reason and emotion, as they are manifested in economic agents of either sex' (Nelson, 1995: 136, emphasis in original). It also allows for

choices to redistribute resources, power and economic well-being rather than precluding such choices when focusing on scarcity, selfishness and competition (Strober, 1994).

All the contributions to the Economy section of this Handbook reflect these broad concerns with the world of gendered differences in the economy, and insofar as they interrogate issues within and outside of the academy and discuss economic aspects of life together with the political, social, cultural and so on, they are of relevance to other disciplines and efforts concerned with well-being and justice. The chapters were commissioned after the onset of the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2007 in the USA and subsequently spread internationally, beginning with the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. They were completed before any firm signs of sustained recovery could be discerned in many of the countries that were affected. It is therefore unsurprising that much of the discussion in this section refers to the crisis and either uses it as the main trigger to analyse its particular features or focuses on different aspects of the functioning of economies and highlights how crisis conditions may affect it. The global crisis – whether financial, economic, sovereign-debt, austerity or political – is an important particular event for feminist theorizing. This is because it is unprecedented in its scale, scope and speed with which it spread. It is also unparalleled in the policy responses of governments and it is not yet fully understood in its long-term ramifications for individuals, communities and countries, as well as for transnational relations. Equally important is theorizing the underlying causes of the crisis not in the least because of its potential to inform adequate responses but also in a more general sense of the contribution that crisis theorizing – of current and previous episodes – may make to feminist (economic) theory more broadly. The role of gender and racial inequality and stratification among the causes and effects of crisis and austerity is a good example (Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2013).

A related prominent theme in the section is the rise and persistence of neoliberalism – a hegemonic economic, but also state-political, social and cultural paradigm playing out at the subjective level of people’s lives and extending far beyond the market (Brown, 2003). Ideology is important to the process of domination of market mechanisms, which are established gradually as taken for granted knowledge (see Hanappi-Egger, this volume) and then are placed outside the political process which limits the scope of negotiating change (see Klatzer and Schlager, this volume). A telling example of this is the TINA argument – There Is No Alternative – promoted by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in cementing neoliberalism and repeated today in relation to austerity policies. The dominance of neoliberalism and the critique mounted at it have thus gained a renewed significance. But even critical accounts of neoliberal economics (e.g. Stedman Jones, 2012) do not mention its gendered implications, which illuminate a number of unresolved tensions in feminist economic theory. One such opposition is between the state and the market, which in shorthand discussions tends to associate the first with a progressive force for social justice and the latter with self-interest and survival of the fittest. This, to an extent, is not an inaccurate characterization, and builds on the work of John Maynard Keynes (1936/2008), Karl Polanyi (1957) and Hyman Minsky (1986/2008). But while there are many examples of state governance modifying the unequal playing field for the less and the more privileged, to which the vast welfare state literature testifies, there are numerous historical and contemporary instances in which the state sides with the more powerful and cements or exacerbates inequalities, economic and otherwise, including along gender lines. Feminist theorists – among them Jane Lewis (1992), Ann Shola Orloff (1993) and Nancy Fraser (2013) – have conceptualized many of these challenges.

Arguably, the spread of neoliberalism (in scope and in magnitude) makes some of these conflictual relationships even more

problematic. For instance, with the notion of transition from welfare to workfare, socio-economic well-being increasingly relies on labour force participation in the formal economy. The longstanding productionist emphasis (over reproduction) takes on a new dimension as to who deserves to be a citizen both in the Global North and South, albeit in varied ways. A transnational analysis (Barker and Kuiper, this volume) demonstrates how global processes of neoliberalism, international debt management, migration and feminization of labour operate to exclude large groups of populations marked by gender, race, ethnicity, class or migration status from enjoying the material, social and political rights available to others. Given the primacy of the market in many contexts across the globe, it is easy to become implicated in the process, juggling the false opposition between an ‘unproductive’ carer vis-à-vis a ‘productive’ worker. These tensions crystallize around the conditions of participation in the market and the constraints on women’s employment in a labour market, which remains normatively fixed on the male life-course even as men’s working lives fail to fit the norm. But, the question of whether to engage with the market at all is more peripheral, although as much important. Building on debates about women’s access to and equality in the workplace as a means to advance gender equality, recent contributions ask nuanced questions about the ways in which women affect and are affected by work in economic, social and political spheres (Morrow and Fredrick, 2012). Feminist work in the context of development is particularly pertinent here, as it emphasizes the value of a critical stance towards discourse and policies that purport to be emancipatory, empowering and progressive, but in fact encroach on individual and community rights (Wilson, 2013). The collusion of state governments with big, often transnational corporations – whether through land grabbing and plundering of resources in India (Wilson, 2013), low labour standards in labour laws and working conditions in maquiladoras in Mexico or low and

decreasing corporate taxes in the UK – attest to what is being done in the name of economic growth without any attention to the violence and hardship it causes to vulnerable people and communities.

The state's collusion with big corporations and certain international organizations generates a further ambiguity for feminist engagement with those institutions, as many now claim women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality as their flagship initiatives. In some ways this attention to previously ignored or marginalized gender inequality issues is a welcome development, and in part it is an outcome of feminist action. However, while it matters that gender issues are incorporated, how this is done is crucial to interrogate so that feminism is not a party to a compromised relationship with state capitalism (Eisenstein, 2005). Questioning inequalities occurring within the system is essential, but it cannot take the place of critically challenging the system itself.

When gender is integrated into economic analysis and public policy, the extent to which it is done remains limited. The theme of marginality thus emerges on several levels, one being the marginality of heterodox and feminist economist work to mainstream economic approaches both in the academy and polity (Dunford and Perrons, this volume). This is also apparent in diversity discourse, which draws on gender and other social categories but does so at an individual level of identity without due attention to structural forces in capitalist societies (Hanappi-Egger, this volume). And, more generally, there are difficulties of incorporating gender into existing theoretical and policy models, which, in an add-on and instrumental fashion and with no solid attempt to transform existing foundations, does not overcome the tensions and contradictions inherent to them (Floro, this volume). Crucially, within feminist economist scholarship too, marginality is of concern, with certain themes and voices being more dominant than others, and this section of the Handbook is not immune to this charge. Feminist economics is an

expanding international space welcoming a range of scholars and activists engaged in increasingly broad theoretical, empirical and political issues. The kind of work published in the discipline's main journal, *Feminist Economics*, and the range of papers presented at the annual conferences of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE), which take place in countries of the Global North and South, all attest to the longstanding feminist commitment to dialogue and debate. Queer and post-colonial perspectives enhance these analyses by drawing attention to the implied heteronormativity and Eurocentrism (e.g. Bergeron, 2009; Charusheela, 2004), but much more remains to be foregrounded in theory and practice. Likewise, an intersectional analytical perspective in informing our understanding of economic processes is vital, and there is much scope for its application in feminist work on the economy (see Wendy Sigle-Rushton, this volume).

Indeed, insofar as theory and practice work in tandem, marginality is a persistent feature of micro and macro relations. Gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work – including care work – such as the exclusion of unwaged work from what is considered work and therefore what is and is not reflected in national accounts (Folbre, 1991), continue to preoccupy feminist analysis. The extent of this omission is great in size and significant in its undervaluation (Himmelweit and Plomien, this volume). Examining care work in relation to the question of undervaluation of jobs performed by women – where the notions of skill, choice and labour market segregation have limited explanatory power – indicates that they must be seen together with deeply rooted gendered social norms and cultural practices (Dunford and Perrons, this volume).

Finally, the chapters in the section attest to the value of interdisciplinarity in discussions on economic citizenship, justice and equality, which have much in common with welfare state scholarship. As a discipline, feminist economics has grown in part from a basis of

neoclassical economics foundations and continues to utilize much of its theoretical and methodological tools. At the same time, it formed a sharp critique to it with respect to the object and method of analysis, and so feminist economics, in addition to being a disciplinary field, also includes much interdisciplinary work. Interdisciplinarity is central to discussions of gender and the role of power relations that mainstream economic theory tends to ignore, resulting in inadequate theorization and flawed policy practice. To overcome these limitations, human rights and capabilities approach frameworks are advocated (see Floro, this volume). In a similar vein, economic and political explanations are deemed necessary to account for the rise and persistence of inequality, despite a relative growth of wealth and material well-being on an aggregate level (Dunford and Perrons, this volume). As neoliberalism is seen as the culprit by many critics within and outside of academia, and insofar as it is as much a political project as it is an economic one, the nexus of the economic and the political must be brought into focus much more closely than can be achieved by economic or political theory on their own. Recent macroeconomic reforms in the European Union serve as an example (Klatzer and Schlager, this volume). Importantly, looking across disciplines can be instructive beyond conceptual and substantive issues and can benefit the development of methodologies (Sigle-Rushton, this volume).

The eight contributions to the Economy section, to various degrees theorize feminist concerns in relation to epistemological, methodological, political and policy issues into the twenty-first century. All the chapters share in '[t]he goal of Feminist Economics [which] is not just to develop more illuminating theories, but to improve the conditions of living for all children, women, and men'.² The first three chapters critique some of the cornerstones of neoclassical economic theory, especially its emphasis on objective, value-free and gender-neutral (and otherwise unbiased) terrain, and point out the constitutive

interests and values of economic processes that need to be incorporated into theoretical and methodological thinking. From a feminist perspective, Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger considers the implications of the gendered construction of rationality, which, through the *homo economicus*, epitomizes the foundations of mainstream economic theory. A historical trajectory of the capitalist mode of production, in theory and practice, demonstrates the persistence and spill-over of gender biases to human capital theory, underpinning discrimination in employment relations, and which are also carried over to new forms of capitalism. And so, objectivity, neutrality, efficiency and optimality are assumed without fully taking into account the messy reality of social economic behaviour occurring within, but importantly also outside, supposedly rational markets. Such omissions in mainstream economic theory are glaring, given, for instance, several decades of contributions from political economists on power and class relations and in light of critiques from feminist and feminist economist scholars highlighting their gendered dimensions. These gaps, as Hanappi-Egger argues, are key to understanding the gender-specific hierarchies in economic thinking, which assume away many of the processes underpinning current economic problems.

In the following chapter, Maria Sagrario Floro carries the theme of an articulated hierarchy in mainstream economic theory forward. She first shows how the inclusion of some, but not other, processes in micro- and macro-economic modelling is arbitrary and gendered, and then considers the possibility of engendering economic analysis using elements of mainstream economic theory. Accordingly, there are a number of reasons that make mainstream economics incapable of a full inclusion of a gender perspective, because such would fundamentally transform its basic tenets. So, a feminist perspective – including feminist economics – is necessary to overcome the biases, gaps and tensions and thus to better understand economic reality. As such, much of this takes place outside of the market, and

much of this is not a result of rational or optimal decision-making processes that lead to efficient outcomes. These issues, Floro argues, are crucially important at a time when policy-makers within countries and internationally pay increasing attention to gender equality; the way in which gender issues are framed in economic and other policies matter for their potential to address unequal gender relations. The much publicized, and in many respects welcome, recent efforts of the World Bank serve as a case in point in illuminating the limits of gendering economics. The author concludes by identifying the capabilities approach and the human rights framework as allowing for a more profound incorporation of gender in economics.

To what extent the capabilities or the human rights frameworks can succeed in establishing better ways of understanding and practising economics remains an open question, much like the important theoretical intervention made possible by the concept of intersectionality analysed by Wendy Sigle-Rushton. While feminist contributions continue to stress the relevance of gender, the usefulness of gender as a single social category – as Sigle-Rushton outlines – has been examined critically. Attention to sources of difference other than gender – such as age, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality and many others – and their role in generating and experiencing inequality enables researchers to avoid false homogenizations of women's and men's lives. But the manner in which social categories are used, and the use of categories themselves, has been the subject of conceptual and methodological debates by feminist scholars. Intersectionality, then, while a significant intellectual and political development, poses challenges to empirical research both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The author considers a number of options available to quantitative researchers, especially in micro-economics, in addressing them, and concludes that although the resulting analysis will be partial, it offers a better understanding of how a number of dimensions exacerbate or modify inequality as they intersect.

The following contributions resonate with some of the conceptual themes underpinning mainstream and feminist approaches to the economy and to economics developed in the first three chapters, but shift the emphasis towards some key substantive fields. Susan Himmelweit and Ania Plomien theorize care's economic properties as care developed into a commodity that can be exchanged on the market. However, the limits to productivity gains to be made from this movement render care a different kind of economic good. Additionally, normative, cultural and emotional features of care as a relational activity and the institutional context within which it takes place – and which it helps to constitute – combine in ways that make care needs and care provision responsibilities a more or a less significant source of inequality. Taken together, these factors necessitate significant public policy effort to share care more equally within and across societies, beginning with the greater recognition and valuation of care work. Care work, as the authors show, is mostly provided unpaid and, whether in the unpaid or the paid sectors, it is mostly performed by women, although to various degrees in different contexts gender is co-constitutive with age, class, ethnicity, race or migrant status. A sustainable care strategy thus demands investment in care in tandem with a wider transformation of gender and other social relations.

Robin Dunford and Diane Perrons consider a transformative potential of political and economic systems in their discussion of persisting gender income inequalities. They examine the role of power and privilege within neoliberalism to help explain the differences in pay between female-dominated work, particularly care, and male-dominated jobs such as elite finance. The authors question the paradox of how work that is associated with high social benefits carries low monetary rewards, whereas work that is of relatively lower social utility commands high remuneration packages. They show a close relationship between economic and political dimensions of power as it operates on many levels and across various

domains. A more challenging puzzle, however, is the continued orthodoxy of these unequal gendered social, economic and political processes, illuminated by the example of the ongoing crisis. While in addressing the crisis both the stark contrast between nurses and bankers and the primacy of neoliberalism as the economic paradigm were challenged, alternative strategies to organizing a society and running an economy continue to be marginalized. In explaining this conceptual and real-life problem, Dunford and Perrons call attention to how the rise of neoliberal elite is legitimated through biopolitical practice and argue that an analysis of the persistence of inequality needs to be informed by a discursive account of the production of subjectivities.

Similarly, Elisabeth Klatzer and Christa Schlager examine the interface between economic and political power structures, but from a different angle, as they scrutinize the policy mechanisms through which neoliberal power is consolidated. Their analysis of the new economic governance in the European Union integrates feminist macroeconomic and political science theory to show the negative implications of the recent reforms for gender equality. The authors argue that the new economic governance in the EU entrenches existing biases integral to economic policy decision-making and, by so doing, limits the conditions for gender equality policies and jeopardizes the attainment of gender equality within Europe. These processes are implemented despite the EU's formal commitment to gender equality and, as such, privilege 'market rationality' over gender justice. Crucially, they take place without due attention to democratic decision-making processes and public engagement and, in changing the playing field for social and economic policies, further constrain the scope of activities of democratically elected national institutions. This contribution thus highlights the importance of international or global processes – such as those generated by the interconnectedness of economic and political systems – for the modification of gender regimes.

In a complementary discussion of neoliberal global processes fuelled by international and transnational institutions, Drucilla Barker and Edith Kuiper draw connections between gender, class and location in the context of a global economy. The authors illustrate some of the gendered consequences of globalization processes occurring on a macro-level – what they call 'globalization from above' – which include state-level collaborations as well as activities of international organizations and transnational corporations. They also point to a counter-movement – that they call 'globalization from below' – which includes social movements with environmental, human rights, anti-patriarchy or anti-poverty concerns. Barker and Kuiper argue that the workings of free market thinking in practice exacerbate inequalities within and between countries, and that increasing inequalities constrain gender and class solidarity. With cautious optimism, they consider the human rights framework as capable of advancing social, economic and cultural rights.

In the final chapter of the Economy section, Corina Rodríguez Enríquez completes the analyses by discussing how gender relations play out at the micro, meso, and macro levels and pointing to their significance for and linkages among social protection systems, fiscal policy and the macroeconomic environment. As such, she draws together a number of themes – including differences in women's and men's participation in the formal labour market, pension systems, poverty reduction strategies and the provision of care – and discusses them in the context of Latin America. This discussion is instructive in and of itself, but its added value lies in its illustration of the encroachments and the limits of the neoliberal paradigm and the potential for the undoing of some of its processes and consequences. That which Rodríguez Enríquez calls 'counter-reforms' allows the possibility of destabilizing the hegemonic hold of the neoliberal paradigm. In this context, the author argues for instituting social protection floors through a set of social policies guaranteeing basic income security and essential services

capable of narrowing gender gaps. These, however, are neither sufficient nor unproblematic, and an equality agenda requires a more ambitious approach.

The eight chapters comprising this Economy section thus explore many questions, themes and developments in economic discourse and economic reality that are of relevance to gender equality and justice into the twenty-first century. While these contributions cover much ground and attest to gender-aware and feminist economics offering radical challenge to mainstream neoclassical economics, they nevertheless remain incomplete. This incompleteness, both in this section and in feminist theorizing of the economy more generally, is an invitation to seek better and fuller representations and explanations about gendered economic relations in an unequal world.

NOTES

- 1 www.economist.com/node/15174489. Accessed on September 13, 2013
- 2 www.feministeconomics.org/about_aims.html. Accessed on September 13, 2013

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'Homo Economicus' and 'His' Impact on Gendered Societies¹

Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger

INTRODUCTION

For many heterodox and feminist economists, the concept of Hayek's self-regulated markets is a questionable theory in terms of its deep ideological contradictions, and the current economic crisis is seen as most recent manifestation of this (Wallerstein, 2010; Hanappi, 2010). Thus there was some hope that alternative socio-economic models would come under discussion and that such revised and fairer international models could even be implemented. Perhaps unsurprisingly this hope remains unfulfilled; yet at the same time more and more citizens are refusing to accept the proposed solutions to the crisis in terms of slashed budgets for public goods such as education, social security and health. Widespread industrial action, the 'occupy' movement and even violent conflicts in various countries are signs of a growing resistance to new forms of oppression and further exploitation while governments are busy saving banks and other financial institutions. Roemer (2012) has

investigated how the economic and financial crisis has led to social and political crises as well as boosting the popularity of right-wing parties and widening the gap between rich and poor.

Since 2008 the gender impact of the crisis has also been the subject of wide discussion, specifically in terms of the policies of European and international financial institutions and their gendered biases.

Elson and Warnecke (2012: 110) distinguish three ways in which gender dimensions can be introduced into the current economic and financial discussion:

- Sex-disaggregated impact analysis investigates the repercussions of certain policies on women and girls compared to men and boys.
- Gender analysis of the extent of (fiscal) space de-masks how increases or decreases in public spending affect gendered characteristics of the economy.
- The analysis of the invisible gender order within policy rules highlights the implicit assumptions contained in those rules, whereby gender order is defined as the 'system of social power that

sustains particular patterns of gender relations' (Elson and Warnecke, 2012: 111).

In this chapter I will adopt the third approach in order to investigate gendered bias in mainstream economics (for a complementary application of this see Klatzer and Schlager, this volume). In particular, the role of 'rationality' – a fundamental concept in modern theories – will be examined. The discussion opens with an overview of the historical development of modes of capitalist production and basic concepts of capitalism such as rationality, exploitation and the gendered ordering of society. With reference to the economic crisis that began in 2008, the analysis underlines that these concepts remain paradigmatic in economic theory and practice. The second section presents the main critiques of current economic thinking as formulated by feminist economists, in particular with respect to the role of 'rationality' in economic theories. The third section will focus on the unspoken gender assumptions in human capital theory and how this affects discriminatory practices in employment relations. In the conclusion we offer an outlook on new emerging forms of capitalism, termed 'financialization' in the literature, and derive future challenges from a feminist point of view.

Thus the aim of this chapter is not only to summarize the longstanding critiques of capitalism from a feminist point of view but also to identify the main ideologies in mainstream economics and how these have been transformed by the financial crisis.

RATIONALITY AND THE ECONOMIC MAN

Rationality is a basic concept in economics. The root of the term is the Latin word 'rationalis', meaning 'reason' (for a more extensive discussion see Hanappi-Egger, 2011). The Oxford English Dictionary defines rationality as 'based on or in accordance with reason or logic'. The tide of rationalism, which engulfed eighteenth-century

Europe, had its roots in the scientific revolutions of the previous century. In direct opposition to religious belief and traditional modes of thought, this revolutionary idea was that true knowledge could be gained only by the application of logic and by empirical experimentation. In his mechanistic analysis of the underlying logic of the social compact, the influential English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) emphasized the brutal competition between human beings for material survival in their original 'state of nature'. To moderate the co-existence of human beings, he argued, a social contract is required, represented by the state as supreme body, which must be strictly separated from religion.

Later, David Hume, a representative of the Scottish enlightenment (1711–1776), elaborated the idea of human beings as rational social agents, attributing the development of religion to the anxieties and fears of an ignorant populace. Adam Smith was highly influenced by these ideas (for further discussion see Morris, 2009). In his 'Wealth of Nations', Smith proposed that a natural characteristic of human beings is 'the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another' (2002: 11), concluding that the division of labour is thus a *rational* step in management. As will be discussed later in this chapter, such division of labour included a gendered order – which then became integral to 'rational' production processes.

Historically, this strong attraction to the notion of rationality can be seen as a reaction to the political systems in place during the Middle Ages, when power – which can generally be equated with aristocratic power – was accepted as God-given or to be secured by force (right by might). Rationalism was thus a counter-movement, which, through the power of logic, aimed to investigate the underpinnings of society and thereby increase transparency. Hence the new age (the modern age) can be said to represent a movement against political oppression and inherited power towards power bestowed through a social contract. The idea of rationality also

had an impact on the treatment of women. In 1869 John Stuart Mill published 'The Subjection of Women', in which he decried the oppression of women under a patriarchal system. In this work Mill de-masked as false the ideological construct that nature legitimizes the systematic oppression of women, instead offering a positive, if essentialist, view of the benefits which women bring to society. Although the essentialist conception of manhood or womanhood was not questioned, some traits regarded as inherently female were at least seen as contributing positively to the world's welfare (for a comprehensive historical analysis of these developments see Folbre, 2009).

Rationality became a basic concept in economic theory with the development of the 'homo economicus', a neo-classical theoretical construction. This concept was first labelled 'economic man' by John Kells Ingrams in 1888; in 1906, Vilfredo Pareto used the term 'homo economicus' for the first time to express the idea of a profit-maximizing actor (Persky, 1995: 222). This fictive man is used to understand and even forecast human economic behaviour by introducing a utility function, backed by the assumption that each individual is strictly interested in maximizing his/her expected utility. In other words, rationality and logic govern the economic actor's decision-making to ensure the highest possible utility. At that time the focus of economic behaviour was dominated by methodological individualism. Keynes elaborated the meaning of rationality in a meso- and macro-economic context in 1936.

Foley gives a comprehensive overview of the role that this concept of rational economic agents has played within the development of capitalism. As he makes clear:

The Rational Consumer's function is to Choose. Thus he (or perhaps even she) becomes Sovereign in the neoclassical picture of the function of the capitalist society. [...] They [the capitalist firms] function only as vehicles for a rational and efficient allocation of resources to satisfy the Consumer's will. [...] As twentieth century critics

later pointed out, the Rational Consumer also has some extraordinary, even superhuman, capacities, particularly in the area of information processing and computation. (2002: 3-4)

Foley sketches some important milestones in the adaption of economic theory to the specifics of the history of European society, such as economic crises (e.g. the two world wars and the Cold War). He highlights the various forms of market-oriented economic theory and the shifting features of 'economic man'. Keynes, for example, referred to the homo economicus as a clever civil servant, while Neumann, in his work on the optimization of decision-making, referred to an automaton. In developing his theory of strategic decision-making, Nash elaborated the idea of an algorithmic man (with respect to information processing). Finally, Herbert Simon critically examined the assumption of unlimited information processing capacities. As Foley puts it: 'His [Simon's] observations of how people in responsible positions actually made decisions confirmed the suspicions of the inflated cognitive powers of the Rational Economic Agent Simon inherited from the American Institutionalist tradition' (2002: 11).

Simon developed the concept of a problem solver and an information processor with limited capacities as the economic agent (Simon, 1982), consequently transforming the idea of utility maximization into the best possible decision. Furthermore, game-theoretic experiments have confirmed the high degree of irrationality underlying the supposedly rational decision-making of actors (Hanappi-Egger, 2011). In particular, altruistic behaviour is explained by considering the economic agent as a Rational Reciprocator, one 'who combines the motives of personal material advancement with an inborn tendency to reward cooperation and fairness and punish defection and unfair behaviour in others. The advocates of this vision of the Economic Agent hold out the promise of a unified explanation of economic (and presumably other social behaviour)' (Foley, 2002: 13).

It should be noted in this regard how the notion of altruism came to be eliminated from mainstream economics (Bowles, 1985). And even if, as in *New Home Economics* by Gary Becker (1965) was tried, altruistic behaviour is considered, it sticks to the same gender bias of ne-classical economics (see Bergmann, 1995). The reigning market-oriented view, focusing as it does on price movements in perfect markets, does not accommodate any consideration of social behaviour. This shift from social interaction to 'neutral' and 'objectively rational' market mechanisms is one way of creating 'taken-for-granted knowledge' while avoiding the reality of social economic behaviour. Such thinking has often been de-masked by feminist scholars as ideology, and such arguments will be examined later in the chapter.

It can be seen that the concept of 'economic man' has been redefined time and again throughout the history of economic theory to attempt to deal with the contradictions, ambiguities and lack of explanatory power of this notion as revealed by empirical observation. Godelier (1972: 39) summarizes the main issues of rationality (and irrationality) as these impinge on economics. He argues that the rationality of systems cannot be analysed by merely observing *individual* behaviour, since an economy is always embedded in social contexts and cannot be separated from given political and societal structures that determine such behaviour. In particular, the view that behaviour is 'economic' only when occurring in the marketplace appears rather superficial, or, as Nelson puts it:

Drawing the distinction about what is 'economic' and what is not at the household door leads increasingly to odd dead ends and bifurcations in economic analysis. Why should childcare, elder care, and care of the sick be 'economic' when provided by markets (or sometimes government), but not worthy of study by economists when done in private homes? (1995: 142)

In other words, relating 'economic activities' to rational markets only and ignoring the

whole societal and political context is a gender-biased and partial view on what is going on in reality.

A review of the historical development of mainstream economic thinking, in particular the fundamental concept of rationality, reveals the step-by-step implementation and establishment of the ideology of free market mechanisms as taken-for-granted knowledge. In the current crisis we hear the main finance institutions reiterating the view that there is no alternative to the capitalist market system as the primary distribution mechanism. Thus the 'causes' of the current disasters have to be located outside 'the system of liberalized trade and finance, giving the illusion that this system is an efficient, coherent, and rational whole' (Gill and Roberts, 2012: 160). Hanappi-Egger (2011) highlights the role of taken-for-granted knowledge as the carrier of a specific ideology, revealed through ideological practices and institutions (see, for example, Althusser, 1977) that ensure its reproduction and maintenance. Finally, this externalization is reflected onto itself, pointing to current forms of the distribution of ideological statements. Ideology is thus not a homogenous mechanism but vaguely connected procedures, an elusive network of seemingly 'non-ideological' practices. Implicit intentions and direct links to extra-ideological coercion (e.g. 'the market' or 'nature') make it difficult to distinguish between ideology and the grains of 'reality' it transforms. Masked as taken-for-granted knowledge, the ideological framework is not exposed to political discussion – a problem identified by early feminist scholars (Fox-Keller and Longino 2003; Harding, 2004). Following this feminist understanding, the next section will scrutinize these taken-for-granted mainstream economic theories and present the main critiques.

MAIN CRITIQUES OF MAINSTREAM ECONOMICS

The idea – or, better, the ideological construct – of the homo economicus has been widely

criticized from both outside and inside the field of mainstream economics. For example, the assumption of the inherent selfishness of human beings has been refuted by arguments pointing to frequent displays of altruism, while the 'perfect' information base required to make an optimal choice has also been questioned. In particular, political and feminist economists have attacked the strict exclusion of social and political factors.

Sociologists have disputed the interpretation of human behaviour as purely motivated by economic considerations. In order to highlight the rationality of social action, Weber (1980) developed the idea of social economics, which investigates the relationship between the economy, on the one hand, and religion, art and politics on the other (Swedberg, 1998).

In the meantime, numerous scholars have emphasized the necessity of linking economics to the other social sciences (see Milonakis and Fine, 2009; Nelson, 2006; Mäki, 2002). Godelier (1972) has addressed an even more fundamental problem of rationality in economics, namely the difficulty of defining the basic terms. He points out that the definition of 'economics' as a human activity is in itself paradoxical. The underlying assumption that human beings inherently strive for maximization (whether money, power, food or any other object of desire) leads to the paradox that if all intentional practices are called economic, then we cannot longer identify any specific *economic* practice. Definitions that are all encompassing are in the end drained of meaning. If we want to describe something as being economic, there must be something non-economic, which becomes impossible if all intentional practices are economic. So the term is not very helpful at all.

Despite the many diverse contributions to the critical discussion of mainstream economics, it is interesting to see that current theories are still *male-stream* theories, ignoring valuable insights from feminist

scholars as well as from political economists, in particular with respect to the concept of a 'rational' decision-maker or economic man.

The idea of a single, autonomous and gender-neutral homo economicus has been discussed in some depth from a feminist perspective. For example, Cohan (1982) has criticized the inherent sexism of the term 'economic man' as serving to bolster the linguistic centrality of *men's* economic activities. Furthermore, cultural bias was detected by Dixon (1977), who, from an African perspective, rejected the concept of an individualistic and self-interested man. The African worldview reduces the distance between the self and nature and consequently considers human beings as part of nature rather than pursuing separation and domination of men over nature.

Maier and Fiedler (2002) have pointed out that the concept focuses on a male understanding of the contexts of life. In particular, homo economicus has been criticized for its ignorance of the whole field of reproduction and its neglect of the mutual dependencies of the private and public spheres (Nelson, 1995; Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann, 2005). The androcentric assumptions of neoclassical models have also been highlighted, wherein the existing system of gender relations is seen as the only possible or desirable arrangement; otherwise, 'such sharp contrasts between the assumptions thought appropriate to analyse households and those thought appropriate to analyse markets would not have seemed appropriate' (England, 2002: 154).

Ferber and Nelson (2003) and Nelson (2009) intervened to overcome the sex-based discussion of economic life by linking economic concepts to the issue of gender in terms of the social construction of codes of femininity and masculinity. They welcome the remarkable contributions of feminist economists and point to a change in some areas of economic thinking, which now also take households and the reproductive field into consideration. In their work they challenge the widely held view that

masculine constructions are inherently of greater value and applicability, and make clear that 'masculinity' is an inadequate base from which to define the behaviour of all individuals.

In particular, feminists have been instrumental in criticizing the gendered order of society. Over the last decades several scholars have questioned the 'natural' sex-based ordering of societies, identifying this as a social construction and introducing the concept of 'gender' (see Oakley, 1972) to argue that it is not biological disposition which leads to the subordination of women, but rather inequalities and hierarchization as socially generated phenomena. The latter are, of course, subject to change. Several scholars have also argued that gender is not strictly derived from, but merely related to, sex, in this way criticizing a rigid 'either-or' perspective (see Wetterer 1995). Indeed, the concept of sex itself has even been viewed as the result of specific social processes (see Butler, 2004; Ferber et al., 2008).

With respect to the critique of the concept of rationality, feminist discussions have focused on the general notion of rationality as an inherently masculine construction (Lloyd, 1984). But, as Prokhovnik (2002) has pointed out, rationality must really be understood in a broader sense by subsuming historical, gender-specific hierarchies and dichotomies; we need a more inclusive definition of the rational, one which does not distinguish in an essentialist way between men and women.

Historically, when the productive field of *paid* employment became detached from the *unpaid* private sphere, men were assigned to the former and women to the latter. Previously, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it would have been impossible to identify distinct non-productive family households in the working class, since all family members (men, women and even children) were forced to work in order to ensure their survival. It was only in the second half of that century, when working conditions improved and households

became more bourgeois in nature, that the trend was set which evolved into its final incarnation – the bread-winner model – after the Second World War (Thompson, 1964; Wetterer, 1995). This model institutionalized the private household as a social unit whose role was subservient and contributory to the 'wage-earning man', while the female input to economic productivity was wholly ignored (Folbre, 1991; Elson and Cagatay, 2000; Benería, 2003).

Nelson (1995) argues from a macro-economic perspective that ignorance of the role of unpaid work in mainstream economics continues to strengthen the societal status of male work. Furthermore, the ideology of free market mechanisms and the institutionalized forms of rational and optimized production processes are reflected in company thinking and the theories of microeconomics, again referring to the 'rational' in terms of 'mechanical' dynamics (Nelson, 2006). In particular, the argument that gender-specific power relations are integral to capitalism, and consequently of other exploitative systems, will be elaborated in more details in the following section.

RATIONALITY AND GENDERED EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

The optimization of work processes in the productive field (while neglecting the reproductive field) has been a driving force in the development of capitalism and its basic economic unit, the for-profit company (see Hanappi, 1994; Hartmann, 1976). The theoretical underpinning of the benefits brought by a division of labour was first formulated by Adam Smith, a vigorous proponent of this new form of managing production. Taking the example of the pin-making industry, he argued that production can be raised considerably if each worker is assigned only those sub-tasks he or she can do best: 'The division of labour, however, so far as it can be introduced, occasions, in every art, a proportional increase of the

productive powers of labour' (2002: 7). The increase in productivity brought about by the division of labour can be attributed to:

three different circumstances; first to the increase of dexterity in every particular workman; secondly, to the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another; and lastly, to the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many. (2002: 8)

The same basic idea of isolating and distributing tasks is used to explain the emergence of the large firm, considered to be the institutionalized realization of a bargaining process between parties that have diverse production curves. These diverse production curves represent the different abilities to produce goods. An optimal production is achieved by allowing the single producers to concentrate on goods they can produce best.

One of the involved parties can indeed be the organizer of this combined outcome, namely the entrepreneur. Those introducing novel combinations of separate activities are entrepreneurs – usually distinguished from managers who help to maintain and control existing systems of production. A manager allocates the diverse capacities of individual workers in order to organize a joint process of production.

Such basic ideas about the division of labour and assignment of tasks according to the 'capability' of workers have also been introduced into human capital theory. From the outset these 'capabilities' were couched in terms of 'gender specifics' – that is to say, biological determinism of the two sexes. The term 'capital' originally referred to the ownership of land, and later to the ownership of factories. In contemporary business theory 'capital' refers to (financial) assets – which are often difficult to assess with respect to human 'resources'. 'Human capital' is defined along the same lines as these concepts of ownership by expressing the idea of a capital stock contributing at any given time to the productive process. Thus 'human capital'

is understood as the knowledge and skills of workers. Analogous to the division of labour, the concept of human capital introduced the skills and education background of workers as important factors in economic theory and analysis, specifically the roles of families, schools and other social institutions. In particular, the 'rational' decisions of individuals to invest in their own education were seen as fundamental to their economic success, determining their later job opportunities and increasing their value to employers (Becker, 1975) – an approach which was criticized by Bowles and Gintis:

'labour' disappears as a fundamental explanatory category and is absorbed into a concept of capital in no way enriched to handle labour's special character. One gets the uneasy feeling that the operation was successful, but the patient vanished! [...] Human capital theory is the most recent, and perhaps ultimate, step in the elimination of class as a central economic concept. (1975: 74)

As a consequence, neo-classical economics rejected the view that the labour-wage exchange was a form of political struggle, instead believing the ratio of wage to labour time to be set by 'rational' and 'objective' mechanisms in free markets. Workers are considered to be owners of their specific 'human capital' (i.e. their labour time), which they exchange with firm owners for wages in the firm owned by the employer. The wage thus equalizes marginal expected gains in a transaction between two owners of 'capital' – just as in every other market.

With regard to gender, human capital theory still claims to explain given sex-segregation in certain fields of work (Zahidi and Ibarra, 2010) as the result of rational decisions which women, in particular, make. The assumption is that women see their primary responsibility as reproduction and childcare, and thus they 'rationally' search for jobs that are easy to interrupt and which generally require low personal investment. Polachek (1981) has discussed this kind of self-selection of women by arguing that the main reason why women choose to work in

low-paid sectors is that their perceived financial loss when giving up such jobs is minimal: 'Those occupations in which losses are smallest have the lowest atrophy rates' (Polachek, 1981: 62). This means that there is an economic rationale behind women's choice of jobs; when planning to stay at home for long periods throughout their working life, they select those jobs for which the costs of interrupting employment are low. Such costs can be defined as the difference between starting wages and re-entry wages. Polachek's approach also indicates that women suffer lower penalties for interrupting typically female occupations than typically male occupations, such as managerial positions. However, it must be said that these results have been contradicted by, for example, England (1982: 358), who has shown that there exists 'no evidence that plans for intermittent employment make women's choice of traditionally female occupations economically rational'.

Although its proponents often see human capital theory as a more adequate approach to the multi-faceted aspects of work and employment, it nevertheless falls within the tradition of neo-classical economics, which conceals key marketplace factors such as power structures and institutionalized forms of wage-labour exchange. It fails, in particular, to provide a sophisticated explanation of occupational sex segregation, since the underlying dual gender concept and difference-oriented view of men's and women's skills and abilities are viewed as an inherent, even innate, feature of individual human capital investment, and thus not susceptible to change.

Besides the rather questionable assumption of free and autonomous choices in the educational and professional marketplace, Aigner and Cain (1977) have stressed that human resource managers play a crucial role in work relations in organizations. Owing to underlying gender stereotypes, these managers are more likely to offer better working conditions, such as higher salaries and promotion, to men rather than to women.

This means that the vital factor underlying gender-segregation phenomena is not simply women's choice of education and occupation but, rather, the hidden effects of gendered assignments and attributions to specific tasks, often termed the 'gender typing' of occupations (see Hanappi-Egger, 2012). Similar discourses can be found in the study of racial discrimination concerning, for example, wage differentials between black, Latino and white jobs – what Kmec (2003) calls 'racial typing' (Huffman and Cohen, 2004).

Generally, a 'gender-specific' view implies a basic categorization based on *difference*. With respect to gender-specific skills, it is widely assumed that, owing to various gendered socialization effects (or even inherent biological dispositions), men and women are differently qualified for various kinds of tasks. This bolsters the idea of a gender-specific division of labour, since if employees display varied aptitudes it should be possible to optimize output by matching task requirements with specialized knowledge and skills. This argument has been critically examined by Hanappi-Egger (2011). Using a simple mathematical model she illuminates the underlying 'irrationality' of such an approach and shows how the assumption that the gender-specific division of tasks optimizes output is fundamentally biased in terms of gender attributions. It can be demonstrated that by simply gender-switching (assuming men can perform female-coded tasks and women male-coded tasks) better output results can be achieved in a mathematical model. Hence, described in a formal (mathematical modelling) language, gender-specific attribution does not make sense in terms of 'rationality'.

It is perhaps worth mentioning at this point that, as in the discussion on human capital theory, the gender-specific distribution of tasks is not merely a matter of linguistics but has a very real and persistent effect on wages. Power is exerted by means of the reigning ideology to assign acceptable wages for male- and female-coded

work, systematically de-valuing the latter. There is no empirical evidence in economic studies on gender gaps to explain this phenomenon by means of a rational choice (see England and Folbre, 2005). Arguments which try to show that women are more likely to welcome non-pecuniary compensations than men (such as mother-friendly working conditions) are unable to fully explain the gender wage gap. Glass and Camarigg (1992) point to the fact that female-coded jobs (often performed by women) are frequently not 'family-friendly'. In addition, the argument that the high demand for female jobs depresses wages cannot convincingly explain the persistence of gender gaps in income. In other words, the question of discrimination enters the stage.

As already discussed, economic theories that see the gender-specific division of labour (in particular as affecting women) as evidence of 'rational decision making' are ignoring the role of societal and political circumstances as well as the historical development of the work field. Instead of exposing the gender bias in economic theory to critical scrutiny, the status quo is defended by specious arguments based on rationality and objectivity, thereby reproducing the gendered order of societies.

The main aim of the division of labour is to optimize output by exploiting the individual capabilities and skills of workers. Gender-specific assignments derived from a rather essentialist understanding of gender are fundamental to creating 'difference' in social groups. But other social dimensions can also function as a basis for discrimination and exploitation. For example, ethnic background or the age of workers can clearly determine whether they are successful on the labour market or affect their likelihood of being promoted. In other words, a crucial ordering factor in societies is not gender alone but diversity more broadly, with respect to a number of differentiating social characteristics (see discussion by Sigle-Rushton, this volume).

FROM GENDER TO DIVERSITY: ECONOMIC THEORY AND DISCRIMINATION

Mainstream economic theories and the concept of a homo economicus as rational representation are of little use in tackling the current problem of a widening gap between rich and poor or determining how this is interwoven with social identities. The issue of 'discrimination' is largely disregarded, since the general equilibrium approach suggests that discrimination cannot occur in a rational market under perfect competition. As Nelson (2006) rather cynically puts it, the argument runs that a company sacrificing productivity by discriminating against female job candidates will 'make lower profits than its competitors. Because in perfect competition only the most profitable and efficient firms survive, the discriminator must [...] soon be forced to close down. Discrimination might be a part of social life [...], but, since it cannot persist in competitive markets, it is not an interesting economic issue' (Nelson, 2006: 1059).

Nevertheless, since discrimination is an observable phenomenon, some neo-classical economic theories have indeed attempted to grapple with the topic, though in rather simplistic ways. For example, Charles and Guryan (2011) have discussed how neo-classical theorists mainly adopt one of two approaches to the question of labour market discrimination, both with severe shortcomings: The *prejudice model* emphasizes the chauvinism of human beings – which would at least partially question the idea of homo economicus – and, in particular, human resource managers, then leaving it up to the economists to construct social categories (black, white, Latino, etc.) which necessarily are specified ambiguously. The *statistical discrimination model* focuses on the role of limited information in labour market transactions, while attempting to determine the required levels of skills and their relationship to, for example, groups of white and black

employees. Neither model, however, satisfactorily explains sources of prejudice and, consequently, Charles and Guryan conclude: 'As all these examples show, despite the difficulty of establishing definitive evidence about whether discrimination exists at all, there are many avenues for creative work in future' (Charles and Guryan, 2011: 33).

In their survey studies on discrimination against workers with disabilities, Baldwin and Johnson (2006) have highlighted the inherent difficulties in precisely defining the disadvantaged group in economic theory. While the category 'women' is here uncontested, so-called 'minority groups' are rather trickier to define. Furthermore, studies on the issue of 'disability' are often predicated on the unspoken, biased assumption that functional limitations are related only to disabled people. 'Functional limitation' is linked to a productivity-standardized model of the relationship between physical capability and performance, without any consideration of working conditions and content. Additionally, the authors point out that discrimination studies with respect to disability focus strictly on the prejudice assumption (i.e. misbehaviour of human resource managers), but did not empirically test statistical discrimination models or models of exploitation.

Contrary to neo-classical approaches and the concept of a homo economicus, Bowles et al. (2009) have looked closely at the interdependence of social categories (such as race) and economic equality. Their work follows a longstanding research programme aiming to reconcile economic theory with other research in the social sciences (see Weisskopf et al., 1983). In particular, Bowles and Gintis (1975) criticized Marxism for viewing the working class as a uniform social unit while neglecting any internal social segmentation. In adopting the idea that the working class, as well as other social categories, such as sex, race, nationality or ethnicity, should be acknowledged in economic theory, Bowles et al., (2009) have devised a model to highlight the link between social segregation

and the dynamics of inequality, arguing that the 'combined effect of interpersonal spillovers in human capital accumulation and own-group bias in the formation of social networks may be the persistence across generations of group inequalities.' (Bowles et al. (2009: 20)

What is remarkable in the broad range of economics theories – even the more radical varieties, such as the heterodox economics proposed by Bowles et al. (2009) – is the unquestioned assumption of the validity of social categories, encapsulated in the Social Identity Theory (SIT) of Tajfel and Turner (1986). This assumption is also highly influential in the *diversity* discourse, and certainly needs critical examination. In recent years there has been a shift in research from investigating the material circumstances of living and economic inequality towards studying psychosocial identity constructions and the role of diversity (see Hanappi-Egger and Hanappi 2011). The Social Identity Theory (SIT) – often linked to the social categorization theory – assumes that human beings tend to discriminate against out-group members who do not possess the same characteristics as members of their own group. Thus, discrimination is reduced to the level of individuals and their misbehaviour, ignoring the role which discrimination plays in capitalist societies.

Hanappi-Egger and Hanappi (2011) highlight the negative impact that this neo-liberal course in terms of promoting individuality has on welfare. Attributing the existence of economic inequality to the diverse characteristics of social groups – that is, shifting factual economic inequality to the identity-building level – serves only to promote the exploitative logic of finance capitalism and to increase injustice. Thus, they argue that diversity in relation to social categories has to be investigated in more detail to elaborate its interplay with the traditional 'working class' concept and the concept of exploitation. Nancy Fraser (1995) has made an important contribution to the discussion of social differentiation by outlining the

distinction between the injustice of distribution and the injustice of recognition: 'Here, then, is a difficult dilemma. I shall henceforth call it the redistribution–recognition dilemma. People who are subject to both cultural injustice and economic injustice need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity. How, if at all, is this possible?' (Fraser, 1995: 77) (Fraser, 2000; Fraser and Honneth, 2003 for further discussion). In summary, it can be stated that in the current discussion on diversity it is necessary to fight against the social hierarchization and marginalization of individuals based on social categories such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability and the like. This might result in more acceptance and tolerance, but also in purely rhetorically correctness rather than in distributive justice. Furthermore, focusing solely on recognition runs the danger of contributing to the strategy of underplaying the exploitative aspects of capitalism (Hanappi and Hanappi-Egger 2003). Capitalist ideology applies a kind of 'divide and conquer' tactic. Splitting disadvantaged groups into smaller and smaller units and exposing them to competition has the effect of a) shifting the focus from distribution to recognition and b) eliminating solidarity, and therefore the chance to build critical masses, which are necessary for political movements and resistance. The functionalist perspective that diversity can be managed is currently the subject of much discussion. As Magala puts it:

[...] we realize that 'diversity management' has also been turned into a managerialist ideology of the second half of the first decade of the 21st century. [...] This ideological turn also followed growing awareness of diversity's entanglement with ideologically obscured (but very sensitive) links to inequalities. Celebrating differences, we are legitimising the inequalities inherent, implicitly included in 'otherness' and 'difference'. Inequalities, which emerge as the raw energy resource of social dynamics and change (because they give rise to the powerful forces of upward social mobility reinventing and transforming societies), have to be managed and legitimised (so

that the sans-culottes or anarchists or hippies or terrorists do not blow everything up). The socially acceptable price for managing and legitimizing them fluctuates as much as the price of a barrel of oil on stock exchanges. (2009: 30)

It is ever more relevant to focus on the role of identity at a time of globalization and increased mobility, when workers with different biographies and multicultural backgrounds are thrown together (see Barker and Kuiper, this volume). In fact, the socio-demographic changes and dynamics of the last years have led to the growth of a new field in economics – the economics of identity.

The economics of identity (Akerlof and Kranton 2000; 2005) is a new way of looking at discrimination by introducing identity theories to economic analysis. Social categorization, the creation of inner and outer groups and norm setting are integrated into economic theorizing as well as decision-making. It is argued that processes of socialization and perceived societal role-expectations contribute to the preferences and self-images of individuals. Thus discrimination on the job market cannot be simply attributed to the prejudices of human resource managers, but must be investigated from the perspective of societal norm settings and the internalization of those norms. Under such dynamic processes, women, for example, become aware of their expected gender roles and consequently tend to self-exclude themselves. Gender norms tag tasks as male and female, with such matching leading to discrimination in terms of 'rational' decision-making by indirectly positing that women are better suited to feminine tasks and men can more authentically carry out masculine tasks. The economics of identity therefore argues for more sophisticated models, including culturally valid norms. Change in discriminatory mechanisms can be initiated only at the societal level. An important implication of this is that public discourses on justice are needed and discrimination mechanisms have to be identified and eliminated. In the literature of the economics of identity identity is variously

defined as: ‘a payoff, as a set of social categories, as an interiorized social norm, as the belief in profound personal values, as a perceptual lens or as non-instrumental deontological elements of action’ (Aguiar et al., 2008: 3). Identity is introduced as a factor in utility functions, without the usefulness or validity of such functions being questioned. Although this approach clearly enlarges the scope of economic theories by including structural and socio-cultural settings, it still fails to challenge the guiding rules and concepts of capitalist modes of production (Fine, 2009). Consequently, the new scholarly work on the economics of identity fails to link personal or social identity to the issue of discrimination as an integral part of capitalist modes of production and exploitation and continues to pose challenges for feminist theory and practice in economics.

CONCLUSION: NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter I have focused on the deeply gendered bias of economic theory and particularly neo-classical approaches, which make use of the concept of the ‘homo economicus’ and posit a high degree of rationality from economic actors. Based on the critiques of political and feminist economists, two fundamental problems have been identified. The first is that capitalism and its primary economic unit, the firm, are based on a gendered order of society that distinguishes between the productive and the reproductive field, assigning men to the former and women to the latter. The main economic theories holding sway today are deeply gender-biased, implicitly adopting an essentialist dual gender concept. In general, we can say that the gender order in societies is based on the stereotypical attribution of what it means to be a man or a woman. Such a gender-specific view can always be traced back to some kind of biological determinism,

which leads to our second problem: namely that mainstream economists construct theories which focus on ‘rationality’ and ‘objectivity’ in order to avoid any political discussion of phenomena such as sex-segregation, the gender gap in income or wider social injustice and discrimination.

The current crisis clearly shows how capitalist modes of production can trigger severe social and political problems. In particular, social injustice and discrimination have proved highly difficult to eliminate. Hanappi-Egger (2011) has defined crises as unexpected events that can lead to the erosion of longstanding paradigms. From a gender perspective this can engender a backlash from those who hold strictly conservative views on gender relations by reinforcing a dualistic gender concept and gender-specific division of labour, as well as gender-specific hierarchies. But crises also can be windows of opportunity, fostering more innovative gender concepts and encouraging a higher degree of gender balance in many societal fields. The final impact of the current economic difficulties is still open to debate, but many scholars believe that the status quo will remain largely unchanged. Whitelaw (2009), for example, points out that the urgent demand for financial reform and regulation has yet to be fulfilled, while Klatzer and Schlager (this volume) and Dunford and Perrons (this volume) consider some of the reasons why this is the case. Eisenstein (2005) has even explored the question of whether feminism has not in fact built a dangerous liaison with capitalism by examining the down-swing in US economic growth after World War II at a time when Europe and Japan enjoyed swift economic recovery and growth (Hanappi 2010). Strategies were introduced to counter this relative decline: in particular, the ‘abolition of welfare “as we know it” in the United States, and [...] the use of micro-credit and female labour in export processing zones in the “developing” world’ (Eisenstein, 2005: 489). These steps, combined with the rapid growth in the service

sector, seemingly contributed to the feminist project of empowering women. The transformation of developed economies in terms of de-industrialization, the expansion of the service sector and a relative shift of investment from manufacturing to finance was already underway in the 1970s – and this transformation, a capitalist strategy to increase profitability, is still ongoing today. Termed 'financialization' (see Thompson, 2003), this phenomenon is not limited to the USA, but can be found around the world. International companies pursue mergers and acquisitions of smaller businesses, making decisions to scale-up or reduce production based on changing currency exchange rates or in an attempt to lower costs. For example, at the time of writing the airline company Lufthansa, which since 2009 has been owner of Austrian Airlines (AUA) as well as Tyrolian, a smaller Austrian airline, has decided to dissolve a joint agreement with the staff union at AUA in order to increase short-term profits. The pilots have been forced to accept the lower salaries of the Tyrolian airline in the knowledge that, if they refuse, management will simply transfer the AUA flights to Tyrolian. Similar dynamics can be observed elsewhere: international companies created through mergers are able to maximize profits by shifting production to countries with lower wages and by exploiting currency exchange rates.

From a feminist perspective the main problem was, and still is, the domination of the 'market' mechanism in the allocation of resources at both a national and an international level. Consequently government, communities and other stakeholder groups are forced into a subordinate role. Hanappi-Egger and Hanappi (2011; Hanappi and Hanappi-Egger, 2013) argue that a new concept of 'social class' is urgently required, one which combines the material existence of individuals who are exposed to exploitation (working-class identity) with social identity, which necessitates the recognition and questioning of norm settings. Focusing merely on the second aspect – namely recognition, social

identity and identity building – simply contributes to the diversionary tactics of neo-classical economics and ends up fostering new forms of exploitation. On the other hand, focusing too narrowly on working-class identity also neglects internal distinctions and new forms of living, and thus must be enlarged. The new (old) feminist project must be to define a new 'social class' that sees exploitation as a unifying factor and which at the same time understands inequality and marginalization to result from norm setting and hierarchization. At the same time it is imperative that alternative models be developed which better fit the realities of modern economies and societies. In other words, it is time to leave the simple model of a homo economicus behind and to come up with a more adequate perspective on people and their societal chances.

NOTES

- 1 Some of the arguments presented in this chapter were previously published in greater detail in Hanappi-Egger, 2011: re-use permitted.

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Integrating Gender in Economic Analysis¹

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This chapter focuses on the integration of gender in economic analysis and asks whether integrating gender can transform economic thinking and how it impacts the design of public policy. By way of background, the first section explores the persistence of the so-called ‘articulated hierarchy’ in mainstream economic thinking that upholds *laissez-faire* or market liberalization policy and neglects issues of distribution and power relations.² The second section highlights the challenges in the integration of gender into economic analysis. In particular, it examines the tensions and contradictions posed by mainstream economic theories and models in addressing gender concerns. The third section highlights the contributions of feminist economics in providing the basic pillars for envisioning a gender-aware economics and thereby pushing the boundaries of the analytical framework beyond those posed in mainstream economics. The fourth section demonstrates the impact on policy using the mainstream economic framework by discussing the ‘gender is smart economics’ approach of the World

Bank. This approach embodies the tendency to fit gender equality discourse within the ‘efficiency and economic growth’ framework. And the final section explores an emerging approach of integrating gender into economic analysis using the human rights and capabilities framework, which, I argue, provides the possibility of transforming economic thinking.

THE ARTICULATED HIERARCHY IN MAINSTREAM ECONOMICS

Economics is conventionally defined as the study of how societies can best coordinate wants and allocate scarce resources among alternative uses so as to maximize their objectives. Although there is tacit recognition of the varied ways in which people can coordinate their wants, needs and desires, mainstream economics focuses on the market system of coordination and allocation. This pertains to a set of production, distribution and exchange *mechanisms* organized around meeting some specified set of objectives and

in accordance with the governing rules of conduct as dictated by the laws of supply and demand. Mainstream economics rests on two branches of study, namely microeconomics, focused on individual (consumer or firm) choice, and macroeconomics, which examines the operation of the aggregate market economy. The fundamental principle underlying the microeconomic theory of human behaviour involves making decisions so as to maximize a stated objective, such as the level of individual or household satisfaction (i.e. utility), or profits, in the case of the firm. It assumes that maximizing individual satisfaction and business profits will maximize society's well-being.

While microeconomics focuses on how markets do their job of coordinating the wants of people given the relative scarcity of resources, macroeconomic theory explores the interconnection of these markets through aggregate flows of inputs, goods, services and income flows. It depicts the manner in which aggregate production, employment and general price level are determined by a host of economic, demographic, social and technological factors. It also addresses the role of government, both as a market participant and a regulator, which affects individual decisions through its choice of macroeconomic policies and, concomitantly, the functioning of markets and their outcomes. The standard macroeconomic objectives of high market output or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, stable prices and full employment of resources, specifically capital and labour, correspond to what is considered as the enabling environment for utility and profit maximization.

The mainstream economics' notion of efficiency with which markets do their job is based on some fundamental assumptions regarding human behaviour. As pointed out by Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger (this volume), people are assumed to be selfish rational beings making decisions that maximize their own satisfaction by comparing the costs and benefits of every choice or action. The rationality assumption supposes individuals

to have knowledge of available opportunities and the terms on which they can be accessed. A rational person then makes choices by assessing the opportunity cost or foregone benefit of various alternatives and selecting that which provides more 'utility' or net benefit than any other.

Rational choice-making is the defining characteristic of the representative market agent the 'economic man'.³ Market prices (or their 'shadow price' equivalent) essentially provide the means for the monetary valuation of such costs and benefits at the margin. This process of reasoning can be applied to nearly any concern, thereby presenting the economic problem as a question of efficient allocation of limited resources where objectives are framed in terms of utility or profit maximization. Economic theories and models are thus constructed to abstract from what is deemed to be less important elements of the problem – for example, whether there are costs and benefits that may spill to other persons or how preferences are determined, and to focus on those viewed as 'important'. Economic theory and models are not expected to provide a full description of the real world but, rather, to give an abstract representation of the salient features of that reality. The articulated hierarchy of what is salient is manifested in the choice of simplifying assumptions and in the framing of the objective of economic inquiry.

The basic theories and models of mainstream economics make the additional assumptions of well-functioning, competitive markets and the flexibility of economic actors to make constant adjustments in their decisions and lives as stipulated by changes in prices. Although the powerful idea of the 'Invisible Hand' and the market developed by Adam Smith is a social construct and its development has been deliberate, the discussion of issues regarding the accompanying institutions, such as private property rights, prevailing social norms and rules, is often muted or mentioned only as an aside.⁴

The study of the aggregate or macro economy applies similar reasoning and

assumptions. Building on the conceptual understanding of how individuals, households and businesses make decisions and how a market functions to coordinate their wants, mainstream macroeconomic theory analyses the economy-wide interaction of varied markets (labour, capital, other inputs, goods and services) and specifies the connections. Macroeconomic models are then used to identify the resulting changes brought about by a shock, say an increase in market price of oil or a devaluation of a currency, and to help address economic problems such as low GDP growth, unemployment and inflation by means of macroeconomic policies. The activities included in the operating framework of these models are assumed to represent the totality of economic activities and processes in the economy. Absent in most discussions are the sets of activities and exchanges that are neither performed for pay nor guided by market prices, such as those performed within the household essential for human maintenance and social reproduction.⁵ Also largely missing is a longer-term perspective involving the well-being of future generations that recognizes the relationship between the economy and the ecosystem in which it is deeply embedded (Nelson, 2011).

GENDERED IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARTICULATED HIERARCHY

In this section I explore the nature of gender and gender relations and the possibility of integrating gender using the elements of mainstream economic theories. A related question is whether a gender lens requires an adoption of a different articulated set of values and parameters for understanding economic processes and outcomes.

Gender and gender relations bring attention to the social framework of economic analysis specifically in terms of the social relations that underlie contractual arrangements in businesses, households and markets. Several aspects of gender relations are

particularly relevant with respect to engendering economic analysis. First, gender relations interact with other structures of the social hierarchy, such as class, ethnicity and race. Market forces do not necessarily address the distributional imbalances that are embedded in social relations. In fact, the unequal power embedded in gender relations draws from existing social norms, conventions and practices and can be reproduced in the sphere of economic activities, which in turn influences economic outcomes. The embedded power relations may be altered by egalitarian outcomes such as those that effectively enhance women's empowerment and/or reduce gender inequities. On the other hand, they may be reinforced by asymmetric market outcomes such as those that bestow more assets, productive resources and opportunities to men than on women.

Second, gender relations, as with other aspects of social relations, do not necessarily involve explicit negotiation or bargaining (Agarwal, 1997, Sen, 1990). They can result from implicit differences in power and are expressed in the form of discrepancies between the actual contributions, needs and abilities of a person and that person's own *perception* regarding them. Hence, the ideas and representations of gender are often internalized by men as well as women (Kabeer, 1994). For instance, women's paid work may be viewed as 'secondary' or 'supplementary' earnings by employers or lenders and therefore as not as important to the household as that of the 'primary' male breadwinner. This perception can influence hiring and promotion decisions and credit or loan approval, even though women's earnings may be just as critical to meeting household needs as men's. Women too have also been socialized to believe that their work is of lower value, or that challenging their husbands is not a woman's right (Kabeer, 1994).

Third, gender relations are not static, as with the roles of men and women. Social rules that prescribe their behaviour and rights are influenced by the interaction of economic, social, demographic and political

forces (Beneria and Sen, 1981). For instance, Boserup (1970) argued that women's relative status in many parts of Africa and Asia declined under European colonialism and forms of patriarchy where the promotion of land ownership has deprived women of land-use rights. The belief that men were superior farmers encouraged the introduction of technology and cash crops to men, which left women with traditional low-yield methods for growing subsistence crops (Floro and Meurs, 2009). The evolution of gender relations as a result has put the responsibility of money incomes squarely on men, while women (and children) grew to be dependent on the male breadwinner. Western forms of patriarchy embedded in colonialism have profoundly shaped gender relations in developing countries, but its impact, however, has been confounded by class dynamics. Intra-household transfers, for example, became more prominent in intra-household dynamics and provided the mechanisms for the better-endowed and market-participating men to assert control and authority over their dependent women and children.

Moreover, the varied trajectories of development processes undertaken by countries and the manner in which these interact with social conventions and practices have brought about variations in women and men's roles and in the levels and forms of power asymmetries between them. In Egypt, Iraq and Syria, for example, the generally low labour force participation rates of women reflected persistent barriers posed by norms and conventions on their labour market participation (Olmsted, 1999). In South Asia stark gender inequalities in basic education and land rights continue to persist. Despite these variations there is a shared commonality across countries: the underlying social rules and practices governing inheritance, property rights, employment and household division of labour, among others, have tended to ensure that the entitlement of material resources is more commonly invested in men and that the care and nurture of the family is ascribed as primarily women's responsibility.

Fifth, gender relations are interwoven into a broader set of social relations that structures the division of resources and responsibilities, claims and obligations between different social groups. To ignore this can lead to the simplistic treatment of women and men as homogeneous groups. One obtains deeper insights into the social context of the economy when the interconnection of gender with other social stratifications is recognized, since the crosscutting nature of power relations illuminates the important distributional element of economic processes. The gains from market expansion and economic growth, for example, are likely to be unevenly distributed across sectors, among households and between men and women, as with the costs of economic downturns and crises.

These key facets of gender relations suggest that bringing gender into the economic discourse is likely to challenge the boundaries posed by the mainstream economic framework. It demands scrutiny of the assumptions on which their theories and models are based (see also Sigle-Rushton, this volume); it requires the recognition of the processes involved in social reproduction and the dynamics between this sector and that of the market economy; and it puts emphasis on the underlying social relations and brings attention to the power asymmetries that underlie economic transactions and processes. These are examined in greater detail below.

There are several features of the mainstream economics framework that are germane to the integration of gender in economic analysis. The first has to do with the depiction of human behaviour as epitomized in the rational, self-interested individual (see Hanappi-Egger, this volume), whether s/he is a consumer, lender, investor, borrower, employer, worker, farmer, etc. A corollary to this is the assumed exogeneity of preferences.⁶ This becomes problematic since it excludes the fact that the options, constraints and preferences of a person are shaped not only by one's proclivities but also by socially

defined roles and the actions of others. This point is recognized by some mainstream economists, such as Kenneth Arrow, who argued that individual behaviour also depends upon the constraints or obstacles that are determined by the actions of others, and possibly by past actions of the individual and of others (Arrow, 1951). Unfortunately, this point is infrequently considered in mainstream economic theorizing.

Second, the notion of rationality is given a particular meaning in mainstream economic analysis, which imposes restrictions on the way gender can be integrated. The term broadly refers to the use of reason in explaining the relationship between means and ends (Feiwel, 1987). It is not specific to any particular set of objectives or of means, but rather it brings attention to the congruence or dissonance between the two. However, the use of rationality in mainstream economics specifies a particular set of ends, namely utility and profit maximization for individuals and firms and steady output growth and macroeconomic stability for the aggregate economy. It also denotes the particular means, namely the overwhelming reliance on market mechanism to coordinate different wants. Resource and goods allocation is performed by the invisible hand and takes place in contractual exchanges with price as the signalling mechanism. When gender is incorporated within these parameters, gender inequalities are addressed in a manner that is compatible with self-interest or the logic of individualism and the efficiency of markets. Focus is given to increasing women's labour force participation and access to credit markets, and to the acquisition of human capital to increase labour productivity and the desideratum of upward mobility and of expressing one's 'true self' (England, 2010). Gender mainstreaming therefore takes place without altering the stated ends and the means, even though a change in the latter does not make the rationality concept irrelevant. The particular application of rationality in mainstream economics tends to ignore the

possibility of a rational person pursuing the goals of gender equality and sustainable development in the sense that s/he employs reasoning to understand and evaluate a wider range of means, such as market regulations and collective action, in order to achieve these ends.

A related problem is the blurring of the means and the ends of economic activity. As mentioned, the main objective is the allocation of scarce resources efficiently; in macroeconomic parlance, the objective of any society is to attain high and stable growth of GDP per capita, which is typically made synonymous to improvement in human well-being. The starting point of any economic analysis is the goal of promoting individual and societal well-being. However, a framework that privileges production for the market discounts the important contribution of unpaid work and non-market production and takes for granted the 'invisible' economy of reproduction and human maintenance. It misses out the factors that affect the quantity and quality of labour and the crucial linkages between the unpaid, non-market economy and the operation of the market economy. The focus on market output growth creates a partial picture of human provisioning and as a result, narrows the range of means that are considered for improving or enhancing well-being. For example, childcare solutions to address the tensions in balancing market work and family life are likely to emphasize the promotion of part-time work among mothers so they can also attend to their children's need or the promotion of a childcare market.

Third, there are implicit value judgments embedded in mainstream economic models that carry with them social practices as well as biases. What connections are specified and how they are expressed requires *a priori* judgment of 'important' aspects in economic reasoning and, by default, those that are assumed exogenous or given are considered to be less so. For example, the notion of 'revealed preference' involves some subjective judgment regarding the outcome of making a choice in

the following manner: whatever a person does must provide more satisfaction or utility than any alternative; otherwise, s/he would not have chosen it. Following such reasoning, a woman who undertakes a 'double burden' by performing both market work and household chores must prefer them over other options. Absent in this analysis is gender and socially constructed norms that influence household divisions of labour and create routines and customs in decision-making, many of which are internalized by the actor or decision-maker. Consequently, mainstream economics avoids certain options, such as negotiating with the husband or social provisioning of childcare services, from the process of deliberation or decision-making and thereby makes a strong value judgment. What mainstream economics tends to disregard is the irrefutable fact that economics, as Kenneth Arrow points out, is an 'inextricable mixture of fact and value' (1978: 472).

Fourth, conventional economics tends to suppress its inquiry on the social relations among individuals that underlie economic processes and of the power embedded in these relations that provides a ranking that indicates the subordination of one group or individual to another. Implicit here is an articulated hierarchy of characteristics where self-interest dominates over the welfare of others and the broader society and individualism overshadows connectivity with others. Mainstream economics puts its emphasis on the act of market exchange resulting in the transfer of resources or goods between market agents, and on the behaviour of market prices. The de-linking of the functioning of the economy from the social context in which markets operate is deliberate, as any suggestion of value judgment is considered to be subjective, messy and imprecise.

Questions regarding distribution are thwarted, too, by certain propositions: for example, wages are determined by the marginal revenue product of labour, market prices at equilibrium are efficient, and economic growth depends on investment growth that derives from growth in savings.

By discarding the notion of power, the relational distinction between subordinate and superior individuals or groups is removed and the tendency to place women and men, ethnic minorities and the majority, workers and bosses on the same 'playing field' emerges in its place. For example, the concept of utility implies that the satisfaction enjoyed by a person, say a poor woman, is valued as much as that of anyone else. But this 'egalitarian' element of the utility theory, as pointed out by Joan Robinson, is sterilized by slipping from utility to physical output as the object to be maximized, so that growth of material output is made synonymous with promotion of well-being (Robinson, 1964: 56). It explicitly separates growth from distribution, so that problems associated with economic growth or low wages can be handled as isolated logical questions that are free of value judgment. There is also an avoidance of issues of power through an assumption of perfect competition among sellers and buyers as the default state of affairs, unless stated otherwise. These attributes are incongruous with the integration of gender into economic analysis because the essence of gender relations and the manifestations of the prevailing gender ideology involve the exercise of power.

ENGENDERING ECONOMIC ANALYSIS FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Recent developments in feminist scholarship, including feminist economics, have led to a greater realization of both the potential and limitations of social allocative mechanisms (market) and of social relations that extend the domain of individual rationality. The work of Elson (1995), Beneria (1995 and 2002) and Elson and Ça atay (2000), for example, have shown that mainstream economics has a history of inclusion of women's and gender issues, such as labour force participation, human capital and fertility, although these are generally topic-specific.

Specific experiences and interests facing women in the developing world, including constraints on the adoption of modern agricultural technology, division of labour on the farm and access to credit, have also been addressed. Gender has also been introduced in some macroeconomic models by disaggregating at least one variable by gender, though for the most part, conventional macroeconomic models are gender-blind (: Elson and Ça atay, 2000).

The extensive body of work on feminist economics is illustrative of the multifaceted interconnections between gender and economic processes; it demonstrates the varied ways in which economic institutions such as markets, firms and households are 'bearers of gender'. Markets can no longer be viewed merely as a multitude of transactions between different agents that involve the actions of 'buying and selling'. Rather, they are socially created through a myriad of institutions – from the legal system enforcing property rights to social norms. Such actions entail the existence of social institutions and become meaningful only as a result of accepted social rule. Several feminist economists have thus challenged the assumptions, methodologies and empirical investigations, as well as structural features, of mainstream economics (England 1993; Nelson 1993 and Nelson 1996).⁷ They have deconstructed the meanings of economic concepts and have exposed the gender biases implicit in them. Their approaches are as diverse as the schools of thought within the economic discipline. Nevertheless, feminist economists share a common view regarding the centrality of gender in analysis and their collective work towards its integration is part of a broader agenda to develop a 'more humane economics centered around the provisioning of human needs rather than the notions of scarcity, efficiency and maximization of economic growth' (Beneria, 1995: 1847).

Engendering economic analysis entails the expansion of the scope of economic inquiry beyond market activities to include those economic activities performed in the sphere

of social reproduction and human maintenance. This significant aspect of human provisioning involves a wide array of activities that rely heavily on unpaid labour, contributed overwhelmingly by women. This sector is generally kept invisible in conventional macroeconomic models (see Himmelweit and Plomien, this volume) by treating the processes associated with the production of the labour force as exogenous. Yet, it is clearly vital for the functioning of markets and the reproduction of the labour force, just as markets are for the processes of social reproduction. Gender relations permeate economic processes in the market and non-market spheres in an interconnected manner. For example, the norms governing the responsibilities for care and domestic work and the value (or lack thereof) given to the requisite labour effort are constantly drawn upon in determining the terms of women's and men's participation in the labour or credit market. The fact that women spend long hours in caring and meeting the needs of other household members makes it more difficult for them to do what they want in other areas of life, such as employment and leisure. Examining economic reality using a gendered lens highlights, therefore, the underlying tensions which, depending on how they are handled, determine the manner in which they are incorporated in analysis and addressed through economic and social policies.

FRAMING POLICY: THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC FRAMEWORKS

The last few decades have witnessed a growing effort by governments and multi-lateral institutions to address gender inequities and biases in political, social and economic spheres of life. Since the 1970s, the combined efforts of women's groups, regional and international women's networks, feminists, development scholars and the United Nations have brought the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment into the forefront of policy discourses. Claims such

as the 'feminization of poverty' grabbed the attention of policymakers and heightened the need for engendering data collection methods and statistics (Chant, 2008). Development concerns ranging from agriculture to health and nutrition, education, employment, vulnerability and poverty are critically explored through a gendered lens. The 1975–1995 UN international conferences on women, which culminated in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, underscored the need to adopt a framework in which gender-based inequities in resource access, voice, political representation, work burden, earnings and economic opportunities can be addressed and rights reconfigured.

At the same time academics and policymakers pondered, both conceptually and pragmatically, how to 'frame' gender issues in an economic context. As the following discussion demonstrates, the policy design used in addressing gender concerns ultimately depends on the ideological perspective through which the integration of gender into economic analysis is made. Within the mainstream economics tradition several feminist, labour, development and institutional economists heeded the call for a conceptual framework by skillfully using standard economic tools that helped to weaken the grip of androcentric ways of thinking and to open the possibility of acknowledging some differences between men and women. These studies entailed a balancing act between accommodating *a priori* and accepted knowledge in mainstream economics on the one hand and confronting the general assumptions regarding human behaviour and markets and predicted outcomes on the other. While some scholars have modified elements and helped to expand the boundaries of knowledge by exploring the roles of institutions and social norms, formation of preferences and market imperfections and failures, others have adapted the 'disaggregate market agents by sex' approach. For example, gender dimensions are examined in employment patterns, earnings gap, migration and expenditures, as in the studies by Blau and Kahn

(2006a, 2006b), Jacobsen and Levin (1997), Neal (2004), Hoddinott and Haddad (1995) and Fafchamps et al. (2009), using standard economic tools.⁸ These studies have helped to shatter the gender-neutrality view of economic models and have raised awareness of gender concerns among mainstream economists who may not otherwise consider the relevance of gender in economic inquiry.

The variety of approaches in conceptualizing gender in economics is reflected in the different gender mainstreaming efforts of governments, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations and multilateral institutions. There are two main approaches that are likely to shape the academic and policy discourses in years to come, however: one is the 'efficiency, productivity and development' approach and the other is the human rights and capabilities framework. I will first examine the first, epitomized by the 'gender is smart economics' approach used by the World Bank,⁹ arguing that the policy framing illustrates the tensions that arise in the integration of gender in the mainstream economics framework. The second approach is explored in the final section of this chapter.

The 'gender is smart economics' approach was first adopted by the World Bank in 2000 as an attempt to address gender concerns within a mainstream economic framework. It illustrates the tensions that arise in the process of integrating gender into the mainstream economics framework and reflects an instrumentalist understanding of the relationship between gender, economics and the process of development. The 'gender is smart economics' approach construes the gender equality objective to mean empowering women economically by enhancing their participation and access to markets and by increasing human capital investment in women. A corollated supposition is that women's subordinate position stems from a lack of economic opportunities and, therefore, can be addressed by enhancing their participation in the market economy. It presumes that women's (economic) disempowerment derives mainly from their exclusion

from the market and that, therefore, women have tended to gain less from the prosperity brought about by GDP growth than men. It also presumes that increasing women's productivity can enhance economic growth. This approach is exemplified in the World Bank's *Gender Action Plan* (GAP), launched in 2006 and later revisited in the *2012 World Development Report* (WDR). The goals of the GAP are: to advance women's economic empowerment in the World Bank's client countries in order to promote shared growth and to accelerate the implementation of Millennium Development Goal 3, which entails promoting gender equality and empowering women. This is achieved by '*making markets work for women* (at the policy level) and *empowering women to compete in markets* (at the agency level)' (World Bank, 2006: 4). Gender inequities are perceived through the market lens, so that gaps in labour force participation, unequal access to productive resources and market-related solutions are emphasized. The latter includes incentives to increase women's market participation, measures that reduce transaction costs, such as infrastructure investment, and improvements in the policy and institutional environment for women in land, labour, finance and agricultural product markets (World Bank, 2006: 5).

The GAP measures are treated differently from the conditionalities that accompany structural adjustment loans (SALs) as they rely upon incentives rather than mandates and obligations. Moreover, the GAP focuses on enhancing women's economic empowerment in those 'economic sectors' that are considered as the Bank's 'core competencies', namely agriculture, infrastructure, business sector and financial development. It relies primarily on the ability of markets to increase their economic empowerment by promoting microcredit and by providing an enabling business environment for working women. It also emphasizes the importance of women's participation in decision-making and promotes the accountability of government to citizens, although the language used

suggests specific targets by which policy-making processes are made accountable, such as local (and not national) allocation of public expenditure. It is also particularly concerned with raising the voice of specific groups of women in various ways, such as supporting the participation of businesswomen's groups in trade policy and regulations decision-making. In sum, the 'gender is smart economics' encapsulates the Bank's policy agenda for addressing gender issues. As the rationale section of the GAP paper puts it: '... the business case for expanding women's economic opportunities is becoming increasingly evident; this is nothing more than smart economics' (World Bank, 2006: 2). Put in another way, the problem of women's lack of economic empowerment can be viewed as an underutilization of a productive resource (women's labour) that has undermined efficiency in the allocation of resources. It not only imperils economic growth and poverty reduction but also has a host of other negative impacts, such as less favourable education and health outcomes that undermine women's productivity.

It can be argued that this framing of gender recognizes the presence of an 'uneven playing field' between women and men. On the other hand, there is an implicit Faustian bargain. As the economic discourse in the GAP is effectively depoliticized and framed firmly within mainstream economic theories and methodologies, its scope of inquiry tends to focus on those gender concerns that ultimately fit into the overarching goals of productivity and economic growth. What is given up is a deep understanding of the interconnections between the functioning of markets and the underlying social relations that systematically reproduce different opportunities, constraints and outcomes for women and men.

An added problem is the inadequacy of data and statistics, which limits empirical investigations into the trends, patterns and nuances of gendered outcomes, although there has been significant progress in accounting for women's unpaid work as well

as disaggregation of labour data, as noted in the *2010 World's Women: Trends and Progress* (UN 2010) and *2012 World Development Report* (World Bank, 2011). Better information can be helpful in addressing informal employment, earnings disparities, discrimination, sexual harassment, household division of labour, asset ownership and the gendered effects of macroeconomic policies. A cycle of ignorance regarding these gender concerns is likely to be maintained, leading to their neglect.

To be sure, the World Bank has been open to dialogue with non-governmental organizations, women's advocacy groups, feminist economists, anthropologists and development scholars from the heterodox and institutional economics tradition (see Chant, 2012 for critique). More recently, the World Bank has extended its 'gender equality as smart economics' approach by adopting 'Gender Equality and Development' as the theme for the *2012 World Development Report*. Otaviano Canuto, the vice president of the World Bank, stated at a media background briefing on the report: 'This WDR is well-aligned with the Gender Action Plan that we carried out from 2007 to 2011, known as the "GAP"' (World Bank, 2012). While it reiterates many of the ideas in its 'gender equality is smart economics' approach, the 2012 WDR takes the integration of gender several steps further. First, it alludes to the concept of injustice by acknowledging that gender inequality is manifestly unfair. It declares in its overview that 'gender equality matters in its own right' (World Bank, 2011: 3). Gender equality is therefore framed both in economic efficiency and equity terms. In particular, it identifies three key dimensions of gender equality, namely: a) the accumulation of endowments (education, health and physical assets); b) the use of those endowments to take up economic opportunities and generate incomes; and c) the application of those endowments to take actions, or agency,

affecting individual and household well-being (World Bank, 2011: 4).

Second, it takes a broader view of development by addressing its social dimensions and argues that under-investing in women puts a brake on poverty reduction and limits economic and social development. It also avoids the pitfalls and limitations of the 2006 GAP by recognizing the role of cultural norms and social practices in the different positioning of women and men in society and in determining economic outcomes. The 2012 WDR has not only recommended actions in closing the gender gap in human capital and incomes by addressing existing gaps in the education of girls and boys and by reducing the gaps in earning and productivity between women and men. It has also mentioned the issue of power particularly in household decision-making, and thus recommends measures for women to have greater voice within households and societies.

Third, the WDR acknowledges the importance of social reproduction in the functioning of the market economy and of unpaid labour. It also examines intra-household dynamics and the division of labour within households and how these impact on women's agency and economic participation.

Fourth, the 2012 WDR takes a longer perspective and acknowledges the possibility that gender inequalities can be reproduced if they are not addressed. It also calls for action on investment in girls and boys so as to limit the perpetuation of gender inequality across generations. As pointed out by Canuto, countries that create better opportunities and conditions for women can raise productivity and improve outcomes for children (World Bank, 2012).

However, the WDR never really digresses from the mainstream economics framework that continues to serve as the theoretical foundation for Bank policies, and this remains its fundamental weakness.¹⁰ It addresses the issue of gender relations mainly at the micro-level and distances itself from the idea of the household as a

harmonious unit. However, it makes inadequate reference to the presence of gender and gender relations in labour markets, agriculture and financial markets, for example, except in the discussion of employment, occupational segregation and microcredit. There is hardly any mention of gender discrimination as a source of wage differentials in employment, even though there has been some evidence on this matter (Beneria, 2012: 4). In some cases, the reference to gender provides a partial assessment that is favourable to the Bank's lending operations and support of economic globalization and market liberalization policies. As Razavi comments, the WDR 'provides a rosy assessment of employment generation for women in the export-oriented sectors, drawing on the (partial) evidence that in some contexts, the jobs provided in these sectors ... are preferable to other options that have been hitherto available to women' (Razavi, 2011: 6).

As with the 2006 GAP initiative, the 2012 WDR fails to recognize that economic processes and outcomes are shaped as much by gender relations as by economic policies. Its discussion of globalization and trade openness, for example, emphasizes the positive impact of these phenomena on women's access to economic opportunities without providing a comprehensive assessment of the ways in which men and women are affected differently by trade policies and performance. In avoiding such an analysis, the Report fails to acknowledge that, macroeconomic policies critically affect the different positioning of women and men by influencing the distribution of the economic and social benefits and costs.

The above points help to explain the ambiguity with regards to women's market participation found in feminist discourses. The operation of markets can contribute to increasing women's voice and empower them economically, which then raises the possibility of challenging the prevailing gender relations; but markets can also

operate by accommodating gender relations and thus reproduce or even reinforce them, leading to outcomes that place women in disadvantaged positions (Ça atay et al., 1995; Beneria, 2002). For example, while export expansion can have potential benefits, such as increased employment for women, it is not always the case that this leads to their empowerment. An important feature of modern globalization has been the heightened competition that has taken the form of race-to-the bottom low-paying jobs such as subcontracted homeworking and contingent or temporary work that offer no job security and little or no benefits, which are often performed by women (Beneria and Floro, 2006).

Furthermore, economic policies that promote competitiveness and increase investment tacitly endorse weak labour standards, encouraging a more flexible labour force by suspending minimum wage laws and discouraging collective bargaining, for example. This tends to disempower women workers and thereby weakens their voice in the economy and society (Berik et al., 2011; Berik and Rodgers, 2008). The 'efficiency, productivity and economic growth' approach fails to see the contradictions between macroeconomic policies and their profound effect on the terms and conditions faced by women workers. It is not only disenfranchisement or exclusion from the market that constitute the basis of women's subordinate position, but also the terms and conditions on which they participate in the market.

The ambiguity that confronts feminists with regards to women's links to markets ultimately results from the inevitable tension between the intrinsic character of markets and the goal of gender equality, a conflict of competing claims that are difficult to resolve. This tension is evident in the underlying theoretical basis of the World Bank's operations for addressing development and gender issues. Macroeconomic stability, efficiency and steady economic growth continue to be the overarching goals that gender equality

serves. This is clear in the World Bank statement: 'Putting resources into poor women's hands while promoting gender equality in the household and in society results in large development payoffs. Expanding women's opportunities in public works, agriculture, finance, and other sectors accelerate economic growth, and help to mitigate the effects of current and future financial crises'.¹¹ This approach fails to address the underlying distributional consequences of the allocative criteria in *laissez-faire* markets: namely, those who own more resources (and have more income) have a greater say on what to produce as well as for whom, and, assuming that they also invest, how to produce. This economic power transmits to political power (see Dunford and Perrons, this volume) and intersects with other aspects of social power on the basis of sex, race or ethnicity. The underlying laws of unregulated markets shift the balance of human provisioning in favour of those who have more at the expense of those who have less.¹²

ENGENDERING ECONOMICS USING HUMAN RIGHTS AND CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

The use of a gendered lens in examining economic reality and processes requires recognition of the fundamental social elements of the economy and that the provisioning for sustenance and well-being involves a multitude of social relationships. In contrast to the tightly woven, mainstream economic models, the requisite framework would need to be more encompassing. It should allow the explanation of economic processes and outcomes without the extenuation of their deeply human aspects. This is done by treating markets as sites in which power is exercised and, thus, in which human rights can either be upheld, compromised or violated. It should recognize that elegant mathematical models, statistics or quantitative methods cannot adequately capture gender relations and the ways that

women are disadvantaged. In this section I explore the use of the human rights and capabilities approaches for engendering economic analysis.

The work of Amartya Sen on entitlements, capabilities and development and the human rights embodied in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights has drawn the attention of several feminist economists. The approaches that subsequently developed, namely the human rights and the capabilities approaches, are part of broader efforts to find an overarching framework best able to encompass all human activities, including economic, and in which gender equality is embedded. Although the two approaches have evolved separately, the overlaps and complementarities allow for their combination into a single framework. The resulting human rights and capability framework establishes the centrality of human rights, values and basic capabilities in analysing economic reality and in assessing economic outcomes and effects of economic policies. Social reproduction, alongside markets, is crucial in its examination of the provisioning for the needs of each and every person. It entails, however, a rethinking of the meaning of choice, opportunities and agency.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all human beings are entitled to civil, social, political as well as economic rights (United Nations, 1948: 1), serves as the starting point of the human rights approach. The Declaration is a statement of rightful claims or, in the language of capabilities approach, of moral entitlements to the resources over which people have command. There is, however, a wide difference between these claims and entitlements and the entitlements that people actually have to meet their needs.¹³ Entitlements depend upon rights to assets, such as property, as well as endowments, including a person's health and skills (Sen, 1981). The issue of human rights, however, goes beyond the individual level and involves scrutiny of the aggregate economy, both that within nation-states and the global economy. Elson

(2002) argues that the right to use one's endowments in order to produce for one's own consumption or for sale in the market and the rights to goods, services and monetary transfers from governments together comprise a system of entitlement relations. In other words, the concept of entitlements encompasses production, distributional and exchange processes and involves non-market exchanges and market transactions as well as social or government provisions.

The works of Diane Elson, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, and Radhika Balakrishnan, among others, have contributed greatly to the development and use of the human rights approach in engendering economic analysis. They made the critical point that realization of human rights requires that resources be allocated and used in a manner that enables their fulfilment, which makes the economic discourse an essential element of the framework. The Declaration of Human Rights makes it clear that governments, organizations and individuals have an obligation to contribute to the creation of an enabling economic environment for the enjoyment of human rights (Elson, 2002). For instance, human rights provisions with regards to employment and adequate standard of living have significant economic implications as they require resources and involve costs.¹⁴ Economic policies have significant impacts on the realization of the economic and social rights of women and men and the assertion of one's rights calls attention to the justified and urgent claims that people have to dignified treatment, regardless of the condition or environment they are in, by virtue of being human (Balakrishnan and Elson, 2008; Balakrishnan and Elson, 2011).

The human rights approach brings to the forefront of economic discourse not only the manner of allocating resources but also the distribution and the distributive aspects of social relations, such as gender, that are embedded in economic processes. It significantly alters the way one thinks about issues of the coordination of human needs and situates the

discussion of allocative efficiency in meeting the fundamental goal of provisioning and the fulfilment of human rights, rather than focusing on the growth of material output. This, however, raises the difficult and legitimate question of what manner of coordination and system of entitlement relations would enable the realization of human rights, given limited resources. Inevitably, as pointed out by Elson (2002), the approach requires a system of setting priorities for resource use and a framework for evaluating potential trade-offs between the attainments of different needs. What the framework insists upon is the maintenance of the essential minimum level of economic and social rights for all in the performance of economic processes, whether it is commodity production, social reproduction, allocation of government budgets, engagement in trade, etc.

The capabilities framework highlights that the person's capability to function is what really matters. It emphasizes that human systems and the development process should be concerned with enhancing the lives each and every person leads and the freedoms that they can enjoy (Sen, 1999). Focusing on the economic aspect of these human systems, what matters is not just the size of money incomes or the amount of commodities produced, as emphasized in mainstream economics. Rather, it is what a person does (or can do) with the commodities or given characteristics that the person comes to possess or control, in order to enhance his or her well-being, which are referred to as functionings. Sen defines capabilities as the freedom that a person has in terms of the choice of functionings given his/her personal features and his/her command over commodities. Rather than starting with the moral claims posed by the human rights framework, the capabilities framework focuses on what people are actually able to do (Nussbaum, 2003). As with the human rights framework, it brings to the forefront of economic analysis the distributive elements of gender and other aspects of social relations.

A key feature of the capabilities approach relevant to engendering economic analysis is its assessment of the processes within the system of entitlement relations. These include market production, distribution and exchange; other institutional arrangements, such as communal farming, workers' cooperatives, labour exchanges, common pool resource management and government transfers; and the sphere of social reproduction through which people also articulate and claim their entitlements.

The freedom of choice in the capabilities framework has material preconditions in whose absence there is merely a 'suggested feasibility' of choice. For example, a woman who has a 'feasible choice' to engage in a business of her interest simply cannot do so owing to social conditions and economic circumstances that make it difficult or impossible. Although she has the freedom in the sense that no law prevents her, she may actually be prevented by patriarchal norms, by the burden of caregiving or by lacking assets or access to credit (Nussbaum, 2003). This makes the issues of power relations and distribution central, as with the human rights framework. Having a broader range of options to choose from has to do as much with the distribution of land, wealth and income as with the nature of social relations that determine the real opportunities for women and men. It also means that gender inequities that reduce women's access to resources and limit their ability to convert resources into functionings will require governments and societies to devote more resources to those who encounter obstacles from traditional hierarchy or prejudice (Elson, 2002).

Although entitlements have been defined by Sen at the level of the individual, he alluded to the notion of an aggregate system of economic and social relations by referring to a 'network of entitlement relations' (Sen, 1981: 159). Women may have low levels of literacy, for example, because of entitlement failures due to low income, prevailing social norms that favour boys over girls in sending

to school, feeble government support for education, or a combination of these. Such entitlement failures can lead to capability deprivation or the inability of women to be more skilled in the activities that they engage in and to be well-informed participants in decision-making within and outside the household. As Sen (1999) points out, a one-sided focus on income poverty merely obscures the other important facets or causes of entitlement failures.

Both the human rights approach and the capabilities approach cover a comprehensive domain of activities pertaining to the economic provisioning for human needs (Nussbaum, 2002; Elson, 2002; Nussbaum 2003; Robeyns, 2003; Balakrishnan and Elson, 2011). Both are complementary in a number of ways. The human rights language provides a more authoritative and urgent discourse; it identifies the deprived as active claimants of rights, while the capabilities framework provides some concept of a basic social minimum so that all people, both women and men, are actually able to do and to be, thus leading a life worthy of the dignity of the human being (Nussbaum, 2002). The capabilities framework identifies various forms of freedoms and Sen has operationalized the notion through the human development index. The operational feature of the capabilities framework allows for the development of measures and proxy indicators of well-being or social welfare that go beyond incomes and GDP per capita growth. These indicators can be used for comparison between groups and across countries and for monitoring progress. To date, several gender indices have been developed based on the capabilities approach.¹⁵

The human rights framework provides an alternative, normative criterion for judging the effectiveness of social institutions such as markets for allocating resources and economic policies to the extent that they help ensure or satisfy the minimum essential levels of economic and social rights. It makes explicit the foundational values to which economic systems are evaluated in a manner similar to the use of civil and political rights

when assessing the extent of democracy in a given society. The overarching objective in both approaches is the capability of every person to live a dignified human life in which the economic goal of provisioning is part. The human rights and capabilities frameworks both treat every person's well-being as the end, and not merely as means to an end, or as tools for the ends of others. They criticize the view and the practice of, for example, treating women as adjuncts to men and their labour as a resource for increasing commodity output. Reasoning would involve weighing the alternative use of resources both in terms of meeting the essential level of economic and social rights of every person (critical threshold) and to guarantee the substantive freedoms that the members of that society can enjoy. This reasoning differs from the mainstream economic framework that focuses on the weighing of costs and benefits (at the margin) to satisfy objectives such as the maximization of utility, income or material output.

A combined human rights and capabilities framework entails the possibility of redressing the problems of the 'gender is smart economics' approach by articulating the ways in which opportunities, choices and constraints are influenced by their social location and the social relations in which they are embedded. Opportunity does not deal merely with the availability of a desired good, resource or service, for example. It has to do with real access to them, allowing that person the real possibility of being and doing. Access to credit, for example, may be notionally available in the sense that a bank has opened a branch in a particular village, but this does not necessarily translate into an opportunity for a woman in that village. The constraints imposed by entitlement relations and gender norms, for example, may make it difficult for women to take advantage of the availability of credit services. Choice is not just a matter of stated rights; it requires being in a position to exercise those rights and to convert commodities into functionings.

The combined human rights and capabilities framework, therefore, opens the boundary of economic analysis to include a deeper examination of the constraints that restrict the person from realizing his/her economic and social rights or that impact upon his/her ability to enjoy substantive freedoms. Fundamentally, it views basic economic and social rights both as ends as well as means, in the sense that the fulfilment of the rights of women and men serves as a basis for evaluating economic and social progress and the effectiveness of economic policies.

This framework is not without limitation, however. In particular, it requires further development of simple and tractable analytical tools for exploring socio-economic concerns through a gendered lens.¹⁶ In this way, the framework becomes both profound and 'researchable' and thus influential in economic thinking and policymaking. Issues of incentives, resource allocation, collective action versus competition, innovation and productivity, trade and finance, markets and strategic planning, agricultural development, paid and unpaid labour, ecological concerns and so forth are some of the areas that can be further studied in a manner that enables the fulfilment of human rights and the development of capabilities. The approach has immense potential for the integration of gender into economic analysis in a manner that is both transformative and empowering.

Feminists have thus provided invaluable insights regarding the use of a gendered lens in examining economic processes. Their interventions offer foundational knowledge and methodologies for examining the crucial social elements of the economy and for understanding choices, opportunities and actions pertaining to the provisioning of sustenance and well-being. Feminist economists in particular have shown how socially constructed institutions, such as markets and households, can be conceptualized as bearers of gender and other distributive relations such as class, race or ethnicity. As I have

demonstrated in this chapter, the analytical framework to which gender is integrated matters. The prevailing tendency to address gender and other inequalities within the 'efficiency, economic growth and development' framework is limiting and inevitably creates contradictions. In contrast, I argue that the combined human rights and capabilities approach allows for engendering economic analysis in a profound way.

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank the section editor of the handbook for helpful comments and suggestions and Tanya Savrimootoo and Maria Wahlstrom for their assistance.
- 2 Mainstream economics in this chapter refers to the dominant paradigm of neoclassical economics.
- 3 See Strassmann, 1997; Kabeer, 2000; Ferber and Nelson, 1993, 2003; Hanappi-Egger, this volume.
- 4 Extensions of the basic economic model acknowledge the existence of non-competitive markets such as monopolies, oligopolies and imperfect or incomplete markets, and the presence of rigidities that create obstacles to price adjustments. Welfare economics starts with the neoclassical framework but explores further the welfare dimensions and limits of markets as well as sources of subjective values associated with individual satisfaction. For instance, Scitovsky (1993) has raised the point that not all sources of satisfaction go through markets and that, even when evaluating overall satisfaction, the markets are limited by failures. Markets measure values attached to needs or wants that are satisfied within markets, yet many economic goods and services are produced outside the market. This and other crucial points are often overlooked, especially in relation to policymaking. Similarly, new institutional economics has posed challenges by highlighting the centrality of socially constructed institutions such as norms and other informal 'rules of the game' that guide human interaction and economic exchange (Harris-White, 2003). There are diverse schools of thought outside the dominant paradigm including Keynesian economics, and a host of heterodox economic approaches, including social economics, marxist economics, ecological economics and post-Keynesian economics, to name a few.
- 5 The New Household Economics within mainstream economics applies theories of comparative advantage and of human capital in its analysis of the household division of labour, marriage and children. As Beneria (2002) points out, 'the hegemony of the New Household Economics within the profession continued through the 1980s, as symbolized by the central role played by Gary Becker's *A Treatise on the Family* (1981) in neoclassical writings on the household' (2002: 35).
- 6 Emphasized by George Stigler and Gary Becker, who noted that 'one does not argue over tastes for the same reason that one does not argue over the Rocky mountains – both are there, will be there next year, too, and are the same to all men' (Stigler and Becker, 1977: 76).
- 7 For example, Beneria, 2002; Ferber and Nelson, 1993; Ferber and Nelson, 2003; Folbre, 1986; Peterson and Lewis, 1999; Kuiper and Sap, 1995; and several issues of *Feminist Economics*.
- 8 For an overview of studies on occupations and earnings, discrimination and family formation and work roles, see Blau et al., 2010.
- 9 The World Bank website summarizes the Bank's gender equality strategy as involving: a) strengthening nutrition, disease prevention and maternal health programmes; b) improving women's and girls' education and life skills, and c) expanding women's access to credit and economic opportunity (World Bank, Millennium Development Goal 3, www.worldbank.org/mdgs/gender.html, accessed 1 August 2012).
- 10 This has been observed by Beneria, 2012; Chant, 2012; and Elson, 2012 as well.
- 11 World Bank, Millennium Development Goal 3 (www.worldbank.org/mdgs/gender.html, accessed 1 August 2012).
- 12 As Arrow pointed out, 'the distribution of income or the distribution of goods that society grants... as achieved by the price system offends our sense of justice' (1974: 4–5).
- 13 The term entitlement 'refers to the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces' (Sen, 1984: 18).
- 14 Article 23 states that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to equal pay for equal work, and to just and favourable remuneration, supplemented by the right to social protection and the right to form and join trade unions. Article 25 makes reference to adequate standard of living involving health, food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services. It also specifies that everyone has a right to social security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood.
- 15 See Van Staveren's (2012) review of the various indices of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 16 See discussion in Nussbaum, 2002.

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Essentially Quantified? Towards a More Feminist Modeling Strategy

Wendy Sigle-Rushton

INTRODUCTION

In research extending back several decades, feminist theorists have raised questions about the usefulness of social categories such as gender and ethnicity and the way in which those categories are used by researchers. Taken together, this work makes a clear and convincing case against examining gender, class or ethnicity as single and separate categories. The treatment of gender as a single category has arguably been afforded the greatest attention, and theorists have robustly criticized the unreflective and uncritical deployment of the category 'woman'. Feminists have been criticized, often (but not only) by other feminists, for assuming that women's experiences can be easily generalized and for erroneously homogenizing the experiences of women. As a consequence, feminist research has emphasized the importance of taking into consideration other important sources of variation – such as ethnicity, age and social class – that modify the meaning

and experience of gender in complex ways to shape diverse social positions.

Moreover, where multiple dimensions have been considered, researchers have been criticized for implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) treating multiple dimensions as additive and separable. In Elizabeth Spelman's (1988) incisive intervention, she refers to this as the 'ampersand problem' – the (sometimes implicit) tendency for researchers to assume that the experiences of black women, for example, can be deduced by isolating the effects of racial discrimination and the effects of gender discrimination. Multiracial feminist theory has played a crucial role in the development of these critiques, which formed the foundation of what is today called 'intersectionality', arguing, as Brown and Misra succinctly put it, that 'Race is "gendered" and gender is racialized' (2003: 488). Instead of operating as two distinct and unitary hierarchies, race and gender intersect to create, in specific historical situations, a 'matrix of domination' in which each of the cells represents a unique positioning (Collins, 1990).

These ideas can, of course, be extended to incorporate other socially constructed hierarchies, such as class, disability, age and sexuality. Taking into account the way in which the vast array of axes of differentiation intersect, the notion of what is meant by the term ‘woman’ (or ‘man’) becomes increasingly problematic. Indeed, talking about gender without taking into account other social structures is likely to obscure the experiences of marginalized groups, and so fixates and essentializes the meaning of ‘woman’. Some women have high levels of academic achievement and manage to obtain secure and well-paid employment. Other women are less advantaged and vulnerable to poverty. Moreover circumstances can change over the life course. Importantly, we see similar differentiations among men. Clearly, gender is an important axis of difference but ‘only one among many divisions in a truly uneven and heterogeneous society’ (Coward, 1999: 211). If we accept the proposition that social structures are ‘mutually constitutive’, we cannot speak of gender independently of other social structures (see Barker and Kuiper, this volume). An intersectional perspective – one that examines how various systems of oppression intersect – is required.

Notwithstanding some notable exceptions (see Brewer et al., 2002 and other articles in that special issue of *Feminist Economics*), feminist economists have been extremely slow to adapt their applied methods and models to accommodate the concerns raised in the literature that (eventually) led to the development of the intersectionality paradigm. For the most part, feminist economists and other quantitative social scientists continue to employ, often routinely and uncritically, methods that fail to acknowledge or address concerns about the nature of social categories and processes of social stratification that are expressed in the literature on intersectionality. In this chapter I explore the ongoing disconnect between the ideas raised in this literature and the assumptions that underlie many of the empirical analyses that we, as feminist economists or quantitative

social researchers more generally, carry out. In addition, I discuss the ways in which an intersectional perspective can be used as a critical lens. Although data constraints limit the extent to which empirical work can represent interlinking hierarchies in all of their complexity, feminist economists can and should take greater care in their choice of methods and model specifications and reflect to a greater extent on the assumptions that underlie their choice of method and the models they estimate.

INTERSECTIONALITY: BACKGROUND AND BASIC TENETS

Theoretical Development of Intersectionality

The term ‘intersectionality’ was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the late 1980s in the context of a discussion of anti-discrimination law in the United States, but the relevant concepts and issues were raised and explored in many earlier academic texts (see, for example, Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981, 1984; Spelman, 1988; Mohanty, 1988). These ideas were largely (but not entirely) generated from feminist critiques of early feminist work – more specifically ‘via an internal critique and self-reflection of the imagined community of feminism’ (Knapp, 2005: 260). In this sub-section I provide a brief sketch of the critiques that led to its development and an overview of its key tenets. My intention is to familiarize readers with the key criticisms that, in recent decades, led to the development of intersectional thinking and not to set out a detailed intellectual history of feminist thought. For an impressive and far more comprehensive history of the development of intersectionality tracing many of the ideas as far back as the nineteenth century, see Brah and Phoenix (2004).

An important early contribution of feminist scholarship was its critique of mainstream research for not acknowledging or

incorporating the experiences of women. Feminists developed tools to uncover strategies of power and exclusion that were hidden in mainstream, male-dominated and male-centered research. In an attempt to understand what it means to be oppressed 'as a woman', some feminist scholars attempted to isolate gender oppression from other forms of oppression, and, as a direct consequence, their work tended to be either pre-occupied with the experiences of white middle-class women or to ignore completely the experiences of other women. It is from critiques of this (largely feminist) work, that the articulation of the theory of intersectionality began to take shape. Some scholars, Black feminist scholars in particular (Nash, 2008), began to argue that the experiences of a certain privileged group of women had become conflated with the experiences of all women in much the same way that the experiences of (some privileged groups of) men have been conflated with the experiences of all humanity (hooks, 1981).

In addition to taking issue with the use and meaning of the term 'woman', feminist scholarship also scrutinized the way in which multiple social divisions, when they were considered at all, were dealt with analytically. Feminist texts were criticized for making the implicit assumption that various axes of difference could be understood as additive and separable; for example, that experiences of sexism and racism can be (i) examined in isolation and (ii) added together to understand the experiences of Black women. As a consequence, the possibility that Black women experience different kinds of gender oppression than White women or different kinds of racial oppression than Black men is neither identified nor explored.¹ The implications of choosing to apply this approach are important because, as Spelman reminds us, 'How one starts, in thinking as well as in acting, has everything to do with where one might go' (Spelman, 1988: xi). Assumptions which underlie empirical applications affect the way we think about and conceptualize issues and can, in turn, affect our interpretation

of the results. This means that the specification and use of categories, the underlying assumptions about how they relate to one another, and the modes of analysis which are utilized all work to focus attention to some areas and divert it from others. The models we employ determine not just what we ask but also what we are able to find. Some reflection on these matters is warranted because certain simplifying assumptions may cause us to ignore important information or to extrapolate what is observed in relatively large (or otherwise powerful) sub-populations to smaller sub-groups. For example, we might explain the 'healthy migrant' effect (the tendency for people who are migrants to have better-than-average health given their socio-economic circumstances) by pointing to the higher rates of marriage that are observed in this group without considering that marriage may not confer the same advantages, or to the same extent, to more socially and institutionally excluded groups (Sigle-Rushton and Goisis, 2013). Similarly, we might speak of the socio-economic benefits that accompany fertility postponement without explicitly asking whether education, career opportunities and health trajectories modify the net benefits of delay (Goisis and Sigle-Rushton, 2013). In so doing, we may be inadvertently recreating or naturalizing hierarchies that need to be problematized and challenged.

Engaging with and critiquing a selection of (predominantly) feminist texts, researchers brought together these various criticisms to develop the theory of intersectionality. In so doing, they constructed a solid argument for a reconceptualization of gender – one that moves beyond a simple male–female binary and that better reflects the complexity of social structuring and social life.

Although there are various understandings of intersectionality, key tenets of the paradigm which are particularly relevant for applied empirical work include the following: (1) analytical categories are socially defined and constructed with meanings that are historically and contextually contingent

(Zinn and Dill, 1996); (2) intersecting hierarchies, which occur at all levels of social life, work to create unique social positions and result in positions of both oppression and domination (as well as opportunity and disadvantage) in the same individual; and (3) specific social locations create a unique social positioning which cannot be either represented or understood as additive and separable (Collins, 1990).

The development of intersectionality has illustrated and emphasized the need to examine men and women from varying social groups and at the interstices of multiple axes. Its influence can be perceived in scholarship that is attentive to multicultural differences and explores the consequences of imposing Western perspectives and interpretations (Lorber, 2006). According to McCall ‘... feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality One could even say that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution of women’s studies, along with racial and ethnic studies, so far’ (2005: 1771). While the contribution that intersectionality has made to the way researchers think about social structures and oppression is apparent, the movement from critique to methodological innovation has gone in various directions and is far from complete. Indeed, the extent to which feminist methodologies have incorporated these ideas and aims, at least in some disciplines, has been questioned. Knapp wonders if it has become a concept that is mentioned more than used, and suggests that ‘By just mentioning other ““differences”” besides ““gender””, the work continues to be delegated to the respective ““others””.’ (2005: 255). This tendency is reflected and reinforced in the metadata that describes academic work and assigns it to particular subfields. For example, among the JEL subcodes for Demographic Economics (J1) we find separate categories for work which examines age (J12), gender (J13) and ethnicity (J14), suggesting, perhaps, that it is valid to examine any one of these in isolation. Others have pointed out

that ‘The enormous body of theory and research feminists sociologists have produced is used at the gender-as-variable level or as adding women to the sampling mix, just as it was twenty years ago’ (Lorber, 2006: 449). But these criticisms should not divert attention away from the developments that have occurred. The next section provides a sketch of the different ways intersectionality has influenced methodology. Drawing heavily on the work of McCall (2005), I summarize the different approaches to (dealing with the complexity of) intersectionality that exist in the literature to date, highlighting those developments that have the most to offer empirical researchers.

Methodologies for Applying Intersectionality

Intersectionality has come forth as a new and prominent paradigm, particularly in women’s studies, but methods of studying it and the ways in which it should be operationalized remain underdeveloped and, in some ways, contested (Sigle-Rushton and Lindstrom, 2012).² It is generally agreed that intersectional analyses should aim to treat different social dimensions as mutually modifying or reinforcing (Glenn, 1999) rather than as concepts that can be understood as unitary and separable. But that is difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish in its entirety. When multiple aspects of difference are examined simultaneously, the result is an often intractable amount of complex information. Indeed, taken to its limit, intersectionality could lead researchers to continue splitting their samples into increasingly detailed social groups until there is nothing left but a population of individuals (or handful[s] of individuals) that cannot be meaningfully studied (Young, 1994). At present, there is no clear or straightforward solution to the effective management of that complexity. Focusing in particular on the ways in which existing methodological approaches to intersectionality manage complexity, McCall (2005) proposes a threefold typology: the anti-categorical approach, which

she connects with poststructuralist theories; the intra-categorical approach, which focuses on differences that cut across one particular category of interest; and the inter-categorical approach, which focuses on differences across (multidimensional) categories.

The anti-categorical approach is based on the premise that analytical categories are over-simplistic, fictional devices. Because categories erroneously convey a sense of unity and distinctiveness, they are always and necessarily exclusionary and invalid. The aim is not to redefine (or better define) analytical categories, but to deconstruct them and in so doing take away their power. Proponents of this approach would argue empirical analyses of gender, race and class are invalid because the categories themselves are meaningless. It is a perspective and approach that, on its own, bears little resemblance to what the originators of the concept would have envisioned (Lorber, 2006). Examining and challenging structures of disadvantage becomes impossible if those same structures are treated as only and always meaningless. Because intersectionality grew out of the recognition that social structures generate social groups and determine social positions, the key issue, I think, is to think carefully about how those structures are conceptualized and interpreted. That said, contributions that deconstruct categories provide a salutary reminder of the need to exercise care and caution when we generate categories and indicators and attach meanings to them.

In contrast to the anti-categorical approach, both the intra-categorical and the inter-categorical approaches appear to be more directly linked how researchers can (better) use categories to contribute to knowledge production. Both approaches make use of analytical categories and both attempt to address the ampersand problem, though in slightly different ways and with slightly different aims and objectives. The methods employed predominantly can differ substantially, but can be seen as complementary. Each begins with the use of analytic categories and both draw attention to the importance of

heterogeneity within broadly defined analytic categories. However, the former tends to lend itself to more qualitative case study methodologies whilst the latter is more amenable to quantitative descriptive analyses.

The intra-categorical approach examines marginalized or neglected groups located at the interstices of several social dimensions in order to explore the complexity and heterogeneity of differentially located individuals. Complexity is dealt with in this approach by focusing intensively on a single group or case study that is compared with the hegemonic representation of a more broadly defined social category to which that sub-group also belongs. We might, for example, explicitly compare the gendered family and employment experiences of less socially and institutionally privileged migrant groups with those of the native-born ethnic majority population (Sigle-Rushton and Goisis, 2013). Often this means looking at combinations of characteristics that would be not be (well) represented in secondary survey data. Examples of literature on intersectionality that employ an intra-categorical approach include case studies which take the form of in-depth qualitative analyses of, for example, young South Asian women (Ahmad et al., 2003) or Black victims of domestic violence (Crenshaw, 1991).

In contrast to the intra-categorical approach, which tends to focus on differences that cut across a single social group, the inter-categorical approach focuses more on the measurement and description of inequality (and changes in patterns of inequality), both within and across categories. 'The concern is with the nature of the relationship between social groups and, importantly, how they are changing, rather than with the definition and representation of such groups per se ...' (McCall, 2005: 1785) This approach attempts to uncover how analytically defined categorical difference – gender, ethnicity, social class and age – intersect in practice and in relation to particular economic and geographical contexts (see, for example,

McCall, 2000; 2001). It also seeks to verify whether broad analytical categories are sufficient for the purposes of description and to test whether the use of more detailed social groupings is required. It is important to emphasize that whether there are differences between groups is not simply imposed but instead is treated as a hypothesis. This approach most obviously has implications for large-scale quantitative analyses, suggesting that the researchers should be more sensitive to the way in which categories are constructed and analyzed, and it is this approach that I will examine in more detail in the following sections.

INCORPORATING INTERSECTIONALITY: WHAT CAN APPLIED ECONOMISTS DO?

The idea of intersectionality has played an instrumental role in highlighting the limitations of existing approaches to gender analysis and in emphasizing the political effects of ignoring within-group diversity. Although the central tenets were developed largely in the context of a critique of feminist theoretical texts, and not as a result of engagement with work that applies advanced statistical methods, many of the core ideas can be applied to empirical research and, moreover, raise salient issues for applied economists and other quantitative social scientists who make use of analytic categories. All too often, researchers who want to carry out gender-sensitive empirical analyses resort to standard parametric (often some variant of least squares) modeling techniques. In order to examine gender wage gaps, for instance, researchers will often estimate linear models that include, in addition to age or experience, separate controls for gender, race/ethnicity and education level. In regression analyses this modeling strategy effectively imposes the strong assumption that the effects of gender, race/ethnicity and education are additive and separable. The gender parameter reflects differences in average earnings by gender regardless of the person's race and ethnicity

and the race/ethnicity parameter reflects differences in the average earnings of that groups (both men and women) usually relative to Whites. In effect, model specifications often ignore the concerns about complex inequality raised by feminist theory and impose the additive logic of Spelman's ampersand problem.

Staying with this example, the Oaxaca decomposition offers a somewhat more intersectional approach to the issue of gender wage gaps. Here separate (fully interacted) models are estimated for women and men, explicitly acknowledging that the effect of gender is not additive and separable. The returns to investments in education (and other analytically defined characteristics) are likely to differ between men and women. To include race/ethnicity controls in each of the sex-specific equations would be to assume that within each gender group the 'ethnicity effect' could be added on. It would not, for example, allow for returns to women's education to vary by her ethnic group. If the researcher also takes into account differences by race and ethnicity, an intersectional perspective would require separate models for each sex and ethnic group combination, however. This is where data constraints and issues of statistical power might become a concern. Taking into account only two social dimensions, we suddenly have several models and an extremely large number of parameters to be estimated. Given that there are so many social divisions that are likely to intersect it is nearly impossible to operationalize intersectionality in all of the richness and detail that it implies. But that does not mean that we should not try to incorporate intersectional thinking as much as we can. So what can researchers do in practice?

Look Across Disciplines and Learn from the Past

For quantitative research, the sample sizes that are available in large-scale survey samples can seriously limit the number of interaction terms that can be introduced and

examined. Sample sizes are often limited, especially for some population sub-groups, and, as discussed above, data requirements increase substantially with each additional dimension. Although data limitations – in terms of both information and sample size – mean that it is not possible to account for all sources of difference and diversity using large-scale survey data, it is nonetheless true that intersectionality could be far better accommodated than it currently is in much of the extant literature. When it comes to data sources, part of the answer may be found by looking to other disciplines. In particular, I would suggest that we draw lessons from the history and development of demography.

When, in the early 1990s, Eileen Crimmins (1993) looked back on the previous three decades of *Demography*, she made an important observation about developments in demographic research. She noted that the bulk of work published in the early years of *Demography* tended to come from vital registration systems and from the census, and most analyses focused on groups. Over time, the increased availability of large-scale sample surveys, the computer power to analyze them and concurrent methodological developments created an environment in which researchers were increasingly encouraged not just to describe but also to explain demographic dynamics and processes. Referring to work in population studies or social demography, she suggests: ‘We have moved from descriptive methods and data to analysis that is based largely on the application of causal models. The availability of certain types of data and the power to easily apply complex statistical techniques have encouraged the development of methods appropriate to this emphasis on causal models’ (1993: 585). The pursuit of causal effects has prioritized the identification of a direct and unbiased relationship between two variables and, as a consequence, an examination of the diversity of subject positions has become something to control rather than explore in its own right.

Appropriately, Crimmins (1993) cites the strong influence of economists and economic modeling, and the enthusiastic adoption of OLS (or OLS-like) parametric models. In their enthusiasm for more complex and causal models, few considered the costs that came with this kind of modeling, however. Whereas previous methodologies dealt with heterogeneity by subdividing the population into sub-groups and examining each group separately, one of the costs of adopting new methods of analysis and including an increasingly large number of explanatory variables was the simplifying assumptions (often directly linked to the theoretical micro-economic models that underpin and motivate the statistical models and which focus on some disembodied universal rational actor) that such methods entailed. The treatment of categories as additive and separable was one assumption that allowed more complex models to be estimated even when confronted with some small sub-group populations (Xie 2000). Because the aim of the inter-categorical approach is more akin to earlier demographic pursuits – the description and documentation of differences – more traditional data sources with many observations, but perhaps fewer variables are likely to be a good option.

Fortunately, changes in computing and database technology have made the return to traditional demographic data sources easier and far more flexible. In contrast to researchers who were responsible for the many early articles in *Demography* that relied on ‘unpublished two- or three-variable cross tabulations compiled by the census bureaus, statistical offices or the United Nations at the request of, or made available to, individual researchers’ (Crimmins, 1993: 581), incredibly valuable resources like IPUMS (www.ipums.umn.edu/) which provide free access to individual census records for several countries and for multiple census years are readily accessible. Population registers from several (predominantly, but not exclusively, from Scandinavian) countries also offer researchers

unprecedented opportunities to explore large samples with extremely accurate data. The availability of these kinds of data allows researchers to examine and measure differences across detailed social groups and even to assess change over time. McCall's (2000; 2001) work on wage inequality provides excellent examples of what can be accomplished with large census samples. Her applications of the inter-categorical approach document important differences that would be masked by more simplistic additive approaches. For example, looking across cities in the United States, McCall (2000) finds that class and racial inequalities among men, racial inequalities among women and gender inequalities among the highly educated are likely to be higher in post-industrial rather than older industrial regions. The class inequalities between women show the reverse pattern, as does gender inequality among the less educated. These patterns could not have been identified with the simple inclusion of dummy variable controls or with smaller samples.

Maximize the Number of Observations

When data with the largest number of observations is inappropriate for the question at hand there are still ways to make the most of the data that is available. Researchers interested in applying the inter-categorical approach might also want to consider using data sources such as the UK Labour Force Survey or the US Current Population Survey which contain relatively large samples (particularly of minority populations) and extend back for several years. Combining samples from more than one year can boost the number of observations and enhance the sample appreciably. For some outcomes of interest it might be possible to construct pseudo-cohorts (immigrants with a specific set of characteristics who came to the country one year ago in survey year t and combined with those who report coming to the country in

survey year $t + 1$) which would allow the researcher to assess change over time not for the same person but at least for a representative group of people with same set of characteristics.

In my own research with Diane Perrons we have applied this strategy (Sigle-Rushton and Perrons, 2006). To examine the longer-term relationship between motherhood and employment we used a sample of repeated cross sections drawn from the UK Labour Force Survey. With several quarters of data, sample sizes are sufficiently large for us to control for ethnic group in our models and specify models that allow for a relatively large number of interactions. We allow key parameters of interest – educational qualifications, partnership and fertility variables³ – to differ for those who are classified as Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African. This selective interaction strategy allowed us to estimate models that apply an inter-categorical approach with a smaller number of parameters than would be required in a fully interacted specification. The findings reveal significant differences between ethnic groups in terms of life course events. First, consistent with findings in the extant literature on motherhood wage penalties (for example, Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel, 2007), motherhood is significantly associated with a reduced probability of employment. But there are important variations by level of qualifications and ethnicity. Mothers with no qualifications are much less likely to be in employment than those with a degree. Furthermore, the variation across different ethnic groups is far wider among mothers with no qualifications than those with a degree. Consistent with previous research, Bangladeshi and Pakistani mothers with low qualifications have very low participation rates, but there is nonetheless a steep educational gradient (Holdsworth and Dale, 1997; Modood et al., 1997; Dale et al., 2002).

By making the most of our data we were also able to identify important differences between Pakistani and Bangladeshi women

living in the UK. In quantitative research in the UK, it has often been the case that data on Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are combined, usually because of limited sample sizes, to form one group. There are several reasons why this may be an unfortunate, albeit necessary, estimation strategy. For instance, we know that, compared to Pakistani women, Bangladeshi women are less likely to speak English fluently. They also have higher rates of inactivity and lower rates of employment (Modood et al., 1997). Bangladeshi women also tend to come from communities that are more economically disadvantaged than those of Pakistani women (Blackburn et al., 1997). We also find differences in the employment patterns of Black Caribbean and Black African women which similarly suggests that a unified 'Black' category which, for reasons of small sample size, may be necessary in some statistical analyses (such as Goisis and Sigle-Rushton, 2013), may mask important variations in the experiences of different women in the labor market. Careful descriptive endeavors of this sort underscore the need to exercise caution when interpreting and exploring the implications of statistical evidence that, out of necessity, combines (and often take some form of average across) different groups.

Follow Best Practice to the Extent that Data Allows

Although with any data source it will not be possible to account for all sources of difference in all of their complexity, it is nonetheless true that feminist concerns regarding complex inequalities and intersectionality could be far better accommodated than they currently are in much of the extant literature. Even with more limited sample sizes, when estimating standard regression models researchers should, at a minimum and wherever possible, explore the extent to which they can interact different analytic categories and examine critically the size and significance of the parameters associated with the interaction terms. Of course,

this suggestion is simply a reminder to researchers to follow what we already know to be best practice – to thoroughly examine our data using interaction terms and to look for non-additive relationships. Additionally, depending on the research question, testing for interactions with other key variables may be warranted, again wherever sample size permits. That said, it is especially important, when there is so much (potential) complexity, to be clear from the outset which groups are being compared, why they are being compared and what can be found out by comparing them (Lorber, 2006).

The next thing that researchers can and should do to incorporate an inter-categorical perspective is make sure that their results are not more complex than they need to be. Recall that the inter-categorical approach should not impose complexity but should instead seek to verify whether broad analytical categories are sufficient for describing the outcome of interest. Although there may be evidence that social structures sometimes interact, that does not mean that they always will. 'Even to find that these structures intersect to position certain social groups against others in some contexts doesn't mean they are so positioned in all contexts. Which divisions are more salient will depend on the context' (Weldon, 2005: 13). As a matter of good practice, all interactions that are included in the models should be tested for significance (with careful attention to sample size problems and how they can affect measures of significance) and the model fit should be compared to that of the more restrictive model. The use of step-wise methods provides one way of assessing whether and which interactions are required (see, for example, Hobcraft, 2003; Hobcraft and Mensah, 2006; and Hobcraft and Sigle-Rushton, 2012 for examples of how to apply this approach). Obviously where more simplistic models fit the data well, simplicity is a virtue. Both simplicity and complexity should be considered and explored rather than assumed.

Adopt New Ways of Presenting Results

Although it can be extremely informative to estimate models with several interactions, it is important to emphasize that doing so can result in extremely large tables with pages of parameter estimates that are difficult to digest and interpret. With many parameter estimates and complex interactions, tabular results of this form will be difficult to present and interpret with ease. This may be one reason behind McCall's warning that

... it is nearly impossible to publish grandly intersectional studies in top peer-reviewed journals, using the categorical approach because the size and complexity of such a project is too great to contain in a single article. Indeed there is much hostility to such complexity; most journals are devoted to additive linear models and incremental improvements in already well-developed bodies of research. (2005: 1787)

It would behoove authors who want to apply an inter-sectional approach to think carefully about how best to present their results so that they are linked as clearly as possible to the research question at hand and the issues s/he is trying to examine. In many cases, this will not be a table of parameter estimates (these may be best placed in an Appendix or made available on request). For example, in McCall's (2000) study of inequality across US labor markets, she chooses to present the percentage of variance explained by different sets of explanatory variables and so presents important information on a range of different models without weighing the reader down with hundreds of parameter estimates that are of less substantive interest anyhow.

When we carried out our work on the employment rates of different groups of mothers (discussed above), Diane Perrons and I encountered similar problems of presentation. The final models contained well over 100 parameters, many of which were interacted with race and ethnicity, making the tables cumbersome and difficult to interpret. For this reason we decided to summarize the findings in a way that readers would

find more accessible and which would focus on our aims and objectives, one of which was to document differences by ethnic group. We used the parameters from the model to estimate the likelihood of employment for a hypothetical individual who follows a particular life course. We estimated the probability of employment separately for women of different ethnic groups with no qualifications and then for those with at least a degree-level qualification. These predicted probabilities were presented graphically and the findings were discussed with reference to different aspects of the graphical representation instead of referring to a large table and multiple combinations of parameter estimates (Sigle-Rushton and Perrons, 2006). Estimating and presenting models for each subgroup – which is, of course, statistically equivalent to fully interacted models – would have made the presentation slightly easier to interpret, but separate models should be (although often are not) tested against the null hypothesis that the parameter does not, in fact, vary across groups (Hobcraft and Sigle-Rushton, 2012). When interaction terms are used, this information is more readily available. Of course, when differences appear substantively important but (for reasons of low statistical power) statistically insignificant, it might be good practice to retain complexity and to underscore the need for further exploration with larger samples.

It goes without saying that models making use of the inter-categorical approach will often remain complex and the results will be difficult to present in a way that is easy to grasp and understand. This will create an unfortunate obstacle to publication that can only partially be overcome. But we should not make the problem any harder than it needs to be and should think about creative ways to ameliorate this problem. Standard methods of presenting model results are generally inappropriate when the models being estimated are so complex. It is a mistake to try to present results using methods and practices that were designed for other types of (often single parameter of interest) analyses.

Consider Alternative Methodologies

In addition to making the most of existing data sources and adapting standard methods (wherever possible), feminist economists who are interested in applying the inter-categorical approach should ask themselves whether ordinary least squares models (or some variant of them) provide the best methodology. Parametric regression techniques, while traditionally the statistical method of choice in the social sciences, often impose strong linearity assumptions and, as already mentioned above, can meet with data-based constraints on the extent and order of interaction terms. When the assumptions underlying parametric regression methods are not met, the model is unlikely to describe the data well. In addition, as discussed in the previous section, when many and high-order interactions are included in an attempt to allow for non-linear relationships, the model is often difficult for both the author and the reader to interpret.

Non-parametric techniques allow researchers to relax or eliminate many of the restrictive assumptions underlying parametric modeling. Classification and regression trees (CART) provide an example of one such technique that can aid in the identification of non-linear relationships and in the choice of parsimonious models that are more consistent with the aims of an inter-categorical approach. Regression trees are a person-centered statistical technique that stratifies the data into higher and lower risk groups by sequentially splitting the data into more homogeneous groups based on a specific outcome. Researchers interested in identifying multiple, complex pathways that contain a series of inter-related characteristics or events can use this method to identify the structure of pathways without making the strong assumptions necessary in regression techniques (Zhang and Singer, 1991; Zhang and Bracker, 1995). In some cases, person-centered analyses can be used as a preliminary step that can be employed to identify,

inform and complement other statistical techniques, such as regression analysis. Importantly, person-centered approaches such as CART (but also better-known techniques such as cluster analysis) can help researchers to identify differences across more complex groups and may be better suited, in some instances, to inter-categorical approaches. In addition, the CART method appears to be well suited for identifying complex relationships in smaller samples. Because the method is not well known in the applied economics literature, I provide a brief introductory description of the method in Appendix A, but interested readers are directed to Zhang and Singer (1991) for a more thorough introduction and to Zhang and Bracken (1995) or Hobcraft and Sigle-Rushton (2005) for applications of this method.

That inter-categorical approaches seem, at first glance, most relevant to largely descriptive endeavors is perhaps another reason why feminist economists have been slow to embrace and incorporate intersectionality. In a field where the identification of causal relationships has become a central concern, and where the label 'just descriptive' is often attached to research deemed less important or deserving of publication in top journals, addressing the methodological challenges of intersectionality may seem to many feminist economists – particularly those seeking to publish in top journals and to secure tenure – to carry many costs and few benefits. Although as a feminist economist and demographer I take issue with what I perceive to be the undervaluation of good measurement and description, it is worth emphasizing that the tenets of intersectionality can inform and create potentially productive challenges for more causal approaches as well. The literature on heterogeneous treatment effects, for example, is one that illustrates the potential importance of (and the challenges that accompany efforts aimed at) developing sound methodologies that take into account the complexity of intersectionality (see, for example, Fink et al., 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The idea of intersectionality has been described as ‘a fast and flexible traveller in the English speaking world of western feminism’ (Knapp, 2005: 254). But its travel across disciplinary boundaries has been rather more partial and selective. This chapter has sought to highlight some of the fundamental concerns raised by the early literature on intersectionality, and it has sought to show that these concerns raise important questions about the way we, as feminist economists, design and interpret applied, particularly (but not exclusively) micro-economic, studies. The idea of intersectionality was generated from the fundamental argument that the social positions that result from various social structures cannot be conceptualized or understood as additive and separable. Allowing these core ideas to travel across our disciplinary boundary opens up the possibility for other methodological developments and innovations, those which ‘... avoid the fully deconstructive rejection of all categorization, yet ... remain deeply skeptical of the homogenizing generalizations that go with the territory of classification and categorization’ (McCall, 2005: 1783).

But taking on these ideas requires extremely large samples and results in an enormous amount of complexity. Consequently, this paper has also sought to offer suggestions for how researchers who want to develop more gender-sensitive methods can most productively take these ideas forward. While the intra-categorical and inter-categorical approaches offer applied micro-economists a way of dealing with intersectionality, it is important to stress that analyses that apply the notion of intersectionality are always likely to be partial because the analysis becomes increasingly complex as additional social structures are considered. Nonetheless, a partial solution may uncover new information that was previously obscured by simplifying additive assumptions.

Although some analysts make an effort to examine women and men separately wherever possible, or to examine broad racial groups separately wherever possible, it is important that complex interactive relationships be tested rather than presumed. While the findings will never be comprehensive or definitive in the sense that we can conclude that there are no other social structures that need to be incorporated in order to document and understand differentials in the outcome of interest, the value in adopting this way of thinking and linking it to how we collect and analyze data will help elucidate areas that need further attention in our own or future work. This is one of the most important contributions intersectionality has to make to applied micro-economics.

APPENDIX A

A CART analysis begins with the unique root node of the tree, which is represented by a circle at the top of the tree diagram. This root node contains all observations in the sample from which the tree is derived. At each subsequent layer of the tree a node can be internal, meaning that additional nodes lie below it, or terminal, meaning that no additional nodes lie below it. Internal nodes are represented with circles and terminal nodes with boxes. Both the root and the internal nodes are partitioned into two nodes in the next layer of the tree. These are called left and right daughter nodes, each of which is a sub-set of the internal node above it and, in the diagram, connected to it with straight lines. The goal for each partition is to locate a binary split that results in two homogeneous, or pure, daughter nodes. Because no split is likely to achieve total purity, we base our choice on a goodness of a split measure that weighs the impurities of the resulting daughter nodes. Impurity can be measured using any concave function, ϕ that satisfies these three conditions:

- (i) $\phi \geq 0$;
- (ii) for any $p \in (0,1)$, $\phi(p) = \phi(1-p)$, and
- (iii) $\phi(0) = \phi(1) < \phi(p)$.

The partition of the sample becomes progressively more detailed as the layers get deeper, but each subject is eventually assigned to one of the terminal nodes – ideally a node in which all subjects are homogenous with respect to the outcome variable. In practice, the complete homogeneity of terminal nodes is rarely achieved, however.

The method continues splitting each layer of nodes until no offspring nodes can be split any further. When this happens, the tree is said to be saturated. Because the total number of possible splits for a node falls from one layer to the next, the number of permissible splits gradually approaches zero, at which point the tree cannot grow any further. Saturated trees are of limited statistical use because the terminal nodes are usually very small, and the trees are often so large that interpreting them can be difficult. For this reason, some researchers make the trees more workable by applying a second step called ‘pruning’. To prune the tree, a Studentized log relative risk is calculated for each internal node from the bottom up.⁴ Next, the Studentized log relative risk for each internal node is compared with those calculated for all of its offspring nodes. If any offspring node has a higher statistic than its ancestor, the statistic of the ancestor is replaced with that higher value. Finally, any node whose statistic falls below some threshold (for example 1.96 if the researcher is interested in pruning to a 0.05 significance level) is changed to a terminal node. The terminal nodes, both before and after pruning, represent mutually exclusive groups of real people each of which has different risks with respect to the outcome of interest.

NOTES

- 1 Recent empirical research provides additional evidence against this simplifying assumption. Results from in-depth interviews demonstrate the ways in which employers stereotypically and differentially characterize Black men, Black women and White women (Kennelly, 1999). Moreover, recent work by Steinbugler et al., (2006) demonstrates

that racial stereotyping by Whites differs significantly across groups who were asked to consider ‘Blacks’, ‘Black Men’ and ‘Black Women’ when they formulated their assessments.

- 2 McCall (2005) makes an excellent case for the acceptance as valid, and indeed the further development, of empirical approaches to intersectionality by feminist researchers. This paper takes on a far more modest challenge and speaks to the ‘other side’ – those quantitative researchers who are interested in making their work more gender sensitive. I want to convey some of the basic ideas that quantitative researchers might want to consider when conducting their research.
- 3 Following Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel (2007), we control for fertility with indicator variables for having one child, two children, three children and four or more children. In addition, we control for the number of years since the last two children (if any) were born. Because time effects may be nonlinear, we control for the square of the time since each of the last two births as well.
- 4 In practice, this statistic is biased upward to some extent because the relative risk is calculated as a resubstitution estimate – i.e. using a similar measure to the one from which the tree was grown.

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Feminist Perspectives on Care: Theory, Practice and Policy

Susan Himmelweit and Ania Plomien

INTRODUCTION

Feminist theory across a number of disciplinary fields has made a significant contribution to the understanding of care and to the development of its policy and practice in a variety of societal contexts. Care is a key feminist concern because its provision remains so stubbornly gendered and this has important implications for what men and women can do. How care is provided, therefore, also has consequences for the functioning of economies and the wellbeing of societies. Despite the high profile that care and gender equality have attained in the recent years, policy remains underdeveloped and the importance of care is often inadequately reflected in mainstream theories.

In this chapter we trace some feminist ideas and debates concerning care and their effect on understandings of gender divisions. We begin by theorizing care's unique economic properties and its role in constituting social and economic relations. We then outline some of the gendered, and otherwise

unequal, patterns of care provision and highlight how these are structured by inequalities embedded in economic and other relations. We emphasize that the failure to give care relations due significance leaves mainstream economic and social policy with an inadequate gender-blind characterization of socio-economic relations. Finally, we conclude that any interest in improving socio-economic relations and well-being must necessarily incorporate consistent and sustained attention to care. Thus, the key feminist question of how to mainstream care into theory, practice and policy continues to be relevant.

THEORIZING CARE

Care enables people to do what others can do unaided, and may also help them develop in physical, cognitive and emotional ways. Although walking sticks and some other physical objects can enhance people's capabilities, what is meant by 'care' is a personal, hands-on service in which the relationship

that develops between the care-giver and care-recipient is an integral part of that care. Thus, it is both the 'provision of personal services to meet those basic physical and mental needs that allow a person to function at a socially determined acceptable level of capability, comfort, and safety' (Himmelweit, 2007: 381) and an 'investment in the capabilities of recipients' (England, 2005: 385).

By referring to the way that basic care needs are socially determined we note that there are no absolute standards of care and what might be a reasonable expectation in one society may in another be considered unnecessary or too difficult to achieve. Even within the same society, expectations of capabilities may vary; in particular, the circumstances in which women and men are deemed to need care may differ. Nevertheless, because care meets basic needs, how care is organized is a significant feature of any society structuring the allocation of time within it.

Traditionally care needs were met, well or badly, along with many other needs, within families and communities, mostly by women, and even today the vast majority of care remains unpaid. People's care needs vary, and those with greatest needs are not necessarily those with best access to family and community care. This gendered unpaid care system has never worked for everyone, has never covered all care needs and has always been backed up by other forms of care. But for a long time the only way in which 'normal' care was provided was unpaid, a situation that began to change with the large-scale entry of married women into paid employment.

The Development of Care as a Commodity

Economists argue that commodification takes place when the market can provide goods more efficiently or with greater productivity than can be achieved in other ways. In the case of care, however, productivity gains are limited owing to its relational character. Feminist economists have highlighted

how relationships are fundamental to care quality and that, because relationships cannot just be speeded up, it is hard to reduce the time spent in care. As a result any productivity gains from the commodification of care remain limited. Care in essence must 'involve taking the concerns and needs of the other as the basis for action' and is a form of emotional labour where the attitude and emotions of the care-giver are fundamental to what she provides (Tronto, 1993: 105). Care also often involves long-term relationships that develop over time, so that continuity of care matters to its quality. Because such relationships were typically associated with the family, this produced some resistance to the payment of others to provide care. All these factors slowed down the commodification of both child and adult care, with uneven and partial results.

An hour's childcare, for example, takes an hour; it cannot be speeded up. Of course, it is possible for one person to look after a number of children simultaneously. For adult care, there are, similarly, some productivity gains in domiciliary care being provided for just the periods of time when care is required, and residential care allows for some economies of scale. A paid care worker can care for more people than an unpaid family member who may give up employment to look after the needs of just one person. There are, therefore, some productivity gains from collective child or elder care provision. But, even so, there are limits to how far the periods of time care workers spend with each client can be reduced without undermining the quality of care through workers being too rushed to develop any relationship with those for whom they care.

While much domestic labour has been replaced by bought commodities, purchased care has remained very expensive, too expensive for many to afford, because the productivity gains from its commodification are so small. In the UK in 2012, for example, a full-time nursery place costs £11,000 for a year, almost half women's median gross earnings (Daycare Trust, 2013). Whether the

productivity gains can be realized by individual families depends on a number of factors: whether employment is available to make use of time freed up, and whether the gains from such employment exceed the financial, cultural or emotional costs associated with using professional care services. These potential gains vary considerably with earnings – in general, lower-earning households gain less from using commodified care.

Furthermore, care needs are particularly inflexible in that they must be met at particular times of day and are not easily fitted around other uses of time, such as employment. Given the prevailing domestic division of labour between women and men, the net result is that care continues to constrain women's employment (and that of a much smaller number of men who have primary care responsibilities). The commodification of care has also not succeeded in meeting all care needs. It has not helped those lacking family members to provide care unpaid, who also do not have the resources to purchase it on the market. Few societies are so hard-hearted as to leave all care needs unmet; in economic terms, the provision of care is a 'merit good' that creates positive externalities because the population as a whole prefers its members to receive the care that they need. This gives care the characteristics of a public good¹ in that it provides direct and indirect social benefits beyond those private benefits enjoyed by its direct recipients (Folbre, 1994; England et al., 2002). In particular, the care children receive has wider economic benefits through improving the future workforce's capabilities. More broadly, high-quality care for children and adults provides externalities through both maintaining social solidarity and reciprocity between generations (lower crime rates, more trust and helpfulness) and reassuring individuals about how their own care needs will be met.

Those positive externalities provide a justification for public involvement in the provision of care because, left to individuals, care is

purchased only when private benefits outweigh affordable private costs, and this is insufficient to cover all cases where care is of benefit to society. Where the family or the market fails to provide, care needs may be met by voluntary or community organizations. And care is also provided collectively by the state, directly by the public sector or indirectly by subsidizing voluntary sector provision or the purchase of care on the market.

Baumol's Cost Disease

Not only are few productivity gains to be made from the commodification of care, but it is also difficult to raise productivity in paid care without cutting its quality – and a productivity gain in which quality falls is not a real productivity gain. This limited capacity for productivity gains means that costs in care tend to increase over time relative to those in industries where productivity rises. The US economist William Baumol noted that whether productivity can rise in an industry depends on how it uses labour (Baumol, 1967). Most industries, including all manufacturing and some services, use labour just as an input; in these industries, alternative techniques using more machinery and less labour may be able to produce an effectively identical product, so it should be possible to raise productivity by capital investment and/or technological improvements. In those industries improvements in productivity can result in reductions in unit labour costs even if wages rise.

But in other industries, including care provision, the time people spend working is part of their product. In that situation there is little scope for raising labour productivity through capital investment or technological improvements. Baumol noted that this applied to 'health care, education ... and the care of the indigent', 'precisely those [industries] in which the human touch is crucial' (Baumol, 1993: 17, 19). In those industries productivity rises are impossible without reducing quality, and if most costs are wages total costs must rise almost as fast as wages do.

Therefore, the products of those industries inevitably become more expensive than other goods whose costs of production can fall through productivity increases (Donath, 1996).

Care, therefore, suffers from what became known as Baumol's 'cost disease': as a country's standard of living rises and real wages increase, costs in those industries where productivity cannot be increased rise relative to those where labour-saving technical progress is possible. Care becomes increasingly expensive and it may appear that the country can no longer afford to provide it in the way that it has been able to in the past. This is a mistake, since it is an effect of the economy getting stronger – more productive – overall; but of necessity only in some industries. As a result less labour is needed to produce the same amount of goods in those industries, leaving the country well able to afford to use the same amount of labour providing care. But an issue will arise about the distribution and financing of such care. To see this, we can consider the effects of rising wages on each of the various sectors of care provision (Himmelweit, 2007).

Effects on Different Sectors of Care Provision

For those restricting their employment hours to provide unpaid care, rising wages make it increasingly worthwhile taking employment and therefore the opportunity costs of time spent out of the labour market will rise.² More of those who, because of higher earning potential or smaller care responsibilities, can afford to purchase substitute care will do so to increase their hours of employment. This may make others who cannot earn so much or have greater care responsibilities also want to take employment, but for many it will be too expensive because rising wages will have pushed up the cost of care too. This has made inequality in access to affordable care a major problem in many high-income countries, which increasing wage inequality can only exacerbate (Himmelweit, 2007).

Private sector providers of care must always try to restrain their costs if operating in a competitive market. Childcare providers facing rising wages are unlikely to be able to charge more to parents, many of whom might then find childcare unaffordable and reduce their employment hours instead. Similarly, providers of residential and domiciliary care are constrained by what their clients, or the funders of their care, are able or willing to pay. Facing rising wage costs, the only ways to cut costs are by reducing staffing ratios or employing cheaper workers, either those with less training or those made vulnerable by lack of alternatives, such as migrants. All these ways of reducing costs may also lower the quality of care provision. Because it is always hard for care recipients to shop around to improve care quality, its provision by for-profit providers needs to be very carefully regulated.

Public sector providers and non-profit providers funded by the state or charitable donations are under similar cost pressures because their funding tends to lag behind their actual costs. Rising public expenditure on care is easily misinterpreted as a sign of inefficiency, rather than that rising costs are an inherent characteristic of care. This had led to calls for privatization and reluctance to fund properly the costs of high-quality care provision. Nearly fifty years ago it was Baumol's recognition of a similar tendency to blame rising municipal spending on the arts on inefficient administration that led to the discovery of his 'cost disease' (Baumol and Bowen, 1965).

However, non-profit providers are likely to provide higher-quality care. Although they are subject to the same pressures as for-profit providers, a non-profit's aim is not to make profits but to provide good-quality care to those who need it. As a result, non-profit providers are more trusted by clients than for-profits, and research has shown that trust to be well founded (Cleveland et al., 2007). However, non-profit providers may be unwilling to operate in conditions where they

cannot deliver care of the requisite standard, so the state cannot rely on the expansion of non-profit provision as a cheap way to meet demand.

In public sector care a public service ethos may resist the lowering of quality in the face of rising costs, though the increasing imposition of targets and private sector accounting methods on public sector organizations may erode the ability to resist such pressures. Nevertheless, there is evidence that public sector care tends to be of better quality than that provided by for-profit providers. For example, in 2011/12 in England, while 71 per cent of state health care provision met the general standard on ensuring people with a learning disability's care and welfare only 49 per cent of private service providers' services did so (Care Quality Commission, 2012).

Effects on Care Workers

The pressure of rising costs also results in care workers being some of the worst paid employees; since most of them are women, the poor pay of care workers is a significant contributor to the overall gender pay gap in most countries (Budig and Misra, 2010). As a justification for its low pay, care is often talked about as 'unskilled'. Although many care workers have qualifications and are formally trained, some of the skills involved in care involve relating to others. Care workers learn what particular people require to be well cared for and often become attached to those for whom they care, both of which tend to improve the quality of care given but reduce their bargaining power as workers.

Such skills also tend not to be well recognized, because they are not obviously codifiable; people's needs differ so specifying how to look after a particular person may not be generalizable, though how to be flexible in responding to needs can be taught. Such flexibility, however, is often portrayed as a natural attribute of women rather than a skill that has to be learned and paid for (Adams and Nelson, 2009). This low recognition of, and financial compensation for, the skills involved, combined

with attempts by employers to keep costs down, has led to high turnover rates in the care industry, which in turn affects continuity of care and hence its quality. Industries facing rising wage bills frequently outsource production to lower wage economies to reduce their costs, but this is a less practical option for care which, as a personal, hands-on service, cannot be done at a distance, although some people do outsource their own care by choosing to retire to countries where care is cheaper. A much more important trend is the employment of migrant care workers in higher-income countries.

Care costs rise because wages do; but, since the financial crisis, wages, including those of care workers, have been falling in many previously prosperous countries as well as in lower-income countries. However, there are still huge international disparities in wages, and poor countries continue to lose their internationally mobile care workers through migration to higher-income countries. Although migration, including of care workers, can also be encouraged by states seeking remittances, the migration of skilled care workers can constitute a significant drain on national resources at a time when their skills are greatly needed (Smith and Mackintosh, 2007). Such migration may also lead to so-called 'global care chains', in which care workers from poorer countries look after those needing care in richer countries, while leaving behind those that they would otherwise have been caring for to be looked after by others, who may thereby be less available to meet their own family's care needs (Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Yeates 2004).

CARE IN PRACTICE: INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES

The Care Diamond

The provision of care varies between societies across several dimensions. The first dimension concerns which sectors of the economy provide care. As we have seen,

care can be provided in all economic sectors: the household or family sector, the private (for-profit) market sector, the public state sector and the community/non-profit sector.³ The sectoral balance of care provision varies within and across countries and over time; it also may vary by type of care, so that the sectoral balance of provision may differ across childcare, adult care and elderly care. In all places and times and for all types of care, the household sector remains the most significant provider. The second dimension distinguishes whether care is provided on a paid or unpaid basis. While there has been a notable movement from unpaid to paid care, the amount of care provided unpaid continues to dwarf the amount that is paid across all societies. The third dimension of care provision concerns how it is allocated, whether by the market or by other mechanisms – for example, according to need by state, community or household sectors. These latter two dimensions can be mapped partially but not uniquely onto sectors of care provision. For example, market allocation mechanisms are used for

all private for-profit care and also for some public sector and non-profit care.

Society's provision of care can be depicted by a shifting 'care diamond' (Razavi 2007) (Figure 26.1), which shows how all three dimensions are related. The cross-hatched area shows where paid labour is used: care workers for the public and for-profit sectors are paid; those who work for the non-profit sector may be volunteers or may be paid while in the household sector family members are generally unpaid but domestic workers in household are paid and there may be circumstances in which people receive payments from the state or paid leave for looking after family members. The solid grey area shows where the market is used to allocate care: this is the case for all the care provided by the for-profit private sector, but while non-profits and the public sector may use the market they are more likely to use other criteria, such as need, for allocating care to eligible recipients. Within the household care is generally allocated according to need, though the circumstances in which women and men are deemed to need care may differ substantially.

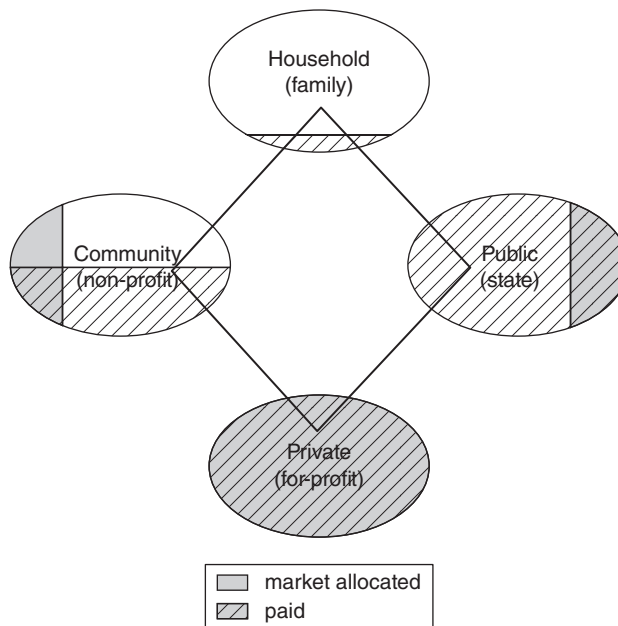


Figure 26.1 Provision of care

Source: Adapted from Rasavi, 2007: 21

Social norms and practices affect the provision of care in any society, including the balance between paid and unpaid care, the use of market and other mechanisms, and which sectors are involved in providing care. These same norms affect and are influenced by country-specific economic conditions, institutions and social policy, creating positive feedback and path dependence; as a result there are substantial differences between societies in all these respects. Nevertheless, three common universal features remain. First, the bulk of the care economy is unpaid and remains outside what is counted in GDP. Second, care provision is gendered at all points of the diamond. Together these two features mean that a quantitatively significant part of women's contribution to the economy remains financially unrewarded and largely invisible. And third, as women's employment has increased and some unpaid care has had to move into the paid economy, care is currently one of the fastest growing industries and sources of employment in nearly all industrialized societies.

Economic Contribution and the Valuation of Unpaid Care

The first universal feature of care provision is that, like other household service provision, unpaid care work is not included in the system of national accounts production boundary. There have been, however, many attempts to calculate the economic contribution of household services, drawing on the pioneering work of Margaret Reid (1934).⁴ Such accounts show that the total value of unpaid care and domestic work is equivalent to about a third to a half of most countries' GDP (see, e.g., UNDP, 1995; FGB, 2009; ONS, 2002;2013a;2013b; Ahmad and Koh, 2011). Different definitions, methods and data have been used by a number of national statistical offices in various countries⁵ to estimate the value of unpaid care in order to include them in 'satellite' accounts as an adjunct to but separate from GDP.

Input-based methodologies assign a wage to the hours spent on unpaid household activities. A recent EU study (FGB, 2009) using such methods valued unpaid care and domestic work at 20.1 per cent of GDP (comprising 16.5 per cent unpaid domestic work, 2.9 per cent of unpaid care work and 0.7 per cent outsourced childcare to other family members).⁶ But this was a low estimate, assigning a wage equivalent to that of an unskilled domestic worker; when the wage level assigned was that of a trained childcare worker the estimated value rises to 36.8 per cent of GDP (comprising 30.9 per cent unpaid domestic work and 5.8 per cent unpaid care work) (FGB, 2009: 59 Table 5). Although care can be conceptually distinguished from other unpaid domestic tasks, the dependence of personal care on such activities as food provision and preparation, cleaning and laundry makes these distinctions difficult to make in practice. Furthermore, unpaid care and domestic work can be, and often are, performed simultaneously. As a result, when Time Use surveys allow only single activities to be recorded or force a choice between primary and secondary activities, care may be under recorded when combined with activities with a physical product, such as cooking. This affects the valuation given to care by input-based methodologies. Nevertheless, even the lower estimates demonstrate that unpaid care, as well as domestic work, is a quantitatively significant part of the economy.

An output-based methodology measures the value of services provided at the price of equivalent market products. Using this methodology care work can be distinguished by its output from other forms of unpaid work; this tends to produce higher estimates of unpaid care as a proportion of GDP. In the UK such valuations of informal adult and child care have been included in household satellite accounts calculated for 2000 and 2010. Because of the experimental nature of these calculations, with different criteria used at the two dates, the interpretation of any pattern of change requires caution. The

UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS 2013a) finds that between the two periods considered the number of adults receiving informal care in the UK remained similar, at just over 2 million, but the total number of hours of informal adult care received increased substantially from 6.28 to 7.58 billion hours – that is, by almost 21 per cent of the 2000 figure. Consequently, the estimated value of informal adult care increased from £32.6 billion to £61.7 billion, which in 2010 was equivalent to 4.2 per cent of GDP (ONS 2013a).

This scale of provision also means that, whether based on estimates of gross annual public expenditure on adult care of more than £18 billion (UKCES, 2012; UKHCA, 2013) or compared with adult social care costs of almost 1.2 per cent of GDP (Commission on Funding of Care and Support, 2011), the value of adult care provided unpaid was more than three times as much as that financed by the state. And while it is difficult to estimate expenditure on care privately funded by care recipients and their families, this too remains much smaller than the value of unpaid care. In England, for example, owing to its large number of social care recipients, the private market in residential and non-residential care is estimated to be worth about £6 billion (IPC, 2012; Laing and Buisson, 2013, cited in Humphries, 2013).

In the period between 2000 and 2010 there was a slight trend away from unpaid to paid childcare provision, with an estimated annual average of 27 hours' additional formal childcare hours per child (up to 15 years of age). Despite the slight increase in paid childcare, the estimated value of unpaid childcare in 2010 was still substantial, at £343 billion, which is equivalent to 23 per cent of GDP (ONS, 2013b). It thus remains significantly more than both the value of £4.1 billion (2009 estimate by Laing and Buisson, cited in Daycare Trust, 2009) provided by the childcare market, and public expenditure on early childhood education and care services (up to the age of 6) of about 1.1 per cent of GDP (based on OECD family database, see

Moss and Lloyd, 2013 for discussion of this figure), or £6.1 billion (UKCES, 2012).

These valuations, whether more or less generously estimating the value of unpaid care work, clearly show that it comprises the majority of care provided in any society. And even in contexts where substantial public resources are allocated to care services, such as the Nordic European countries, this relationship holds. In Finland, for instance, the value of household provision of unpaid care is about double that of publicly funded care, and the value of market provision is even smaller (Hamunen et al., 2012), while in Sweden the volume of informal unpaid long-term care is twice that of formally provided paid care (Johansson, 2000 cited in Lundsgaard, 2005).

The Gendered Distribution of Care Work

The omission of the unpaid care economy from GDP is also significant because care work, whether paid or unpaid, is highly gendered. This, we noted, was a second universal feature of care found across societies. Time-use surveys document general and persisting patterns of a gender gap where men, on average, work more in the paid economy and engage less in domestic work and care, while the opposite tends to be true for women (Gershuny et al., 2005; Breen and Cooke, 2005). These gender differences, however, are neither uniform across societies nor fixed. On average across the world women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work and care, although the gender division of domestic labour is somewhat more even (but not equal) and less time-consuming in the more economically developed countries (United Nations 2010; World Bank, 2011). For example, as illustrated in Figure 26.2, taking unpaid domestic and care work together, in Bulgaria women spend 329 minutes per day on this while men spend 186 minutes; in Turkey the discrepancy is wider, with 371

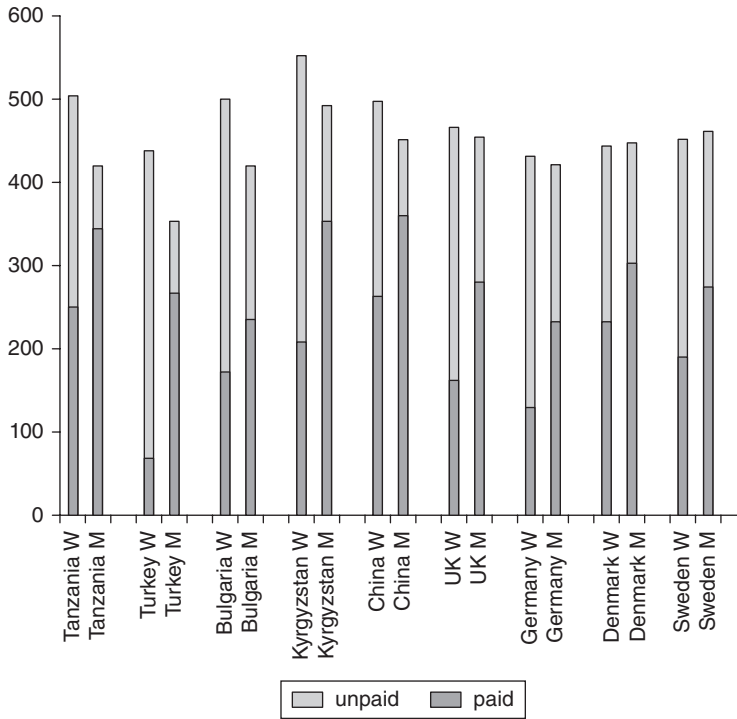


Figure 26.2 Time spent on paid and unpaid work in select countries, by gender

Source: UN 2010, Statistical Annex, Table 4C: 211

Note: Minutes per day; data for various years in the 2000s; most countries population 20–74, except Tanzania (15+), China (15–80), Denmark (16–74).

minutes for women and 88 minutes for men; in the UK the gender gap is lower, with women contributing 306 minutes and men 175 minutes; and in Sweden women's input of 261 minutes and men's of 187 minutes result in the gender gap being lower still (based on United Nations, 2010).

Attitudinal surveys find that gender-role attitudes differ substantially even across European countries, with Nordic countries being the most egalitarian, while those in southern and eastern European regions, among them Austria, Greece and Ukraine, expressing the highest commitments to traditional maternal roles (O'Reilly et al., 2007; European Commission, 2013a). In all, however, when the domestic demand for care increases it is women, more often than men, who reduce their paid employment and earnings, while men may increase theirs to compensate

(Gershuny et al., 2005). In the EU, on average, the employment rate of women with a child under six years of age is 9.7 percentage points lower than that of women without young children, whereas for men it is 11.4 percentage points higher. These patterns vary widely: in the Czech Republic this negative impact of motherhood is nearly thirty-six percentage points and in Greece only one percentage point, whereas in Sweden and Slovenia the difference is positive (European Commission, 2013b).

While women's and men's employment status modifies the amount of time devoted to unpaid work and care, gender differences persist. An analysis of eighteen OECD countries shows that men and women who are in paid employment spend less time in child-care than parents who are not in paid employment. However, while non-employed fathers

spend 51 minutes on care per day, only 11 minutes more than fathers in employment, mothers double their caring time from 74 to 144 minutes per day when they are not in employment (Miranda, 2011: 18). Fathers' substantially lower contribution to childcare than mothers', whatever their employment status, is evidence of the persistence of the traditional gender division of labour. As a result, in most countries there is evidence of a double burden whereby the total amount of work (paid and unpaid) tends to be higher for women, although with considerable variation in the size of the gap. For example, the gap is more than 80 minutes per day in Bulgaria, Tanzania or Turkey, about an hour in South Africa, but less than 20 minutes in the UK or Germany, while in Sweden it is men's total working time that is longer by 13 minutes (FGB, 2009; United Nations, 2010).⁷

These behaviour patterns are affected by gender role attitudes, the availability of alternative care facilities and the gender pay gap, and in turn influence policy on these matters, but to different extents and with variable time lags. In Poland the full time employment of mothers with small children is generally approved, yet childcare services and employment rates lag behind (European Commission, 2013a; Plomien, 2009). Attitudes can also be influenced by both behavioural norms and personal experience; in the UK, critical attitudes towards maternal employment diminished through the 1990s as more mothers took employment, with mothers in employment holding such attitudes themselves more likely to change their attitudes than their behaviour (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004). Within the overall pattern of a gender division of labour over care and employment, institutions, policies, labour market structures and attitudes work together to determine how unequal that gender division is in particular societies.

The movement of unpaid domestic work and care into the paid economy does not, however, change its gendered character. At all points of the care diamond a disproportionate amount of all care work is performed

by women. Worldwide, women account for 83 per cent of the workforce in the paid domestic work sector, much of which is focused on the provision of care (ILO, 2013). In OECD countries, health and social work is the most highly feminized of all service sectors, with a 78 per cent female workforce (OECD, 2012). In the EU, women make up more than 90 per cent of pre-primary education workers, 90 per cent of those in personal care, nearly 80 per cent of those in social work and about 80 per cent of those in residential and non-residential care activities (Jagger, 2010).

The Growth of Paid Care

These patterns interact with the third universal feature of care provision, namely that the paid care industry is the fastest growing sector of most industrialized societies. Across OECD countries the health and social care sectors, including long-term care, childcare and various types of social work, employ a large and growing number of people. Employment in these sectors averages more than 10 per cent of total employment and ranges from 20 per cent in Norway to about 3 per cent in Mexico and Turkey (OECD, 2012). In the UK it represents 13 per cent of all employment, making it the country's largest sector in employment terms (UKCES, 2012). In the US one-fifth of all workers are employed in work that can broadly be called care, more than the automobile and steel industries combined (Folbre and Nelson, 2000: 126; Folbre, 2006: 21). In the period between 1995 and 2009 on average the OECD countries' workforce in these sectors increased⁸ by 2.8 per cent per year, more than twice as fast as the 1.3 per cent growth rate of employment overall (OECD, 2011). In the UK, employment in both the health and the social care sector has grown by 23 per cent in the years 2002–2010 (UKCES, 2012).

Furthermore, such employment growth has been comparatively resilient in the context of the adverse impact of the economic crisis on employment overall. As OECD (2011) reports,

in most countries employment in the health and social sectors grew in 2008 and 2009, while overall employment either remained unchanged or declined. In Ireland the growth of employment in health and social sectors of 3 per cent occurred while total employment declined by 8 per cent. In lower-income countries much of this growth in care employment has been in the domestic sector. For instance, in the Latin American region in 2004 10 per cent of all new jobs were in the domestic sector (Antonopoulos, 2008, citing figures from the Economic Commission for Latin America, ECLAC, 2007).

Whether shifting care work from the unpaid to the paid economy improves gender equality depends in part on the working conditions and pay of paid care workers. Care work performed in the formal paid economy is generally more visible (though less so in the paid domestic service) and provides the care worker with an income and social security entitlements, but the problem of undervaluation remains. The existence and persistence of the gender pay gap and its various aspects are well documented (for example, Bergmann, 1974; Blau and Kahn, 1996, Manning and Petrongolo, 2008). One explanation links women's lower wages to their concentration in a relatively small number of sectors that tend to have lower pay levels than those dominated by men. As we have shown, care industries are the most feminized of all and much research points to the notoriously low wages in care occupations and industries, identifying what has become known as the 'care penalty' – lower wages received by care workers compared with similarly qualified workers in other types of jobs (England, 1992; Kilbourne et al., 1994; England et al., 2002; Budig and Misra, 2010). Many types of care work are very poorly paid; for instance, recent evidence from England demonstrates that a higher proportion of care workers across all care sectors were paid at or below the national minimum wage (7.9 per cent) than were workers in the economy as a whole (3.7 per cent) (Skills for Care, 2012; Hussein, 2012).

While the care penalty is evident in both public and private sector jobs (Budig and Misra, 2010), in the era of welfare state expansion employment in the public sector was generally better paid than in the private sector, and in a number of European countries, the USA and Canada, the public sector wage premium tended to be higher for women than men. Recent data on hourly pay rates for the social care workforce in England confirm that across all care occupations, public sector workers earn more than those in the private sector, and that wages in the private sector are even lower than those in the voluntary sector (Skills for Care, 2012).

But in some areas of care provision the state is retreating and private sector providers are taking on a larger share. The rapid growth of the care industry intensifies this process so that new care jobs, and thus many of the new jobs taken by women, are increasingly in the private sector, where the gender pay gap is larger. In England nearly 90 per cent of publicly funded homecare is provided by the private sector, compared to only 5 per cent in the early 1990s (Community Care Statistics, 2013: 46). Such shifting of boundaries and shrinking of the state's role as a direct provider of care is not unique to England, since in many countries across the world privatization and liberalization processes have gained a prominent place on political and economic agendas. The move away from public to private care services does not bode well for care workers who face a larger pay gap in the private sector as well as losing the job protection, collective bargaining processes and higher wages of public sector employment (Rubery, 1992; Antonopoulos, 2008).

In many richer countries, as the paid care industry has expanded it has increasingly looked towards migrants as a source of cheap, but sometimes relatively skilled, care workers. There is a rich feminist scholarship that has examined the relationship between paid and unpaid care labour and migration (e.g. Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Yeates, 2004; Lutz, 2008; Kilkey et al., 2013). In liberal social

democratic southern European and Asian countries the growing demand for paid care has resulted in a vast increase in the employment of migrant care workers by the public sector and private sector care providers and by care recipients and parents in their own homes. Recruiting cheaper, less protected sources of labour from poorer regions and those with labour market disadvantage has enabled the expansion of a low-paid domestic care sector, as well as allowing larger employers' working conditions and wages to deteriorate (Williams and Brennan, 2012). So, the low value of women's work in general and care work in particular increasingly refers to migrant women's work.

Employment in the domestic sector is particularly closely related to migration patterns, especially from poorer regions to the Middle East, Europe and North America, but also in intra-regional flows within Asia or Latin America. In Europe the biggest employers of domestic workers are Spain, France and Italy, who rely largely on the employment of migrant women (ILO, 2013). Italy stands out as a female 'migrant in the family' model (Bettio et al., 2006) for both child and elderly care, which underscores how a lack of formal care services, combined with aging populations and changing women's roles, intensifies the country's care deficit. State policies play a role in these processes (Williams and Gavanas, 2008; Lutz, 2008; Blofield, 2012; Kilkey et al., 2013) where insufficient public support encourages private solutions, exacerbates the vulnerability of migrant workers by not offering routes into formalization of their status and reinforces inequality among differently positioned women. This is in contrast to the low demand for domestic workers in the Nordic societies, which is in part due to the public support for the provision of child and elderly care (ILO, 2013) through services, more favourable working hours and lower inequality.

The increase in women's labour force participation has resulted in a modification of the male breadwinner model (Lewis, 1992) but has not been accompanied by a similar

increase in men's unpaid care work (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Harkness, 2008). Some of that difference has been covered by an increase in women's overall working day, but a much larger share was transferred to other women variously positioned in the paid care sector. This outsourcing has reinforced inequalities among women because paid care workers often come from more disadvantaged groups than the higher-paid women whose unpaid labour they replace. An intersectional perspective, focusing on how gender is co-constitutive with social class, age, ethnicity, race, migrant status and other differences, would further illuminate the importance of care in the changing character of inequality (see Sigle-Rushton, this volume, for a discussion of integrating intersectionality into feminist economics).

Achieving a balance between paid and unpaid work without creating or reinforcing inequalities between women and men, and among women and among men (see Kilkey et al., 2013), must involve better conditions for care provision in the paid sector and a more equal division of care work in the unpaid sector. Unpaid care responsibilities have been identified as a major barrier to expanding women's employment (Rubery et al., 2001; Orloff, 1993; World Bank, 2011) and the availability of paid care can lift some of that burden. It can also create jobs for women. But paid employment in caring, especially if wages and working conditions remain inadequate (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2007; Razavi and Staab, 2010; Hussein, 2012), does not automatically result in care work being properly rewarded and gender inequalities associated with it, including the gender division of labour and occupational segregation, being redressed (Chang, 2000; Mandel and Shalev, 2009).

TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUALITY IN CARE: CONCLUDING REMARKS

An underlying theme common to all aspects of care, both those we have discussed and

those we have not, is the inseparability of care and gender (in)equality. Modifications to the male breadwinner model, changes to the world of paid work and differentiations among women and among men within and across societies notwithstanding, women's responsibility for the provision of care remains a critical barrier to their equal participation in paid employment. Conversely, men's unequal share of care work, whether due to reluctance to do more or because of long hours of employment, not only fails to reduce women's care burden but also contributes to upholding a 'male norm' of paid employment incompatible with caring responsibilities. Both care and paid employment require transformative strategies if sustainable and equal societies are to be achieved. Only consistent and sustained policies centrally motivated by meeting society's care needs and achieving equality can end the dependence of current care systems on gender and other inequalities.

There are several examples of feminist theorizing and empirical analysis which consider the conditions for achieving sustainable and equal societies, all of which put the provision of care and gender equality in paid employment at their centre (e.g. Fraser, 1997; Folbre, 2001; Himmelweit, 2007; Gornick and Meyers, 2008). Our own analysis of care, its characteristics and its interdependence with the labour market has policy implications. In particular, a care strategy that reduces gender inequalities must entail a redistribution of care work: from the unpaid to the paid economy; from market to state sector; from women to men.

The movement of care from unpaid to the paid sector by creating more child and adult care services will result in more carers being paid for the work that is currently provided for 'free'. This will continue happening and policy can speed up this process. But, while it has many advantages, few care recipients and providers would want all care to be provided by paid workers given the emotional nature of the care relationship. These limits to the movement of care from

unpaid to the paid sector suggest that the redistribution from the market to the state is as important as better regulation and monitoring of private care providers. Limits to productivity and economic gains and rising needs and costs associated with care provision pose challenges that cannot be resolved through market mechanisms alone, especially in the long term (Baumol, 1967). Finally, the third necessary prong of redistribution is to shift care responsibilities from women to men. While women's participation in paid employment has increased substantially, the corresponding adjustments in men's behaviour, although discernible, have been much less spectacular. There is much scope for policy to address here.

Policies that have demonstrated their effectiveness include the direct provision of childcare and residential and domiciliary adult care; subsidizing costs; regulation; better training and developing career prospects for the care workforce; the provision of leave for parental and other care responsibilities; and payments for carers. How well care and equality goals are met will depend on the precise mix of these policies and the socio-economic contexts in which they are applied. Policy makers, both at the supra-national and country levels, declare the key importance of gender equality and care for socio-economic development in high- and low-income countries alike. But this discursive commitment, while important, remains problematic with respect to which policy aims are prioritized, how they are framed and whether they are matched by concrete policy initiatives.

Examples include the World Bank's recent World Development Report 2012, dedicated to gender issues in lower-income countries, which advocates for childcare services and health care infrastructure and recognizes the importance of addressing the segregation of women into poorly paid jobs. But while gender equality is the focus of the report, it is economic development rather than equality that drive its agenda, so that, as Diane Elson points out, its intention is to make 'women more like men, from the perspective of

employers, rather than changing the way that jobs are constructed and valued, so that, for example, care work is more highly valued and pays more and is undertaken equally by men and women' (2012: 180). So, not only is the care–equality nexus inadequately addressed, but, as also noted by feminist economist critics, to be effective the Bank's recommendations would require an overhaul of macroeconomic policies, of which there is no trace in its report.

The OECD, with its neoliberal stance complemented by a social investment paradigm, has given longer and more encompassing attention to policy issues concerning care and equality (Jenson, 2010; Mahon et al., 2012). This is evident in a number of influential initiatives, such as *Babies and Bosses*, *Starting Strong* and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). For example, childcare services have been viewed as a public good and presented as 'an unequalled opportunity for investment in human capital' (OECD, 2006: 20, 37). The OECD also identifies gender equality as a key goal in, for example, *Closing the Gender Gap* (2012). Finally, it recognizes the growing needs of adult care and encourages both the provision of support to family carers and improvement in the quality of jobs in the paid care sector, while also considering questions of financing and value for money (Colombo et al., 2011). Despite these positive developments, OECD policy advice falls short on a number of care–equality dimensions. It is limited by its continued stress on making a business case, where the argument that 'competitive markets have the potential to drive efficiency improvements in care delivery' (OECD, 2011: 7) is promoted. But, as we have noted, such 'productivity improvements' can have negative implications for the quality of care provision and gender equality.

Among supra-national policy arenas, the European Union combines longstanding attention to both gender equality and to care. EU social protection systems aiming to 'ensure access for all to quality care' are seen

as 'an important part of the European social model', and the quality of care in Europe is 'almost unrivalled in the world' (CEC, 2004: 2). That said, the inadequacy and unsustainability of existing care systems has been recognized and a combined concern for gender equality, family welfare and needs 'arising from dependence of the elderly' (CEC, 2004: 2–3) has provided the rationale for the future development of policy, including with respect to childcare services and the reduction of working time (European Parliament, 1983).

Despite gender equality being normative (Elgstrom, 2000), its translation into care policies has not been straightforward at the EU level. This has resulted in differences in approaches to the care of elderly and dependent adults and to childcare, and patchy attention to issues within each of these areas. The main initiatives have been contained within the reconciliation of work and family life policies, which aim to enable individuals to combine employment with care responsibilities though the three main pillars of statutory leave arrangements, organization of working time and the provision of childcare facilities. They have provided an important stimulus for Member States through legislation, soft law and monitoring.

EU social policies, while intrinsically progressive, often conflict with economic policies (Perrons and Plomien, 2010). Efforts to enhance parental leave, for example, were blocked by the national ministers of the member countries, such as the UK coalition government, for whom the additional expense for employers and public finances was stated to be 'deeply out of touch with reality'.⁹ So, this policy opportunity to recognize fathers' rights and responsibilities in care, even in a relatively small way, failed. Working time has also been regulated by EU policy, and to an extent directives on part-time work and working time address care and equality issues by offering protection to those who can participate in paid employment only on a part-time basis owing to caring (and other) commitments, and restraining employers

from making open-ended claims on workers' time. However, these seemingly gender-neutral regulations have not overcome gendered patterns of working time which tend to bifurcate into feminine and masculine models of availability for paid employment (Mutari and Figart, 2001; Zbyszewska, 2013). As such, the room for the legal framework to enhance gender and other dimensions of equality remains considerable. Lastly, the provision of care services represents a mixed picture, with EU-level initiatives focusing on child rather than elderly care, though targets for childcare take-up are more frequently set than achieved. The focus is on relieving women of child care responsibilities to facilitate their move into paid employment, rather than supporting a more equal gender division of care work by requiring or enabling men to do more.

Supra-national policy makers recognize the socio-economic significance of care and note that its provision is un- and under-paid, gendered and an increasing part of the paid sector economy. The fact that care provision faces serious sustainability and equality challenges is identified as a key motivation for reforms. Nonetheless, the necessary social and economic policies have not yet been implemented. The redistribution of care from unpaid to the paid economy, from the market to the public sector and from women to men is not addressed. As feminists have shown, unless these issues are addressed the provision of care will remain a source of gender and other inequalities.

NOTES

1 Other examples include health and education, where not only do the particular healthy and educated individuals benefit through leading healthier lives and gaining higher wages, but also society more widely gains from an epidemic-free environment and a better-educated and more productive workforce. The recognition of this in public policy is evident in state provision of health services and education. Societies differ with respect to the coverage and level of provision of these goods.

- 2 An opportunity cost is what is lost from not taking a course of action, in this case the wages that could have been earned from employment.
- 3 The community/non-profit sector has been particularly important in initiating forms of care that governments have subsequently provided or financed, as in the Scandinavian welfare states (Anttonen, 2005). In many low-income countries, care provided by local communities and the donor-funded non-profit sector is often the only alternative to family care (Razavi, 2007).
- 4 See Folbre, N. and Pujol, M. (eds) *Feminist Economics* (1996) 2(3): special issue on unpaid household work in honour of Margaret Reid.
- 5 Examples include Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, Nepal, Switzerland and the UK.
- 6 The estimated value of child care is relatively small compared to that of domestic work because of how primary and secondary activities were recorded and counted.
- 7 These figures are averaged across various age groups, which include those with care obligations and those without. Gender differences are greater if only people with caring responsibilities are included.
- 8 Exceptions are Poland, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and Iceland, where the share of health and social sector employment in total employment declined in recent years.
- 9 Comment made by David Frost, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (see www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2010/12/articles/uk1012029i.htm?utm_source=EIRO-United%20Kingdom&utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=RSS). Accessed 14 November 2012

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Power, Privilege and Precarity: The Gendered Dynamics of Contemporary Inequality

Robin Dunford and Diane Perrons

INTRODUCTION

In the immediate aftermath of the 2007–08 financial crisis debate raged between neo-liberal economists and Keynesian heterodox economists. The former, armed with an explanation of the crisis as a product of rising public deficits resulting from runaway state spending, proposed further privatization and cuts to public spending to foster conditions for a private sector-led recovery. The latter understood the crisis to have resulted from a demand deficit caused in part by rising inequalities. This rising inequality, as it is itself the result of thirty years of neo-liberal dominance in public policy, would render further programs of privatization and cuts a fetter on, rather than fuel for, economic growth. Heterodox economists thus proposed a programme of public spending on skills and infrastructure. Not only would such spending provide an immediate fiscal stimulus, but it would also be funded from tax revenues taken from the wealthy and create skilled employment, thereby reducing inequalities.

But these alternatives by no means exhaust the possible explanations for the crisis or the possible responses to it. First, feminist economists have long focused on the gendered structure of economic relations and the persistence of the resultant gender inequalities, which are often ignored by both neo-classical and heterodox economists. However, while feminist economists have broadened the scope of heterodox economics, both positions focus on primarily *economic* explanations for the rise of and potential responses to the crisis. They have paid less attention to the *political* factors that support and legitimate stark disparities in earnings. In particular, attention has not been paid to the question of how inequality and, with it, the rise of a neo-liberal elite, has been legitimated, both in discourse and through bio-political practice. Noting that the exorbitant wealth of the rising neo-liberal elite provides them with privileges that include significant power to influence political decisions only heightens the need for an explanation of how this power is legitimated. It is our contention that

an analysis of rising inequalities and any discussion of what might be required to escape the circle in which neo-liberal solutions are proposed as a remedy for neo-liberal maladies must focus not only on economic processes. In addition, attention must be paid to the broader dominance of neo-liberal discourse and the production of neo-liberal forms of subjectivity. Supplementing the work of feminist economists with this focus on the *political* dimensions of power that sustains and legitimates economic inequalities offers the potential for an integrated explanation of both the economic and the political dimensions of the crisis.

Heterodox economists, including Nobel Prize winners Paul Krugman (2012) and Joseph Stiglitz (2012), have been critical of rising inequalities. Stiglitz (2012: xiv), with respect to the US, argues that ‘the financial crisis unleashed a new realization that our economic system was not only inefficient and unstable’, insofar as the inequalities it generated were one structural factor behind the crisis, but also fundamentally unfair as a small minority reaped huge incomes while ‘most citizens were seeing their standards of living erode.’ Krugman is similarly critical of contemporary economic policies, arguing that ‘most of what economists have done in macroeconomics for the past thirty or so years has turned out to be spectacularly useless at best, and positively harmful in some cases’ (Krugman, 2009; also cited by Whalen, 2012: 2). By ‘economists’, Krugman is referring to orthodox neo-liberals who subscribe to the view that economics is about the allocation of scarce resources between rational decision makers through competitive markets. In this perspective, markets are assumed to operate like clockwork, generating efficiency, prosperity and choice, which in turn leads to socially optimal outcomes which benefit everyone. In these circumstances, the role of the state is simply to create the conditions in which markets can operate freely by providing physical security and guaranteeing private contracts. Accordingly, the main policy

recommendation for low-income countries experiencing the debt crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, and applied to high-income countries in the financial crisis of the early twenty-first century, was to ‘get your macro balances in order, take the state out of business, [and] give markets free rein’ – in other words, the recommendation was to ‘stabilize, privatize, and liberalize’ – a tripartite policy recommendation which ‘became the mantra of a generation of technocrats’ (Rodrik, 2006: 973).¹ These ideas remain dominant in economic thought and policy making, despite the fact that in practice such free market policies only intensified the problems they were formally attempting to resolve, resulting in ‘two lost decades of growth’ for low-income countries, including those in Latin America (Bértola and Ocampo, 2012), and high-income countries, including the UK, the US, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, where neo-liberal policies, both before and in response to financial crisis, generated prolonged economic depression in the early twenty-first century (Krugman, 2012; Skidelsky, 2011). Indeed, although the incomes of the powerful and privileged continue to rise, the real-term incomes of many Americans have stagnated or fallen, encouraging the Centre for Economic and Policy Research in the US to describe the early years of the twenty-first century as a ‘lost decade’.

This chapter focuses on inequality and contrasts feminist and heterodox economists’ analyses with the orthodox economics approach. We show that these former perspectives provide fairly convincing explanations of some aspects of economic inequality, gender inequality and the economic crisis, but are less able to explain why their ideas remain marginal to the discipline and overlooked by policy makers. It is only by combining this analysis with an account of the dominance of neo-liberal discourse, which in turn is built on an edifice which includes the production of neo-liberal subjectivity, that it is possible to shed some light on the legitimation,

solidification and intensification of neo-liberal power and privilege.

We begin the chapter by outlining some synergies between heterodox and feminist economics perspectives with regard to understandings of the economy and human motivation. We demonstrate how these approaches contrast with the dominant neo-liberal approach, before turning our focus specifically onto the earnings inequalities, including the gender pay gap, that form a major component of rising inequality. We demonstrate how feminist economists go beyond both neo-liberal and heterodox economists by attending to the gender division of labour and the differing economic value according to gendered work sectors. Specifically, we consider whether values are determined through market processes or whether the process of wage determination reflects social beliefs, cultural values and power relations. This division at the micro level maps on to a distinction at the macro level, with feminist economists offering an analysis of economic value which moves beyond the paid work located in the public world of the market to focus additionally on the private sphere of reproductive work upon which the market depends. Considerable attention has been paid both to the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market and the manner in which policy responses to the crisis have an especially harsh impact on women and low-income earners more generally. Feminist economists have paid less attention to the question of how the earnings of the elite and the policies that sustain their privilege are (re) produced and legitimated in contemporary thought and material practices. In parallel, while feminist economists can show that earnings inequality is gendered, they are less able to show how such inequalities have come about and continue to be sustained. Feminist economists recognize some of these limitations and acknowledge 'the importance of social beliefs and power structures in creating gendered economic

outcomes' (Nelson, 2008: 1 [online version]), demonstrating their receptivity to ideas from other disciplines. So, in the final section, we consider how ideas from political and gender theory might help explain these gaps. Specifically, we draw upon the work of Chantal Mouffe to demonstrate the 'hegemony' of neo-liberal discourse, which ensures that neo-liberal ideas remain dominant and that alternative voices must be articulated in a way that positions them in relation to the dominant neo-liberal paradigm. Then, we refer to Wendy Brown's analysis of the production of the neo-liberal subject in order to demonstrate the material practices with which this discursive hegemony intersects. Together, feminist economists and political theorists enable a richer understanding of the gendering of power and privilege.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE ECONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTIVITY

There are many parallels between the approaches of feminist and heterodox economists towards economics and policy prescriptions. But there are also key differences, particularly with respect to the attention paid to gender and gender inequality. These differences matter in terms of finding more equitable and sustainable solutions to inequality and the endemic crises associated with free market policies.

Both feminist and heterodox economists are critical of the neo-liberal understanding of the economy and human life which sees people as isolated entities governed by market principles and motivated by a self-interested, a-social rationality. Neo-liberal economics begins its analysis from 'rational economic man', or the autonomous individual which Julie Nelson (1995), among others,² likens to Thomas Hobbes's hypothetical man, who 'as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly (like mushrooms), come to full maturity, without any kind of engagement with each other' (Hobbes, 1949:

100). As Nelson points out, this portrayal implies that these beings are borne with ‘fully formed preferences ... no childhood or old age, no dependence on anyone and no responsibility for anyone but themselves’ (1995: 135). Understanding humans as springing from the ground with fully formed rational faculties and preferences obscures social reproduction. Given the enduring and universally uneven gender division of reproductive labour, this absence results in significant gender bias and inequality.³ Men are expected to prioritize paid activity in the public sphere and are to a great extent excused from routine domestic work and caring. This practice, which exists at the micro level in heterosexual households throughout the world, albeit to varying degrees, is also reflected in the orthodox neo-liberal understanding of the economy, which likewise marginalizes social reproduction and is assumed to work independently from the social institutions that brought the market into being and allow it to function (Polanyi, 1957). Such understandings of the economy and the human subject are highly gendered and prioritize autonomy over interdependence, separation over connection and abstract rigour over concrete complexity (Nelson, 1992; 2008; 2010). While heterodox economists (Whalen, 2012; Bowles, 1998) focus on the neglect of social institutions, feminist economists highlight the gendered biases that occur through disregarding the role of predominantly female labour in nurturing and caring for human beings and making them fit for the economy. Feminist economists focus, in addition, on the way that our human activities and decision making are invariably influenced by and interdependent with those around us.

Neo-liberal economists may, of course, claim that they recognize that the concept of rational economic man does not correspond to actual behaviour; that it is simply an assumption necessary to analyse real-world complexity with rigour and precision. As both heterodox and feminist economists point out, however, the problem is that the

predictions from models based on fictitious assumptions are frequently used directly to formulate policy, with reality only subsequently, if ever, built back in.⁴ In practice this leads to inaccurate understandings of how economic processes work, as we shall discuss later with respect to wage determination. Neglecting how decisions reflect the ‘social and emotional dimensions of human behaviour should be considered a serious limitation, rather than a sign of rigour’ (Nelson, 1995: 137). Of equal concern is the way that neo-liberal economics separates the economy from society and then prioritizes the economy almost as a reified being which must have its needs met. The effect, here, is to portray what are in reality political decisions as technical requirements that are necessary to ensure overall well-being (Mouffe, 2000; see also Klatzer and Schlager, this volume). This perspective is evident in the displacement (albeit temporary) of the elected president in Greece and the elected prime minister of Italy in late 2011 by technocratic governments of ‘national unity’, who were given political control in order to enact ‘necessary’ economic reforms. Before discussing the ways in which these apparently necessary economic reforms continue to damage low-income households and maintain the privilege of the elite, we next consider how the neo-liberal era has been characterized by rising (gendered) inequalities.

INEQUALITY, EARNINGS INEQUALITY AND THE GENDER PAY GAP

Patterns of Income Inequality

Neo-liberalism has been associated with economic growth, at least until the onset of the recent economic crisis in 2007–08, but also with increasing inequality in incomes and in earnings linked in part to labour market change.

Contemporary labour markets are shaped by globalization, new information and

communication technologies and new forms of employment. Working patterns have become more varied and more precarious in the context of economic deregulation, privatization of public sector services, subcontracting of non-core business and greater flexibility of working times, contracts, status and locations. These changes have expanded employment but simultaneously widened earnings disparities, weakened career structures and reduced the collective power of workers.⁵

The share of overall income accruing to working people has fallen and redistribution through taxes and transfers has become less effective (ILO, 2008; OECD, 2011). We focus on earnings, which account for three-quarters of income for people of working age and which have polarized sharply in the last three decades in OECD countries, with earnings in the top decile increasing at a much faster rate than those in the lowest. These patterns are consistent for sixteen of the twenty-three OECD countries for the period 1980–2008 for which data is available, and have resulted in high levels of inequality. In the UK the earnings gap between the 90th and 10th decile of the income distribution increased from nearly 3.0 to 3.6 times as much. The jump in the US was even larger, from 3.8 to 5.0 (OECD, 2012a).⁶ Further, these figures underestimate the extent of polarization, as the earnings of the top and bottom 10 per cent of the distribution are excluded from the statistics and earnings at the top are often boosted by dividends from shares and capital holdings. In both the US and the UK it is the top 1 per cent and top 0.1 per cent whose earnings (and overall incomes) have increased most rapidly during this period (Atkinson et al., 2011), a point Stiglitz highlights in the title of his 2011 article in *Vanity Fair*: ‘Of the 1 per cent, by the 1 per cent, for the 1 per cent’. In speaking of policies enacted ‘by’ the 1 per cent, Stiglitz is highlighting the political privilege that comes with and facilitates the reproduction of elite power.

As the US and UK are among the highest income countries on a global scale,⁷ those

with earnings in the top decile are extremely wealthy. Putting these statistics into perspective, some \$1423 per dog was spent on dog products in the US in 2007–8, a sum higher than the per capital income of 40 per cent of the world’s population.⁸ With respect to the UK, between 2010 and 2011, as economic growth has slowed, executive pay in the FTSE 100 rose on average by 49 per cent compared with just 2.7 per cent for the average employee (HPC, 2011). The bonus paid to the now discredited Chief Executive Officer of Barclays Bank⁹ was reported to be £6.5 million for the year 2010–2011 (BBC News, 2011); enough to buy a laptop computer for every child in Tower Hamlets, the deprived London borough overlooked from the Headquarters of Barclays.

Despite rising income inequalities, the gender pay gap has narrowed for all but two countries in the OECD.¹⁰ It nonetheless remains wide, on average 16 per cent in 2010, with figures for the US and UK being close to this average (OECD 2012b; 2012c).¹¹ This decline is the result of women’s increasing qualifications and engagement in the labour market and feminist campaigns for greater equality, demands which have been partially met in Europe via European Union legislation and in the US through both equalities legislation and affirmative action. Less positively, however, the narrowing gender pay gap is accompanied by widening wage dispersion. At the upper end of the distribution, women have moved into an expanding range of professional and managerial jobs, though they rarely reach the top. Meanwhile, many stereotypically male jobs in manufacturing in the middle of the distribution have disappeared. This employment restructuring has resulted in an expansion of relatively low paid and more precarious personal services and elementary occupations, where men’s pay has fallen relative to the male median. A significant factor in the closure of the gender pay gap, then, is the fall in men’s pay, which, at the lower end of the distribution, more closely approximates women’s pay. Precise patterns vary with age, across the income

distribution and between countries, with the gender pay gap generally being lower in countries where overall equality is higher (OECD, 2012b). For the UK, when measured on an hourly basis there is virtually no gender pay gap between women and men in the lowest decile, while a 16 percentage point difference exists in the top deciles (ONS, 2012a).¹² At the median on this measure the gap is narrower, at 9 per cent, but at the current rate of closure this form of gender inequality would not be eliminated for 30–50 years for full-time workers and not for over 300 years in the case of part-time workers.¹³

Theorizing Labour Market Inequalities

Having briefly outlined the polarization of earnings and the continuation, notwithstanding some decline, of a substantial gender pay gap, we now contrast some of the explanations that have been put forward to account for these trends.

Neo-liberal and some heterodox economists' explanations for rising overall earnings inequality in high-income countries emphasize globalization, migration and trade on the one hand or skill-biased technological change on the other. While debates between these perspectives continue, both relate, in essence, to the polarization in employment composition in high-income countries, with the offshoring of middle-level manufacturing work leading to increases in well-paid professional and managerial jobs at one pole and lower-paid work in personal services at the other (Kaplanis, 2007; OECD, 2012a). These explanations are rarely differentiated by gender and often take male earnings as representative of all earnings (OECD, 2008). The OECD (2011) re-estimates the significance of these differing explanations and identifies an alternative explanatory factor – namely, changes in labour market policies and institutions. Specifically, they identify weaker labour market regulation, on the one hand, and technological change, which results in a wage premium being paid for 'skill', on the

other, as the two main factors responsible for rising inequality. It is important to note, though, that these factors still leave most of the increase in inequality unexplained. This explanatory gap can be met in part by attending to the rising influence of the finance sector. David Rosnick and Dean Baker (2012) identified a strong positive correlation between the financial sector's share of GDP and rising inequality; a correlation which looks significant in light of data demonstrating that finance workers are well represented among high earners. This changing dynamic in the labour market and associated earnings also offers some potential in explaining both the gendered and regional dimensions of contemporary inequality, with high-income individuals in the UK 'much more likely to be male and in their 40s ... more likely to live in London or the South East [and] ... more likely to work in real estate, law and other business activities, finance, or health and social work,'¹⁴ than the average tax payer (Brewer et al., 2008). Stiglitz (2012) also highlights the increasing influence of the finance sector on the economy as a whole and on the high (and, in his view, unjustified) earnings of finance workers.

But even this added focus on finance does not suffice. Krugman (2002) argues that these conventional arguments do not provide a convincing explanation of the dramatic widening of earnings inequalities in the US, especially in the top decile, and suggests instead that a full explanation must attend to changing social norms that have become more tolerant of greater inequality. Similar arguments have been made for the UK by Anthony Atkinson (2002), who refers to new social codes. This insight provides avenues for questioning the current distribution of earnings and for examining the link between pay and the power relations and social norms that influence the social value accorded to different forms of work. Additionally, given that different forms of work are differentially *gendered*, as well as differentially valued, this question must lie at the heart of any understanding of gendered inequality. Yet,

despite four decades of literature on wage determination, much remains to be explained. Just as analyses of overall earnings inequality are rarely differentiated by gender, feminist economists' analyses of the gender wage gap, discussed below, tend to be based on cross sectional data and do not refer to changes in the overall wage distribution. By not addressing questions of overall distribution they leave unexplained the roots of some of the processes leading to the outcomes that they identify, especially regarding the relationship between gender and social class.

Theorizing the Gender Wage Gap

As paid work plays a crucial role in determining earnings in capitalist societies, identifying the processes leading to (gendered) pay differentials explains how some elements of the material foundations of power and privilege of the elite are sustained. The majority of studies on the gender pay gap, including some feminist studies, focus on supply side factors such as individual qualifications and years of experience. In so doing, these studies reflect an orthodox neoliberal perspective underpinned by human capital theory. Yet these individual factors generally account for only a third of the gap (Makepeace et al., 1999; OECD, 2012c; Olsen and Walby, 2004; Rubery et al., 2005). The residual is subsequently attributed to discrimination and left largely unexplained. Some studies include occupational segregation as part of the explanation (Olsen and Walby, 2004; OECD, 2012b), and segregation remains remarkably resilient in OECD countries (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009; Hegewisch et al., 2010; OECD, 2012b). In the UK over 50 per cent of women and men work in just eight (out of 111) occupations, with the 5 Cs (cashiering, caring, clerical, cleaning and catering) still accounting for the major share of women's work alongside teaching. This stability in horizontal segregation is matched by a similar pattern with respect to vertical segregation, with less than a third of women in managerial positions in

the OECD as a whole, the UK and US figures being marginally higher. But the reasons for this segregation and the reasons why jobs in which women are disproportionately concentrated receive lower pay than male-dominated jobs remain unexplained. The orthodox perspective (OECD, 2012b) attributes segregation to women's preferences, but, as feminist economists pointed out nearly four decades ago (Hartmann, 1976; Strober, 1984), this too is not a sufficient explanation, as it overlooks the gendered context in which preferences are enacted and choices are made.

Heterodox and the majority of feminist economists argue that focusing on individual variables tends to emphasize 'gender deficits' and overlooks how the work environment and the value of different forms of work are shaped by gendered norms and assumptions that operate to women's disadvantage (Rubery et al., 2005). Making this point is crucial because it broadens the explanation from a form of methodological individualism to include social processes. Raising these wider social questions is important because, although individuals can raise their level of qualifications and, as discussed earlier, some women have moved into highly paid jobs, qualifications alone are not sufficient to generate gender equality (Purcell et al., 2005). Individuals alone cannot, therefore, remedy gender inequity in the labour force. Rather, change is required in the gender composition of sectors and occupations and/or in the valuation of different forms of work. This wider perspective raises questions about the determination of wages and the comparative value and status of the work on which it rests.

Feminist economists Damian Grimshaw and Jill Rubery (2007) identify 5 Vs that help to account for the undervaluation of jobs done disproportionately by women: visibility, which relates to the compression of a range of skills into a single group and the correspondingly limited opportunities for career progression; valuation, which refers to the low value accorded to the skills

involved; vocation, which focuses on the way that complex work is attributed to women's 'natural talents' rather than skills; value-added, which focuses on the comparatively low monetary value of the output; and, finally, variance, the fact that women are over-represented in part-time employment, which in the UK *de facto*, if not *de jure*, confines them to a narrower range of sectors and occupations where many experience downward occupational mobility and a much wider gender pay gap.

Focusing on the example of care work allows us to demonstrate the way in which these five Vs lead to different valuations or differentially gendered forms of work. Care work, which involves a range of tasks of social reproduction including child care, elder care, nursing and teaching, is an expanding field of employment, extensively analysed by feminist economists, in which women are over-represented.¹⁵ With respect to visibility, there are hierarchical career and pay structures within care work. In childcare, for instance, positions range from qualified teachers and nursery nurses to classroom assistants with little formal training, with pay varying accordingly – from close to the top decile to the minimum wage. But work at all these levels involves direct personal encounters and the needs of those cared for are often unpredictable and not easily differentiated by task or 'skill', at least not at the moment when the task needs to be done. In practice, then, less qualified workers on lower wages perform a variety range of tasks requiring a range of skills. As a formally qualified nursery manager said with reference to the work of assistants: 'they have an equal say in planning and in contact with the children; there is no difference in the work they do' (Perrons, 2004). Although pay varies by qualification levels, even the highly qualified in these sectors earn considerably less than equivalently qualified workers in more masculinized sectors and occupations. In this respect, it is commonplace to link women's work to vocation based on natural talents, in contrast to men's use of formal skills, and

as a consequence women are constructed as not requiring commensurate monetary recompense. As Adams and Nelson (2009) point out, this is not a view shared by the careworkers themselves.

Carework is characterized by low value added in the sense that the output has a low market value. Care is a composite good (Folbre and Nelson, 2000), simultaneously consisting of guarding (preventing any harm), caring for identifiable bodily needs and nurturing. It involves direct human encounters and frequently involves an affective dimension that also makes measurement of quality difficult and limits the potential for productivity increases, unless the character of the work is profoundly, and many would consider adversely, changed. As a result, overall relative costs tend to rise over time. Producers operating on market principles often struggle to make profit, and many do so by restricting their services to an elite or subsidized clientele or by employing workers disadvantaged in the labour market on low wages (Baumol, 1967; Himmelweit, 2007; Perrons, 2004).

Exploring the character of care work allows us to identify some of the reasons for its low levels of pay. Given women's over-representation in this sector, these reasons also account for one dimension of the gender pay gap. But what is less clear is why work in these sectors is not regarded as being more skilled and why the social value of this form of work is not recognized and rewarded, especially as good-quality care work creates positive social externalities or social gains in terms of more educated and rounded social citizens (Elson, 1998). Recognizing the social value of care work provides an economically rational argument as to why this sector and the workers employed therein should receive a larger share of social output. Arguably the social value is far higher than that arising from the work of highly paid workers in finance, where, in the UK, overall annual and hourly average earnings are approximately twice those of all other employees (Metcalf and Rolfe, 2009). The

gender balance of employees in finance is roughly equal, but the gender pay gap is approximately double the size of that in the economy as a whole. This higher gender pay gap reflects the combined impact of the uneven gender distribution across different branches and occupations within finance. Men are concentrated in higher paid jobs requiring higher qualifications. While these factors can account for the differentiated pay, they cannot explain 'why men, rather than women, with degrees are employed and why women, rather than men with lower qualifications are employed' (Metcalf and Rolfe, 2009: 33). In addition, these factors do not account for the comparatively very high levels of pay at the top end of the distribution. As Adair Turner, Chair of the Financial Services Authority, argued with respect to high level finance workers, high market returns and associated earnings 'can just as easily reflect market imperfections rather than proof of social value' (2009: 5). Stiglitz (2012), too, highlights the disconnection between private rewards and social returns and is highly critical of the high earnings of financiers who brought the world to the brink of ruin compared with technologists and inventors, who, in his view, make a much greater contribution to raising productivity.¹⁶ Given that the social and even economic value of care work does not explain this difference in valuation, how, then, is the value of different forms of work determined? The orthodox economist view that pay is linked to productivity has been questioned by heterodox and feminist economists. With respect to social values, care and finance work both reflect market mis-recognition or imperfection; finance is associated with negative social externalities and some very overpaid workers, while carework is associated with positive social externalities and underpaid workers. Less well understood are the processes driving the gendering of these activities and how it is that some groups of workers, specifically a minority of workers especially in finance, are able to justify and legitimate their high share of

social resources. Two questions are particularly important. First, why are the sectors and occupations in which women 'choose' to work less well paid than those 'chosen' by men? Second, what are the mechanisms that determine rates of pay, if market determination is not a satisfactory answer? What, in other words, are the dynamics that produce and uphold the power and privilege held by some sectors over others?

Given diversity among women it is unlikely that, as a group, they simply prefer low-paid employment and more likely that there are external constraints of some kind. Individual capacities and attributes may influence appropriateness for and productivity levels in different jobs, but this would lead to a varied job distribution within any particular social group and not an overall gender difference. Unless it is assumed that there is a necessary connection between gender and the capacity to do different kinds of jobs, the only explanation for under-representation of entire social groups in particular jobs is that 'something is blocking the way' (Phillips, 2004: 8).¹⁷ This 'something' could be formal legislation, but in many countries the barriers now are more subtle, but nonetheless enduring. Segregation becomes cumulative as particular social groups or identities are considered unsuitable for certain positions and then become unsuitable by virtue of not having had the necessary practice, experience or social networks. In this way, the gender, race and ethnicity of people holding positions becomes identified with those positions, such that leadership and authority 'stick' to and become equated more with white men who then shape the notion of leadership as male and white. Likewise, aptitudes for social care work, perceived to be 'physically but not intellectually challenging', 'dirty, gruelling and low paid', are then associated with women, who are believed to have the apposite 'natural predisposition' or 'personality type' (Research Works, 2001). Particular economic or social attributes are thus inextricably identified with particular social positions. In this way occupations

become gender stereotyped and, while the boundaries are permeable and divisions vary across cultures and over time, with such variations reflecting their social/cultural construction rather than natural origin, they nonetheless have a certain fixity that shapes expectations, making people reluctant to transgress by entering gender incongruent occupations or, in the case of employers, of facilitating entry into gender incongruent occupations. Occupational segregation itself is therefore one of the strongest influences on career decisions by workers and employers alike, leading to a perpetuation of segregation from one generation to the next. Similarly, reward structures reflect social understandings of what is deserving or undeserving, what is understood to be a learned skill or material competence and what is dismissed as 'natural' talent, what is worthy of substantial financial recompense and what merits less than a living wage.

Crucial to explaining the different valuations of male and female work, then, are deeply embedded cultural practices and gendered social norms; norms which uphold and reinforce existing enactments and understandings of appropriate roles for women and men and the value of different activities. These boundaries are deeply rooted and have arguably become naturalized through repeated practice (Butler, 1990; Epstein, 2006: 320; West and Zimmerman, 1987). But simply pointing to these norms and their naturalization through repeated practice serves only to restate the problem and does not get down to the root of the question of how and why these gendered practices and gender differentiated rewards emerged in the first place. What must not be forgotten, therefore, is the question of the power and privilege that underlies these social norms.

POWER AND PRIVILEGE

In this section we reflect on how neo-liberal economics has come to be regarded as the orthodox and best way of running an economy.

Put differently, how did this legitimating neo-liberal discourse become so ubiquitous, dominant and hegemonic? What secured and what continues to reproduce the understandings that legitimate increased and still-increasing inequalities that benefit only a privileged and powerful elite? While reference has been made to the lobbying powers of a minority of financiers and their close links with government (Stiglitz, 2012) and to the power of multinationals (Crouch, 2011), we turn to the work of feminist and political theorists, whose explanation goes further by considering how the power of neo-liberalism and its associated elites is legitimated in thought and everyday practices. We turn, first, to the work of Chantal Mouffe to discuss the hegemony of liberal ideas, before developing Wendy Brown's account of the material processes and practices that contribute to the formation of a neo-liberal mode of governmentality which spreads across every facet of society and, in so doing, leads to the production, reproduction, extension and legitimation of the neo-liberal order and associated powerful and privileged elites.

As we have seen, heterodox and feminist economists provide alternative analyses of the economy, economic change and earnings differentials (Acker, 1989; Cockburn, 2009; Glucksmann, 1982; Hartmann, 1976; Pollert, 1996; Young, 1981). In addition, they propose alternative, more equitable remedies to the current economic depression in Europe and the US but these ideas are marginalized in the academy and even more so in policy and practice. Indeed, whenever the privilege and power of the wealthy elites in society is called into question in the public realm a dismissive response immediately seems to follow. Constraining the elite, be it through personal taxation, business taxation, control over bank bonuses or even increases in minimum wage and employee rights is portrayed as not only a usurpation of economic freedom but also as a blockage to the efficient market driven allocations of goods. In this regard, constraints on growing wealth and inequalities are said to be to everyone's

disadvantage, despite the evidence to the contrary that we have discussed. Within this perspective, challenging the privileged position of the super-rich can only be the product of envy or a desire to prevent others from receiving benefits and rewards, and cannot be based in any sound, rational thinking with regard to one's own advantage. This discourse becomes so enconced in economics and even more so in public life that there appears to be no reasonable alternative.

Just as orthodox economics is portrayed as possessing the rigour and precision of natural science, politics, in a European and North American context, appears to move onto 'a neutral terrain' upon which 'solutions are available that could satisfy everybody' (Mouffe, 2000: 110). Politics increasingly becomes understood as technocratic governance, where expert solutions that purportedly work in a maximally efficient way and to the benefit of all replace political *decisions* that involve both normative choices and winners and losers (see Klatzer and Schlager, this volume). Thus, as Mouffe (2000: 24) suggests, liberal hegemony is secured by presenting 'as a moral exigency what is really a political decision'. As a consequence, opposing ideas are excluded as unreasonable and even irrational, and therefore unworthy of consideration. In this way, both feminist and heterodox economics and alternative voices raised in public become marginalized.

When translated into politics, the orthodox economist's notion of the person as a self-contained individual whose rational, self-interested decisions lead to the good of all generates a form of governance that is beyond politics, reflecting Mouffe's (2000: 14) notion of a 'politics without adversary'. The neo-liberal hegemony, then, presents itself as the only rational and reasonable political position, as the form of governance through which 'everybody could win and where the demands of all ... [can] be met without anybody having to lose'¹⁸ (Mouffe, 2000: 120). This logic led to the displacement of democratically elected leaders in Greece and Italy in late 2011 to ensure the

implementation of what were portrayed as sound technical strategies necessary to resolve the crisis, despite popular opposition, the fact that such strategies would result in declining incomes for the majority and little evidence to suggest that these strategies would even achieve the stated goals (Pons-Vignon, 2012). But this alone does not account for the legitimation of inequalities that have developed. As well as being self-contained maximizers, individuals are deemed responsible for their fate and position. Accordingly, social position is understood to reflect qualities such as endeavour, entrepreneurial innovation and skill, and not broader social and structural opportunities and limitations linked to gender.

These two facets of the neo-liberal conception of the person combine to provide a powerful legitimation of the power and privilege of elites. Developing inequalities are seen as the product of some extremely gifted and creative individuals producing wealth, and while this wealth makes them vastly richer than the majority, they are understood to pull up others through their wealth-generating activities. They generate jobs and tax revenues, meaning that the wealth they are producing trickles down to everyone. This notion of individuals as responsible and this entrepreneurial ideal of the creative, innovative wealth-generator provide the neo-liberal legitimation with a normative fall-back position. Not only are the purportedly wealth-generating elites carrying the rest of society with them, but their position also reflects their innovative, determined and entrepreneurial qualities, their ability to work hard and so become successful. Likewise, the losers in the neo-liberal economy are similarly understood as individually responsible for their own destiny (Beck, 1992), meaning that their lowly status reflects a comparative laziness, a lack of desire to acquire useful market skills, a different set of priorities or poor life-choices. Both are therefore in the situation they deserve to be in, and interfering with this purportedly just and legitimate market distribution of goods would reward laziness

and punish innovation and endeavour; a reward structure that would, in turn, disincentivize wealth creation, thus feeding back into the technical legitimation of neo-liberalism by suggesting that different, more equitable reward structures would undermine the wealth of all.

This neo-liberal legitimation is not merely an ideological or discursive construction, nor is it solely about facilitating free trade, maximizing corporate profits and challenging welfarism. Rather, as Wendy Brown points out in her Foucauldian account of neo-liberal governmentality, neo-liberalism constitutes an entire 'political rationality that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market', with neo-liberal principles coming to dominate state governance and reaching even as far as 'the soul of the citizen-subject' (2003: 4, 7). Neo-liberal privilege is not just the product of the discursive hegemony discussed above. Instead, it is upheld and reproduced at a range of levels, running from the production of individual subjects to rationalities that shape global political and economic governance. The result of this form of neo-liberal governmentality is a society where an increasing number of dimensions of contemporary existence, be they personal or political, are 'cast in terms of market rationality' (Brown, 2003: 9). This submission of all action to market principles is constructed not just through discourse but through a variety of practices, incentives and policies driven by a range of actors.

Looking, briefly, at the relation between inequality, debt and home-ownership reveals one way in which numerous practices, including rising home ownership, debt-based spending and financial speculation, combine to help generate, reproduce, lock-in and legitimize neo-liberal orders and neo-liberal subjectivities. Initial moves to neo-liberalize economies, which were often driven by strong displays of power, be it the power of international interests and domestic military forces in South America, international financial organizations such as the IMF or a strong government, as was the case with the Thatcher

government's attack on union power in the UK, led to deregulations and privatizations that lessened the power of labour with respect to capital and led, as we have argued, to increasingly precarious, insecure and less rewarded forms of work (Harvey, 2007; INEQ, 2009; Perrons and Plomien, 2010; Standing, 2011). The stagnation or decline of real-terms income that resulted for the mass of the population led to an increased reliance on debt-based spending. Rising home ownership, supported by market interests, cultural values and individual desires regarding the value of home ownership and government incentives, served only to intensify the possibilities for debt-based spending, with rising house prices seemingly generating infinite possibilities for further loans, further spending and further financial products and debts, the trade in which generated opportunities for profit lacking in consumer markets. It was these processes that culminated in the 2007–08 crisis, which both heterodox and feminist economists attribute to rising inequality (Seguino, 2010; Stiglitz, 2012).

This iterative process of debt-based spending has multiple effects that serve to reproduce, intensify and lock-in the neo-liberal order. Not only does the continuing ability to maintain a standard of living despite lowering real-term incomes render people less likely to challenge growing inequalities, debt-based spending also drives the very generation of inequalities that establish the power and privilege of elites *and* helps to generate neo-liberal forms of subjectivity which uphold and legitimize these inequalities. As we have shown, the growth of finance and high incomes in the financial sector has been a significant factor behind growing inequalities, and it is the ability to continually trade in debts that led to the growth, and growing profits and bonuses, in this sector. Furthermore, individuals are increasingly involved in decisions regarding whether to take out loans, which of many available loans to take, and whether they can sufficiently profit or gain from the loan to justify the cost in terms of

interest. People therefore become the very 'rationally calculating individual[s]' who bear full responsibility for the consequences of ... [their] action[s]' (Brown, 2003: 15) that uphold and legitimize neo-liberal policies and the inequalities that result from them. The development of a neo-liberal economy, then, produces the very subjectivities that legitimize and reproduce the very inequalities associated with neo-liberalization. Furthermore, growing home ownership and debt-based spending create a material identification of interests between a large body of the population and the elite finance workers who trade in mortgage debt and play a role in driving increasing house prices. The development of a neo-liberal system, then, increasingly ties people in to the practices that foster rising inequalities and the extraordinary wealth of elites, thus producing 'structural and indirect relations that lock people's current and future life choices and possibilities', while also encouraging 'the working class to identify with the interests of the capitalist class' (Le Baron and Roberts, 2010: 30,19). This identification of interest only serves to further legitimate the financial market, with the trickle-down justification for economic inequalities becoming something of a self-fulfilling prophecy as the stake people have in the neo-liberal system ensures that their dependence on the success of the value-generating activities of the rich became increasingly real, at least until the bubble bursts.

An additional way in which the entrenchment of the neo-liberal system and its legitimation grows is through the manner in which the extension of neo-liberal rationality undermines the potential for critical voices or spaces of dissent. Brown argues that neo-liberalism or, more specifically, the practice of neo-liberal governance, if not the economic theory discussed in previous sections, is distinct from classical liberalism insofar as it spreads beyond a set of economic policies to embrace all facets of life. Classical liberalism differentiated between principles which

were appropriate for markets and principles which were appropriate in other spheres. Adam Smith (1976: 18), for instance, identified the 'regard to their own interest' of 'the butcher, the brewer, or the baker' as the source of 'our dinner'. A calculative and selfish rationality was therefore deemed appropriate for economic activity, and an invisible hand was seen to organize these self-interests to form an efficient economy that was advantageous for all. But, for Smith, these principles were confined to economic activity, with human moral sentiments, for instance, taking precedence over selfish market rationality and behaviour in other, non-market relations (see Smith, 2010).

But neo-liberal governmentality spreads beyond market engagement to dominate across an increasing array of social relations. As a result, what was previously outside the neo-liberal regime and could function as a possible location for critical voices and perspectives is increasingly swallowed up by neo-liberal rationality. What occurs here is not the same as the processes described by Polanyi (1957) in relation to periods of dominance of classical liberal economics where the self-regulating market was given precedence over state and social protections. Instead, social protections, previously a counter-veiling force on markets, come to operate through market principles, with protective functions privatized, workfare replacing welfare and increasing proportions of government spending going on contracts given to private companies. In this regard, we see not so much a change in the scales of the double movement between state and market but an increasing merging of state and market, with the state increasingly operating according to market principles. The implications of this diffusion of market principles are striking.

When democratic principles of governance, civil codes, and even religious morality are submitted to economic calculation, when no value or good stands outside of this calculus, sources of opposition to, and mere modulation of, capitalist rationality disappear. (Brown, 2003: 21)

Brown, here, is talking about the disappearance of a liberal democratic alternative or position of resistance to neo-liberalism, with the liberal democratic state having been replaced by a neo-liberal one. But our above comments indicate that neo-liberalization also undermines the prospects of the Polanyian response advocated by heterodox economists, which looks to increase state involvement in the economy by increasing social protections. With state institutions now subject to market rationality, this state existing as an alternative to or outside the market is no longer there to call upon in order to counter the excesses of neo-liberal free market economics. But this might be seen not as a loss to be mourned, but instead as an opportunity. As Nancy Fraser (2011) points out, this Polanyian response would not, in any case, be sufficient. The state it wishes to restore, Fraser argues, is a hierarchical one, insofar as it fails to acknowledge the gender inequalities produced in overlooking the significance of social reproduction and care work. The more holistic understanding of the economy offered by feminist economists attempted to highlight the manner in which people are interdependent rather than autonomous and connected rather than isolated. By focusing on these forms of subjectivity that, despite the increasing neo-liberalization of the subject, nonetheless still exist in a range of caring practices that are not motivated by pecuniary returns, feminist economists might offer a genuine point of resistance. Furthermore, this loci of resistance is one which could help promote understanding of the economy as something that can serve, rather than be served by, society and, as a result, it offers prospects for the development of less hierarchical and more egalitarian social orders.

In conclusion, we have argued that focusing on inequality, while crucial in analysing the crisis, does not go far enough. Analysis of inequality must be supplemented with an analysis of the ways in which the power and privilege of the new neo-liberal elite is ensconced and legitimated. To this end, we

sought to combine work in heterodox and feminist economics on the role of inequality in the crisis and on the gendered dynamics of contemporary inequality with an account of both the discursive and the bio-political hegemony of neo-liberal ideas. Finally, we suggested that the forms of subjectivity that feminist economists identify in the often unacknowledged practices of care that underpin market economies without being rewarded by them, in focusing on inter-dependence, connectivity and regard for others might provide a transformative counterpoint to the neo-liberal rationality and associated autonomous, isolated and self-regarding neo-liberal subject. The 2012 Olympic Games, which took place in London as we were writing this chapter, drove home the tension between these two existing forms of subjectivity. On the one hand, the athletes and officials offered high praise to everyone whose work had made the Olympics possible, from those building the stadium to those providing security and to the volunteers in a variety of functions. The athletes and officials therefore acknowledged the significance of interdependency. But, on the other hand, it presumably would not even have occurred to them that the returns from the gains and associated activities might, similarly, be shared. It is clear, then, that pointing out the dependence of neo-liberal economies and the privileged elite it generates on comparatively poorly paid reproductive work is not sufficient to shake neo-liberal advocates out of their commitment to the system that generates wealthy elites, nor is it sufficient to generate resistance from the subjects produced by the processes of neo-liberal governmentality discussed above. Instead, in order to overcome their marginalization feminist economists must take seriously the manner in which the material and discursive practices of neo-liberalism have infiltrated the state and individual subjectivities in such a way that neo-liberal policies and subjectivities can remain resilient in the face of the acknowledgement of the importance of poorly rewarded or even unrewarded care

work. Just as this neo-liberal order and subject was produced through material and discursive practices operating at a range of levels and in a range of practices, multifaceted forms of resistance must be called upon if economic practices, understandings of the state and notions of subjectivity are to be changed.

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NOTES

- 1 As shall become clear later, neo-liberal policy making in fact requires a great deal more than simply freeing up markets, with political actors involved in the production of the very subjects that make neo-liberal economic practice possible.
- 2 This reference is made by heterodox economists such as Bowles (1998).
- 3 See the work of King DeJardin (2008) and Razavi (2007), where debates with respect to care and the domestic division of labour in low- and middle-income countries have many parallels with the longstanding debates in the western literature.
- 4 There are other ways of theorizing without distortion which allow for rigour and complexity, such as using concept-metaphors but in specific contexts (Moore, 2004) or indeed as Karl Marx (1973: 100–101) demonstrated in the *Grundrisse*.
- 5 OECD (2011) data shows that where there is employment protection and higher rates of unionization the extent of inequality is lower.
- 6 These measures relate to the annual gross earnings of full-time workers. The OECD is more reliable when comparing a given country over time rather than making cross-country comparisons, as the measures can vary.
- 7 In terms of GDP per capita, the US ranks as the 7th richest and the UK as the 22nd richest country (World Bank, 2012).
- 8 Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009) report that these figures come from the American Pet Product Association.
- 9 During his period of office Barclays bank was found guilty of manipulating the LIBOR (inter-bank lending rate) in order to make the bank look more secure in the financial crisis. As a consequence the CEO gave up his £2.7 million bonus for 2012 and subsequently resigned, but the bonuses for previous years were not clawed back (BBC News, 2012).
- 10 While a gender pay gap exists on every measure, the size is very sensitive to the measures used. Care, therefore, has to be taken when making comparisons.
- 11 OECD (2012b) calculates the gender pay gap at the median for full-time employees. In the UK and US the gender wage gap declined significantly between 1975 and 2010, from 38 to 18.4 per cent in the UK and from 46 per cent to 18 per cent in the US and 18.8 in 2010.
- 12 Hourly earnings most closely reflect the value that society confers on different kinds of work as it does not take into account of the different hours worked, which vary between women and men given the gender domestic division of labour. So, when measured on an hourly basis, the gender pay gap is lower than OECD estimates, which are generally based on gross earnings.
- 13 These calculations rest on what is termed the unadjusted measure. Specifically, the unadjusted gender pay gap is measured by taking the percentage difference between gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as a percentage of male gross earnings. For full-time employees, at the median the gap would close in 29.5 years, at the mean it would close in 49.5 years. The part-time gap, also measured at the median, has narrowed by only 2 percentage points between 1997 and 2011. This hourly measure of earnings, which excludes overtime and bonus payments, is the one that minimizes the gender wage gap. On a weekly measure of earnings, for example, the gender wage gap would be higher as women and men do different amounts of paid work (own calculations based on ONS (2012) data). The gender pay gap also increases with age and the presence of children, reflecting the motherhood penalty.
- 14 The inclusion of health and social work reflects the high pay received by top level professionals and managers.
- 15 See, for example, the writings of Nancy Folbre (1994) and Susan Himmelweit (2007).
- 16 Stiglitz (2012) does not comment on the value of care work, but is critical of continuing gender and racial discrimination.
- 17 Here we are drawing on the work of Anne Phillips (2004: 8), who makes this argument in relation to the under-representation of women in politics.
- 18 Mouffe is discussing this move of politics onto a neutral terrain in the context of both liberal political theory, in particular the work of Rawls and Habermas, and the rising wave of third way

governments across Europe and America in the 1990s and early 2000s. Her remarks, however, seem equally important today, where the crisis has seen an intensification of the movement of politics onto a neutral terrain.

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Feminist Perspectives on Macroeconomics: Reconfiguration of Power Structures and Erosion of Gender Equality through the New Economic Governance Regime in the European Union

Elisabeth Klatzer and Christa Schlager

INTRODUCTION

Feminist work in macroeconomics and macroeconomic policies is a core field of feminist economics and the research on gendered impacts of macroeconomic policies and feminist conceptualization of macroeconomics has a long history. Contributions by Isabella Bakker (1994) conceptualizing the ‘strategic silence’ in economics regarding gender issues provide both a stocktaking of early work as well as an outline of a broad research agenda. Especially neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes and policies in the global South promoted during the 1980s and 1990s have stimulated intensive work on gender impacts of macroeconomic policies (see, for example, *World Development*, 1995). Yet, the strategic silence (Bakker, 1994) – the failure to acknowledge that macroeconomic policies and economic reform occur on a gendered terrain – persists to the present. Based on a vast literature on gender and

macroeconomics (see, among others, Bakker, 1994; Young et al., 2011; Benería, 2003; Bettio and Smith, 2008; Elson, 2002; Elson and Cagatay, 2000; Elson and Warnecke, 2011; Gill and Roberts, 2011; Gubitzer, 2006; 2012; Klatzer and Schlager, 2011b; Löfström, 2009; Williams, 1994), our chapter focuses on a feminist perspective on macroeconomic governance at the level of the European Union (EU). It thus extends the feminist economist theoretical contributions on the relationship between economic policies and processes and individual well-being developed in the global South to the current political and economic change occurring within the EU. Since 2010 a range of new policies implemented at the EU level in response to the financial and economic crisis are contributing to a swift transformation of framework conditions for macroeconomic policy making for its member states.

The new economic governance comprises a set of rules and procedures on economic and

budgetary policies introduced since 2010 at the EU level and in particular for the Euro area.¹ Under the banner of improving economic policy and budgetary coordination as well as competitiveness, fundamental reconfigurations of framework conditions, institutions and policy rules are taking place. We argue that these reconfigurations are occurring in a gendered terrain. In this chapter we analyse how current shifts in policies at macroeconomic level in the EU are contributing to a reconfiguration of the existing gender regimes. The analysis is guided by an analytical frame which brings together important elements from the broad literature on gender and macroeconomics as well as on the gendered contents of institutions.

The main argument presented here is that the new economic governance in the EU not only fundamentally changes the room for manoeuvre for economic policy decision making but also fundamentally constrains framework conditions for gender equality policies and thus bears profound implications for equality outcomes and women's empowerment. While gender equality and equal treatment of women and men have been declared a 'fundamental tenet of the European Union since its inception and the principle of gender equality is central to all its activities' (European Commission, 2011: 4), our analysis suggests otherwise. Even though the core of gender equality and gender mainstreaming policies and legal acts are not altered or affected as such, the macroeconomic governance of the EU has a significant impact on the living conditions of women (and men), as well as on economic institutions and participatory space for women. Indeed, we argue that EU macroeconomic policies are eroding gender equality and women's empowerment in Europe and reversing gains of the past decades. Crucial dimensions of gender equality and women's empowerment, not only social and material well-being and division of labour but also political spaces, are negatively impacted. The mechanisms of the systematic reproduction of injustice (Young, 2000) are reconfigured and strengthened along gender lines.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON MACROECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

Early work in feminist macroeconomics was inspired by analyses of structural adjustment policies and programmes in the 1980s. Diane Elson's work (1991) on the male bias in stabilization and structural adjustment policies was very influential for subsequent work. Accordingly, the male bias occurs as a result of the failure to take into account the gendered division of paid work and unpaid domestic work. In addition, gender norms impact intra-household patterns in consumption and expenditure. Structural adjustment policies led to outcomes that left many men without a job and often unoccupied whereas women were overworked, compelled to take up jobs with poor pay and conditions or informal jobs. Mainstream economics, in terms of both theory and practice, fails to recognize the importance of unpaid work as a basis for the paid economy. Cuts in public expenditure and cuts in the provision of public services have a particular impact on women, as unpaid work is to a large extent women's work; the cuts in public expenditure lead to a decrease and deterioration in public services and women often need to compensate for this by increasing their unpaid work. As women's work is not infinitely elastic, 'there may simply not be enough female labour time available to maintain the quality and quantity of human resources at its existing level, leading to deterioration in health, nutrition and education' (Elson, 2013: 5).

Subsequent work, partly done in the context of the Asian financial crisis, refined the concept of the male bias and provided new impulses for work on gender and macroeconomics (e.g. Francisco and Sen, 2000; Floro and Dymski, 2000; Elson, 2002). It was highlighted that fiscal and monetary policy rules tend to have inscribed in them a series of biases that have gender- (as well as class- and race-)based outcomes: Elson and

Cagatay (2000) identified deflationary bias and male breadwinner bias, as well as commodification or marketization bias. In light of the 2007/08 financial crisis Young et al. (2011) added risk bias and creditor bias.

These theoretical insights are important not only in highlighting the gender, class and race aspects of macroeconomic policies but also in pointing to the obscured power and politics dimensions (see the discussion by Dunford and Perrons, this volume) inherent to them. And so, the *deflationary bias* refers to 'the priority given to low inflation and fiscal restraint compared to public spending to create and sustain full employment' (Young et al., 2011: 2). It ties governments' hands in dealing with recessions, combating poverty and unemployment and promoting economic growth and improvements in health and education. These measures, which were found in many International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies in developing countries, are now also applied to all European countries with problems to finance the state within the parameters set by policy makers. These policies have a disproportionately negative effect on women. Because of their weaker economic position (as regards income and capital and gendered roles) they benefit more from redistributive state interventions in general. This is accompanied by the *male breadwinner bias*, which springs from the assumption 'that the nonmarket sphere of social reproduction is articulated with the market economy of commodity production through a wage which is paid to a male breadwinner and which largely provides for the cash needs of a set of dependents' (Elson and Cagatay, 2000: 1335). It thus has differential gender implications, as women work more often in low-paid, part-time and precarious jobs or are not incorporated into the world of paid (formal or informal) employment. A related concept is *commodification* (or *marketization*) bias, which occurs 'when macroeconomic policy is designed to minimize the role of public provision' (Elson and Cagatay, 2000: 1335). This bias occurs when the reduction of budget deficits is primarily

achieved via the reduction of public expenditure rather than by increases in tax revenue. This leads to cuts in the public provision of goods and services, many of which are highly important in alleviating the role of women as carers. Consequently an increasing part of this work of social reproduction is shifted to the unpaid economy, where it is mostly women's responsibility, and this can further weaken their access to formal employment. It also exacerbates inequalities where gender intersects with class, age, race or migration status, e.g. when migrant women take over care work in more affluent households. Severe cuts in public health provision in some EU member states are further examples in this respect.

In the course of the financial crisis the effects of increasing risk individualization as well as credit bias increasingly emerged. *Risk bias* 'is defined as forms of governance that reduce the extent to which risk is pooled, and measures to protect against it are shared, and instead individualizes risk' (Young et al., 2011: 3). Women are affected in particularly negative ways by the individualization of risks because they have fewer savings and limited ownership of real wealth. The reduction of unemployment schemes and health provision bears higher risks for women as the risks of falling into poverty are disproportionately higher. This is also the case in countries where public social provision was increasingly replaced by cheap loans (for example, in the US). The state provision of social assistance payments and of social housing at low cost was cut back and more and more emphasis was placed on people buying their own homes. These high levels of individual risk became manifest during the financial crisis, when many women lost their houses and had no or only very limited welfare benefits (Young et al., 2011: 3). The gendered risk bias is reinforced by other dimensions such as ethnicity, race and class. Owing to different endowment with wealth and income, women enter finance markets as creditors and therefore suffered severely from the problems in the crisis, whereas they did not reap the profits of the boom years.

Subsidized credit to those on low incomes has increasingly substituted social benefits (Young and Schuberth, 2010). *Creditor bias* can clearly be observed in the US housing markets, where women with low incomes, especially black women, were often seen as more risky borrowers than men and were targeted for subprime loans (Seguino, 2011) and subject to more disadvantageous terms as well as greater surveillance with respect to their economic situation. Women were integrated in the financial markets primarily as debtors. While substantial fortunes belonging mostly to men were amassed via bank bail-outs, black people and female-headed households lost their houses (Seguino, 2011). Owing to their social, economic and political position, women are under-represented in the active shaping of measures and regulations and tend not to benefit from 'rescue packages' to the same extent as a number of male-dominated sectors and industries (Young et al., 2011: 3; Young and Schuberth, 2011: 145).

Additionally, macroeconomic policies entail a gender bias regarding economic and social stabilization functions. Macroeconomic policies and rules are based on specific assumptions about gender relations and gender roles with 'inscriptions of gender order in policy rules' (Elson and Warnecke, 2011). It is implicitly assumed by policy makers that impacts on social sustainability and stability can be ignored and that the respective governance regime is being accepted without disruptive protests from the public (Elson and Warnecke, 2011: 125; Dunford and Perrons this volume). Based on the predominant gender relations it is assumed that social reproduction functions independently of the respective macroeconomic rules and that women compensate for the reduction of public social and reproductive services. For the purposes of this chapter, this is referred to as the *stabilization bias* or *outsourcing of stabilization functions*.

Another line of research of relevance to the analysis is work on welfare regimes, which demonstrates how, within capitalist economies, various configurations of power, interests and institutions evolved over time and

differentially integrate claims for gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights, particularly in the relationship between work and welfare. In Western Europe, different models of gender regimes have emerged over the last century (Lewis, 1992; Schunter-Kleemann, 1992; O'Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996; Pfau-Effinger, 1998; Daly and Rake, 2003; Estévez-Abe, 2009). This comparative work established the role of political actors and institutions in shaping individual life courses in public and private domains, especially in relation to participation in employment and care and in the extent to which responsibilities, opportunities and resources are shared within society. During the last decades we have seen profound economic and political transformations in capitalist regimes all over the world. Neo-liberalism, the contemporary economic and political paradigm, began to impose increased market rationality across the globe (Bakker, 2011: 39). The transformation of the state in neo-liberalism, redirecting the interest of the state towards individual responsibility, corporate profit-seeking and the self-sufficiency of the patriarchal household (Smith, 2008: 132), puts increasing pressure on gender relations. With the transformation of the state, historical shifts in welfare state contours and content are taking place, with EU- and member state-level trends towards individualization, flexibilization and workfare being key dimensions (Daly and Scheiwe, 2010; Daly, 2011; Rubery, 2011; Grimshaw and Rubery, 2012), with profound gendered consequences.

In other debates, neo-liberalism has been characterized by some feminist political scientists as an enormous project of the masculinization of society, politics and the state (Kreisky, 2001; Sauer, 2010a). The state is perceived as condensed social relations. At the core it embodies settled male life and experience, masculine-loaded spheres of value and masculine symbolic orders with a revaluation of masculinity in neo-liberal strategies (Kreisky, 2001: 76). This contrasts with Julie Nelson's (2000) postulation of a necessary redefinition of the Cartesian value system of masculine and

feminine associations. Eva Kreisky (2001: 87) has pointed out that neo-liberal globalization is gender politics par excellence. Even though traditional patriarchal patterns are fading, a remasculinization of social relations in the sense of reinforcing masculine hegemony is taking place. According to Kreisky, the aim of masculine ideology is the recovery of pre-modern patterns of masculinity. Women's and gender equality policies are blocked not by open violence but by well-covered ideology. In this broad analytical perspective, what is of interest is the gendered nature of specific economic institutions and processes. Neo-liberal politics are closely interrelated with political regression in terms of gender equality. Not only have women to bear a larger share in terms of the costs and risks of neo-liberal politics, but increasing imbalances are being ignored. Given their stabilization function and more fragile position in terms of income and wealth, women have to shoulder a higher share of costs and risks of reinforced neo-liberal policies.

Based on these theoretical concerns, four dimensions are important in the subsequent analysis of the new EU economic governance: namely, the gendered content of governance mechanisms and institutions; the gender biases of macroeconomic policy rules and priorities; the transformation of the welfare state; and impacts of macroeconomic policies and policy reforms on living conditions and well-being of women and men respectively. In the following, we first present the key features of the new economic governance, followed by the gendered bias of its contents, rules and objectives, and then consider the gendered implications of the transformation of the state and the consequences for material well-being.

THE NEW ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE REGIME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The financial and economic crises since 2007 have led to significant reorganizations of economic policy coordination and economic

governance in the European Union, which have been shaped at a high pace, with the broad public being unaware of these significant transformations. The speed and tactics of the introduction of the new macroeconomic regime have similarities with other shock therapy doctrines (Klein, 2007) used to reinforce neo-liberal economic policy regimes. Actors promoting the transformation of economic governance and thus introducing fundamental changes in the EU, its economic policy competences and its institutional balance are politicians and leaders in Europe, namely the German president, Angela Merkel, the president of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, and the president of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, along with the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers (the ECOFIN Council) and the European Commission (EC). Neither the European Parliament nor the parliaments of member states have played a significant role in shaping the new economic governance.

Public participation in developing the proposals was nonexistent and public discussion was being focused on single, often minor issues – often on luridly presented questions such as the Greek tragedy, the breakdown of the Euro or the exclusion of Greece from the Eurozone. While the economic, democratic and social implications of the new economic governance have received little enough attention, gender impacts are completely disregarded. Most mainstream media remained silent about the fundamental transformation which has taken place in Europe. While the focus of public attention was directed towards the crisis-induced increase of public debt and public deficit and its presumably urgent reduction, the 'silent neo-liberal revolution' (Klatzer and Schlager, 2011b) in the form of a fundamental transformation of economic governance was ongoing without much notice. The one-sided analysis and perception of economic challenges in Europe is being reinforced by the predominant discourse on regaining the 'trust' of financial markets.

The continuous discussion about debt brakes and austerity packages refers to the direct

catalysts of the crises, although it misses the systemic causes and the more complex gendered dynamics leading up to them (Perrons and Plomien, 2013). It also conceals the consequences of the crises and the current crisis measures. Especially, it removes from the public's sight the urgently necessary renunciation of the predominant paradigm of market faith, the monetarist tunnel vision regarding monetary policies and the one-sided supply side competitiveness policies. One EU summit after another has dealt with rescue measures, although it became increasingly transparent that particularly the banks have been the primary focus of concern and thus were the primary beneficiaries of rescue measures, and not so much states and even less so people. In 2014 Europe continues to confront the prospect of stagnation and even depression in the periphery countries, along with rapidly increasing unemployment and poverty, and is far away from objectives it set itself in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the reduction of poverty (European Council, 2010). The social consequences of the economic and financial crises and of austerity policies on women and men in Europe continue to be widely ignored by policy makers.

Virtually nonexistent in public discussions, and even less evident among Europe's leadership, is the question of the gender policy implications of the new economic governance regime. The impact of the economic governance regime in the EU on gender equality and gender orders is at the core of the chapter. While the important analysis of specific austerity programmes is carried out elsewhere (see the edited volume by Karamessini and Rubery (2013) for a comprehensive, up-to-date discussion), our objective is to carry out a broader analysis of the macroeconomic policy regime.

KEY FEATURES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MACROECONOMIC POLICY SPACE

Building upon established mechanisms of economic policy coordination, namely the

Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the Integrated Economic Policy and Employment Guidelines and the Europe 2020 strategy, the main elements of the new economic governance within the EU can be characterized in several ways. First is the *transformation of the SGP*, with an expenditure rule in the preventative arm, a debt rule in the corrective arm and severely increased sanctions for countries of the Eurozone, leading to one-sided enforcement of austerity measures and to the obligation of rapid reduction of deficits, largely independent of the situation in the business cycle; thus, even in times of economic crises, debt and deficit reduction obligations remain. Institutionally, the role of the EC, especially the Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), has been strengthened and quasi-automatic sanctions for Eurozone countries increase the pressure to cut public expenditures. The new SGP represents significantly strengthened rule-based fiscal policies and the room for manoeuvre for discretionary budget policy decision making at the member state level has been narrowed considerably.

The introduction of the *new process of macroeconomic surveillance* with the macroeconomic imbalance procedure (MIP) constitutes the second element of shifting influence over macroeconomic decisions and structural policies at the European level. The competences of the EC and the ECOFIN Council to determine specifications of economic policy measures to be taken with quasi-automatic sanctions in the case of non-compliance represent a decisive strengthening of economic policy coordination. Defining of what constitutes an excessive macroeconomic imbalance and which economic policy measures have to be taken has been shifted towards bureaucratic mechanisms, namely the DG ECFIN of the EC.

The third aspect is the introduction of the *European Semester*, in which the streamlining of the timing of major economic and budgetary policy surveillance procedures at the European level and subsequent decisions

at national level harmonizes the timing of surveillance in the frame of the SGP and macroeconomic surveillance. This brings about a narrow ex-ante coordination and strict surveillance and enables strong interventions on the part of the EC and the ECOFIN Council in budget and economic policy priorities of member states. Democratic decision-making procedures at member-state level are being narrowed and parliamentary votes in budget and structural reform matters will to a large extent be limited to rubber-stamp specifications from the EU level.

Fourth, the establishment of a *Fiscal Compact* outside the European Treaties is enshrined in a treaty under international law – the Treaty on the Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union – bringing together all member states except Great Britain and the Czech Republic. Its core element is the Fiscal Compact in title III of the treaty. The fiscal treaty has major further implications for fiscal policy, primarily in terms of further reducing room for manoeuvre, introducing rule-based procedures which *de facto* enforce zero deficits and confirming the harsh debt reduction obligations already enshrined in the reformed SGP. The debt brake consists of the obligation to have an annual structural deficit below 0.5 per cent of GDP if debt level is above 60 per cent of GDP, or up to 1 per cent of GDP if the debt is below 60 per cent of GDP, of an automatic correction mechanism and of the establishment of an independent fiscal surveillance institution at national level. The EC obtained the right to specify details of this new mechanism. It has to be translated into constitutional law or the equivalent at national level and the proper translation of the new rules is subject to a ruling of the European Court of Justice, including the possibility of the imposition of substantial fines. Furthermore, the Fiscal Treaty introduced new voting rules for entry into excessive deficit procedures, ensuring that the will of the EC is followed unless it is clear beforehand that a qualified majority is against the Commission proposal. The easier

entry into excessive deficit procedures is of relevance because it implies stronger control from the EC and the imposition of sanctions if member states do not comply with guidelines from the European level. Furthermore, the Fiscal Compact introduced the obligation to submit budgetary and structural reform programmes to the EC and the ECOFIN Council for approval. Further stipulations of the Treaty deal with economic convergence and summits of the Eurozone with an elected president.

The fifth aspect is the adoption of the *Euro Plus Pact*, which is intended to strengthen structural reform policies in areas of member-state competences. The Pact commits signatories to even stronger economic coordination for ‘competitiveness and convergence’. The surveillance of the implementation of the commitments is integrated into the European semester, and the Commission monitors implementation of the commitments. The provisions of the Euro Plus Pact lead to increased pressure for reforms towards liberalization of markets under the code word of increased competitiveness and it is intended to put pressure on wages and foster labour market reforms (Feigl and Templ, 2011). Furthermore, the Pact includes agreements to reform pension and health care systems as well as social benefits from the perspective of financial sustainability, which essentially means reducing benefits and payments under these schemes.

And finally, the intergovernmental *Treaty Establishing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM)*, signed in February 2012, introduced the so-called permanent emergency parachute. The ESM established a new institution tasked to give financial support to member states with difficulties in financing the public budget via financial markets. Financial support is linked to strict conditionalities and macroeconomic adjustment programmes which are negotiated and controlled by the EC. Finance ministers of the Eurozone have negotiated the treaty and put themselves into decisive positions within the

ESM, which has been set up in such a way that it is completely obscure and not accountable to democratic institutions. The ESM cooperates closely with the IMF and the European Central Bank (ECB). The European Parliament (EP), however, is not included at all. There are no possibilities of democratic control by the EP and there is no regular control institution set up, but the administrative council of the ESM can elect its own control organ. Although a stability mechanism to help member states in financial trouble might be seen as a useful instrument, the problem with this Treaty is that the ESM established a new institution with great power outside established standards of the rule of law.

To summarize, it can be concluded that the new economic governance within the European Union is characterized by *rule-based fiscal policies* at a high level: the new rules at EU level have *de facto* a much greater legal validity than constitutional laws at national level because changes at EU level – often to be taken with unanimity – are much more difficult. A *lopsided focus on deficit and debt reduction*, a coercion of permanent austerity which leads to a reduction of the public sector, is another characteristic, as is a *strengthening of structural reforms* in the name of increasing competitiveness that is aimed at the deregulation and liberalization of markets in particular labour markets, reducing labour market regulations and labour rights, increasing flexibilization of rules and workers and putting downward pressure on wages. What has taken place is a high degree of transfer of influence over delicate economic and budget policy decisions to small elite groups within bureaucracy which lack democratic legitimacy but ensure a considerable increase of powers of the finance bureaucracy in the EC and in member states. The creation and reinforcement of such non-transparent processes without the possibility of democratic influence and control is another core characteristic of the new economic governance regime.

These trends are an example of what Stephen Gill (1998) framed as the ‘*new constitutionalism of disciplinary neo-liberalism*’. These rules, which are very difficult to change, enforce one-sided economic policy paradigms on member states. Room for manoeuvre in terms of economic policy is radically constrained and compliance is ensured by significant financial fines (up to 0.5 per cent of GDP in the case of the SGP). The concept ‘disciplinary’ refers not only to enforcing the currently predominant neo-liberal economic policies guided by outdated monetarist and neo-classical economic views and disciplining Eurozone member states by means of hefty fines but also to increased ‘discipline’ at individual level. In line with the debates on welfare state change outlined above, systemic risks of unemployment and poverty are passed on to individuals and, at the same time, those people affected are confronted with increased control, cuts in benefits and severe sanctions in case of non-compliance with the strengthened rules. Bieling has framed these new developments in the EU with reference to Gill as ‘*European crisis constitutionalism*’ (2011: 61).

THE GENDERED NATURE AND GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE EU MACROECONOMIC GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

The macroeconomic rules and priorities have enshrined gender biases. The ECB is committed to price stability and does not pursue the goal of high employment, a clear example of the deflationary bias identified by Elson and Cagatay (2000). Even with inflation rates of less than 1.5 per cent, while unemployment rates are at record levels of more than 12 per cent in the Eurozone and youth unemployment was at 24 per cent in April 2013 (Eurostat 2013a; 2013b), the ECB is still not inclined to pursue growth and employment-promoting policies or equality between women and men, even though its statutes and the legal basis would

leave room for that (article 127 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in combination with article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union).

Even though the EU has the aim of increasing women's employment rates, the extent to which this undermines the foundations of the male breadwinner model is limited (Lewis et al., 2008; Plantenga et al., 2009; Smith and Villa, 2010). Data from EU countries show that, in spite of increased female labour market participation rates, the quantity and quality of women's employment has not changed, jobs are becoming more insecure and precarious, and women's jobs especially are part-time and earn low incomes. Both the flexibilization of labour markets and limited job security are gendered (Lewis and Plomien, 2009).

The consolidation efforts in the EU with regard to public budgets are heavily focused on the expenditure side, bringing about large cuts in public spending. Even though the scale is different across different member states, the trend is the same in all EU countries, being very much influenced by the new debt and deficit rules. Thus there is a strong pressure towards the reduction of the public provision of services. The commodification bias prevails. Severe cuts in public health provision in Latvia, Greece and UK and pension reforms leading to reduced benefits and introducing tax relieves for private pension contracts are only some of the many examples of how austerity policies open new markets with high profitability.

The risk bias is also rising in Europe as a consequence of EU recommendations in the frame of economic governance. Under the preventative arm of the SGP, the EC is focusing on long-term projections about the economic and budgetary implications of an ageing population to presumably demonstrate the demographic threat to the long-term sustainability of public finances. A major recommendation of the EC to almost all EU member states is to reduce age-related expenditures relating to pensions and long-term health care (see discussion by Himmelweit and Plomien,

this volume). This is in sharp contrast with the experience during the financial crises, which demonstrated the inability of financial and housing markets to serve as prudent retirement provision. With market-based solutions, high risks and losses are carried by individuals, but instead of promoting public pensions schemes which would shield people from market risks and market failures, these schemes are framed as a demographic burden and subsequently dismantled. Poverty among the elderly, especially women, who are more at risk of poverty than are men (23.1 per cent compared with 17 per cent across the EU in 2011 [Eurostat, 2012]) is likely to be exacerbated as a consequence of this policy. Interestingly, the creditor bias observed in the US in the aftermath of the financial crisis (Young et al., 2011) is not as evident in most European countries. This might be due to the fact that the promotion of subprime mortgages was not that prevalent in Europe, many countries focusing instead on public support to housing construction.

The EU governance mechanisms represent strict lock-in mechanisms which severely punish deviation from the predominant economic paradigm; involving a weakening of the already very weak democratic legitimization of economic policy making at the European level; shifting towards authoritarian rules and installation of bureaucracy as the new economic policy sovereign; and further surrender of states to 'market forces'. Power over economic policy making is concentrated in the hands of a few actors and institutions. This core of changes constitutes a rupture – although gradually prepared over the years – with forms of economic policy making to date. In sum this constitutes a further erosion of the already curtailed room for manoeuvre of member states in economic policy matters.

The new rules and procedures give much power to bureaucratic institutions, in particular financial bureaucracies in finance ministries and the EC. This marks an increasing trend inside bureaucracies: it is an accelerated step to a new level in an

already long-observed trend of power concentration in finance ministries, reflected also inside the EC bureaucracy, where influence over economic (and social) policies in all fields is increasingly concentrated in the DG ECFIN.

From a gender perspective the power shift in influence over macroeconomic policies has severe implications. While power shifts towards finance ministries could also be observed in the past (Sen, 2002), with the new regime in the EU there is a decisive leap forward. The finance bureaucracy in the EC (DG ECFIN) and in member states (finance ministries) thus received large new powers in budget and economic policy decision making. This marks a shift in gender relations and power structures as well, as these institutions of finance bureaucracy not only are dominated to a much higher degree by men than many other parts of the bureaucracy but are still highly dominated by masculine norms and traditions (Schuberth, 2006; Sauer 2010a). Especially national parliaments' influence is reduced as a result of these rule-based, bureaucracy-dominated procedures. This has considerable influence on the representation and the influence of women in relevant decision-making processes. Even though women are far from being represented equally in parliaments, there has been a considerable increase of women in parliaments compared with other spheres of power. And now, as women have started to enter economic and finance policies in parliaments and in national governments, the power over crucial decisions moves elsewhere. Contrary to the persuasive work of feminist political theorists to engender democracy (Phillips, 1991), the bureaucratic and political practice in the EU not only continues to privilege the male but even suggests deterioration, a picture which is confirming trends identified in feminist analysis of power relations and influence. While the share of women present and their influence in traditional democratic institutions has slowly increased over the last

decades, the effective decision-making power has shifted towards not only selected EU institutions but also other international institutions such as the IMF, multinational enterprises and finance institutions and markets. These constitute terrains of masculinity and male-dominated power that have increasingly gained power over political decision-making processes (compare also Colin Crouch's (2004) post-democracy analysis).

Furthermore, the new regime will strengthen the surrender to the judgement of the financial markets (Klatzer and Schlager, 2011a), bringing more volatility to the Eurozone area. The new mechanisms bundle information about important economic developments and the DG ECFIN in the EC gets – in alliance with the ECOFIN Council – virtually complete sovereignty of interpretation over and appraisal of the quality of economic policies of member states, so, given the current neo-liberal ideology prevailing within the DG ECFIN, it can be expected that deviations from the neo-liberal canon will be assessed as 'wrong' or 'bad' macroeconomic policies. This assessment will not only be decisive in the process of imposing sanctions but also largely influence market reactions. In combination with still weak advances to regulate financial markets and markets' power over interest setting for sovereign debt, the new regime will further strengthen the power of financial markets over budget and economic policy decisions – especially by means of downgrading and speculative attacks.

The power shifts within the EU can be observed for all member states; however, they are being further reinforced for Eurozone members through financial sanctions. But for EU states that need financial support the shift is most pronounced. The economic policy dictates of the Troika – in the form of the EC, IMF and ECB – mark the top of the power concentration, without any democratic control or legitimization. The EU countries that have so far received financial support to ensure their solvency, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus, have

been forced to sign memoranda of understanding on economic reforms with common patterns: deregulation of labour markets and wage cuts, including minimum wage cuts, other structural reforms, massive cuts in public expenditure and public employment and measures to save banks. In all four cases the Troika has imposed conditionalities without giving the EP a chance to participate in negotiations, and putting national parliaments under pressure to adopt the measures. With the new ESM this form of authoritarian power concentration and concurrent masculinization is being legally ensured and strengthened by international treaty. It is interesting to see that, while the male-dominated ECB is included in the new rules and procedures, the EP, which represents the European people and – at least to a minor extent – pursues gender equality priorities, is not involved in the decision-making procedures.

As regards the design of processes, major shifts can be observed: with the increasing importance of bureaucratic processes, particularly at the European level, these processes are becoming much less transparent. The processes of surveillance, with regard to both financial policies in the frame of the SGP as well as economic developments and reforms in the frame of the MIP, are taking place within the EC and the preparatory committees of the ECOFIN Council, especially in the Economic and Financial Committee as well as in the Economic Policy Committee. It is virtually impossible to obtain any information or documents before they are adopted, which closes important spaces for democratic participation but opens spaces for specific interests and well-connected lobby groups who have access to the respective actors.

Overall, it can be noted that the masculine finance bureaucracy at national and European level has considerably increased power and influence and is being established as the new sovereign over economic policies in the frame of the new economic governance architecture.

GENDER IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE STATE AND CONSEQUENCES FOR MATERIAL WELL-BEING

Rule-based austerity policies lead to severe cuts in public expenditure. This leads not only to cuts in the provision of public services and a reduction of public employment but also to an increased change in the public sector and the state as a whole. This is clearly manifest in a reduction of the entire public sector, in the outsourcing and retrenchments of public activities and in privatizations and a market-like restructuring of public services (universities, public transport, health services).

The EU plans to continue the dramatic reductions of its debt levels mainly by reducing state expenditures, leading to a reduction in the size of the welfare state. In its horizontal assessment of the stability and convergence programmes of member states, which have to be submitted in the context of the SGP and the European Semester, the EC comes to the following conclusions: if all public consolidation plans of all member states are realized, there will be a drop in the EU-wide share of public debt relative to GDP from 91 per cent in 2012 to 54 per cent in 2030, based on the no-policy-change assumption of the EC. Consolidation predominantly takes place through the reduction of expenditures (with exceptions of Belgium and Italy); around 65 per cent of consolidation in the Eurozone and more than 80 per cent of consolidation in the whole EU is based on expenditure cuts. Twenty-five member states (excepting Finland and Luxemburg) have planned a decreasing public expenditure quota and most member states plan retrenching of investments; the Baltic States, Poland and Bulgaria intend to make considerable cuts in public investments (European Commission, 2012). Evidence from previous and current austerity packages makes clear that the reduction of public employment has more significant impacts for

women (Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; European Parliament, 2013; WBG, 2013). Wage and staff cuts in the public sector work against gender equality, as in the public sector the wages for women are on average higher and the gender pay gap is much smaller than in the private sector. Many women are working in the health and social sectors, which are confronted with considerable retrenchments, so they face job losses and increased work pressure (Elson, 2002; Karamessini and Rubery, 2013; European Parliament, 2013).

The new fiscal rules do not specify requirements that cuts in public services must affect the provision of care and social services; in theory, cuts could instead or also fall upon the military or economic subsidies. But in times of austerity there is frequently a reduction of expenditures in social spheres and we can observe this pattern in Europe as well (OECD, 2011). In the context of the Euro Plus Pact and the discourse about the 'sustainability of public finance' the reforms of health, social and pension systems are explicitly targeted, which *de facto* means substantial benefit cuts. This involves a shifting of costs to the private sphere, where women compensate for reductions of public services with their unpaid work. Those who can afford it shift the burden to – in some cases undocumented – female immigrants who often have even worse work conditions and high dependency relations with their employers than citizens (Benería, 2003). Owing to the gendered division of labour and roles within society among men and women, it is women who rely to a larger degree on public services in many fields. The implications of the fiscal policy rules on member states, which actually force them to downsize their public sectors, will thus lead to an increased necessity to compensate with services from the private sector, in the form of either market services for the more affluent population or increased reproductive work for households and communities for the less wealthy, where women will bear a major part of it. As argued in the context of commodification

bias, care work is shifted from the public sector back to families for a large part of the population who cannot afford to pay for market services and who must substitute services through unpaid work. Women have to compensate for their income losses and their losses in public services, and thus suffer from 'overfull employment' as a result of the excessive demands on their time and energy (Bakker, 2011: 43). Equally, past experience shows that a lack of public services leads to a growing informal sector to provide care, with predominantly women working under conditions of precarity and exploitation.

The shift in the conception and role of the state from a welfare state towards a state safeguarding competitiveness is connected with large gender biases. What we see is a remasculinization of social relations (Gubitzer, 2007; Kreisky, 2001; Sauer, 2010b). Characteristics loaded with masculinity, such as an increasing reliance on market mechanisms for the provision of social services, over-emphasis on competition among both states and individuals, the reinforced role and influence of male-dominated and masculine elites in financial markets and multinational enterprises (see Connell, 2010), the influence of private business interests and non-transparent club-like decision-making mechanisms (see Schunter-Kleemann, 2001) in times of crises are some of the elements contributing to remasculinization. The neoliberal rationality has contributed to the erosion of women as the subject of public policy (Young 2000; Bakker and Brodie, 2008). Women, being under-represented in structures of representation, do not have equal power and space to argue for their needs. The increasing dominance of the financial market sector worsens this situation. This field is extremely male-dominated and 'social actors and their interests are denied representation in financial governance' (Young and Schuberth, 2011: 138).

The impacts of fiscal austerity and the reduction of public services on women are not only specific to the current situation in Europe. As we have described earlier, the

experience during structural adjustment programmes in the global South and the Asian crisis of 1997/98 have followed much of the same pattern. During the Asian crisis banks were saved by huge public subsidies and the subsequent fiscal consolidation resulted in a 'downloading of risks to the kitchen' (Elson, 2002: 1), with a massive increase in unpaid work for women. Women compensated for income loss through the provision of unpaid work. Many services previously bought in the market or provided by the state have, again, been transferred to the unpaid household sphere. Budget cuts in health services and education resulted, on the one hand, in job losses for women and, on the other, in increased unpaid work to compensate for these services. Women have been affected by the crisis and by austerity packages in manifold ways and have shouldered the costs of the crisis to a higher degree than have men (Elson, 2002).

These experiences have been repeated during the current crisis across many European countries. As women in the EU have, on average, lower incomes and higher exposure to risk of poverty, as well as (again) higher unemployment rates, a larger share in unpaid care services and lower endowment with capital and wealth than men, they are much more affected by the current policies. Similar effects can be observed in different EU countries. In the UK, for example, it is estimated by researchers at the House of Commons Library that women will pay over 72 per cent of the cuts in welfare benefits and changes to direct taxes in the budget introduced in June 2010 by the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government (*The Guardian*, 4 July 2010; WBG, 2010). This includes the increase in the pension age for women to 66 years, increases of sales tax from 17.5 per cent to 20 per cent, job losses in the public sector, cuts of financing for 95 per cent of women's organizations and institutions serving the interests and needs of women as well as the abolition of the Women's National Commission, which represented women's interests vis-à-vis the

government (WRC, 2011). According to WBG's estimates, 25 per cent of women's institutions will have to close down due to lack of funding. The analysis of the UK Women's Budget Group (WBG) of austerity plans for 2011 and subsequent years (WBG, 2011; 2013) showed that until 2014/15 an average household will have lost public services amounting to 6.8 per cent of its income. Female pensioners, however, will suffer a loss of public services representing 11.7 per cent of their income, while the loss of female single parents amounts to 18.5 per cent of their income.

Ireland is another example of tight fiscal austerity, and the picture of impacts remains the same: women's organizations have suffered budget cuts between 15 and 30 per cent of GDP and many have had to close already. Single mothers, single women and elderly women are particularly affected by the crisis and by expenditure cuts. An over-proportional reduction of income is expected for these groups, as are sharp cuts in welfare expenditures (NWCI, 2011).

Even if gender impact assessments of austerity policies are missing in most countries, the policies implemented do have very similar characteristics, as an overview by the OECD displays (OECD, 2011: 45 et sqq.): The highest expenditure cuts affect social expenditures (social transfers, health services and pension payments). As regards revenues, the focus is on increasing consumption tax rates. Taxes for the financial sector are rare, whereas cuts of public personnel are very frequent.

The currently imposed economic governance regime in Europe perpetuates the need for cuts in public expenditure and thus will lead to a shrinking public sector. In times of low growth, high unemployment and increasing opposition of people to austerity measures (see, for example, Alter Summit, 2013) there is a particular drive towards burdening the costs on those who show least resistance and have least access to political elites. And, in particular, costs are being 'externalized' as far as possible by shifting burdens to unpaid

work (Harcourt and Woestman, 2010). All this shows how closely neo-liberal fiscal policies focused on budget consolidation and shrinking public sectors are linked to backlashes in gender equality. Not only do women have to shoulder the bulk of the deterioration but the fact that this widens gender inequality is also ignored.

CONCLUSIONS: EU MACROECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AS A REGIME TO REVERSE GAINS IN GENDER EQUALITY

In this chapter our analysis of the different dimensions of the gendered implications of the new EU economic governance demonstrates how macroeconomic policies at the EU level have a negative impact on gender equality and gender relations. The contribution of this chapter has been to highlight how policies in response to the crisis at macroeconomic level in the European Union contribute to a reconfiguration of the existing gender regimes. We show that the new rules and regulations of the EU economic governance and decision-making mechanisms contribute to forming power structures that are reconfigured and strengthened along gender lines. The crisis is being used to reinforce patriarchal hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity. We are confronted with a reconstruction of the state and of politics under masculinistic accidentals. Those who caused the crisis emerge as experts to solve the crisis, and thus can retain and enlarge their power.

The main institutional reconfiguration shifts power over priority-setting for macroeconomic and budget policies from democratically elected and representative institutions at member-state level to bureaucratic institutions at the EU level. This is a power shift which is highly gendered. Women lose decisive influence in the terrain of political decision making. Hard-won and slow progress in participation in decision-making processes is being undermined.

Women are still under-represented in traditional democratic institutions, but with the shifts in economic governance even these strides towards participation are being lost as power and influence over economic policy making is shifting away from national governments and legislators to new institutions that are male-dominated and have a masculine connotation. The rule-based fiscal policies and the pressure towards neo-liberal economic policies in the EU represent a constitutionalization of gender blindness and of the strategic silence in European economic policies with its inherent gender biases and reinforced downloading of costs and risks to women.

European economic governance is gender politics played with the cards close to the chest. The focus on debt and deficit reduction leads to a fiscal squeeze in EU member states that translates into extensive cuts in public expenditures, especially in social services, as well as significant reductions in public employment. This accelerated the trend of weakening welfare state arrangements. With the new EU governance masculine steering mechanisms are being introduced and strengthened and economic policy prescriptions are still based on tacit – feminized – shifts of costs and risks. With this new governance the EU is creating economic and social problems as well as increasing democratic deficits. Furthermore, the economic governance brings about new gender policy challenges and constitutionalizes hegemonic masculine structures. Economic and social policies pursued in the light of the European economic governance bring about the off-loading of risks to individuals and in particular to women and embody significant risks of negative impacts on gender equality.

NOTE

- 1 The Euro area is the group of eighteen EU member states which have adopted the Euro as their currency.

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Gender, Class and Location in the Global Economy

Drucilla K. Barker and Edith Kuiper

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has contributed substantially to several of the most significant changes since the end of the Second World War: the feminization of labor and migration, the internationalization of finance and debt and increased income inequalities within and among nation-states. The feminization of labor refers to both the dramatic increase in women's labor force participation over most of the world and changes in the conditions of work. While globalization has resulted in an increase in the participation of women in paid labor, for many women this has meant working in low-paying and service sector jobs often without job security and benefits. When relatively affluent women enter the labor market they use some of their income to purchase domestic services no longer produced in the home, services now provided mainly by poor women and racially and ethnically stigmatized men (Charusheela, 2003). International debt obligations, national migration regimes and increased income

inequality among and within countries ensure an impoverished, precarious and flexible supply of labor to satisfy this demand. The work done by nannies, maids and sex workers are prime examples of services provided by women, while women are also predominant in the lowest-paid jobs in export manufacturing sectors.¹ Because women occupy different positions in the globalization process the consequences for women and the work that they do worldwide have not been homogeneous.

Economic globalization – the flows of people, capital, goods, services and technologies across countries, cultures and economies – is happening today on a massive scale (Stiglitz, 2002).² This chapter is concerned with the consequences for women of economic globalization from above – that is, globalization that reflects the collaboration among developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, with transnational organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and large transnational

corporations such as General Electric, Royal Dutch Shell and Nestle.³ Globalization from below, on the other hand, is constituted by an array of social forces motivated by environmental concerns, human rights and a desire to end patriarchy, poverty and oppression (Zimmerman et al., 2006). Globalization from above increases global stratification, while globalization from below seeks to decrease stratification across all categories of social difference. While we focus on specific aspects of globalization from above and below, it is important to note that not all top-down processes are socially regressive while not all bottom-up engagements are progressive.

One important source of social stratification can be expressed by the one-third/two-thirds world concept articulated by Chandra Mohanty (2002). Using this framework we can see that particular populations or groups are considered deserving of human rights, both civil and economic. Their work may be difficult and stressful, but it is valorized, secure and well-compensated. They are the minority, the 'one-third world'.⁴ Other populations, the 'two-third world', marked by race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, location and gender identification, are disenfranchised, disposable and often treated as undeserving of basic human rights such as those articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other established international declarations, covenants and conventions.⁵

In the early years of the twenty-first century, populations that are considered disposable are found in both the global North and the global South. Some nation states in the global South – China, India and Brazil, most notably – are experiencing relatively high rates of economic growth, while many in the global North are stagnating, in part as a result of austerity policies. However, both the gains from economic growth and the hardships from austerity policies and economic globalization more generally are distributed highly unevenly. For example, there are

slums in Mumbai, India, which are adjacent to the international airport and luxury hotels, but inexorably separated not only by concertina wire and concrete fences but even more importantly by the lack of opportunity for the slum dwellers to change their situation. As Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen notes, our world is one of extreme deprivation and inequality (Sen, 2011). According to estimates by Ortiz and Cummins, the top 20 percent of the world's population accounted for 70 percent of the world's income (Ortiz and Cummins, 2011; see also the analysis by Dunford and Perrons, this volume). It is the bottom 80 percent of the world's people who are providing material foundations for the comfortable lives of the relatively more prosperous. These inequalities have their origin in economic globalization from above. Consider the following hypothetical example as an illustration of this phenomenon.

It is 6.30 a.m. on a lovely spring morning in New York. Brittany and Rosa are both walking briskly in Central Park.⁶ Brittany is getting her exercise before heading off to work in her law firm, knowing that her two young children are being safely cared for by their Filipina nanny. Her day will include a lunch with friends at the new downtown bistro everyone is raving about. She tries to make sure that at least three evenings each week are reserved for spending quality time with her children. Rosa's day, on the other hand, will consist of cleaning kitchens and washing dishes in restaurants like the bistro. As an undocumented worker from El Salvador she is paid a pittance in cash (average wage estimates for workers in the informal sector are difficult to come by) and is assigned the dirtiest, most unpleasant chores.⁷ Washing dishes, cleaning the floors and cleaning the toilets are among the tasks assigned to her. She has not seen her children in over five years, but sends home most of her pay and calls them regularly. Rosa and Brittany do have at least one thing in common, though; poor women in sweatshops around the world manufactured their clothes, their shoes and their cell-phones. Although

Brittany has the latest ‘smart’ phone and top-of-the-line athletic shoes, while Rosa has a relatively cheap pay-as-you-go phone and shoes from the Dollar Store, their manufacturing origins are the same. Income inequality, quality of life, and the opportunity to have a career rather than a job, are just a few examples of the ways women are stratified by contemporary economic globalization.

In this chapter we argue that both multiple and intersecting forms of difference and oppression are interwoven into globalization from above, and that increasing inequalities among and within countries inhibit both gender equality and class and gender solidarity. Our analysis is informed by an assessment of the neoliberal policies and practices of the IMF and the World Bank. Examining the increasing inequalities among and within countries, we focus on their connections to debt, migration and the internationalization of care work. We conclude that the goals and ideals expressed in the various manifestations of globalization from below can be strengthened by a human rights approach that seeks to ameliorate the unfavorable consequences for women and marginalized men of globalization from above.

INEQUALITY AMONG COUNTRIES

Accompanying economic globalization has been a dramatic increase in income inequalities among countries (Milanovic, 2011). Until recently, feminist economists have been analyzing women’s position in the global economy focusing mainly on the intersections of gender, race and class; however, we argue that location has become an equally important factor in international inequality. Milanovic has shown that during the late nineteenth century income inequalities were equally attributed to within-country inequalities and among-country inequalities. This left a space for international class solidarity. In the early twenty-first century, however, this situation is quite different. The main source of global income inequalities is

locational and can be explained by the unequal incomes among countries. For example, ‘the poorest five percent of Americans, adjusted for price levels, earns 35 times more than the poorest Zambians or 12 times more than the poorest Malians’ (2011: 16). Likewise, Milanovic shows that on average the richest Malians are poorer than the poorest Danes. The income gap between the global North and the global South is vast and is the largest source of global income inequality. Moreover, as Balakrishnan et al. argue, this is true not only for income and wealth but also for access to ‘food, water, sanitation, health care, education, and access to services’ (2013: 11).

Rajman et al. (2006) provide an illuminating example of the causes of migration in their ethnography examining international migration of undocumented Latina migrants to Israel. One of their informants was training to be a dentist in Ecuador. There, she would have earned \$100 a month working as a clerk to finance her studies. However, she decided to migrate and work as the live-in caretaker for an elderly man in Israel. In this way she was able to make \$1,000 a month. However, that ten-fold increase in income came with a high cost of downward social mobility and loss of self-esteem.⁸

Balakrishnan et al. (2013) have examined some of the causes and consequences of between-country inequalities. They find that the vast majority of inter-country inequality is the result of differences between the rich and the poor in each country. The concentration of income and wealth in the top 1 percent in both the developed and developing countries is not sustainable and poses considerable risks to the functioning of democracy and the global economy. Moreover, this highly unequal distribution of income and wealth means that wealthy elites are able to block policies and programs that would support gender equality and the realization of economic and social rights (see Dunford and Perrons, this volume, on the theorization of power and privilege). Again, we argue that this uneven concentration of income, wealth

and access to resources increases the stratification among women.

GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE: ITS INSTITUTIONS AND IDEOLOGY

The shape of globalization today is made possible by four interrelated factors: the neo-liberal ideology that so-called ‘free markets’ will benefit everyone, the policies of international economic institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the resultant weakening of the nation state *vis a vis* international corporations, and the feminization of the global labor force, including the internationalization of care work. The IMF and World Bank, created in the aftermath of the Second World War, set the rules and regulations for international financial stability (the IMF) and international economic development (the World Bank).⁹ The economic logic of these two institutions is that ‘free markets’ help everyone because they encourage job creation and economic prosperity, and that these are now stifled by government intervention and regulation. The ‘feminization of labor’ refers not only to the increase of women in the paid labor force but also to the conditions of work: that is, a shift from integrated factories with a stable labor force to a global production network employing workers who are perceived to be ‘unorganized (undemanding), docile but reliable, available for part time or temporary work and willing to work for low wages’ (Peterson, 2003: 62). This type of employment is characterized by the ‘informalization’ of employment, via outsourcing, casual labor, part-time labor, home work and other types of labor unprotected by government regulations (Standing, 1999).

The women and men who hold good jobs – whether as knowledge workers (workers in information technologies) in the ‘new’ economy, or as executives and managers in traditional industries, or as professionals in the service sector – are well compensated for their labor, while other, feminized workers – male

as well as female – assemble products or provide services necessary for the daily functioning of highly paid workers (Peterson, 2003). The proportion of jobs requiring craft skills acquired through apprenticeship has declined, labor market regulations have been eroded and unionized, full-time, stable jobs are disappearing. Thus, men’s position in the global labor market ‘has become more like that of women, and this is especially the case with respect to entitlement to a modicum of income security once unemployed’ (Standing, 1999: 599).

This leads us to question the dominant image of economic globalization that Thomas Friedman draws in his bestseller *The World is Flat* (Friedman, 2005). His is a narrative of progress. The opportunities for people in India and in the Mid-West of the USA have become equalized by the use and improvement of technology, so that workers in the South can be competitors of those in the North on an equal footing. Instead we see that poor women and racially and ethnically marginalized men, whether in the global South or North, remain excluded from the decision-making processes that profoundly affect their lives, while, at the same time, they are the very groups that bear the negative impacts of globalization (Peterson, 2003). To be a policy maker at the top requires graduating from a top university, making the right connections and being wealthy.

DEBT, STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT POLICIES AND AUSTERITY MEASURES

As we argue above, the ideology of free markets and the resultant weakening of nation-states’ ability to protect the rights of their workers has allowed multi-national corporations to increase their profits by exploiting workers, outsourcing labor and polluting the environment (Apfell-Marglin and Marglin, 1996; 2006; Peterson, 2003). Now we turn to the deregulation of the financial sector that has allowed financial institutions, banks and

investment firms to make large profits by engaging in high-risk speculation. The executives at the top reaped the profits. The people in the middle and at the bottom, many of whom lost their life savings in the succession of financial crises since the 1980s, bore the costs of bailing them out when the crises occurred. The exact distribution of benefits and costs is, of course, unique to the context of each of the four major crises – the Third World Debt Crisis of the 1980s, the Peso Crisis and the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s, and the financial crisis of 2008. The last financial crisis, for example, not only did not prevent rewarding high-risk behavior and mismanagement of finance executives, but gave rise to large numbers of job losses among employees in the finance sector and other industries. Although more and more women are employed in the financial sector, their jobs are on the line – and sometimes disproportionality so. In the UK, between 2007 and 2011 women accounted for 92 percent of job losses in the financial sector, although their share in the sector was only 51.6 percent (Rubery and Rafferty, 2013: 420, Table 1).

Free market thinking, backed up by the neoliberal policies of the IMF and the World Bank, supported the growth of the financial industry worldwide. During the 1960s and early 1970s interest rates were very low and the financial sector was flushed with cash. The private banks and the World Bank loaned money to countries in the global South, then referred to as the Third World, to finance large-scale projects such as factories and huge hydroelectric systems to provide them with power. Large-scale mechanized farming was encouraged, resulting in a dramatic decrease in subsistence agriculture and a movement of people from rural areas to urban centers. Unfortunately, many of these projects were unsustainable and the promised benefits never materialized. Moreover, the interest rates were variable rather than fixed and during the early 1980s the world witnessed a dramatic rise in interest rates and a global recession as a result. The developing

countries were left with enormous debt burdens that they were simply unable to pay (Barker and Feiner, 2004; Bergeron, 2004; Griffin, 1999; Peters, 1999).¹⁰

The IMF subsequently provided these developing countries with financial support on condition that they would implement Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). SAPs were premised on the notion that countries could return to economic health and repair their economies by reducing the size of government and its influence on economic activity, and by opening their economies to market forces. The details vary from country to country, but in general SAPs required countries to devalue their currencies to encourage exports, make substantial cuts in public sector spending to reduce the size of the government sector, remove subsidies and price supports to eliminate interference in markets, attract international capital and shift resources toward the production of goods for export rather than domestic consumption. Attracting foreign capital in order to increase export production entailed deregulating labor markets by cutting back on rules and enforcement of worker protection such as minimum wages, working conditions and job security (Barker and Feiner, 2004; Benería, 1996). Eliminating subsidies for basic foods such as milk, rice, and corn in order to let the free market set the price dramatically increased the price of these goods, increased the profits of the few corporations that control worldwide food production, and compounded the hardships faced by poor women and their families (Elson, 1991; Benería, 2003). Although there have been changes in the policies and institutional practices of the World Bank over recent years owing to mounting evidence of the negative impacts of SAPs and pressure by NGOs, the core notions remained the same.¹¹

Until recently the effects of these policies on women and their well-being were largely ignored except by feminist economists and other feminist social scientists. When governments cut back on spending for health care, education and food and water supplies

the implicit assumption was that women would take up the slack and provide these services as part of their domestic duties. It took feminist economists to point out that these cut-backs were not really savings, but merely turned paid work into unpaid work that was mostly done by women (Elson, 1991). Moreover, generating the income necessary to pay the international debt likewise fell on the backs of women who went to work in export production factories sewing clothes, assembling electronics and making toys or migrated, both legally and illegally, to the wealthy countries to work as nannies, maids or sex workers (Peterson and Runyan, 2010). Certainly the World Bank has now begun to take note, but its policy prescriptions remain inside the neoliberal economic model (Bergeron, 2006). The solution posed by the Bank is not one of state support or worker collectives but rather involves getting men (who are increasingly suffering from unemployment) to engage in reproductive labor (Bedford, 2009).

The evidence clearly shows that neither SAPs nor austerity measures result in economic growth and prosperity; on the contrary, they lead to increased poverty and misery for the vast majority of the world's peoples (Stiglitz, 2002; Krugman, 2013). The end result of both is that the poor are left to pay for the debts incurred by the wealthy elites. The patterns of these crises remain much the same. The situations in Greece and Spain are good examples. Both countries are part of the Eurozone and borrowed unsustainable amounts in euros to finance public spending. For example, Greece borrowed to finance the 2004 Athens Olympics. As debt levels and the interest rates on their loans increased they had to borrow money from the European Central Bank in order to service their loans. In return, they have had to implement 'austerity measures'. Austerity measures are really SAPs by another name and their consequences are similarly devastating. Employment decreases, hence income decreases, and the countries become poorer rather than richer. Although the banks, the

IMF and other international financial institutions have had to 'take a haircut', they are being repaid.¹² This 'solution' is again on the back of the poor and, as with the case of SAPs in the global South, the impact of the austerity measures in the global North is gendered (Karamessini and Rubery, 2013). The fact that even the IMF has agreed that austerity measures are not working has not prevented them from being implemented (Le Lesle, 2012).

GENDER STRATIFICATION AND MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

That women bear a vastly disproportionate share of the world's poverty is well known. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization are all in agreement about this phenomenon. The World Bank is typical of these transnational organizations in couching its anti-poverty rhetoric in statements such as 'To successfully reduce poverty, we must have an accurate sense of the differences in the status of women and men in key areas ...' and '[e]quality between men and women matters for development ...' (Lin, 2011). Additionally, economic development is necessary for reducing poverty, according to mainstream economics. This emphasis by the World Bank on the importance of gender equality for economic growth masks two things. The first is a dilemma clearly articulated by bell hooks; poor racially and ethnically marginalized women need feminism; however, bourgeoisie women have guided the feminist movement and have co-opted feminist theory to serve their class interests (hooks, 2000). When hooks was writing this, the feminist theory in question was the notion of a common oppression of women by men as a consequence of men's exploitation of women's household labor. She pointed out, however, that white women often oppressed black women in the same way. They were the ones cleaning the houses and taking care of the

children and the elderly while more privileged white women were pursuing professional careers. As theorists of intersectionality have long shown us, women are not a homogeneous class, but rather occupy various hierarchical and subordinated social positions. (Crenshaw, 1991; see discussion by Sigle-Rushton, this volume).

What privileged, elite women have in common are social, cultural and economic resources. They live in middle-class or wealthy neighborhoods in the global North, guarded compounds in the wealthy Gulf States, and elite enclaves in Latin America and Africa. The feminist goal emphasized by the World Bank and other powerful transnational governing institutions is gender equality in education, political representation and access to resources (Mason and King, 2001). A poor woman from the global South, however, would most likely be economically better-off if she were equal to a middle-class woman in the global North rather than a poor man in the global South. The problem with the old goal of global sisterhood, or gender-based class solidarity, is that it is not likely that poor women from the global south will have shared class interests with poor women in the global north. The cheap clothes and food produced by poor women (and men) from the two-thirds world are extremely important to poor women all over. Just visit any Dollar store or Walmart in the US and look at who the shoppers are. They are mainly poor folks looking for the best deal in order to support themselves and/or their families.¹³ Likewise, food sold by informal street vendors in the mega cities of the global South is necessary for the survival of both the vendors and the poor who purchase it (Allain, 1988; Tinker, 1997).¹⁴

The intense and seemingly intractable poverty of the global South has created conditions where migration by at least one family member seems like the only option to escape it.¹⁵ This is particularly true in the case of former export processing zones such as the maquiladoras on the US border. As

Sassen argues, 'people uprooted from their traditional ways of life, then left unemployed as export firms hire younger workers or move production to other countries, may see few options but emigration ...' (Sassen 1998: 43). People who relocate from a poor country to a rich one can increase their incomes several fold (Milanovic, 2011).¹⁶

Milanovic goes on to argue that if one just follows economic logic then a policy of open migration could work toward the social good. For example, the rich countries of Europe have aging populations while those from North Africa and the Arab world have young populations, and migration would restore the balance. However, Milanovic overlooks the benefits to the elite people in both poor and rich nations that keep migration barriers in place. Cross-border circuits, or counter-geographies of globalization, to use Sassen's terms, provide low-wage labor for the rich countries as well as an important source of hard currency for the sending countries (Sassen, 2002). Disfranchised and impoverished migrants provide the cheap labor that support global capitalism and the low-cost, commodified labor necessary for women in the rich countries, at all income levels, to participate in the paid labor force. For middle- and upper-middle-class women this might mean personal nannies and maids; or for poor women it might mean being able to buy low-cost, prepared food and clothing at discount stores. In either case, cross-border circuits of 'revenue and profit making [are] developed on the backs of the truly disadvantaged' (Sassen, 2002: 89). Thus, globalization from above works against the material conditions that foster cross-border class/gender solidarity.

Now, of course, not all poor emigrate. Undocumented migration is extremely dangerous and the working conditions usually awful. Leaving behind family and friends is never easy. In addition, documented migrations, of the sort we see by caregivers from the Philippines, are limited to women who are relatively elite by virtue of bilingual abilities, respectability and education (Parreñas, 2003).

Migration is not always possible. This is poignantly illustrated by the novel *Leaving Tangier: A Novel*, by Ben Jelloun, which begins in a café on the coast, from where the protagonist look longingly at the lights of Spain, just across the Straits of Gibraltar (Jelloun, 2009). But it is a dangerous and expensive journey that may end in death, arrest or deportation.¹⁷ In the ruined economy of Morocco migration seems like the only option, despite the costs, both psychic and material. As an undocumented worker said, 'The money is here, but the love is at home in Guatemala.'¹⁸

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CARE WORK

The feminization of the labor force creates a demand for a low-wage work force to provide the required domestic labor. As Nancy Folbre has famously asked, who takes care of the kids (Folbre, 1994)? The answer is low-wage childcare workers – mostly women who face employment conditions that undermine their own economic and emotional security. The work is poorly paid, the health and safety conditions are not monitored and there are rarely benefits. Historically, in the US, many women of color (especially African American women in the South) worked as domestic workers in the homes of relatively affluent whites. As recently as 1940 slightly over half of African American women were employed as domestic workers. Indeed, an important success of the civil rights and women's movements is the dramatic decline in that number (Barker and Feiner, 2004). Today both childcare and eldercare are increasingly provided by immigrants from the developing world and from the formerly communist economies of Eastern Europe. According to the ILO, in several regions – Europe, the Gulf countries and the Middle East – the majority of domestic workers are migrant women (ILO, 2010).

As women migrate in search of better opportunities many must leave their own

children behind to be cared for by a paid worker, who is paid a pittance in comparison to what the transnational caretaker earns, or perhaps by another family member. The work of Parreñas (2000) on the international division of reproductive labor, as well as that of Hochschild (2003), (who dubbed this series of global links based on caring labor 'the nanny chain') analyse these processes. A woman with a professional career in a rich country hires a nanny so she can work full time. The nanny from the poorer nation or region leaves one or more young children at home, where an older daughter or female relative cares for them (Parreñas, 2003). Sadly, these caretakers often transfer the love for their own children to those they are caring for, resulting in a chain of care. Just as the European powers exported gold and other raw materials from the colonies, today love and care are being exported. These global care chains have many variations. The feature they have in common is that the flow of caring labor is always from the poor to the rich.

Let us go back to our hypothetical example of Brittany, the lawyer in New York City. Not yet a partner, she has to work long hours in her law firm. Her husband is likewise devoted to his demanding career. Last year, when she had their second child, they decided to hire a nanny. As Brittany puts it, 'With Christopher, my eldest, we had so many problems with him getting sick a lot, and then I had to pick him up, which I cannot do when I have to work late.' Lawrence also works irregular hours and sometimes has to travel to medical conferences that last several days. Brittany puts it this way: 'Maria, our nanny, saved my career and my marriage. She is wonderful with Heather, my youngest. Christopher is at primary school now, and she picks him up and takes him to soccer practice and piano lessons. I really could not do it without her.'

Brittany's nanny, Maria, is from the Philippines and has two children of her own who were left behind. They are cared for by a local nanny whose wages are a tiny fraction

of the salary that Maria makes in New York. Maria earns \$14 an hour, but receives no vacation time or other benefits. Brittany thinks that is fair wage because that is what all of her friends pay. Although Maria has a college education, her wages as a nanny are far more than she could earn even with a professional job in the Philippines. Every week she sends almost one-third of her pay home and saves one-third to go home. Through regular phone calls and via the internet she keeps in touch with her children, but most likely she will not see them for another seven or eight years. It is a very long time. As Maria puts it, 'I miss my babies so much, but I know that in working here I am providing a better life for them.'

Like many other actual workers from indebted countries today, our hypothetical worker, Maria, is participating in what Saskia Sassen calls a cross-border circuit for survival and revenue. Not only are households and communities increasingly dependent on migrant women's earnings, but so too are the governments of indebted sending countries (Sassen, 2002). Remittances are one way of procuring the hard currency required to service their international debt. Today women constitute close to 50 percent of all migrants and their remittances are essential (Morrison et al., 2007). The official numbers tell us that world-wide remittances increased from about \$100 billion in 1970 to about \$401 billion in 2012 (Ratha, 2013). The true size, including unrecorded formal and informal flows, is probably significantly larger. Remittances total at least three times official development assistance and are the largest source of external financing in developing countries such as Morocco and Mexico. Because traditional gender norms do not recognize domestic workers as 'workers', organized resistance is difficult and, by and large, they remain exploited and unprotected. However, domestic workers, particularly in large cities such as Los Angeles and New York City, successfully unionized and an immigrant's rights movement, led by women, has begun to materialize (Milkman and Terriquez, 2012).

In a sense this is where globalization from above and globalization from below come together: debt structures and migrations regimes are imposed from above and meet resistance from below in the form of immigrants rights groups and their allies.

CONCLUSION

Globalization has made both developed and developing countries more and more dependent on international markets by increasing both exports and imports of goods and services. For developed countries, the dependence is on cheap goods and services. For the developing countries, the dependence is on remittances and export production, which have been encouraged by SAPs and austerity measures. Together with a strong increase in microcredit schemes, this has made women world-wide more financially vulnerable to economic recessions and crises (Floro and Dimsky, 2000). Besides increasing the dependence of developing countries on the prices set in international markets for primary export goods such as sugar, corn, rice and coffee, the globalization process also added to women's economic insecurity, vulnerability and dependency on international labor markets, migration and capital flows (Assissi, 2009, Sassen 2002). The crisis of care (see Himmelweit and Plomien, this volume) reflects the global economic relations between women in industrialized countries and in developing countries, and remittances reflect the extent and importance of migrant domestic labor.

A '24/7' economy provides new jobs and income for many young women; however, these new jobs tend to come at a price. First, they are often night-shift jobs and working night shifts has been shown to have negative health repercussions such as sleep disorders, fatigue, eye strain, neck, shoulder and back pain and voice problems (Messenger and Ghosheh, 2010). Moreover, most of these jobs are extremely low paid, unprotected and often dangerous. Unfortunately market

based-measures such as consumer preferences, quality labels and image protection have limited effects. Moreover, both national and international regulators are frequently captive to the very industries they are called upon to regulate. For change to happen, workers need to be able to form unions and collectively bargain for higher wages, health and safety protections and work schedules that minimize adverse health effects. Corporations could sign and follow up covenants with competitors in which they commit themselves to provide their workers with enough time off as necessary to maintain their health and well-being. Governments could support on-site child-care and provisions that enable workers to take time off when necessary to take care of sick children or elderly parents. Perhaps a profit sharing arrangement could provide incentives for workers and higher management to take pride in their work and the services they provide. In other words, the aim of unions, corporations and governments would include the creation of conditions for work that were humane, pleasant and good for the well-being of women and their families. Sadly, the 'footloose' nature of global capital works against this solution.¹⁹

It does not, however, have to be this way. In April 2013 in Dakha, Bangladesh, a garment-manufacturing factory collapsed. This disaster took over 1,100 lives, mostly women working for extremely low pay. Despite the warnings of inspectors, these women ended their lives trapped in a building that did not answer to any safety regulations or laws. This drama aroused the sympathies of the consumers of the cheap shirts these women made. Consequently they shamed and blamed the subcontractors who ran the factories and demanded the government of Bangladesh to ask how to improve working conditions and recognize the rights of workers to organize for better pay and working conditions (Yardley and Manik, 2013).

This is a solution from below. How to make it a reality is the rub. Globalization from below is constituted by various groups

that have direct experience with globalization and are engaged in developing alternative practices such as environmental protections, labor organizing, gender budgeting and other social justice initiatives at local, regional and national levels. It requires democratization of economic and political decision making at all levels of governance, from the highest to the most local. Curbing the centralized power of multi-national corporations is a multifaceted task. However, making globalization from below a reality would allow women and men to further the goals of gender equality and equity, equality of opportunity and access to resources to all (Rusimbi and Mbilinyi, 2005). We think that the human rights approach to the post-2015 framework for social and economic development, the successor of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), as proposed by Balakrishnan, Elson and Heintz (2013), provides a way forward.²⁰

The human rights approach has its basis in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and other conventions and agreements, such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), under which states subscribe to the obligation to use the maximum available resources for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The integration of gender issues into this development framework requires, according to Balakrishnan, Elson and Heintz, attention and focus on broader notions of gender equality also including the intersection with race, class, sexuality and age, and the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid work; broader notions of employment to also include decent work, social protection and equal pay; and macroeconomic policies that take unpaid care work into account and 'mobilize the maximum possible level of resources for the fulfillment of economic and social rights' (Balakrishnan et al., 2013: 15). Such a framework can be used for both developing countries and developed countries, to

guide the reforms of international economic institutions, and provide the foundation for the governance for human rights at the global and national levels. In addition to protections from abuses of power by their governments, all people should have access to basic education, health care, shelter and employment. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people should be treated with dignity, as human beings deserving of respect and inherent worth.

Our guarded optimism about this approach is that it works from within accepted transnational institutions and norms. Feminist scholars working in these areas are both insiders and outsiders and hence are in a position to promote the policy changes necessary for a world economy characterized by gender equality and social justice. The changes will be small and incremental. But, to quote an old motto of the women's movement, 'small changes make big differences'.²¹

NOTES

- 1 Data on women's labor force participation on a global scale is difficult to calculate owing to extreme regional differences. However, a rough global estimate is that women's participation in the labor market in the two decades from 1990 to 2010 remained steady, at about 52 percent. Interestingly, global labor force participation rates for men declined over the same period, from 81 to 77 percent (United Nations 2010). According to the latest figures from UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, women constitute 60 to 90 percent of the export manufacturing workforce in the developing world, although this is expected to decrease as a result of the 2008 financial crisis. The report also states that 50 percent or more of migrant workers in Asia and Latin America are women. They increasingly migrate alone as primary income earners and international migration is under-reported (United Nations, 2010).
- 2 There are other forms of globalization as well, particularly social and cultural. While not completely separate, in this chapter we will address the economic aspects of globalization – that is, the flows of people, capital and commodities, rather than the flows of

images and ideologies. For an overview of other approaches see Inda and Rosaldo, 2008.

- 3 For an interesting chart of the world's largest multi-national corporations see Anon., 2012.
- 4 Chandra Mohanty (2002) uses these terms to refer to social minorities and majorities. These categories are based on the quality of life of people in both the North and the South. The term was first used by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1998).
- 5 See Balakrishnan et al., 2013 for a further articulation of the range of covenants and declarations.
- 6 All the names are fictional.
- 7 One study in Los Angeles, a city similar to New York in terms of the cost of living, showed that informal workers made an average of around \$7,630 annually. This also reflects a large gender gap, because the average wage for men was around estimated to be around \$16,553 annually (Vogel, 2006).
- 8 For more examples see Zimmerman et al., 2006 and Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003.
- 9 For a discussion of the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the institution that regulates foreign trade, see Williams, 2006.
- 10 For a more detailed explanation of this period see Griffin, 1999, especially Chapter 4, 'The Open Economy.'
- 11 The Structural Adjustment Policies have since the 1990s been replaced by so-called Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs), in which the local government plays a more substantive role.
- 12 'Taking a haircut' simply means that the debt is not being paid in full.
- 13 This is an anecdotal observation. For a scholarly exposition of Wal-Mart's history, pricing and labor practices see Fishman, 2006.
- 14 It is interesting today that, at least in the US, street food has become a trendy consumption item for members of the elite as well.
- 15 Other reasons for migration include increasing population density, environmental degradation, civil conflicts and continued demand for reproductive labor in the receiving countries (Fargues, 2008).
- 16 Milanovic uses more precise terms, 'low-mean income' and 'high-mean income' countries (2011: 16).
- 17 It is somewhat ironic that today the Spanish economy is also in trouble as a result of debt and accompanying austerity measures. We do not have any substantial data on whether it is still a desirable migrant site (Fargues, 2008). However, it may still function as a gateway to the more prosperous parts of Europe. We also know that in economic downturns border security is increased because the need for labor is not there (Griffin, 1999; especially Chapter 2).

- 18 Informal conversation between one of authors, Drucilla K. Barker, and an undocumented migrant man.
- 19 See Enloe, 2004, especially Chapter 3, for further exposition of this point.
- 20 The Millennium Development Goals were eight goals to agreed to by the United Nations Development Programme to free people from poverty and multiple deprivations (UNDP, 2013).
- 21 *Small Changes* is the title of Marge Piercy's 1973 novel.

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Social Protection

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The idea of social protection could refer to something as narrow as social policies targeted to assist people living in poverty, or to something as broad as the welfare regime.¹ In this chapter I consider social protection as those public interventions aimed to i) protect people against certain circumstances, such as the lack of income in old age (pension system), the lack of health (health insurance and public health systems), the lack of income owing to the loss of employment (unemployment benefit), the cost of raising children (family allowances); and also to ii) provide goods and services that guarantee basic human rights, such as the right to education (public education), meet the right to a minimum standard of living (poverty reduction strategies), and meet the right to minimum material living conditions (public sanitation, housing policies).

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the gender implications of social protection. I will do so by: i) explaining the link between the social protection system, the fiscal policy and the macroeconomic environment;

ii) analysing the gender assumptions and implications of the central bodies of social protection systems (i.e. pension systems and poverty reduction strategies); iii) highlighting gender issues that are pending within social protection designs. While I intend to provide a general analysis that would apply to most countries in the world, the arguments build strongly on the Latin American experience.

SOCIAL PROTECTION, FISCAL POLICY AND THE MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The social protection system could be situated at the meso level of analysis, as a key institution that links economic policy (the macro level) with people's lives (the micro level).² It is part of the fiscal policy: data from many countries in the world demonstrate that social public spending accounts for a high share of the total public budget.³ This means that the spending side of fiscal

policies is heavily determined by the design of social protection systems and vice versa; fiscal policy is a determinant of the possibilities in the social protection arena.

The reactions of many governments to economic crises are a good example of the link between fiscal policy and social protection systems. When debt commitments are heavy, social spending cuts are frequent. When sustaining public spending becomes difficult owing to lower revenues (for instance, because of the economy's slowdown, tax collection decreases), social benefits are reduced both in coverage and in level. Recent history provides us with some extreme examples, such as the privatization of social protection institutions (for example, the pension system in Argentina during the 1990s) or the cut back of benefits (as in the case of Spain in the current crisis from 2007–08 onwards). In contrast, some countries understood that expanding social protection might be a way to face crises and implement countercyclical fiscal policies (as it is the case in the many Latin American countries that decided to expand coverage and/or increase benefits of conditional cash transfers programmes to face the effects of the current global economic crisis and prevent the deterioration of economic activity).

Elson and Cagatay (2000) have demonstrated the gender implications of the link between economic policy and the social arena in their development of the idea of a deflationary bias in macroeconomic policy, referring to the approach that prioritizes compliance with financial markets (through high interest rates, tight monetary policies and fiscal restraint) and prevents governments from dealing effectively with the social consequences of recession (which have disproportionately negative effects on women).⁴

As part of fiscal policy, social protection systems are also a key tool for economic redistribution, the extent of which will depend on benefits coverage and level, as well as on how social institutions are financed. As far as social protection reproduces market social stratification,⁵ which happens when entitlements are

connected to people's participation in the labour market, redistribution is weak. Conversely, when social protection entitlements are distributed with more universal criteria, redistribution is easier to achieve. Insofar as women keep facing stronger barriers to labour market participation compared with men, we could expect that gender gaps will narrow with more universal and inclusive social protection designs.

Importantly, when social protection institutions are financed by a regressive tax system, whatever redistribution gained through the expenditure side of fiscal policy will be compensated by the unequal redistribution of the tax burden.⁶ This takes place when the burden of taxes is heavier for the lower-income population, which is often the case when the tax system relies on indirect taxation (mostly general taxes on consumption).⁷

The potential ability of social protection systems to affect distribution is a key dimension when we are concerned about advancing equality, including gender equality. Besides, social protection institutions are central for gender equality insofar as they affect (and could change for better or worse) people's everyday lives. Feminist scholars have highlighted several key dimensions which need to be taken into account in order to fully understand this. In this chapter I will develop a specific aspect of each in turn.

First, the assumptions underlying social protection institutions, the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver distinction being the strongest one, should be highlighted. The belief that families organize themselves with a husband-income-provider and a wife-care-provider (through unpaid care work) was central for building social institutions organized through the labour market (Folbre, 1994; Himmelweit, 2000; Staab, 2012). As far as it was believed that full male employment was feasible, social protection would entail universal coverage by distributing benefits to employed men and, through them, to dependent members of the family (wife and children). Demographic changes, the extension of informal employment and the unequal participation

of men and women in the labour market point to the limits of this strategy (Lewis, 2001; Chant and Pedwell, 2008; Kabeer, 2008; Lund and Srinivas, 2000; Arriagada, 2007; Heintz and Lund, 2011). Analysis of pension systems, which I will develop in the next section, provides a good example of this.

Second, the importance of women's employment (in decent jobs) in fostering their economic autonomy calls for a consideration of the positive side of 'commodification' in welfare regimes (Orloff, 1993; Hobson, 1990; Martínez Franzoni, 2007). From this perspective, social protection institutions should help in liberating women from dependency on both the husband and the state. This last issue is key when analysing poverty alleviation policies as part of social protection systems, insofar as previous decades' developments in this arena seem to have deepened maternalism of social policy and state dependency of poor women (Molyneux, 2007; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2012). My analysis of conditional cash transfer programmes addresses this issue.

Third, the whole range of welfare provided at the household level by unpaid care work should be made visible in social protection institutions analysis (Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Razavi, 2007). The full recognition of women's unpaid care work is important in order to fully understand: i) the social organization of care and the way in which household care provision compensates for state care provision deficits and market care provision stratification (Razavi, 2007); ii) the restrictions to female labour market participation owing to work-life balance issues (Antonopoulos, 2008; Mahon, 2011; ILO-UNDP, 2009); and iii) the tensions between aging societies, weak care services and increased female labour market participation⁸ (Benería, 2008). The call for redistribution of care as a pending social protection issue is developed further below.

Fourth, the importance of social services provision as source of social citizenship should also be highlighted. Universal access

to education, health and care services (for children and adults) is key to facing inequalities and guaranteeing basic living conditions, as well as developing more equal economic opportunities for men and women (Jenson, 2009; Huber and Stephens, 2000). To this effect, I close the analysis with the idea of a social protection floor as a reasonable strategy to build more gender equitable social protection systems.

SOCIAL INSURANCE AND GENDER EQUALITY: THE CASE OF PENSION SYSTEMS

Pension systems account for most of public expenditure in many countries of the world. It is the main social protection intervention, whose goal is to guarantee some basic standard of living for older people, who are, because of their age, excluded from the labour market. They are governed by a wide range of rules that guide eligibility, benefit levels, financing and administration. Their design can reproduce, exacerbate or mitigate gender inequalities produced elsewhere (Arza, 2012).

We can identify four elements of pension systems design that are of particular importance when analysing coverage and benefits, and differences in these between women and men (Barr and Diamond, 2009). The first one is the contributory requirements and vesting periods that individuals need to fulfil in order to access the benefit. Contributory designs linked to the labour market that require a large number of years of contribution to qualify for the benefit penalize women, who have shorter and more unstable labour trajectories (than men) and in consequence weaker contributory records. Women's lower labour participation rate and, in many cases, higher unemployment rate, as well as the prevalence of informality among women's employment, explain their poorer contributory records and the fact that pension systems reproduce labour market gender inequalities.

The second of these key elements of pension systems is the benefit formula. This

might be a flat-rate benefit (determined by the administrative authority), an earnings-related benefit (as a given share of earnings during active life) or a benefit dependent on individual savings and life expectancy. The first two cases take place in defined-benefit systems, and the last one in defined-contribution systems. Given the fact that women's labour earnings are lower than those of men (owing to gender discrimination in the labour market), both earnings-related benefits and the benefit formula built on individual savings penalize women. Other features related to the benefit formula might also have gender implications (Arza, 2012). One such feature is the relative importance of different pillars in multi-pillar systems, which might imply that women concentrate in the first universal, state-provided minimum pillar, which is usually implemented at a poverty income level. Another is the rules regarding how to compensate for career breaks, for example, by including (or not) the possibility for mothers to compute additional years of contribution by child.⁹ A third one is the existence and value of minimum pension guarantees, which might allow access to benefit even with insufficient contributions. And, lastly, there is the use of gender-specific mortality tables, which usually penalize women, who live longer lives.

The third key element is the mechanism for indexation, which could vary between indexes to follow inflation and/or to follow wage growth, or even to follow GDP growth. The implementation of the correct indexation mechanism is important for every pensioner, but particularly for those who live longer lives (mostly women), and therefore face a higher risk of their pension benefit deteriorating over time.

The fourth key element is retirement age. In many countries women have a lower legal retirement age than men. This might be understood as positive discrimination towards women, because they can retire earlier in life and receive pension benefits for a longer period of time. However, it also results in women having a shorter period of time to accumulate savings in their pension

savings accounts, and/or having less time to reach higher incomes in their careers, which is important in earnings-related benefit systems. On top of this, women live longer and have to distribute their savings over a longer period of time. Therefore, the difference in retirement age between women and men might result in gender discrimination in both benefit level and in the standard of living between men and women living on their pension benefits.

The features of pension systems interact with labour market dynamics as well as with socio-demographic factors, producing different impacts for women and men, but also for different socio-economic groups. Poor women, who face greater barriers to labour market participation, experience poor labour market trajectories (with long periods of inactivity, combined with informal employment with low earnings) and in many cases are lone mothers, might be the most vulnerable and disadvantaged population group, as well as that less attended by pension systems.

Pension systems might also be based on some gender-biased assumptions. That is the case, for example, of those systems built on the Bismarckian model (which is the case in many European and some Latin American countries). In this model access to pension benefits connects with labour market and family organization. The assumption is that every household will have a breadwinner (usually the man) and a carer (usually the woman). The former will participate in the labour market, holding a formal job. His contribution records will provide him, and the dependent members of the family, with social protection coverage. In this case, women are entitled to the benefit not directly but only through her relationship with the man (her husband), including access to a survivor pension in case of widowhood. Both the failure of the labour market to fulfil the goal of full formal employment and changes in family structure and in women's economic participation have challenged this type of assumption.

Informal workers and those who devote much of their time to unpaid care work (in

terms of both every day time and the life cycle) are therefore penalized by pension systems. Women are over-represented in both groups, and in consequence suffer from this limitation in pension coverage. Latin American countries provide good examples. In Chile, for instance, pension system coverage for men over 65 years old reaches 74.1 per cent but decreases to 57.5 per cent in the case of women over 65; in Panama, 61.5 per cent of men over 65 receive pension benefits, but only 33.5 per cent of women do; in Costa Rica, the difference is 65.3 per cent to 37.3 per cent; in Paraguay, where the coverage of pension system is very low both for men and women, it nevertheless reaches 19.6 per cent for men as against only 8.9 per cent for women.¹⁰

Earnings differentials in the labour market also result in gender inequality in the pension system, particularly in earnings-related models. This is the case in systems based on individual accounts because, owing to gender bias in the labour market, women are able to accumulate less money than men along their working trajectories. It is also the case when the benefit is estimated based on the final salary, because men have steeper earnings profiles than women do.

For example, during the 1990s, as part of structural adjustment policies, pension reforms were promoted in many countries in the Global South. The advice was to move from pay-as-you-go benefit-defined systems to contribution-defined systems with individual accounts. In these systems, people are expected to save for their retirement, accumulating mandatory contributions in individual accounts. The benefit received once the retirement age is reached depends on the assets accumulated (individual accumulation plus return on pension savings) and the estimated life expectancy.¹¹ This shift aggravated gender bias in pension systems both at the accumulation stage and at the withdrawal stage¹² – in the first case, because women are able to accumulate less assets than men, and, in the second case, because women live longer than men; in a fully actuarial system this means that monthly benefits will be lower. In brief,

owing to the combination of pension systems design, labour market dynamic, family composition and sexual division of labour, women have less access to pension systems and/or receive weaker pension benefits. Pension reforms implemented as part of structural adjustment policies worsened this situation. Many people, particularly women, remain unprotected by pension systems.

Recently, some countries have started to undo this path and implemented partial or more comprehensive reforms with the aim of extending pension coverage and improving pension benefits. In some cases gender issues were explicitly handled, as in the case of Chile (Yáñez, 2010; Arenas de Mesa, 2010) and Bolivia (Marco Navarro, 2011). In others they were not, though the reforms could in any case benefit women. There are three guiding principles of these ‘counter-reforms’ (or reform of the reform): first, the extension of coverage by distributing benefits to people with insufficient contributory records; second, the guarantee of a minimum monetary level for the benefit; and, third, the recognition of unpaid care work in the determination of the benefit. Once again, Latin America provides useful examples.

As regards the first issue, pension coverage, Chile created as part of the 2008 pension system reform a new solidarity pillar, the Basic Solidarity Pension (*Pensión Básica Solidaria*), to provide basic protection to all individuals regardless of their contributory records. All Chilean residents aged 65 or over who live in households that belong to the three lowest-income quintiles are entitled to this pillar. Taking a more universal line, Bolivia implemented in 2007 the Dignity Pension (*Renta Dignidad*), a universal non-contributory benefit extended to all Bolivian residents aged 60 or over. In this case, all are individually entitled to the benefit, regardless of household income. In Argentina in 2007 the government implemented the Pension Inclusion Plan (*Plan de Inclusión Previsional*), which made it possible for older people with insufficient or no contributory record to receive a pension

benefit.¹³ In all these national cases women were the largest beneficiaries for this coverage extension, given that they were over-represented among people with insufficient contributory records.

Regarding the second issue (guarantee of a minimum monetary level), Chile incorporated a second component of the solidarity pillar, the Solidarity Pension Contribution (*Aporte Previsional Solidario – APS*), which provides coverage to people who, despite having some contributing records, receive a very low benefit from the contributory system. With the APS, beneficiaries complement the pension benefit to reach some guaranteed threshold. In the case of Bolivia, in the 2010 pension reform a semi-contributory system (*Pensión Solidaria de Vejez*) was implemented, which integrates a solidarity component with individual accounts. It provides better benefit guarantees for workers with some (though not enough) contributory records and low earnings. This scheme is available for people with at least ten years of contribution. Again, in all these national cases, with earnings-related benefit determination, women benefited mostly because of their lower labour earnings.

Regarding the third element (recognition of unpaid care work), reforms try to compensate for the income loss produced by the restrictions to labour participation imposed by care responsibilities. Thus, Chile incorporated the Child Bonus (*Bono por Hijo*), a child credit (per child born alive) that is deposited in women's individual accounts and helps to increase their pension entitlement. The benefit is equivalent to 18 months of contribution on a minimum wage (plus accrued interest). Bolivia also included a child credit in the 2010 pension reform. In this case, it is equivalent to one year of contributions per child, up to a maximum of three years. This child credit can be used by women to reach the minimum contributory record for the *Pensión Solidaria de Vejez* (ten years), or to obtain a higher benefit replacement rate from the solidarity pillar, or to anticipate retirement (Arza, 2012).

Uruguay also included a child credit, also equivalent to one year of contribution per child born alive.¹⁴

All these measures are good examples and positive steps forward towards more inclusive pension systems. However, in many cases they still cannot avoid the segmentation of the pension system, with women concentrated among those receiving the lowest benefits (those derived from the solidarity pillars). Additionally, in the cases where access to solidarity benefits is conditional on household income or family composition, women's economic autonomy in old age is still threatened.

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES: THE SOCIAL MATERNALISM TRAP OF CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS PROGRAMMES

There are almost 1000 million people in the world who live in poverty.¹⁵ Women are over-represented among them and face a higher probability of suffering poverty. This is, therefore, an important issue to be tackled by social protection systems. In fact, during recent decades, some relevant interventions were designed and implemented with this goal. In this context, conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs) become the most important and widespread poverty reduction strategy.¹⁶

While in practice CCTs may have different characteristics, they all share at least two common features: i) a cash benefit, that in some cases can be accompanied by other types of intervention (such as job training workshops, awareness-raising events on sensitive social issues such as violence against women or sexual and reproductive health, community activities, etc.); and ii) a set of conditionalities that must be accomplished to receive the benefit. The conditionalities most typically relate to children school attendance and health care. These two defining characteristics of CCTs are based on the following public policy goals (World Bank, 2009: i) income poverty alleviation in the short run;

ii) improvement of children's human capital in an attempt to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty. Additionally, the third shared feature of CCTs is that the benefit is usually paid to the woman (the mother) in the household. The rationale behind this is that women's altruism guarantees that the money will be used to children's benefit.

The World Bank (2009) provides an interesting summary of the theoretical economic foundation of the three basic characteristics of CCTs: money (cash), targeting and conditionality. The shift from in-kind transfers to cash transfers took place because it was believed that 'in the majority of developing countries government spending on infrastructure and public services often fails to reach the poorest citizens'.¹⁷ Besides, guaranteeing access to certain basic goods and services was not enough since, 'in practice, markets rarely function perfectly and sometimes fail in ways that impede the poor from being as productive as they could be through other means'. Finally, it was assumed that 'cash transfers can be adequate instruments to compensate families that suffer from inherent disadvantages'¹⁸ (World Bank, 2009: 49–50).

During the 1990s this view was accompanied by a shift in favour of demand-based subsidies instead of supply-based subsidies – that is, the strengthening of efforts in favour of deregulation and liberalization of the pricing system for basic goods and services together with the provision of subsidies to the population not able to have access to such resources (because of their poverty status).¹⁹ These subsidies increase the demand, allowing more people to purchase goods at market prices, which guarantees optimal (in neoclassical terms) production of these goods and services.

Thus, state paternalism, claiming that it is better to directly distribute goods and services to meet the basic needs of the poor, opposes the idea that it is better to directly distribute monetary income as a means of guaranteeing a more efficient use of public resources. However, the new policy paradigm does not constitute the abandonment of

paternalism or of the need for the state to guide the behaviour of the poor. On the contrary, they represent a reconfiguration of the same idea. As I explain in what follows, conditionalities came into place to operationalize this transformation.

According to the World Bank (2009) three types of arguments exist in favour of conditionalities. First, there is a set of arguments classifiable under the category of 'micro foundations of paternalism', which result in a modern version of the traditional notion that 'the government may know better what is best for the poor than the poor themselves, at least in some regard'. Second, there is a political-economic argument that contends that these programmes can gain more support from the population (taxpayers) if conditionalities are imposed. Third, there is a social efficiency argument, which alleges that conditionalities help beneficiaries to most closely approach the social optimum through investment in human capital.

CCTs' conditionalities (linked to children's school attendance and health check-ups) are punitive in design. This means that failure to comply with them results in loss (total or partial, more or less automatically) of benefits. It is understood that this is necessary in order to guarantee that the poor population effectively invests in children's human capital. Why is it necessary for the state to 'force' this consumption (of education and health care) on the poor? Because it is assumed that poor population may be exposed to inaccurate information regarding the benefits of education or the appropriate ways to accumulate human capital (World Bank, 2009). For instance, the poor may believe that upward mobility is more dependent upon the social contacts they may have rather than on their level of education, or that formal education requires high levels of natural ability, which they do not possess. It may be that parents with limited education fail to recognize the virtues of education for their children. Compulsory school attendance for children in exchange for cash benefits offsets these faults and misconceptions.

Additionally, even when accurate information about academic performance is readily available, conflicts of interest may arise between mothers and fathers (concerning who makes the educational decisions for their children) and the children themselves. This derives from the fact that parents aspire to a lower education level than that which their children would choose for themselves if the decision were theirs. This phenomenon is known as 'incomplete parental altruism'. Again, the obligation to invest in education would correct the inadequacies resulting from this incomplete altruism. Technically, what is stated is that parents discount their children's future income as a consequence of educational investment at a greater rate than what is real, and therefore decide to invest less in education. This occurs because they value themselves as more useful than their children. Moreover, mothers are the effective recipients of the benefit because their altruism is believed to be 'less incomplete'.²⁰

The political-economic argument in favour of conditionalities appears to be a way to diffuse the tension originating from the ideology that considers that those who receive cash transfers (the poor population) are presumed to be inherently different from the population that finances these programmes (tax payers). The presumption is that taxpayers will be more eager to financially support transfers to those poor people who demonstrate substantial efforts to supersede their poverty status. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between the poor who are deserving of assistance and those who are not. Benefits are given to those who express significant interest in leaving their poverty status, rather than to those persons who intend to receive aid without exerting any effort.

This view is reinforced by an entrenched idea from the 1990s that links the individual responsibility of poor people to their own poverty as well as to the possibilities to overcome it. This is linked to the notion of shared responsibility (or co-responsibility). Conditionalities would enforce the role of the poor in overcoming their own poverty through the establishment of a mutual contract between

the beneficiary and the state (on behalf of society, or taxpayers).

Regarding the social efficiency arguments in favour of conditionalities, it is assumed that the two elements that constitute the requirements (education and health care) are goods whose consumption brings a social benefit, in addition to the individual benefit received by the person who consumes them. Investment in education and health creates positive externalities. For example, vaccination helps to decrease the spread of disease and, with that, lowers the social and fiscal costs of population health care. Education promotes more responsible behaviour (for example, with respect to hygiene and personal care, addictions, etc.), which, again, may result in a reduction of the costs of fighting social problems (World Bank, 2009). Therefore, there is not only an individual gain in these investments but also the possibility of achieving optimum social outcomes.

Targeting is the last common characteristic of CCTs, even when some of them are targeted to very extensive populations.²¹ The concept of targeting became synonymous with selective social spending (Sojo, 1990). Selectivity became necessary owing to budget constraints and public spending adjustments during the 1990s. From this perspective, social policies concerning poverty must be subsidiary, to the extent that the key to reducing poverty is economic growth and the trickle-down of its benefits to the whole population. Developed within the context of regional structural adjustment programmes and the 'privatization' of social policy, this view postulates that, unlike universal provision, which is characterized as very costly and largely ineffective, targeting would allow governments to reduce poverty more cheaply and efficiently. Sojo (2007) believes that CCTs constitute a revamped version of the reductionist-targeting model. This updated view attributes greater importance to the causes of poverty and therefore considers that public interventions should establish mutually reinforcing relations between income, education, health and human capital.

Feminist objections to CCTs' economic fundamentals can easily be identified. The first one is the very consideration of the targeted population as economic rational individuals who deliberately search for optimality. This view denies the existence of social and cultural determinants of individual behaviour, including gender relations. The second objection refers to the notion of co-responsibility, which considers the poor population to be, to some extent, responsible for their own situation and for the possibilities of overcoming it. This view also denies that women's greater probability of suffering poverty does not derive principally from their own characteristics or from their attitudes (regarding investment in their own human capital or their participation in the labour market), but it is heavily explained by those mechanisms within socio-economic dynamics that exclude women (to a greater extent than men) from access to economic resources.

Having said this, what can we conclude from CCTs' experience in practice regarding their capacity to provide social protection to the poor population and to improve women's lives? Once more, I will rely on the Latin American experience to draw some insights. CCT programmes have become widespread in the region in the past fifteen years. Currently, there are almost forty CCT programmes operating in eighteen countries in the region and reaching more than 25 million households, which is to say 113 million people (19 per cent of the region's population). On average, they account for an equivalent of 0.4 per cent of GDP, although both the magnitude and the coverage of the programmes differ substantially between countries.²² Existing literature and analysis provide some evidence to evaluate the impact of CCTs on the following dimensions: i) access to income and improvement of material living conditions; ii) the role of women in intra-household decision-making processes; iii) unpaid care work; and iv) labour market participation.²³

In all cases, and despite the substantial variation in their coverage and extent, CCTs

in Latin America have a positive impact on household income, thus improving the material living conditions not only for children and adolescents but also for women and the remaining members of the household.²⁴ For women, who are 'instrumental beneficiaries'²⁵ of these programmes, CCTs comprise a source of income they would otherwise lack. In most cases, women receiving these transfers come from weak and unstable work trajectories with recurrent situations of inactivity and unemployment combined with participation in diverse forms of precarious employment. Therefore, CCTs grant them for the first time a stable and predictable income. Women effectively use the money for their children's needs. In many cases it is used to cover strictly basic needs, but in others it serves to strengthen household savings or to support the acquisition of assets otherwise unattainable (such as more expensive clothing, household appliances/domestic equipment, home repairing, etc.).

The implications of CCT programmes for the relative position of women within the household and in intra-household decision-making processes over economic resources are ambiguous. First, CCTs impose a certain paternalism by guiding the possible use of the transfer (to attend to children's needs)²⁶ and suggesting specific behavioural patterns (investing in children's human capital), as evidenced by the conditionalities. Second, however, surveys among the programmes' beneficiaries attest that women recognize a sense of appropriation of the benefit, considering it an income rightly earned in return for assuring compliance with the conditionalities (Espinosa, 2006). Therefore, they use the resources not only for the needs of their children but also to buy what they want to; they feel empowered to take the decisions on how to use this money. Third, evidence shows that CCT programmes have not significantly changed the decision-making process within households. Women continue to take most of the decisions regarding the use of resources for 'domestic' expenses, while men keep responsibility for decisions concerning

larger-scale or 'more important' expenses. Moreover, it can be observed that the existence of additional resources for household expenses seems to weaken men's sense of obligation toward contributing to the family budget, thus unlocking resources for other purposes they deem a priority.

The care dimension is deeply ingrained in CCTs in the region. The conditionalities imposed by these programmes are linked to care activities (education and health care), and there is a clear transfer of the responsibility in this regard from the state to women. This is one of CCTs' most controversial implications when analysed from the point of view of women's autonomy, because this type of conditionality reinforces women's role as caregiver. In this vein, the first objection refers to the symbolic and subjective weight of the conditionalities, which reproduce the notion of women being the ones responsible for childcare. Besides, CCTs can inflict increased pressure on women's time use. This occurs when compliance with the conditionalities in fact requires additional efforts, for instance, owing to previously nonexistent travel and waiting time needed to procure school assistance certificates or for health checks for their children. Pressure on women's time use is even worse if additional activities are considered, such as attendance at informative sessions, awareness-raising workshops and the like. All of this is reinforced by a traditional sexual division of labour; as Martínez Franzoni and Voorend (2008) and Molyneux (2007) point out, the CCTs' paradigm does not aim at transforming the sexual division of labour but rather at taking advantage of it. Furthermore, this is accompanied by a certain maternalism in the social services, which address women only in their reproductive and caregiver role.

Finally, it is important to consider CCTs' impact on women's labour participation. While not expecting CCTs to promote women's labour market participation, it is a feminist aspiration that they would not obstruct it at the very least. The analyses of existing evidence in this regard are not conclusive.

When receiving the benefit is not incompatible with paid work, CCTs do not seem to promote the abandonment of economic activity. Rather, it is presumed that the resources granted by CCTs would be incorporated as part of a combination of income sources that account for households' survival strategies. When the access conditions to the programme are strict in terms of income threshold or unemployment, CCTs might encourage informal jobs. When labour opportunities are weak (which is the case for most beneficiaries, who have low educational attainments, limited work experience, low qualifications and high levels of domestic responsibilities), CCTs might encourage women's inactivity.

In brief, the analysis of the impacts of CCTs on women's lives shows that they have their strengths and weaknesses. Among the former, the allocation of a stable and permanent income can be highlighted, as can the improvement of material living conditions and the perception of some kind of independent income that improves women's self-esteem and their relative position in the decision-making process concerning the use of resources (Espinosa, 2006). Among the weaknesses, the consolidation of the caregiver role for women has to be emphasized, as does the related traditional gendered division of labour that constrains women's participation in the labour market and their access to additional income. Additionally, CCTs strengthen a meritocratic and maternalistic approach to social policy that limits women's rights.

CARE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: THE PENDING CASE

As noted above, care issues have permeated the social policy agenda. For better (as in the case of some kind of recognition of unpaid care work in pension systems) or for worse (the consolidation of women's care role that takes place in the context of CCTs), they are unavoidable at present. However, care issues have not yet been regarded as a priority in social protection

reforms. Gender equity and improvements in women's lives will not happen unless there is a real transformation in the social organization of care and the sexual division of labour. For that, public policies are needed.

Much research has already been produced that demonstrates the current unequal distribution of care responsibilities and the unjust social organization of care.²⁷ The relevance of care provision in countries with high incidence of HIV/AIDS has also been highlighted.²⁸ Feminist economists have also revealed the relevance of care to economic dynamic and development patterns.²⁹ The need to tackle care issues in order to promote women's paid work and increase women's autonomy was also already exposed.³⁰

Why and how, therefore, should care issues be integrated in the social protection debate and policies (see also Himmelweit and Plomien, this volume)? Considering care as a central element in social development, it is possible to argue that it should gain a status of human right³¹ and therefore be guaranteed by the state and public policy interventions. As Razavi (2010: 5) says, 'to overcome the gender bias that is deeply entrenched in systems of social protection and to make citizenship truly inclusive, care must become a dimension of citizenship with rights that are equal to those that are attached to employment'. Care provision should become another key core element of social protection systems, as education, health care, cash transfers and pensions are today. From a feminist perspective and taking into account the human rights approach, the provision of care as part of social protection systems should follow two simultaneous goals: first, the protection of the right to care, which implies the right to receive care, the right to provide care and the right to devolve care responsibilities or to decide which is the most suitable care-providing organization in each case; second, to allow for the transformation of the current social organization of care, through redistributing care responsibilities in a more egalitarian pattern.

Given the inequality of current social organization of care the provision of universal

child, elder and disabled care services is imperative. This might be guaranteed by different types of public intervention: universal public education and care for infants and pre-school-aged children; extension of school day hours; day-care services (for both children and the elderly); monetary subsidies that might be used to purchase care services in the market; extension of parental leaves; regulation of labour relations in order to guarantee a proper balance between the flexible organization of production and the flexible organization of time to balance family and work obligations; monetary subsidies to provide for carers at home; and regulation of carers' working conditions.

In policy debates in many countries it is usually argued that any of these types of interventions requires a public budget expansion that is not easy to afford. While this might be true, two observations are necessary. First, tax reforms to provide for more public revenues as well as for a more progressive distribution of the tax burden is also necessary in many countries, not only to finance social protection system reforms (including the expansion of care services) but also as a matter of distributive justice. Second, there will be no way to improve equity without the state commitment. This is not possible to sustain without fiscal resources. Thus, care as a pending social protection matter is strongly connected with fiscal and macroeconomic issues.

Finally, it is important to take into account not only the cost of care provision but also the social and economic cost of not providing for care. The burden of unpaid care work on women's time prevents their full economic participation with individual negative consequence (lack of income, social protection, economic autonomy, etc.) but also with economic systemic consequences, as there is a part of the labour force that is underutilized. Besides, the difficulty in balancing work and family life imposes additional pressure on workers' time that results in lower productivity because of recurrent absenteeism, job rotation, stress at the workplace and so on. It is clear,

then, that including care as a key matter of social protection systems is not a matter of women, but a social and economic central issue.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS AND BEYOND

Some of the issues discussed above have been taken on board, at international level, by the UN perspective on social protection floors³² which proposes a set of social policies designed to guarantee income security and access to essential social services for all, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups and protecting and empowering people across the life cycle. It includes guarantees of: a) basic income security, in the form of various social transfers (in cash or in kind) such as pensions for the elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits, income support benefits and/or employment guarantees and services for the unemployed and working poor; and b) universal access to essential affordable social services in the areas of health, water and sanitation, education, food security, housing and others defined according to national priorities. 'The concept is part of a two-dimensional strategy for the extension of social security, comprising a basic set of social guarantees for all (horizontal dimension), and the gradual implementation of higher standards (vertical dimension)' (ILO, 2011: xxiii).

The search for the guarantee of this social protection floor is intended to go together with the promotion of decent work. It is intended to be a global umbrella under which each country would establish thresholds and policy strategies. Therefore, countries have the flexibility to adopt this proposal according to their respective needs and capabilities. As my analysis above suggests, the idea of the universal coverage of resources, including goods (food, housing), services (education, sanitation) and income, is important from women's perspective. Because it implies disconnecting such access from labour market status it therefore avoids the replication of labour market

gender bias. This way, women, who face larger obstacles to labour market participation and access to decent work, could enjoy access to basic rights more easily.

However, there are a couple of shortfalls. First, care is not explicitly considered among the essentials and thus a substantial part of women's concerns is not given priority. Second, there is a risk of building dual social protection systems with a set of solid benefits for people in formal work (as workers' rights) while providing the rest with minimum social services and poor cash transfers subject to behavioural requirements in the form of conditionalities. Given that the feminist agenda is an equality agenda, the feminist goal for social protection systems would be to overcome any form of segmentation and secure universal access to benefits and coverage. To this effect, a shift might be needed from social protection as a system to provide protection from adversity and risk to a system that improves capabilities, distributes power and guarantees better lives for everyone.

NOTES

- 1 For a gender approach to the welfare regime debate see Sainsbury, 1996; 1999; Lewis, 1992; 1997; Orloff, 1996; 2009; Esping-Andersen, 2002.
- 2 For further analysis of the social content of economic policy, see Elson, 2004 and Holmes and Jones, 2009.
- 3 According to ECLAC, in most Latin American countries this share is up to 50 per cent of total expenditure (www.interwp.cepal.org/sisgen/ConsultaIntegrada.asp?idIndicador=2192&idioma=e). For international data see: www.ifpri.org/book-39/ourwork/programs/priorities-public-investment/speed-database. Accessed on 7 July 2013.
- 4 In this context, women might suffer significant job losses and assume greater responsibilities in cushioning their families from the negative effects of recession. For a framework analysis of the gender impacts of economic crisis, see Elson, 2011. For empirical examples see Seguino, 2011; Esquivel et al., 2012 and the forthcoming *Feminist Economics* 19(3) Special Issue on Critical and Feminist Perspectives on Financial and Economic Crisis.

- 5 This idea has been developed in the literature regarding the notion of decommodification. For more on this see Esping-Andersen, 1990 and Martínez Franzoni, 2007.
- 6 For gender analysis of the tax system see Grown and Valodia, 2010 and Huber, 2006.
- 7 Since members of the poor population spend more of their income on consumption (because they have little capacity for saving), the relative burden of consumption taxes is heavier for them than for richer people, who spend a lower share of their income on consumption.
- 8 Calling attention to the 'care crisis' (Pérez Orozco, 2006).
- 9 Which is the case, for example, in Chile (a monetary compensation) and in Uruguay (recognition of one year of contribution per child).
- 10 Figures taken from ECLAC for the year 2007, previous to the pension reforms described later in this chapter (www.websie.eclac.cl/sisgen/ConsultaIntegrada.asp?idAplicacion=11&idioma=e). Accessed on 7 July 2013.
- 11 In some cases, a public defined-benefit or minimum benefit guarantee is received on top of the self-financed pension from individual accounts (Arza, 2012).
- 12 For evidence on these impacts in the Latin American case see Arza, 2012; Yáñez, 2010 Mesa-Lago, 2006; Marco Navarro, 2011.
- 13 People who get access to pension systems via this programme are deducted a small share of the benefit as repayment of unpaid contributions. To learn more about the Argentinean case see Arza, 2011.
- 14 To learn more about the Uruguayan case see Aguirre and Scuro Somma, 2010.
- 15 As estimated by UNDP, considering people who live under US \$1 per day.
- 16 In what follows I take many of the arguments developed in Molyneux, 2007; 2008; Molyneux and Thomson, 2011; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2012; Veras Soares and Silva, 2010 and many Latin American references quoted later in this section.
- 17 This points, for example, to the large electricity subsidies that were in place in Mexico immediately prior to the implementation of the Programa Oportunidades. 'The proponents of TMC's pioneer program, Oportunidades, specifically presented the initiative as an alternative to the electricity and tortilla subsidies that would be more equitable (would reach a larger segment of the poor population) and more efficient (eliminating price distortions caused by the subsidies)' (World Bank, 2009: 49).
- 18 'Differences associated with circumstances not under the individual's control (such as race, gender, or ethnicity) are often considered to be "opportunity inequalities"' (World Bank, 2009: 50).
- 19 All of which was part of the structural adjustment policies recipes.
- 20 The World Bank (2009: 62) references abundant literature demonstrating that when mothers have more control over resources they allot more money to food, health and their children's education.
- 21 For example, according to ECLAC, 'Bolsa Familia', the Brazilian CCT, covers 13.7 million households and 56.5 million people.
- 22 Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011 provide a complete and updated panorama of CCTs in Latin America.
- 23 For this analysis I follow Adato, 2000; Armas Dávila, 2004; Arriagada and Mathivet, 2007; Espinosa, 2006; Maldonado et al., 2006; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2008; Molyneux, 2007; Rivera et al., 2006; Suárez and Libardoni, 2007; and Rodríguez Enriquez, 2011.
- 24 This is true even when the low level of the benefit does not allow households to exit poverty.
- 25 The idea of 'instrumental beneficiaries' refers to the fact that women receive the benefit on behalf of those who are in fact entitled to it (their sons and daughters).
- 26 In some cases, the transfer's use is externally conditioned to specific types of consumption. For example, when the income is distributed via banking cards, the use is electronically restricted to allow only for the purchase of certain types of goods.
- 27 For a comparative analysis of national cases of the social organization of care see *Development and Change* Special Issue (2011), 42(4).
- 28 For an overview of the issue see Waring et al., 2011.
- 29 Picchio, 2001 provides an excellent framework for this conceptualization.
- 30 For an updated analysis of this issue see ILO–UNDP, 2009.
- 31 Pautassi, 2007 provides solid arguments along these lines.
- 32 For a full description of this perspective see ILO, 2011.

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War, Violence and Militarization

Marsha Henry

INTRODUCTION

The fact that women and men are equally – albeit differently – affected by organized violence must be highlighted, and the complex, multi-faceted and ambivalent roles played by women and men during times of war and peace must be engaged with to avoid the perpetuation of incomplete understandings. (Hudson, 2005: 162)

Issues of war, violence and militarization dominate contemporary mediascapes, and yet it is that men and women experience these in distinctive ways that are often obscured or, conversely, overemphasized in much popular culture. How discourses of violence and war play out on the bodies of male and female subjects has been the concern of feminist scholars interested in asking critical gender questions such as ‘where are the women?’ (Enloe, 1983; 1998; 2000); ‘are militarized masculinities to blame?’ (Higate, 2003); and ‘do women offer a less violent approach to conflict?’ (Ruddick, 1980; Elshstain, 1982).

Sharp questioning and a continued curiosity (Enloe, 2004) characterize much of the discussion that has resulted in gender being made visible in conventional International Relations (IR) literature. This section of the Handbook attempts to address some of the key concerns of scholars interested in addressing the ways in which gender is produced and reproduced in violent and martial contexts. It is also about assessing the different impacts of such processes on gendered subjects. A central theme in the literature on war, violence and militarization is that gender is productive of different identities and influences the different experiences of subjects within these contexts. For example, how are men and women represented in accounts of violence and war? In many cases, as is outlined in all the chapters, men and women appear in stock and overly simplistic ways, with men appearing as the perpetrators and women as the victims of violence. Yet these stereotypes are problematic because they have the power

to shape social relations and the potential international responses to gendered inequalities and gender-based violence within conflict and post-conflict settings. The discursive production of women as inherently peaceful gives power to patriarchal norms which assign women an inferior status in society. Similarly, representations of men as 'natural' warriors may give rise to problematic explanations for sexual violence in war, where perpetrators are seen to be essentially violent because they are in male bodies. It is clear, from the chapters in this section, that representations both reinforce and challenge conventional understandings of gender, especially as discussed in the 'exceptional' examples of rape as a weapon of war, gender-based genocide, the hyper-masculine warrior, the female terrorist and the macho female soldier. But what are the links between these figurations and the agency of the gendered subjects in the fields of war and politics? How do individuals negotiate varied gender regimes and navigate their way across social boundaries? The accounts in this section demonstrate that it is difficult to think about how gender features symbolically in discourses of war, violence and militarization and the effect of such discourses on the everyday practices and experiences of those marked as gendered subjects. Women and men do not have equal status in most societies and, as such, it is not surprising that both the form and content of violence that is enacted on male and female bodies is not only different but is afforded unequal value. Consequently, the avenues open to women and men to resist the power of militarization, to exercise agency, even to perpetrate violence or counter the deadly effects of civil conflict and the practice of new wars (Kaldor, 2007), are determined by the structuring of gender, race, class, age, sexuality and ability in a given context.

In the first chapter Laura Sjoberg begins by drawing on historical narratives to demonstrate the longstanding association of women as 'beautiful souls' in need of *protection* from 'just warriors' (=men). Here Sjoberg argues that the story of the Trojan

War can be used to exemplify the enduring rescue (and rescuer) myths that pervade much of the literature on war. Yet she illustrates that there are also female figures within these powerful stories that go against the grain as instigators, violent participants in and governors of fighting and as symbols of success or failure. What Sjoberg's excellent introduction to the topics of gender, war and militarization demonstrates is that while conventional ideas about gender endure, gendered subjects have never inhabited expected roles comfortably. Sjoberg provides a detailed account of where dominant ideas about women and peace and men and martiality originate (Euro-centric mythology and philosophy) and the ways in which these powerful narratives have travelled in a truly transnational fashion. But, by revisiting the accounts of women and men in historical and mythical accounts, Sjoberg unearths the complexities and ambiguities of women's position within and against war cultures. Women are what wars are fought for, she argues, but this does not mean that 'real' women have always been devoid of agency. This is evidenced in the many examples of women who have acted as 'instigators, violent participants, governors of fighting and markers of success or failure' (Sjoberg, this volume). In these four roles, women have demonstrated that mythical ideas of women as beautiful souls in need of protection may continue to have symbolic currency, but, in practice, women have been transgressing traditional war and gender expectations for a considerable amount of time. But what are the implications of such theoretical and empirical insights? Sjoberg suggests at least two. First, the asymmetry of war is maintained and reinforced because women and men are relegated to the historical spheres from which they have symbolically evolved. This means that ideas about women as property and a nation's honour being feminized continue to result in a continued gendered divide in war thinking and practice. Recent US-led invasions in Afghanistan, flimsily based on the idea of Afghan women being in

need of 'rescue', serve as a stunning example of the enduring nature of such militarized discourses. Second, Sjoberg suggests that justifications for intervention and war are often premised upon these ideas and have significantly gendered consequences for the both individual gendered subjects and nation states. Wars, she suggests, can no longer ethically be waged around such mythical ideas about men as just warriors and traditional protectors and women as beautiful souls in need of protection. Rather, she advocates that people (regardless of gender) should be the central focus of justifying wars and interventions, such that no one nation's women or men are elevated beyond another's. These gendered myths, she suggests, may distract from national reflexivity and ethical engagement; instead she argues for more complex positions in war that give priority to witnessing. These, she argues, may actually result in a more complex retelling of narratives of war, which consequently is more just for men and for women.

Jane Parpart and Kevin Partridge follow on from Sjoberg with an examination of what the popular concept of militarized masculinities has done and has the potential to do in contemporary gender and international relations thinking. Importantly, they provide an overview of the concepts of hegemonic and militarized masculinities and their theoretical significance in enabling patriarchal power to remain a significant force in contemporary social (and global) relations. However, they highlight some of the significant limitations of such theorization when it comes to empirical studies of men and women's lives, particularly in the military. Here they emphasize the slippage that occurs between theories of gender ideals and types, and the everyday practices of soldiers on the ground. As Sjoberg points out, not all men and women simply conform to the gender expectations of them in any given context – and this is also true of Parpart and Partridge's exploration of militarized masculinities in situ. They pose questions about those men who do not perform conventional militarized masculinities

and those women who successful do. What are the social consequences for those gendered subjects within the 'total' institution of the military? They argue that, while the concept of militarized masculinity (as a form of hegemonic masculinity) is useful for looking at some of men's practices within the military, it does not adequately account for alternative, 'failed' or female masculinities. Parpart and Partridge examine a range of empirical examples from around the world in order to demonstrate that the consequences of not taking up dominant forms of masculinity (or femininity) in any given context vary considerably. This variation is important to document, they suggest, for a number of reasons. First, it may show that a broader range of possible gendered positions is available to both men and women. Second, it prevents scholars from casually and causally assigning masculinity as a simple explanation for all forms of militarized violence. Third, it may lead to a better and more complex understanding of 'why we fight' wars and the consequences of those wars on the lives of both men and women in, and outside of, militaries (Parpart and Partridge, this volume).

Adam Jones' chapter on gender, genocide and gendercide draws readers back into spaces of violence where the importance of taking gender seriously takes on a lethal significance. Jones outlines the history of the development of thinking on genocide, which has historically been wedded to 'national' groups as the main target of mass killings. He acknowledges the importance of the introduction of the concept of genocide to contemporary fields of International Relations, Human Rights and Law, and foregrounds some of the ways in which such thinking has been integrated into international conventions and other governance mechanisms. However, he reflects on his earlier work, which questions why genocidal actions that have been gender-selective have taken so long to be included within definitions of genocide. Here he highlights how the targeting of males or females on the basis of their gender alone (or in addition to an idea of belonging to a specific national group) has been historically

used in the practice of war, yet the international outrage and response has been muted. Drawing on the work of philosopher Mary Anne Warren (1985), Jones combines the theorizing on genocide with work on gender discrimination and gender fatalities, including acts of sex-specific infanticide and abortion. In doing so, Jones promotes the concept of *gendercide*, originally utilized by Warren to emphasize the fatal effects of various social practices for women but now employed to encompass all gender-based violence leading to death. Jones rightly outlines how gendering genocide discussions needs to account for both the earlier historical neglect of women's specific plight within wars and men's experiences in more recent conflicts such as in Rwanda and Kosovo. Through these empirical examples of war violence against civilians, Jones reflects on the ways in which gendered groups have been specifically selected for genocidal practices. He argues for a continued vigilance regarding and documentation of women as a vulnerable group in violent conflicts, but suggests that boys and men need attention, too. Here he outlines, by drawing on his earlier work and that of Charli Carpenter (2002; 2003; 2005; 2006), that boys and men have often faced gender-specific forms of violence in war. Boys who are forcibly recruited to rape, kill and destroy have not only been forced to perpetrate gender-based violence on family and kin but have often been victims of gender-based violence themselves. Jones argues that, while women as victims of gendercide has gained attention within humanitarian discourses, there is still a reluctance to focus on boys and men as victimized. This is also reflected by the victims themselves, who are reluctant, because of a number of social taboos, to see public forms of redress. Jones' chapter demonstrates that it is important to continue to articulate the parameters of gendered accounts of war violence, and especially genocide, especially if such forms of violence form the basis for international intervention and policy response.

Following on from Jones, Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern turn attention to the

subject of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. From the outset, they trouble our understandings of sexual violence in conflict and argue that, without a more comprehensive assessment of the way sexual violence in conflict is understood, no effective form of prevention or reduction will ensue. Eriksson Baaz and Stern set out to provide a comprehensive account of some of the different ways in which sexual violence in conflict has been theorized and provide five ways of explaining such war practices. These include biological, situational, cultural, tactical and structural explanations for why sexual violence takes place in conflict (and post-conflict) situations. The first explanatory frame is that sexual violence in war is perpetrated by male soldiers as a 'release' from being deprived of biological 'needs', normal sexual access and conjugal familial relations. They easily counter this type of explanation by illustrating its gender-essentializing tendencies, which they suggest 'naturalizes and thus depoliticizes rape in war' (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, this volume). More importantly, variation in the occurrence of rape in different conflicts counters such oversimplistic explanations. The second explanation is that sexual violence occurs because of the unique, extreme and exceptional context of active war. A 'haze' or 'craziness' of war creates a situation where soldiers behave beyond the confines of military expectations, act irrationally and compensate for the traumas of killing and witnessing. Again they challenge this explanation by suggesting that rape is not just a byproduct of war and that such explanations do not suggest why *sexual* violence features so prominently in some wars less so in others. The third explanation is centred on the idea that military cultures provide the fertile ground for such violent acts. Not only is military culture steeped in violence, but it is premised upon very specific expectations of gender. Here militarized masculinities, and the uptake of such dominant practice models, require individual soldiers to engage in aggressive and violence behaviours in order

to conform to their occupational and social milieus. Furthermore, such institutional cultures reify gendered ideas about where honour lies within and across nations, and as such gives fuel to the idea that the enemy nation can be symbolically and physically depleted through violence afflicted on women's bodies. Nevertheless, such thinking does not permeate all soldiers' everyday lives. In reality, military cultures, although gendered, represent a more diverse array of militarized gendered positions. As Parpart and Partridge suggest, ideas about militarized masculinities and the way in which soldiers see themselves are often discordant. Another problem with this approach is that it brackets off sexual violence from other forms of violence. Again, this does not provide insight into the continuities of violences, nor does it provide evidence for any universal understanding of what gender is and how it works in all settings. The fourth explanation is one that puts forward rape as a weapon or tactic of war. Eriksson Baaz and Stern argue that sexual violence has often been understood to be a tool of military doctrine and strategy. In many empirical cases sexual violence has been utilized in a systematic and organized fashion, such as in the contexts of Bosnia and Rwanda. However, they raise questions about how deep research has been to look at the roots of such practices within overall war campaigns. Although these practices appear systematic and organized this is not in and of itself proof that they have been integrated into military tactics from the onset of any conflict. Furthermore, there is an embedded assumption within this explanation that discipline, hierarchy and chains of command work effectively in most contexts – it may well be that rapes occur outside of the military mandates and practices, when soldiers decide to exert their own forms of military power. Finally, Eriksson Baaz and Stern outline the more structural explanation of sexual violence in conflict as universal and inevitable in militarized settings. To counter this they examine the 'motivations, structure and ideologies of armed groups in order to

understand why rape occurs (or does not occur)' (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, this volume). Here they rightly argue that variation in sexual violence across the global conflict map demonstrates that sexual violence is not an inevitable aspect of warfare. Rather, they show that, where warring groups have a long-term strategy of political independence and governance, sexual violence is viewed as counter-productive to struggle. In summarizing the limitations of such explanations Eriksson Baaz and Stern suggest a few further issues that need to be considered in developing new approaches to sexual violence in war. These include taking into account the spectrum of violence that individuals experience or are engaged in perpetuating across both war and peace times. This enables an account of the persistence of gender inequalities and imbalances across time and space, and does not isolate sexual violence to the war space alone. Additionally, like Jones, they advocate taking the experiences of boys and men into account when attempting to understand sexualized practices of war. Finally, they suggest that how we represent sexual violence in war is of utmost importance to how we intend to respond. Simplistic or reductionist accounts will lead to problematic responses and since the international governance community is beginning to take notice, their chapter is an important indictment of the need to take seriously how we theorize all the complexities of sexual violence.

The final chapter, by Swati Parashar, turns the lens more generally onto a range of issues covered in this section. Parashar begins with a specific focus on understanding an increasing interest in terrorism with a need to account for the very specific gendered consequences of such political discourses. Parashar highlights the circulation of popular images of political violence in contemporary mediascapes, showcasing the dominant perspectives of the hypermasculinized 'other', but more recently also those female subjects who are involved in resistance, guerilla and terrorist activities. Parashar advocates for rethinking political violence by beginning with everyday

experiences, starting from the lives of women themselves in order to better understand the ways in which gendered inequalities structure the lives of so many in insecure societies. This focus on the *everyday* enables feminist scholars to understand both the quotidian experiences of women and girls as well as the *exceptional* political violence that some are engaged in. Parashar shows, through a number of empirical examples, that women have acted outside of gendered expectations and have taken up arms within a number of revolutionary struggles. These new roles are not restricted to combat, as many have worked to support revolutionary activities – cooking, cleaning and carrying weapons and money (Parashar, this volume). Women's involvement, as Sjoberg highlights, has a long history and a contested one. Here Parashar outlines the contradictory roles women have played, embracing conventional ideologies of motherhood while subverting gender hierarchies and norms by acting out. Parashar then shifts focus to reflect upon the importance of taking into account the role of emotions in writing about such topics. Feminist scholars documenting women's marginal place within practices of violence and/or resistance may face a number of methodological and ethical dilemmas. How can female perpetrators be written about without valorizing their acts of violence? How can men be understood as victims without drawing attention away from those so often marginalized by social structures such as patriarchy?

This section of the Handbook outlines some of the key issues, concepts and ideas to emerge from the growing contributions of feminist scholars to international relations in terms of how gender figures in the representations of women as agents of war and violence (Sjoberg; Parashar) and as victims of various forms of violence (Jones; Stern and Eriksson Baaz), as well as the corresponding ways in which men and masculinity are formed through processes of militarization (Parpart and Partridge). It forms an essential guide to understanding the latest thinking on gender and the way we understand and

respond to gender in our frequently violent and militarized global world.

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Female Combatants, Feminism, and Just War

Laura Sjoberg

'The fairest woman in the world was Helen, the daughter of Zeus and Leda ... such was the report of her beauty that not a young prince in Greece but wanted to marry her' (Hamilton, 1940: 181). So starts the story of the Trojan War in Edith Hamilton's famed summary of ancient Greek mythology. All of Helen's suitors had taken an oath to protect whoever was chosen as her husband, and her father chose Menelaus, who then became King of Sparta as a result of the marriage (1940: 141). Though most suitors respected this oath, Paris, after having reached a deal with the Goddess Athena for the fairest woman of all, took Helen from her home. Though Menelaus had trusted Paris, Paris kidnapped Helen, and Menelaus called on all of Greece to help him rescue her (1940: 181). The Greeks were eager to come to Menelaus' aid to save Helen and redress the insult, and gathered a fighting force of a thousand ships (1940: 181–3). The war continued for nine years, where 'victory wavered, now to this side, now to that' (1940: 183). During those nine years the Trojans were said to have fought bravely

under Hector (1940: 191). As the Trojans fought, 'to them came Helen, the cause of all that agony and death, yet as they looked at her, they could not feel any blame' because 'men must fight for such as she' (1940: 184). When Troy finally fell, its 'last sacrifice was accomplished' and 'all that was left of Troy was a band of helpless captive women' (1940: 201, 200). Not to forget what they came for, the Greeks 'got her [Helen] out of the city and took her to Menelaus. He received her gladly, and as he sailed for Greece she was with him' (1940: 200).

In this narrative, as in many war narratives, brave men fight wars to save and care for innocent women: those innocent women are both the cause for which men fight and the spoils for fighting bravely and obtaining victory. A decade-long war of great destruction was fought over the unjust taking of a beautiful woman, and the Greeks could not but fight until she had been saved. Throughout a number of different stories of the Trojan War, the Greek men's masculinity is tied to their ability to defend and avenge the 'stealing'

of Helen. Many men die for the cause, while others are injured. In Troy, the ultimate price is paid for this violation of Helen – the Trojan homeland is destroyed and all of the men are killed. Jean Elshtain (1987) identified these gender roles as male ‘just warriors’ who fight bravely for the righteous cause of the protection of female ‘beautiful souls’, for which they receive honor and confirmation of their masculinity. This story of brave men fighting for innocent women is neither unique to the Trojan War nor coincidental when compared with inherited notions of what men are and what women are in either political or social relations. In fact, for as long as stories of just wars have existed,¹ many of the narratives of justice, bravery and, ultimately, victory have had a number of common elements. Often, one of those elements has been the gender of the participants. The brave, chivalrous, ‘just warrior’ must be a man (and ‘real men’ are just warriors) who is making the world safe for the innocent, passive, ‘beautiful soul’, who must be a woman.

This chapter argues that this familiar story of what happens to women in wars – that they are its victims, helpless and in need of masculine protection – simultaneously constitutes both gender roles in society writ large and the war-justificatory logic of ‘just war’ theory. These (gendered) inherited narratives serve a number of functions: to justify wars, to persuade men to fight in them, to contribute to nationalist discourses and to construct the parameters of the celebration of victories. I argue, however, that this gendered narrative has always been more symbolic than real: women have been participants in wars throughout history as protesters; as support staff and personnel; as biological and cultural reproducers of state, nation and military; as soldiers; and as terrorists or other insurgents. Stories of war that talk about ‘just warriors’ and ‘beautiful souls’ (in those exact terms or not) perpetuate unreality and abstraction about war, as well as gender-subordinating ideas about *men* and *women*. A feminist analysis of just war theorizing shows the

gendered logic underlying the justification of wars and the ways that war and gender subordination reinforce and replicate each other. Paying attention to female combatants and the gendered significations of just war that make their existence discursively impossible, this chapter critiques just war theory and practice through a feminist lense.

It does so first by using the time-tested feminist method of asking where the women are, both in the story of the Trojan War and in inherited gendered just war narratives more generally (Enloe, 1993). Identifying where women are included and where they are excluded gives a picture of the discrepancy between inherited notions of what women are and their lived experiences. After presenting this information, it reviews feminist work that argues that gender stereotypes about women in their told roles in war not only subordinate women (and men) on the basis of gender but also serve a legitimating function for actors making wars. The chapter then addresses the role of female combatants in order to deconstruct just war’s women-as-victims trope, and argues that gender analysis points out not just surface-level but fundamental flaws in both theories of just war and the performative employment of just war discourses by actors in the international arena who make war(s). It then discusses some of the empirically and theoretically problematic implications of this gendered paradox and suggests alternative ways to think both about war and justice in war that escape the traps of these traditional gender tropes.

HELEN AND OTHER BEAUTIFUL SOULS

Helen’s is not the only story of wars being fought for the protection of women. Indeed, feminist scholars have pointed out that traditional narratives about why people fight wars have been gendered, both implicitly and explicitly. Nancy Huston (1983) went so far as to argue that women’s particular role in

war-victory stories is consistent across most wars, and that war-victory stories are a crucial part of war efforts, both to convince citizens to approve wars and to convince soldiers to fight them. Huston contended that what is consistent across most war-victory stories is a plot that includes the masculinized hero-figure fighting against an evil enemy for honor, which is often intimately implicated in the protection of the women seen as belonging to the hero. The protagonists in this narrative are just warriors, be they Greeks such as Melenaus, Odysseus or Achilles or other heroes of great stories of battle. Those just warriors are heroes because they protect (their) women (war's feminized 'others') from the evils of the enemy. This enemy seeks to hurt and destroy everything that is good and pure about the hero's society, which is embodied in the heroes' 'women and children' (see Enloe, 1993). The just warrior then puts aside his fear, gives freely of his time and risks his life for the good of the 'beautiful soul'. He does so in part because he is interested in the spoils of honor and bravery, but also because it is a duty associated with masculinity, in which not all men are expected to serve as protectors but all men are expected to be potential protectors, and those who refuse or are incapable are classified as less masculine (Stiehm, 1983). Just warriors, then, go to war not to kill but to die for the cause – the cause of the 'beautiful soul' (Elshtain, 1992, citing Hegel 1977).

In this story, women such as Helen are the cause that men die for. They are 'at once the object of the fighting and the just purpose of the war' (Sjoberg, 2010: 3). When a just warrior's women are threatened war is necessary, because not only war but life itself would be unthinkable without innocent women and the purity and beauty that they represent. In this narrative, the question of *what women do* is not only irrelevant but not to be explored. The purity of the beautiful soul would be interrupted by her having agency in the story. Helen is an example of this. Hamilton's and others' accounts of the taking of Helen are

ambiguous about *what Helen did*. Quoting a verse from *The Iliad*, Hamilton characterizes Paris as 'stealing away a woman' and explains that 'Menelaus got back to find Helen gone' (Hamilton, 1940: 181). Words such as kidnapping or abduction are never used in the discussion of how Helen ended up in Troy. This might be because much of Greek mythology suggests that Helen went with Paris willingly – that she fell in love with him and ran away with him, rather than being abducted (see Homer's *Iliad*). While tales conflict on whether the Gods constructed Helen's willingness and consent, no accounts of Helen's trip to Troy suggest that she resisted going, and some suggest that she decided that she would prefer to live with Paris in Troy (e.g., Lloyd, 1984). But that decision was, in the story of the Trojan War, not Helen's to make. The very constitution of the 'beautiful soul' trope relies on women's innocence of the cause of the war. A 'beautiful soul' cannot be partly responsible or manipulated into cooperation or complicity, since it is her purity and virtue that mark her as worth fighting over. As such, Helen could not have run away with Paris; she had to have been 'taken' or 'stolen', and thereby she was at once innocent of the crime that inspired the war and the cause for which the war was fought.

In this way, the 'beautiful soul' narrative constitutes women as the spoils of wars – they are 'fragile, removed from reality, and in need of the protection provided by men' (Sjoberg, 2010: 3, citing Elshtain, 1992). Providing that protection is key to men's masculinities. As such, 'these gendered derivations rest wars' nobility (and therefore the honor that individuals can expect as a reward for fighting) on the degree to which wars can claim to serve the function of protecting the innocent (women, nations, and states) for whom they are fought' (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011: 167). Protecting women thus serves as a justification for, and provides legitimacy for, the fighting of wars, both for individual soldiers and for masculinized states characterized as the protectors of their (helpless) citizens (Young, 2003: 4).

While the ‘beautiful soul’ at first appears to be wars’ passive other, her lack of agency in war narratives does not diminish the crucial nature of her part. Though the beautiful soul neither makes nor fights wars, her role as that which is fought for makes both the making and the fighting of wars unimaginable without her. In fact, the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative ‘can be characterized as creating the condition of possibility for war, since innocent, defenseless women (and their love and virtue) *to fight for* motivate men to fight, even absent other motivation’ (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011: 167; citing Huston, 1983: 279, emphasis in the original).

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? THE OTHER WOMEN OF GREECE AND TROY

While previous feminist analysis (e.g., Sjoberg, 2010; Huston, 1983; Ling, 1996) has located Helen of Troy as an exemplar of the ‘beautiful soul’ trope of women’s dual innocence of and cause for fighting wars, other women in the story of the Trojan War are neglected. Yet, even in Hamilton’s abbreviated account, there are many. Paris is ‘given’ Helen as a result of the ‘judgment of Paris’, where he chose the most beautiful goddess among three (Hera, the wife of Zeus and the goddess of women and marriage; Athena, the goddess of war; and Aphrodite, the goddess of love) based on their bribes rather than their beauty (Hamilton, 1940: 179). In this way, the three jealous goddesses’ petty disputes about beauty are framed as the catalyst that motivated Paris to take Helen, starting the war. This jealous fight is caused by Eris, the ‘evil goddess of Discord,’ who created a golden apple identifying the fairest goddess, which the goddesses then fought over (1940: 179).

After Helen was taken to Troy, all Greek men were called on to defend Menelaus and help to recapture Helen from the Trojans. When the fighting force was assembled, not all of the expected warriors were present. Instead, ‘Achilles was kept back by his

mother’, who ‘made him wear women’s clothes and hide among the maidens’ (1940: 181). Achilles was discovered, however, by Odysseus, and brought to war (1940: 182). Yet another woman, however, got in the way of the making of the war. The wind was blowing in a direction that made it impossible for the Greeks to sail towards Troy, and the would-be fighters discovered why:

Artemis was angry. One of her beloved wild creatures, a hare, had been slain by the Greeks, together with her young, and the only way to calm the wind and ensure a safe voyage to Troy was to appease her by sacrificing to her a royal maiden, Iphigenia, the eldest daughter of the Commander in Chief, Agamemnon. (1940: 182)

The goddess Artemis demanded the killing of the Commander’s daughter, and ‘he dared the deed, slaying his child to help a war’ (1940: 182, citing *The Iliad*). According to the legend, ‘she died and the north wind ceased to blow and the Greek ships sailed out over a quiet sea’ (1940: 182).

Women are crucial to many war-fighting stories as well. For example, Achilles knew he would not survive the war because he had been told by his mother that ‘you shall not long endure’ (1940: 183). Hector, a Trojan commander, told his wife Andromache that he ‘fought under the shadow of certain death’ (1940: 183). Later in the war she begged him not to make her a widow and ‘he refused her gently’ because ‘he could not be a coward’ (1940: 186). After the war had gone back and forth for nine years, the tide turned ‘in favor of the Trojans’ and ‘again a woman was the reason’, because Achilles and Agamemnon were fighting over Chryseis, the daughter of Apollo’s priest (1940: 183). The Greeks had ‘carried off’ Chryseis and given her to Agamemnon, and her father had protested and asked for her return (1940: 183). Agamemnon had refused, and Apollo was punishing the Greeks for the abduction, which was understood as abuse against Apollo’s priest (1940: 183). Ultimately, following the advice of a prophet, Agamemnon

agreed to return her, but insisted that he would have another woman instead (1940: 184). The other woman that Agamemnon had his sights set on also played a prominent role in the story. Her name was Briseis, and she was the 'prize of honor' of Achilles, who swore that 'Agamemnon would pay dearly for the deed' (1940: 184). At this slight, Achilles' mother 'was as angry as he' and 'asked Zeus to give success to the Trojans' (1940: 184).

During the War Menelaus and Paris duelled and Paris won, 'so Agamemnon spoke to both armies, declaring that Menelaus was the victor ... and the Trojans would have agreed if Athena, at Hera's prompting, had not interfered' to get a Trojan to break the truce (1940: 185). Again, a woman played a role in continuing the war. Athena not only caused the ensuing battle but fought in it, and refused to spare 'the wives of the Trojans and the little children' (1940: 186). Still, Zeus, hearing Achilles' cry, helped the Trojans defeat the Greeks in the battle, causing Agamemnon to 'send Briseis back' and 'with her many other splendid gifts' (1940: 187). When Achilles turned down the gift ('I am a man dishonored') and the Greeks were losing another battle, Hera intervened again, seducing Zeus though 'she detested him', so that 'love overcame his heart' and he briefly stopped helping the Trojans (1940: 189). On Zeus' return, though, the Greeks suffered the loss of one of Achilles' friends and his armor. Achilles, looking for revenge, once again turned to his mother for help to build armor and amass strength (1940: 189). A reformed Achilles 'felt shame ... and he told them that he saw his own exceeding folly in allowing the loss of a mere girl to make him forget everything else' (1940: 190).

The tide turned against the Trojans again, and Paris was wounded. He 'begged to be carried to Oenone, the nymph' who 'knew a magic cure drug to cure any ailment' but 'she refused' since 'his desertion of her ... could not be forgiven in a member because of his need' (1940: 195). A woman, then, had a role in causing Paris' death as well.

In the final battle of the war, where the Greeks infiltrated the city using the Trojan horse, the Greeks were so successful that 'all that was left of Troy was a band of helpless women' who were taken into slavery after their children were taken away and killed. Hector's wife Andromache puts a face on these women as she tries to keep her child, but she, in Virgil's words, is but 'one woman and a slave and no help anywhere' and so gives into the demand that 'the boy must die – be thrown down from the towering wall of Troy' (1940: 201).

Many of the women in this story, like Helen, play the role of the stereotypical 'beautiful soul' – war's potential victim and potential prize, and therefore one for whom wars are fought. Briseis plays almost as important a role in the story as Helen in that regard – the conflict between two Greek leaders over who will have her as a prize of honor becomes a key reason that the Greeks start to lose the war and a key cause of the gods' interference against the Greeks. With her, Achilles is a great hero; without her, he is 'dishonored' and unwilling to fight. That unwillingness, though it should not be mistaken for inability, led to the death of his friend and the near-defeat of the Greeks because Achilles, the great hero, needed to defend his masculinity after his 'prize of honor' was taken from him. Briseis, then, is innocent of the cause of the conflict (she does not choose who to be with), but nonetheless a key cause not only of the fighting but of the result. Chryseis, though she plays a lesser role in the story, has similar signification – where she is to Agamemnon what Briseis is to Achilles. Andromache, wife of Hector, is another woman who fits within the stereotypical 'beautiful soul' trope. She is not directly fought over, but she is fought *for* – her husband fights to protect her and her son, despite her pleas that he stay at home to be a husband and a father. The harrowing tale of what happens to her at the end of the story serves as a warning to men who fail at protection – the humiliating and

tragic result of the slavery of their women and the death of their children awaits. To these women, the Greek and Trojan heroes of the story are 'just warriors' who look to defend and protect their innocent 'beautiful souls'. This need to protect makes fighting, as Hector says, not optional, because one would not want to be a coward. Like Helen, Briseis, Chryseis and Andromache serve jointly as that which must be protected at all cost to get honor and that which motivates the (continued) fighting of the war.

Still, as the narrative above notes, these women are by no means the only women who play prominent roles in the story. First, women (goddesses) *cause* the war, by promising Paris that he can have Helen if he decides that Aphrodite is the fairest goddess. In various tellings of the story, the women's jealousy and concern for beauty caused the 'judgment of Paris', which ultimately caused the war. The blame seems to rest purely on the goddesses (and the goddess Eris who provoked their fight), despite the fact that Paris had choices among a number of bribes and knew that the one he chose (Helen) was married. Though Paris often gets blamed for breaking Menelaus' trust, his feeling of entitlement to Helen seems to consistently be blamed on the goddesses whose vanity started the Trojan War. Second, women *prolonged* the war when it could have ended. Several times over the course of the story both Hera and Athena will not let the war end without the total destruction of Troy, interfering to make the conflict both more violent and more ruthless than it would have played out otherwise. Athena's violence is often direct – she either injures men on the battlefield or helps men to injure other men. Hera's violence, though, is sexual in nature – she seduces Zeus to distract him from intervening in the conflict, causing the Greeks to be able to take the advantage in the battle again. Third, women *controlled* whether and how men fought and whether and how they died. Early in the war Achilles was stopped from going to battle by his mother, who hid him and deceived military commanders by having

him dress in drag. She stayed close to Achilles throughout the war, providing not only permission to fight but advice, armor and weapons. Oenone, portrayed as having the power to have saved Paris' life, elected not to, decided that he would die, and watched him die. Achilles' mother's interference was that of a mother's protection; Oenone's was that of a woman scorned. Finally, women's bodies were the tablets on which victory and defeat were written. Whether it was the sacrifice of Iphigenia to provide safe passage or the enslavement of the women of Troy at the end of the war, the advantage (and moral high ground) in the Trojan War can be tracked by what happens to the bodies of the women.

These four roles – instigators, violent participants, those who govern fighting and markers of success or failure – are very different than the stereotypical idea that women are at once the passive receivers and victims of wars and the causes for which those wars are fought. While there are 'beautiful souls' to be found in the Trojan War, there are other, perhaps even equally prominent, roles that women play. So how is it that the 'beautiful soul' narrative of women's involvement in this war (and other wars) comes to dominate these other stories? One answer might be that the violent roles in which women participate in this war are still sex-specific. The women who fight, who interfere and who control still do so *as women*. Some of them (such as Achilles' mother or the more traditional Andromache) are motivated by motherhood, while others (such as Oenone or Hera) are motivated by love interests gone wrong. As Caron Gentry and I (2007; 2008) have noted, women's participation in wars as anything other than victims is often discarded as anomalous and sex-specific through the use of narratives about motherhood, monstrosity or sexuality. These narratives contribute to making women who do not meet the 'beautiful soul' stereotype invisible. Whatever women's roles are in wars, they are doled out on the basis of sex – the 'good' women are the 'beautiful souls', while the women whose femininity has gone awry play other, less

appropriate, less recognized roles as trouble-makers and instigators of violence in men.

WARS' OTHER WOMEN: DECONSTRUCTING THE BEAUTIFUL SOUL

The less visible women in narratives of the Trojan War are in good company. Though gendered narratives of wars tell women as passive victims whose existence motivates and inspires men's fighting, there is evidence from the Trojan War to the present day that this stereotype has never been accurate. Even as war stories have consistently cast women as 'beautiful souls' women have participated in wars – not only as instigators, violent participants, those who govern fighting and markers of success and failure but also as soldiers, support personnel, strategists, guerrillas, planners and fighters. Women have played these roles in most of the major wars and conflicts in the history of the world, and this is not a phenomenon limited to the formal inclusion of women in many state militaries in the twenty-first century. In fact, feminist work has identified literally hundreds of wars, from the Trojan War to the Vikings' battles to modern interstate wars (Sjoberg, 2010: 6), in which women have served militaries not only as support personnel but as fighters. Women do not only fight, they also (like Achilles' mother) motivate men to fight, either directly (Goldstein, 2001) or indirectly (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011).

This is not to say that women are neither at risk in wars nor disproportionately wars' victims. Quite the contrary: the old and rehearsed story about women as victims of war is old and rehearsed because it is, in important ways, true. In times of war and conflict, rape and domestic violence rates go up, while the availability of nutrition and health care to women goes down (see, e.g., Cohn, 2012). Women are kidnapped and abused by soldiers, vulnerable in refugee camps and comprise the majority of civilian casualties of war. Conservative and dictatorial governments

abuse women's rights and deprive them of their dignity. In times of upheaval, women bear the brunt of changes to how life works politically, socially, economically and medically, and are expected to greet these new realities with the willingness to serve as physical and cultural reproducers for their homeland (Cohn, 2012).

Still, whether it is the Trojan War or the 'war on terror', this old and rehearsed story is both oversimplified and politically expedient. It is oversimplified because, in it, being a victim becomes the identity of women in political upheaval. The victim language hides that some women are not victims and that all women who are victims are more than victims. If one asks where the women are in wars and looks for the untold and de-emphasized stories, one finds a lot of women it is hard to see as victims – women soldiers, women commanders, women war criminals, women guerrillas, women terrorists and women rapists.

Considering conflicts just since the end of the Cold War, one can find women whose souls do not look so pure and beautiful. In the 1994 genocide in Rwanda more than 3000 women were charged with having committed physical violence (rape, beating, torture and murder). One leader, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the Minister of Women and Family Affairs, was convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for her part in commanding the rape of thousands of women and the death of thousands of Rwandans (see discussion in Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). Worlds away in the former Yugoslavia, female Serb President Bijana Plavsic is credited with being one of the originators of the idea of forced impregnation as a weapon against Bosnians and Croats to end the 'purity' of their races, for which she used her background as a geneticist. After a plea bargain with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia she was released from prison in 2009. Women have been terrorists and suicide bombers in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, the United Kingdom, Spain,

India, Indonesia and other places around the world. They have participated in guerilla fighting forces across a number of different conflicts, including but not limited to those in Sierra Leone, Colombia, Kashmir and Mexico. Women have been accused of the perpetration of wartime rape in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and other places throughout the world, and played a large role in both commanding and executing the prison violence at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, as well as a number of other war crimes during the 'war on terror'.

Women's participation in genocide, rape and war crimes is not their only wartime violence, however. Women also fill the roles often understood historically as the property of 'just warriors': fighting the just fight in protection of the feminized 'other' back home. These women are conscripts, soldiers, commanders, prisoners of war, killers and casualties. Yet the 'beautiful soul' narrative not only remains salient generally but continues to be applied to women who do not fit its fundamental mold. My previous work has outlined the ways that the 'beautiful soul' narrative has been applied to women soldiers and prisoners of war such as Jessica Lynch as well as women terrorists such as Chechnya's 'Black Widows' (Sjoberg, 2010).

Like Athena, Hera and Oenone, many women do not fit the damsel-in-distress model that the 'beautiful soul' stereotype relies on. Still, like those women, the women who do not fit the gender trope are either forced into the traditional mold or become secondary characters in the story where the 'beautiful soul' and the 'just warrior' play the leads. Feminist work has been critical of this tendency on two levels, critiquing these narratives for assuming that women's violence is both rare and differently motivated than men's violence and questioning why the just war stories account for only part of women's lived experience. In these accounts, the 'other women' who fight in, are complicit with, control or instigate wars 'have been characterized as anything but regular criminals or regular

soldiers or regular terrorists; they are captured in storied fantasies which deny women's agency and reify gender stereotypes and subordination' (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007: 7). As such, the very idea that women can be anything other than 'beautiful souls' becomes a discursive impossibility and the traditional ideas about femininity come to dominate the storytelling again. In these stories, women are beautiful, peaceful, innocent, mothering, caring and interdependent.

THE PROBLEMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE 'BEAUTIFUL SOUL' NARRATIVE FOR WOMEN

There are several general implications for the way that women are told in war(s) and in just war narratives as beautiful souls. One that is easily understood concerns the continuation of gender inequality. We may think of the 'beautiful soul' narrative as a limit on our understandings of women's capabilities more generally mapped onto a limit of our understanding of women's capabilities in war(s). It is, then, important to see that, if we really are to see women as equals of men, we must not harbor the mistaken impression that women can be men's equals without their flaws. Recognizing that women are often victimized by wars and uninvolved in the decisions to fight them does not have to stop us from recognizing the variety of different roles that women do play in war(s). Relatedly, recognizing gender inequality does not have to – and should not – lead to blindness towards the complexity of those oppressed. Instead, we will not see women's lived experiences in wars fully until we see their complexities – their strengths and flaws – rather than holding them captive to the old and rehearsed one-dimensional story about women as the victims. In this way, the 'beautiful soul' characterization of women, while it appears to put women in the special place of receiving protection without having to provide it, actually type-casts women into a subordinate role where the honor and glory of providing

protection (and therefore full citizenship in their respective states) is unavailable to them *de jure* and *de facto*.

That unavailability might be a trade-off worth making if actual protection from the violences of war were provided to the ‘beautiful souls’ that belong to just wars’ ‘just warriors’. But, as Huston warned us, many of these just war narratives are only that – narratives. They are idealized stories of what happens during wars that do not reflect whether protection is actually provided to women. While men fight (and fight bravely) to protect in these stories, the actual provision of protection is often less scrutinized, if it is scrutinized at all. It is for this reason that feminists have argued that ‘the civilian immunity principle appears to protect women, but instead is gender-subordinating and risks women’s lives’ (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011: 167, citing Elshain, 1987; Peach, 1994; Kinsella, 2005; Sjoberg, 2006a; 2006b).

Women’s lives are risked in part because they are presumed protected, whether or not they are actually protected. Feminist theorists have suggested that the ‘just warrior’/‘beautiful soul’ dichotomy in just war theorizing constitutes a ‘protection racket’ in which where women are guaranteed protection in wars by men who actually claim honor for protecting them, while the business of protection gets lost in the storytelling and actual protection is neglected (Peterson, 1977; Young, 2003). While one would expect wars to routinely spare ‘innocent’ and ‘virtuous’ women, the real impacts of war-fighting betray very different results. Women have always been and remain over-represented as war’s civilian casualties, victims of physical and sexual abuse and sufferers of long-term health and economic hardships (Enloe, 1993). In this way, the non-combatant immunity principle in just war theorizing performs its own illusion of protection and serves as a legitimating tale in a number of ways. First, it legitimates individual soldiers’ fighting of wars. Those individual soldiers derive honor (and, relatedly, masculinity) from fighting wars, which,

by definition, is honorable because of their protective mission. Second, and relatedly, it legitimates wars being fought by states and state actors. The cause of protecting innocent ‘womenandchildren’ is at once presumed both to be the cause of war (because one must fight to protect) and to be just. In this way, defining women as those in need of masculine protection is productive not only of a gender-subordinating limitation on women’s roles in war but also of war itself. Third, and finally, it justifies the existence of the state. This is because, in Lauren Wilcox’s words, the gendered stories of the immunity principle ‘may be said to legitimate the state’s constitution as the provider of security’ (Wilcox, 2011: 234). In other words, ‘states, by using protection discourses and self-identifying as just warrior, define their threatening behavior out of existence in public discourses of state identity, nationalism, and state interests’ (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011: 167). These violent effects are ‘humanized by their function of protecting women, because just warriors make the world safe for their women and protect other women who are being abused’ (Sjoberg, 2006a: 903). The role that the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative plays in legitimating war-fighting, war-making and state-preservation becomes another way that it risks women’s lives.

But recent feminist research has shown a third way that the gendered beautiful soul narrative risks women’s lives. Like Helen and Briseis (and like Iphigenia, the women who must be controlled by men for the fighting to succeed), the prized women who motivate men to fight wars become hotly contested in the fighting of wars and often the only object worth fighting for in the eyes of the soldier facing desperation. As Nancy Huston explains:

But there always remains at least *one* good reason to make the supreme sacrifice, at least *one* transcendental value that justified rushing headlong into as insane an undertaking as war; very often it is Woman; the virtue she represents for the warrior ... (Huston, 1983: 279)

If men who ‘plan, prepare for, conduct, conclude, describe, and define war’ (Stiehm, 1983: 245) are motivated by women for whom wars are (symbolically) planned, conducted and fought, then men will not fight wars without those women to protect. In previous feminist scholarship this was recognized as important to understanding why men are willing to kill men in battle and how both men and states come to make war (e.g., Young, 2003; Goldstein, 2001). Recent feminist research, however, has started to explore how this part of the immunity principle’s effects serves as an explanation for why men kill women; they are engaging in intentional civilian victimization.

If the *casus belli* for which just warriors fight is *their* women, it follows that one wins an absolute victory by exterminating women understood as ‘belonging’ to *the opponent*. The protection racket (Peterson, 1977) places women at the symbolic center of a society’s understanding of its purposes and motivations for war-fighting. The protection of the feminine is a crucial (if often unspoken) cause of war and justification for war. It is, therefore, a key crucial strategic consideration that states use when calculating their own or their opponent’s strengths or weaknesses.

Targeting women in war, then, would serve the function of taking away the opponent’s *casus belli* directly, making it strategically advantageous even when it is not materially beneficial in traditional calculations. Still, feminist theorizing points out another strategic function that targeting women serves, if attacking the *casus belli* of the opponent were not enough. Spike Peterson’s (2010) discussion of the process of feminization in global politics suggests that a belligerent will be seeking to validate its own masculinities as it works to ‘*feminize* other masculinities in conflict, maintaining power and control’ (Sjoberg, 2007: 87). One way a belligerent can do this is to render opponents’ men incapable of performing their own masculinity by targeting, killing and humiliating the women the opponent is

supposed to protect, thereby feminizing him. These theoretical insights suggest that when belligerents attack civilians they are actually looking to attack women. Still, civilians are not always women, and civilian casualties are not always women either (see Chesterman, 2001). Although many tactics aimed at civilians either directly target or disproportionately victimize women,² some have little gender-differential impact and some are targeted towards civilian men (e.g. Rohde, 1998). We are not arguing that states exclusively kill women when they attack civilians. Instead, we are arguing that states are symbolically and actually aiming at the women they see as their opponent’s center of gravity, while fighting to protect the women that are their own center of gravity. In the process, civilian men are killed and civilian men are protected, but only secondarily, since the ‘civilians’ who belligerent parties are interested in are gendered feminine. This constitutes a third way that, in addition to failing to reflect women’s lived experiences and limiting their roles, the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative risks women’s lives (the first two being the failure to actually provide protection and the legitimation of war(s)).

THE PROBLEMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE ‘BEAUTIFUL SOUL’ NARRATIVE FOR JUST WAR

In its original intent, just war theorizing is a set of ethical standards and rules designed to limit the making of wars (*jus ad bellum*) and the fighting of wars (*jus in bello*) both in quantity and in quality. The argument above suggests that the gendered just warrior/beautiful soul dichotomy in the non-combatant immunity principle means that the non-combatant immunity principle does not function in the expected, limiting ways. Instead, this gendered presentation of the non-combatant immunity principle performs three different interventions in the likelihood of going to war and the way that war is fought. First, it serves the function

that is most often and most popularly attributed to it, as *in bello* limiting, prescribing the ‘immunity’ of the ‘non-combatant’ women that are wars’ constitutive others. Second, and as importantly, though, the very level of value placed on that immunity and protection causes the immunity principle (if perhaps in an internally contradictory way) to serve as an *ad bellum* permissive logic, motivating not only individual fighters but the political entities that they fight on behalf of to make and continue wars. Third (and perhaps least considered in the literature), the non-combatant immunity principle serves as an *in bello* logic that encourages belligerents to violate it directly. The very ‘beautiful soul’ story that makes the immunity principle’s logic compelling to men who risk their lives to provide protection suggests that enemies would do well by targeting a belligerent’s women.

In other words, the gender tropes that have become fundamental to the civilian immunity principle’s salience render the internal logic of the immunity principle specifically and just war theorizing generally ‘fundamentally contradictory – key both to civilian protection and intentional civilian victimization’ (Sjoberg, 2013). The contention that it is key to civilian protection is well-rehearsed, where ‘just warriors’ fight for ‘beautiful souls’. The argument that it is key to intentional civilian victimization relies on turning the analytical focus from how ‘we’ treat ‘our’ ‘beautiful souls’ to how ‘we’ treat the enemy’s ‘beautiful souls’, and how ‘they’ treat ‘ours’. In other words:

the *raison d’être* of the ‘good guys’ is to provide beautiful souls protection, then opponents looking to attack those ‘good guys’ will look to interrupt, handicap, or demonstrate as false their protection narrative. Therefore, the ‘civilian’ in intentional civilian victimization is inexorably linked to the ‘civilian’ in civilian immunity – one man’s ‘beautiful soul’ is another man’s target, and for the same fundamental reasons. Here, ‘civilian’ is a proxy for ‘beautiful soul’ in strategic accounting, and the non-combatant immunity principle’s gendered logics justify attacking ‘civilians’. (Sjoberg, 2013)

I have argued elsewhere (Sjoberg and Peet, 2011; Sjoberg, 2013) that the gendered stories that provide this corruption to the immunity principle are both as old as the immunity principle itself and as fundamental as any other tenet of it. Since (and probably before) Helen of Troy, men have not only been fighting wars for women like Helen but writing their victories on the backs of women like Andromache. Their stories fit as well into the just warrior/beautiful soul trope as stories of women in contemporary wars.³ Feminist work has identified its salience in wars as diverse as the Trojan War (Elshtain, 1987) and the ‘war on terror’ (Enloe, 2010). This salience, across wars and conflicts, is evidence that the ‘just warrior’/‘beautiful soul’ dichotomy is a crucial part of narratives and performances of non-combatant immunity, rather than incidental to it. In other words,

Just war theorizing is a restrictive, limiting tradition *in bello* inasmuch as it says that combatants and civilians can and should be distinguished and only combatants should be attacked. But exploring the beautiful soul trope more shows that it has an *ad bellum* impact too, even though little work in just war theorizing really explicitly states or acknowledges it. Particularly, the elevated role that the innocent, feminine other has in the non-combatant immunity principle and the links between honor, masculinity, virility, citizenship, and her protection mean that protecting her can be articulated or felt as a ‘just cause’ in belligerents’ representations and performances of war if not in the explicit, textually articulated standards of just war theory. (Sjoberg, 2013)

If this is true, gendered performances of the ‘just warrior’/‘beautiful soul’ dynamic ‘tip the balance between just war theorizing as limiting and just war theorizing as permissive, encouraging, supportive, or complicit in war(s)’ (Sjoberg, 2013). This is because ‘implicit in the patriarchal metaphor is a tacit agreement that men who cannot defend their woman/nation have lost their “claim” to that body, to that land’ (Peterson, 1999: 48). With these gendered tropes, just war theorizing functions permissively rather than as a limiting force. As such, it is possible to see the

tradition as a whole as counterproductive to its own ends, and therefore causing more harm than good.

FEMALE COMBATANTS, FEMINISM AND JUST WAR

Whether the ‘beautiful soul’ is Helen of Troy, Briseis, Chryseis or Andromache, or a woman in one of thousands of other conflicts across this history of global politics, the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative is the dominant account of what happens to women during wars. This inherited story describes women as at once innocent of and vulnerable to the violences of war(s), and therefore requiring protection. Women’s lived experiences, however, even in the most classic of war stories such as that of the Trojan War, are much more complicated. The women who are victims are not only victims, and not all women are primarily (or even secondarily) victims. Instead, some women (even those narrativized as ‘beautiful souls’) provoke conflict, instigate violence, commit violence, fight (as soldiers, guerillas or terrorists), support war-fighters and become markers of victory and defeat. These women’s lived experiences contradict the one-dimensional ‘beautiful soul’ narrative that is often attached to the non-combatant immunity principle.

Research on female combatants shows that they are not an anomaly and cannot be explained or discarded either within the traditional confines of the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative or otherwise by explanations of their behaviors that rely on pathologies of femininity. Seeing that women’s lived experiences are diverse – as victims and perpetrators, as civilians and combatants, as commanders and prisoners, as terrorists and targets – suggests that the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative should be questioned and deconstructed. Whether it is mythological women such as Oenone (who let Paris die) and Athena (who committed violence in the war), or twentieth-century war criminals such as Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Biljana

Plavsic, some women *make* war, rather than just experience it; some women do the *bad things* in war rather than being the *pure things* that need protection.

Seeing female combatants, other violent women in war(s) and the diversity of roles that women play in wars, then, leads to questioning the familiar story of what happens to women in wars – that they are its victims, helpless and in need of masculine protection. Seeing all women as more than victims and some women as not victims at all leads to questioning what work the ‘beautiful soul’ trope does. Exploring the ‘just warrior’/‘beautiful soul’ dichotomy demonstrates that it is not only unrepresentative but gender-subordinating. These narratives about ‘just warriors’ and ‘beautiful souls’ (in those terms or not) perpetuate unreality and abstraction about war, as well as gender-subordinating ideas about *men* and *women*. As a result, women’s lives are risked in several ways. Women are promised protection which they are not provided with, are more likely to be victims of the violences done in the name of protection and are more likely to be targets of the violence of enemies looking to attack the masculinity and virility of their men, their states and their nations. Understanding these dynamics reveals the civilian immunity principle as paradoxically but importantly *dangerous*, not only to women but to populations more generally. Making female combatants visible, then, is the key to understanding not only the unrepresentativeness but the insidiousness of the non-combatant immunity principle’s gendered foundations.

LOOKING FORWARD: LESSONS FOR GENDER AND JUSTICE

Any approach to justice and war that would be capable of taking into account not only the complexity of women’s roles in war(s) but the complexities of women’s lives would need to move away from the oversimplified

'beautiful soul'/'just warrior' and fighter/victim dichotomies, and therefore away from the (gendered) non-combatant immunity principle. An ethics of war-fighting that moves away from the non-combatant immunity principle would need both a different understanding of just causes for making war(s) and a different understanding of who is responsible for war(s) (and therefore who can be targeted in them). Without reliance on the immunity principle it might be possible to move away from the 'beautiful soul' as a cause to fight wars *ad bellum*, a motivation for individual soldiers to fight wars *in bello* and an incentive to target women in wars for the enemy. That might create space for paying as much attention to the 'other' women (and other blind spots in current war narratives) as to 'beautiful souls', and as much attention to those who fall outside of the old and rehearsed stories of gender roles in war as to those who conform to just wars' gendered expectations.

As a result, a just war theory that does not rely on the non-combatant immunity principle would treat *people* (relationally rather than individually) as the subjects of *jus in bello*, and base the rules concerning how people should be treated on peoples' relationships – both with each other and to the *casus belli*. As Robin Schott suggests, in times of war 'it would be better for a political community to critically examine its identity and the outsiders that its identity creates than to reassert the validity of its identity through force' (Schott, 2008: 133). This suggests that *jus in bello* principles start with critical self-examination both of the justification for war-making and of the people to be held responsible for the offense that creates that justification, and that just war-fighting would be based on the relationship of the targets to the belligerents and the cause. Such an approach would make it possible to imagine transforming the combatant/civilian dichotomy into multiple categories, allowing critical reflection on degrees of relationship and degrees of separation between not only parties fighting the war as

traditionally conceived but the people who constitute the states and/or ethnic groups 'at war', with their constituent similarities and differences.

In addition to thinking about people differently, an account of just war that breaks from the civilian/combatant dichotomy must have a new way to identify participation and suffering in the making and fighting of wars, and a new plan for accountability, accounting and re-evaluating *in bello* choices and results. In her evaluation of just war theorizing, Robin May Schott suggests a tool that might do the job (Schott, 2008: 133). She suggests 'witness' as a mechanism for recognizing the narrative nature of both strategic and tactical war-justificatory accounts. She explains, citing Agamben, that 'the word *witness* derives from the Greek word *martis*, the martyr, which derives itself from the verb meaning to remember' (Schott, 2008: 133, citing Agamben, 1999: 26–8). According to Schott, 'an ethical discourse of war that gives weight to witness ... generates a discourse of war based on their experience of war, not abstracted from experience' (Schott, 2008: 133). An experience-based account moves away from abstracting 'civilians' to numbers (see, e.g., Cohn, 1987; 1993), symbols (e.g., Young, 2003; Sjoberg and Peet, 2011) and significations, and instead conceptualizes victimhood in war(s) as lived experience – which forces humanization and corrects the artificial removal of emotion from ethical and strategic discussions of wartime targeting.

As Schott explains, 'the discourse of witness also make evident that there are many more complex positions in war than the position of warrior or the victim' and 'gives *weight* to the pain of individuals and communities' (Schott, 2008: 133–4). Witnesses – 'soldiers,' 'civilians', 'politicians' and 'people' – in a multiplicity of positions, individually and collectively, *vis-à-vis* the just cause of the war and the fighting of the conflict, can *witness* an experiential account of not only the relational ethics of targeting but also the results of ethical calculations and

decisions as relates to weaponry, chosen targets, level of force and tactics used. *Witness*, then, might be at once a way to recognize and formally understand the power of (gendered) just war narratives and performances and a way to navigate a path that re-tells those narratives more justly, for women, for men and for wars.

NOTES

- 1 For a history and discussion of the current content of 'just war' see Walzer, 1977.
- 2 Directly targeting, for example, wartime rape, forced pregnancy, prostitution; disproportionate effect, for example, infrastructural bombing, economic and health consequences of war. Note that operationalizations of 'civilian victimization' in the literature explicitly exclude many (if not all) of the direct targeting strategies.
- 3 Elshtain was, even initially, quite clear that the 'beautiful soul' narrative extended past the two world wars. She explained that 'It would be unwise to assume that the combined effects of Vietnam, feminism, and the involvement of over 50 per cent of adult American women in the labor force ... undercut received webs of social meaning as these revolve around men, women, and war' (Elshtain, 1987, 7).

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Soldiering on: Pushing Militarized Masculinities into New Territory

Jane Parpart and Kevin Partridge

INTRODUCTION

The idea of multiple masculinities has been widely used and debated within the field of masculinity studies. This includes research within the military and within the discipline of International Relations (IR). *Militarized masculinity* has been theorized as a specific form of masculinity that is described as hegemonic because it is focused on creating a widely accepted dominance over other people, especially women, children and subordinate males, within a patriarchal gender order and is associated with activities that are seen as largely male, such as combat and rape (Basham, 2013; Belkin, 2012; Higate, 2007). In this chapter we locate militarized masculinities within the much broader field of multiple masculinities that incorporates a variety of perspectives from around the globe. We point out that even though militarized masculinities may occupy 'hegemonic space' (Connell, 2005) within the broader field of gender relations they also have many different forms – some

dominant and some subordinate – and may allow alternative, non-hegemonic forms of masculinity within military structures (Higate and Henry, 2004).

This point is in contrast to the assertion that there is nothing of value to be found within militarized masculinities and that the problems that stem from its practices will be resolved only by eliminating it as a specific configuration of gender. Militarized masculinities are the source of a great deal of discussion, debate and critical reaction and are frequently associated with widespread violence, killing and maiming as well as both personal and social breakdowns such as PTSD, suicides, family violence and depression (Higate, 2000; Neocleous, 2012; Whitworth, 2004). Even during peacekeeping these constructions of masculinity are often regarded as forms of 'imperial masculinity' bent on reinforcing the hegemony of white male privilege (Razack, 2004; Whitworth, 2004; Sinha, 1995). Militarized masculinities are specific configurations of gendered characteristics and behaviors that

are visible at the levels of individuals, families, communities and states. While variable within different contexts (Hearn and Morrell, 2012), these masculinities are used to sustain and reproduce broader social orders around the world. Drawing on feminist theorizing on gender and masculinities, particularly within IR, we seek to explain how the military is gendered, the place of militarized masculinities within this gender order and how some of the damage arising from this construction of gender can be mitigated or avoided.

The destructive impact of militarized masculinities, both on civilians and on combatants, is well known. Less attention has been paid to the personal breakdowns of military personnel and their destructive consequences. The argument that these breakdowns are simply failures of individuals to adapt properly to the needs of this sort of intense masculine performance is a facile and individualistic way of analyzing the difficulties with these militarized ideals. Individuals may be unable to sufficiently discipline themselves in order to live up to the standards of this model of hegemonic masculinity, but the model itself is flawed. It is based on a limited conception of masculinity that excludes more expansive concepts of gender that have been discussed and theorized in women's studies, gender studies and queer theory. These include attention to relations between varieties of femininities and masculinities as well as to the possibility that gender relations are not always based on masculinist and exclusively bi-gendered hierarchies. To some extent, all soldiers who survive and retire from the armed forces are successful warriors. However, their lives outside their time in conflict zones are often marked by inability to maintain relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, violence and self-harm (Higate, 2000; Neocleous, 2012). Given the price paid by even successful warriors, the current conceptions of militarized masculinities do not seem like a reasonable measure of masculinity. Both the concepts of militarized masculinities and the gender systems in which they are articulated glorify violence and domination

over other men and all women. Even the military itself is concerned that these forms of masculinities are unsustainable in either psychological (Green et al., 2010) or physical terms (Masters, 2005).

Those who try to defend the overall practices of the military find it difficult to do more than spread the blame for gendered violence around to more generalized 'social masculinities', which helps foster particular forms of oppressive masculinities (Higate, 2007). However, this argument ignores the broader understanding of gender provided by feminist analysis. No single form of masculinity determines the behaviors of those who are defined as male, even in patriarchal institutions. There are men, both inside and outside of the military, who are not defined by the assumptions that stem from the theoretical concept of militarized masculinity/ies (Conway, 2012; Duncanson, 2013; Eichler, 2006).

Paul Higate demonstrates the limitations of using militarized masculinity as an explanation for predictable hegemonic masculine behavior. In his exploration of 'Peacekeepers, Masculinities, and Sexual Exploitation' (2007) he notes that there are military men who are 'hypermasculine' (those who appear to embody militarized masculine ideals) and yet 'have never been involved in the exploitation of others' (2007: 114; see also Higate and Henry, 2004). Higate is concerned that so much effort is being put into investigating and explicating dominating forms of masculinity, while other forms (and perhaps the numerically dominant forms) of masculinity experienced by soldiers are being ignored. Our chapter picks up this point and explores the multiple masculinities emerging from military institutions and experiences. This requires a more complicated and complicating discussion of specific experiences of idealized masculinities within the military (militarized masculinities), including their destructive consequences as well as the possibility that multiple understandings of masculinities as well as femininities and other constructions of gender may enable more

equitable gender practices within the military both during conflicts and in times of ‘peace’.

DEBATING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY/IES

The concept of hegemonic masculinity emerged in the 1980s as Raewyn Connell and others sought ways to move beyond sex role theory to focus on a more fluid, contextual and relational conception of gender relations and patriarchal power (Brod, 1987; Connell, 1987; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn, 2004; Kimmel and Messner, 1989). Connell initially conceptualized hegemonic masculinity ‘as the form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide setting that structures and legitimates hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity and among men’ (Messerschmidt, 2012: 58). She regarded hegemonic masculinity as more an ideal type than a specific set of practices. It set the bar for relations with non-hegemonic masculinities¹ as well as with ‘emphasized femininity’, defined by its acceptance of the feminine’s subordination to all masculinities. ‘Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue’ (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832), thus ensuring a gender hegemony based on a legitimated and naturalized masculine domination over the feminine. Connell also acknowledged the need to pay attention to the operation of hegemonic masculinity across different contexts, over time and in light of gender relations as a whole.

However, as research on men and masculinities expanded, the concept of hegemonic masculinity took on a life of its own. Critiques emerged, particularly of the tendency to produce a static typology of different masculinities (Hearn, 2004), to compartmentalize and underestimate interaction between them (Demetriou, 2001) and to ignore women by

placing them in a separate sphere, outside the study of masculinities (Brod, 1994; McCarry, 2010). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) responded on two levels. While asserting that the concepts of hierarchical and multiple masculinities have stood the test of time, they agreed that more attention should be paid to relations between masculinities, particularly the agency of subordinated and marginalized groups. They also acknowledged the need for greater attention to ‘the practices of women and the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities’ (2005: 848), the impact of intersectionality in specific local, regional and global contexts, and the embodied patterns and practices associated with hegemonic masculinity and gender hegemony. They even raised the possibility that in some cases hegemony may fail and gender relations could be democratized through establishing ‘a version of masculinities open to equality with women [and the feminine]’ (2005: 853).

While acknowledging Connell’s ‘invaluable conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity’, Mimi Shippers has taken up the challenge to place the feminine ‘other’ at the centre of theorizing gender hegemony and hegemonic masculinity (2007: 89). She criticizes Connell for assuming the subordination of the feminine and focusing largely on hegemonic masculinity’s role in ensuring male dominance and hierarchies among men (and masculinities). Drawing on Judith Butler (2004), Shippers argues that heterosexual relations between the sexes, with their discourse of penetration and domination, provide ‘the hegemonic scaffolding for assuming relationships between men and women as “naturally” and inevitably relationships of dominance and submission’ (2007: 90–91). This binary provides the essential rationale, even if often contested, for organizing social and material relations in ways that ensure the continuation of masculine dominance and feminine subordination. Thus, she argues that hegemonic masculinity cannot be understood outside heterosexuality, heteronormativity and the feminine as it

is based on 'the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men [masculinities] and the subordination of women [femininities]' (2007: 94).

This definition opens up the possibility for complicating femininities (and masculinities) and, indeed, Shippers argues for the existence of both hegemonic femininity (analogous to Connell's established femininity) and pariah femininity. She defines hegemonic femininity as 'the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (2007: 94). Pariah femininity, which seeks to adopt 'masculine' behavior, is severely disciplined and vilified for threatening masculine hegemony and undermining the gender order. For example, Shippers argues that authoritative women are often condemned as bitches – seen as 'both feminine and undesirable' (2007: 95). The presence of 'female masculinities' as explored by J. Halberstam (1998) and others (Butler, 2004; Pascoe, 2007) is similarly vilified and does little to undo gender hierarchies (Gardiner, 2009: 633). Bringing femininity into the analysis highlights the importance for hegemonic masculine gender orders to retain a monopoly over masculine traits regarded as essential for ensuring dominance over the feminine (in all its forms) and defining relations between different masculinities.

Yet, as Shippers points out, limiting hegemonic femininity and masculinity to those characteristics and practices that reinforce domination of masculinities over femininities provides an opening for considering alternative approaches based on 'idealized gender characteristics that do not perpetuate male dominance' (2007: 97). This opening is provided by the complexities of gendered practices in everyday life that are reflected in a great deal of empirical research. The

contestation of gender practices and power relations in everyday life indicates a potential and profound space for alternatives. For example, she describes a rock music subculture where sharing and equality are promoted through music, lyrics and actions that do not claim masculine domination over the feminine (Shippers, 2002). Thus Shippers, like Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), raises the possibility for thinking about and organizing gender relations around collaboration and gender equality. We argue that these alternative arrangements and non-hierarchical gender relations could also be constructed even within rigid hierarchical structures such as the military. For example, Claire Duncanson (2013) discovered that while many British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan have exhibited classically masculinist and imperialist behavior in the field, others have demonstrated a willingness to build relationships with ordinary Iraqi and Afghan men and women based on equality and respect. Higate and Henry (2004; Higate, 2007) point to the many peacekeepers who reject abusive behavior, particularly against women.

Numerous other examples of more equitable gender relations and different ways of enacting masculinities can be found even in masculinist and homophobic institutions. Eric Anderson discovered that some American male university fraternities are distancing themselves from 'frat boy culture' and adopting more inclusive values and practices, including being more welcoming to gay men and men of colour, more respectful of women and more inclined to encourage bonding in ways previously regarded as feminine (2008: 616–17). A study of semi-professional British football (soccer) players revealed acceptance of dominating and divisive masculine language on the field, including narratives of war, gender and sexuality, but challenges to this discourse off the field – particularly in regard to race and sexuality (Adams et al., 2010: 294–5). Barker (2000: 267), who studied impoverished young men in Brazilian shanty towns, discovered gender equitable forms of manhood alongside

hegemonic forms of male brutality and selfishness. Thus, whether within a 'hegemonic space' or not, practices of masculinities and gender relations can be variable and contested.

At the same time, many factors reinforce hegemonic masculinities and the broad acceptance of masculine dominance over the feminine. Institutions which reinforce hegemonic masculine ideals, such as the military, are crucial platforms for disciplining masculinity. While influenced by particular contexts, the need to separate from the feminine and to fit in with locally defined hegemonic masculine traits is often very intense (Bird, 1996; Carver, 2006; Goldstein, 2001; Wiegman, 2001). Women are also often active agents in this process. Talbot and Quayle (2010) discovered that many South African women accept the idea that their fortunes are tied to finding a highly masculine and successful male partner who embodies the local hegemonic ideals. Consequently, while supporting non-hegemonic 'nice guy' masculinities in the workplace, hegemonic and traditional masculine ideas were preferred in romantic and family contexts. Class also influences masculine practices. For example, globalization has intensified economic divisions within Mozambique's capital city, Maputo. The more prosperous middle-class males bask in the role of manly providers whereas new forms of masculinity centred on sexuality and violence have emerged among the working-class youth (Groes-Green, 2009). In South Africa the more gender equitable masculinity favored by Nelson Mandela is being challenged by a return to more traditionalist, patriarchal and violent masculinities largely fueled by rising tensions over access to resources based on race, ethnicity, culture and gender (Morrell et al., 2012: 17–18).

Clearly, a deepened understanding of both hegemonic and alternative gender relations and practices requires more grounded empirical research across geographical, class, race and cultural divides. It will require drawing on recent thinking about intersectionality and

gender, particularly from feminist and queer theory (Kirby and Henry, 2012). Jasbir Puar, for example, suggests the need to adopt a more complex and fluid intersectional analysis that pays attention to assemblages of forces (2007: 211).² Hegemonic masculinities coexist with other types of masculinities and are rooted in particular settings (Morrell et al., 2012) – a point agreed upon by Messerschmidt (2012). Militaries remain one of the quintessential institutions for producing, reinforcing and maintaining hegemonic masculine practices and thus are a particularly appropriate starting point for examining hegemonic masculinities. Militarized masculinities are important not just as ideal types of masculinity but also because they are the product of one of the largest social investments made on a global scale. Huge quantities of money, resources and time are spent on developing military structures that require very specific constructions of gender roles – masculinities and femininities – in order to function. These gender hierarchies legitimate the very creation of hegemonic masculinity and the consequent gendered access to or exclusion from positions of power, wealth and privilege.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARIZED MASCULINITY

The military has long been seen as a quintessential site for the production of masculinities and a source of many of the practices and assumptions associated with hegemonic masculinity. Virtually all militaries have been male-dominated institutions generally regarded as key sites for shaping young male warriors dedicated to upholding the values and practices of hegemonic masculinities produced in their particular societies, particularly the protection of 'women and children'. They also reproduce the relationships of power that appear, in many cases, to be determined by gender but also intersect with numerous other structures of social inequalities. Many feminist scholars have supported

this view, 'making a powerful case for the military as the exemplary context in which hegemonic masculinity matters' (Hutchings, 2008: 393, – citing Enloe, 2000; Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002; Cohn and Enloe, 2003). As Cockburn points out, 'Overwhelmingly it is men who make war. ... Indeed, many versions of masculinity in the world's varied cultures are constituted in the practice of fighting: to be a real man is to be ready to fight and, ultimately to kill and to die' (2001: 20). Masters (2005: 117) and Whitworth (2005: 14–17) argue that the Canadian and United States' military forces are primary sites for producing hegemonic masculinity (and disciplining those who fail to live up to those qualities).

It is not surprising that some scholars, such as Stephan Maninger (2008), believe that women have no place in combat and should have a restricted role in the military as a whole. He describes the qualities essential for a warrior and why they are best embodied by men. He believes women, on average, are at a disadvantage in competing against men at certain tasks and uses statistics to argue that women are weaker, have less endurance, are more prone to injuries and require more time off from military service than men. He posits that the ability to carry heavy weights or to throw grenades is essential to participation in the military and that women generally have less upper body strength and therefore cannot throw as far as many men and cannot carry as much gear in the field. It is very difficult, even with extensive training, for women to match or surpass men in these particular measures.

Maninger also provides evidence that women who enlist in the army and undergo boot camp or advanced training are more likely to suffer injuries or take time off due to sickness. This is reinforced by the 'third major physical limitation that places women at a distinct disadvantage' (2008: 14): their ability to have children! He lists the 5 percent of women in the army in Bosnia who 'fell pregnant' (2008: 14) during the first year there as 'casualties' of war. Maninger is not

alone citing measures of strength based on an ideal male body as one the primary qualities of a warrior, despite the increasing dependence on technology in battle (Masters, 2005). The strength involved is defined by a combination of factors, including the ability to lift and carry weight, walk and climb long distances and manipulate weapons, as well as resistance to disease or pain. However, strength alone is not sufficient for warrior masculinity; courage, determination and aggression are also critical elements (Maninger, 2008).

Maninger's judgement of women's ability to embody these other qualities is more complex than his discussion of strength. Although arguing that women are unfit for combat, he acknowledges that women are quite capable of killing opponents. In fact, he seems to admire the aggression and deadly effectiveness of the roughly 1500 Soviet women who served as snipers in the Second World War and who were credited with killing 12,000 German soldiers (2008: 17). Courage is another quality that he concedes women have in abundance, a quality crucial for fostering unit cohesion and the ability to perform under stress. Maninger argues that two further characteristics are necessary to create a successful soldier: discipline and morale. Yet, these qualities must be developed and maintained socially – not just by the individual soldier, because 'performance as a unit is more than the sum of the individual attitudes and aptitudes' (2008: 19). He concludes that 'women [...] pose a threat to discipline and unit cohesion' (2008: 19), in part because of the emotional bonds that develop between differently gendered soldiers. He intimates that 'camaraderie' and the 'buddy-system' will not function with women present and that combat units work best as male homosocial groups.

While his overall arguments are profoundly flawed, Maninger does point us to a useful and complex set of qualities that define a warrior: strength, endurance, discipline, morale, patience, cunning, courage, determination, aggression and camaraderie.

His description of a modern male-bodied warrior reflects a particular type of hegemonic masculinity that is an enduring component of many military cultures. Yet it ignores the complex reality created both by the presence of women in many military organizations and the many different types of male bodies and the multiplicity of masculinities that are found in military organizations. Despite this attempt to envision an exclusively male military, women and other minorities have historically been part of many armed groups and are increasingly visible in military work of all kinds, including combat (Basham, 2013; Coulter, 2008; Sasson-Levy et al., 2011).

The introduction of women and subordinate males into the military, and even in some circumstances into combat zones, challenges the essentialized nature of a militarized body as male and masculine. Some applaud women's introduction into the military, arguing that the macho military is a myth given its emphasis on feminine traits such as camaraderie, obedience and service. Titunik highlights American women soldiers' success in Afghanistan and Iraq, asserting that American 'military culture has been able to accommodate women's changing roles' (2008: 162–3). Others take a different view. Belkin (2012) concludes that the incorporation of unmasculine/feminine traits into the American military has constructed an ambiguity that promotes a psychological instability which allows/creates violence against others, including military personnel who disrupt racialized, sexualized and gendered challenges to heterosexual militarized masculinity. Victoria Basham (2013) discovered that militarized masculinist privilege works to systematically sideline and discipline soldiers on the basis of race, sexuality and gender (i.e. being a woman) in the British military.

The public discourse about women and the military in the Global North has tended to reinforce the naturalization of the military's role as protectors and saviours, particularly when 'rescuing brown/foreign

women from Third World tyrants' (Razack, 1998: 3; Young, 2003; Whitworth, 2004; Hunt and Rygiel, 2006). While the introduction of women *into* the military opens the possibility of questioning such narratives, feminist scholars have demonstrated the continuing power of traditional narratives of male/masculine protectors for female/feminine victims (even if female soldiers) which maintain masculine privilege within the military and among the public. The media (and the military) portrayed Jessica Lynch, the American female soldier rescued from an Iraqi-controlled hospital by US commandos, as a plucky young woman who had to be saved by male (real) soldiers/warriors (Sjolander and Trevenen, 2010). Sjolander argues that women who take part in combat in the US forces are seen as 'tough but not violent; brave, but still in need of defense: adept, but still beautiful; a soldier, but still innocent' (2007: 98), which reinforces gendered assumptions that underwrite hegemonic masculinity, including dominance over the feminine.

One might ask whether this has been true for militaries in other parts of the world. Certainly many states in the global South reject the idea of women in the military, particularly in combat. However, women have been swept up in post-Cold War conflicts around the world, many engaging in combat (Coulter, 2008). As Baaz and Stern (2008) discovered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many women soldiers were more fierce and deadly than their male colleagues.³ Yet the males they fought with still seem to have regarded them with some suspicion, as they are viewed as both failed women and economic competitors who needed to be kept in their place. These attitudes help to explain the lack of support for former women soldiers in post-conflict reconstruction. Indeed, the admonition for them to return home to their 'normal' lives raises questions about women soldiers' ability to challenge militarized masculinities and to transform gender relations by proving their capacity for combat (Arnfred, 1988; MacKenzie, 2009; Utas, 2005; Dietrich, 2012).

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that women's presence in military institutions and operations makes it necessary to talk about assumptions that are troubled by the presence of women. These assumptions are easier to ignore when women are physically excluded. The qualities that constitute the category of 'militarized masculinity' are not at issue but rather their attribution to a specific type of gender order that requires specific configurations of both male and female bodies. These essentialized bodies must exist within an enforced heterosexuality and among homosocial social structures that help create gendered hierarchies which enforce patriarchal disciplines of power (Higate, 2012).

MILITARY FAILURES AND TROUBLED MASCULINITIES

It is important to reiterate that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on a deconstruction of reified and essentialist notions of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). There is wide recognition (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Higate, 2000; Shippers, 2007) that constructing 'hegemonic masculinity' as a rigid typology is an oversimplification of gender, although it may prove useful in some situations (Hooper, 2001: 42). 'Militarized' or 'military' masculinity is a specific type of masculinity that is also subject to this sort of reification and that, as Higate points out (2007), may be conflated with forms of exploitation that are specific to the role of the military and not necessarily to the individualized masculinity that soldiers embody. A more complex and inclusive understanding of the varieties of masculinities and the different ways in which they relate to the structures around them is crucial for understanding how a great many people embody masculinity in ways that may trouble assumptions that are used to justify unequal power relationships. This can include masculinities or femininities that may or may not be exploitative,

violent and oppressive. Gender is often understood as a basic building block of social relationships and militarized masculinities are offered as proof of both crucial difference and of an essential power imbalance that will always subordinate femininities and, by essentialist logic, will also always subordinate women. To promote a more egalitarian gender order we look for evidence of different struggles over masculinities within the gendered hegemonic space of the military.

In order to explore how these constructions of masculinity operate and interact, it is essential to find scholarship that is written with a conscious and critical awareness of the presence of gender among combatants and in the military in general. Fortunately, ethnographic research is available that includes observations and reflections on the role of gender in the military. Gender has increasingly been incorporated into the discussion of IR and shown to be critical to understanding the different ways in which the functions of the military can be understood. This is especially true in the 'new wars' debates. While a contentious concept (Newman, 2004), it is significant that this debate includes an increased awareness and discussion of the role of gender in military organizations and in combat (Parpart, 2010). The increased scholarship incorporating women's experiences as both victims and perpetrators of violence and insecurity has, fortunately for the purpose of research into masculinities, highlighted the need to be more aware and observant of varieties of gendered experiences and practices in the military. This is important not just to understand what happens to women in the context of the military, but because we are not able to articulate the role of men and masculinities as long as we ignore the broader context of gender relations that have been addressed in a variety of disciplines (many of which are labeled 'feminist').

Practices of masculinities can be divided in many ways but the tendency within IR and

other research focused on the military is to focus on the ideas of dominance and submission that are necessary to the usual operations of the military. Militarized masculinity is a necessary conceptual tool for successfully 'securing' state boundaries and fighting wars. Other forms of hegemonic masculinities and subordinate masculinities are understood as unable to demonstrate enough strength, aggression, discipline and camaraderie to preserve the greater social system as a whole (Hutchings, 2008). Scholars have rarely considered how the non-militarized (and 'subordinate') masculinities may allow for a greater ability to live up to other ideals of masculinity and to engage in alternative masculine practices. These practices may not be suited to combat, but are more likely to enable people to live their lives constructively in many other social situations. There is a great deal of concern both about the initial difficulty in convincing people to engage in combat and then the subsequent inability of some combatants to reintegrate into civil society when a 'peace' is declared (Higate, 2007). Unfortunately, a critique of hegemonic masculinity can be lost in discussions around the failure of individual soldiers. It is difficult to connect theories of gender that operate at the individual level of gendered practices and broader gendered analyses that posit a patriarchal or gendered system that is a significant component of political economy and international relations.

Maya Eichler (2006; 2012) provides evidence of the ways in which the ideals of militarized masculinity are problematized at both personal and state levels. She delineates two types of masculinity within Russia and in relation to the wars in Chechnya. One ideal is the 'militarized, ordered, patriotic, Russian masculinity' that is constructed in opposition to a criminally aggressive and unstable Chechen masculinity. The other masculinity is described as a 'crisis in militarized masculinity' (2006: 487) and shows up in men's resistance to conscription during the 1994 Chechen war. Eichler defines this resistance as part of a subordinated

masculinity that is also described variously as 'the enemy, the deserter, the refugee, the homosexual or the national minority' (2006: 489). The connection between militarism and masculinity is not natural; it is 'socially made' or constructed (2006: 491) with the purpose of building and maintaining the legitimacy of the Russian leadership as a government and creating support for their policies. This support was seen as lacking during the 1994 conflict, but was much stronger in the 1999 conflict owing to a concerted effort to suppress and denigrate alternate forms of masculinity.

The military experience has also produced critical views about war, sexual exploitation and gender relations. As we have seen, Eichler (2006) discovered that the war against Chechnya fueled critiques both of militarized masculinism and of war itself. In South Africa, some white conscripts into the apartheid government's war against Angola and its black citizens became crucial advocates for the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). Dr Ivan Toms, who had served two years as a medic in the army, cited both his military experience and his homosexual identity as key factors in his decision to stand trial for objecting to conscription. While the ECC tried to underplay his sexuality, the publicity around his trial and the government's blatant homophobia meant that the issues of war, injustice and sexuality were put on the public agenda (Conway, 2004; 2012). No doubt the majority remained unconvinced, but the debates provided entry points for people to think differently about the destructive consequences of war, militarized masculinity, sexuality and race relations in South Africa. In another case, experiences of hypermasculine cruelty to Palestinian citizens led women in the Israeli army to question combat masculinity, gender hierarchies in the military and the war against Palestine itself (Sasson-Levy et al., 2011).

Peacekeeping has also raised the possibility for thinking differently about militarized masculinities. While peacekeeping has often

adopted militarized masculine traits associated with hegemonic masculinity, as Duncanson points out:

soldiers who portray negotiating for peace and reconstructing schools as masculine are worth taking seriously, not just because they are not prioritizing combat, but because they are challenging traditional gender dichotomies. They are challenging both the privileging of the masculine over the feminine and the association of masculinity with war and femininity with peace. (2009: 75)

The expectation that soldiers should be helping citizens enables a critique of military excesses and a demand that peacekeepers be both effective soldiers and gender sensitive. While the evidence suggests that many peacekeepers have retained their masculinist assumptions, it is important to acknowledge the transformative potential of peacekeeping both for citizens and for the soldiers themselves (Higate, 2007; Duncanson, 2013). These cases raise serious questions about unitary depictions of the military and suggest the need to complicate and engender our understanding of militarized masculinities.

COMPLICATING AND GENDERING MILITARIZED MASCULINITY/IES

A critical problem with any concept of militarized masculinity is that it is an incomplete model of how masculinities are practiced even within a specific military setting. There is a tendency to reify and consequently naturalize the qualities that are attributed to this type of masculinity and to use them to construct a specific understanding of gender as bi-gendered, heterosexual and based on a specific biological division of bodies. Any practices of masculinity that fall outside of this gender construction are considered subordinate or even failed forms of masculinity. Moreover, this concept of masculinity is generally limited to a certain type of male body or bodies and is seen as most practical

within homosocial groups. Given all these assumptions, it is easy to see how this form of masculinity is often conflated with practices that are largely carried out by men (such as rape) or that may be shared with other practices of male-dominated militarism (such as hierarchy and discipline). As we have pointed out, Higate (2007) started to unravel these connections when he pointed out that gender-defined exploitation (such as rape) is not an inevitable component of masculinities in the military. However, it is still important to explore the limits of military masculinities and what they mean within the military as well as to deconstruct the reified forms of these masculinities that serve to naturalize gender practices that are both socially constructed but also institutionalized within larger structures and are consequently important to researchers working within fields such as political science and IR.

This reification comes in part from conflating the ideas of militarized masculinities with hegemonic masculinity and has inspired considerable criticism of hegemonic masculinities even by advocates of the concept. Hegemonic masculinity is a social and political concept that cannot be directly mapped onto individuals. Hegemonic masculinity describes not a set of characteristics but rather a social position within the field of gender. As Connell describes the term, it is the form of masculinity that occupies the 'hegemonic space' (2005: 76) in a certain arena or field of gender relations. Connell holds out the possibility that the occupation of this hegemonic space can be changed into a more gender equitable space because forms of masculinity can be contested and challenged. At the same time, it is important to recognize the resilience of hegemonic masculine practices that legitimate and reinforce gender hierarchies that shape unequal access to power and resources.

One of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity can be challenged is by mapping it on to different bodies and associating it with different practices. Contrary to the belief that militarized masculinities are

fixed as well as socially resilient, they are unstable and often adapted to a variety of circumstances. The common association with the male body, for instance, has been shown many times to be inaccurate or unnecessary at the level of individuals and within specific contexts. The undermining of the equation between the military and the male body has led to broader structural changes wherein women have been incorporated into fighting units and have successfully engaged in combat and other aspects of military life. There are certainly differences in their experiences and practices that stem from gendered categorizations, but there do not appear to be absolute boundaries between different types of gender. Even someone such as Maninger (2008), who sees militarized masculinity as strongly defined by gender characteristics, does not argue for such absolute divisions based on differently sexed bodies.

Research that is focused on (or at least includes) an awareness of these gender dimensions allows for a more detailed analysis of the role of gender in the military. The simplistic notion of a dominant, reified militarized masculinity in conflict with subordinate forms of masculinity and all forms of femininity does not reflect the experiences and understandings of many people and has important limitations as an analytical tool. Women can practice forms of masculinity and men can practice forms of femininity.⁴ This mixing of gender practices and sexed bodies also reflects what we know about the life experiences of many people in the military and even in combat zones, and allows us both to better analyze the way gender works within the military context and to provide new insight into the ways in which people understand and engage with war and combat. Moreover, this approach is relevant both for analysis of the experience of the individual soldier and for larger institutional projects that are concerned with how the military is structured to deal with different sex/gender configurations and, indeed, the broader effects of this

altered gender landscape on the political and economic functions of the military.

The initial impetus to investigate the gendered nature of the military was based in a desire to essentialized notions of gender within this space. Evidence for women's involvement is easy enough to find but the idea that the military is a masculine space is much more difficult to deconstruct. It is necessary to both look at the requirements of the military role and articulate how those characteristics and concepts can be mapped onto gendered bodies that are neither male nor masculine. However, it is also important to explore the concept of masculinity and whether militarized masculinity is an essential or essentialized expression of gender or of an aspect of gender. The concept of multiple masculinities can be used to argue that militarized masculinities are specific gender constructs that share some characteristics with other forms of masculinity, but are not necessarily defined by their relationship with them – whether that is a relationship of dominance and subordination or some other structuring of power and practice.

Higate (2007) usefully points out that militarized masculinity is not a closed gender system and that circumstances and social structures also shape gender expressions. If this is the case, then it would make sense that there are multiple types of militarized masculinities and that the category as it is often used may do more to hide differences than to explain them. The construction of militarized masculinity as a strongly hierarchical form of social performance means that very few men (or women) are able to successfully embody this type of masculinity. The result is that soldiers and fighters often feel themselves to be failures in the field in which a specific type of militarized masculinity is constructed as the dominant and most successful form of gendered practice for men. A few may succeed but the vast majority fall short of attaining and putting into practice the combination of characteristics and practices that are laid out by

Maninger (2008). Masculinity that exclusively emphasizes strength, aggression, courage, discipline and camaraderie within a heterosexual, homosocial, male-dominated gender order seldom works well in practice, as we have noted previously. Militarized masculinity is an illusory ideal that is eroded by the presence of both women and men who do not conform to its strictures.

Even those who do embody the ideals of militarized masculinities are often left with an inability to fulfill other roles in life, particularly after conflict ends. Much like the entire process of mobilization, the consequences of the demobilization process are heavily gendered. Women who are successful fighters often find themselves treated as failed women. They are therefore excluded from community and family and find it difficult to engage in the aspects of social reproduction that are generally assigned to women in their societies (Arnfred, 1988; Baaz and Stern, 2008). Men have some advantages in demobilization but many of them also find it difficult to return to non-militarized masculinity practices (Neocleous, 2012). The construction of militarized masculinity is a broadly destructive social project, and the damage is neither proportionate nor equitable across the gender spectrum.

EXPANDING MILITARIZED MASCULINITY/IES

Militarized masculinities do not provide models of gender roles that are helpful for soldiers, whether male or female. While they may provide pathways towards careers and promotions, they do little to help navigate daily life both within and outside the military. Neither do they help us understand the complex ways in which gender is articulated and practiced within militaries. We have explained how militarized masculinities are constructed and discussed their place within the broader concepts of hegemonic masculinities and a gender order composed of multiple masculinities and femininities. Further,

we have given examples of how the use of this concept leads to misunderstandings and blind spots when researchers look at the role of gender in the military. More seriously, the concept's use justifies the continued support of gendered social structures that are incredibly destructive for many people. The problems in practice lie with the ideal of militarized masculinities that, for people who cannot successfully live up to these ideals, becomes the cause of extreme dysfunction as well as destructive cycles of violence and abuse of various types. As long as writers and researchers have looked only at masculinity as the source of the problem, they embrace a bi-gendered model that does not allow for a fuller understanding of how gender systems work for all people who are caught up in the structures of the military and conflict.

This approach has meant that women's experiences have been erased both during and after conflict because militarized, masculine women are defined as unnatural and it is necessary to 'correct' their experiences in order to enforce dominant gendered social understandings and practices. Likewise, men's experience of caretaking and the deep emotional attachments that are experienced in war and combat are discarded as irrelevant to the attainment of militarized masculine ideals or relegated to a type of camaraderie that must be subordinated to an enforced heterosexuality. When these various understandings disappear from our consciousness it becomes difficult to use them to formulate new social practices and structures that could alleviate the failure of militarized gender relations. It is through this mechanism that the broadly destructive power of militarized gender hierarchies blocks any other possibilities of more progressive or constructive gendered social relationships.

A productive path to take in this field of research would benefit from incorporating recent research into the complexity of gender in the field of queer studies. The work contained in *Female Masculinity* (Halberstam, 1998), with its emphasis on the fluidity of

both gender and sex, could enhance our understanding of different gender possibilities and how they might be navigated and performed within a militarized social space that is no longer defined as homosocial or 'single-gendered'. The aim would be to unlock the categories of masculinity, femininity, male and female in order to more fully explore the many ways in which experiences of war, combat and conflict are gendered across many different people and bodies, including the possibility that non-hegemonic gender relations can emerge from these experiences.

Furthermore, Halberstam's recent book *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) can be inspirational in rethinking this aspect of gender. Halberstam notes that our tendency to focus on gender ideals or the best examples of certain gender roles blinds us to the multiplicity of gendered practices that are present (2011). Explorations that focus on 'failed' masculinities can also reveal a great deal about how individuals navigate the incredibly difficult conditions that they find themselves in during war and combat. When we focus our attention on a 'first place' contestant, we fail to see or celebrate the accomplishments of all the other contenders. Many people practice masculinities within the military in a way that does not match the ideal of a dominant, militarized hypermasculinity that occupies 'hegemonic space'. These non-hegemonic masculinities do not need to be seen as subordinate or unsuccessful. Hegemony means success only within a narrow understanding of dominance and subordination. Forms of masculinity that do not fit into the 'hegemonic space' that Connell describes may benefit people regardless of how they are gendered. The move towards healthier or more equitable gender relations may not come from a 'better' masculinity but from lessons learned from practices of masculinity when it is neither dominant nor hegemonic, within both the military and society as a whole.

We are arguing that, although many critiques of the ideals of militarized masculinity

are useful, it is important to note that there are multiple forms of militarized masculinities. This is in agreement with the model proposed by Connell and others and reflected in a great deal of empirical research from different places and times. Furthermore, because of this multiplicity of masculinities within the military, the possibility of alternative and non-hegemonic masculinities exist even within the most powerful and dominant military structures. Moreover, this approach may provide new perspectives on specific problems that stem from military experiences. The benefits of this research are enormous, as it could lead to new understandings of how militaries function in the lives of individuals and within the broader social structures in which they are embedded. This is important both at the personal level, for those whose lives have been turned upside down or stunted by the brutally gendered effects of militarism and combat, and at the broader level of how gender is accounted for within structures used to enforce boundaries and maintain social inequalities. If we want to continue the feminist project of challenging these inequalities we need to understand more about how gender operates within the militarized system of states and the role of gender in the distribution of resources and privilege around the globe.

NOTES

- 1 Connell identifies these as: complicit masculinity – men who receive the benefits of patriarchy without fully enacting hegemonic masculine traits; subordinate masculinity – particularly those practicing alternative sexualities; and marginalized masculinity – generally linked with cross-cutting factors such as class, race and culture (Connell, 1995: 77–81).
- 2 For an excellent example of Puar's approach for analyzing the military see Brown, 2012.
- 3 Chris Coulter also discovered that women fighters in Sierra Leone were regarded as fierce and effective fighters, who, while constrained, were also active agents in their choices and decisions (2008, 69).
- 4 Halberstam (1998; 2011) is one of the most notable authors to explore the 'queering' of

gender constructions but there is an extensive body of writing that explores the many different possibilities in this approach to placing conventional gender roles within a broader field of gender possibilities. See, for examples, *The Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker and Whittle, 2006) and *Persistence: All Ways Butch and Femme* (Coyote and Sharman, 2011).

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Gender, Genocide and Gendercide

Adam Jones

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the relevance of Mary-Anne Warren's concept of 'gendercide' to the study of mass violence against females and males alike. As a result of feminist mobilizations and increasing media coverage and public debate, gender-selective mass killing and other gender-related atrocities have become prominent subjects of scholarly analysis. They have also increasingly underpinned policy initiatives by national governments as well as international governmental and non-governmental organizations (IGOs and NGOs). This chapter explores feminist engagements with gendered mass violence, particularly in its structural and institutional forms. However, following Warren's original gender-inclusive framing of 'gendercide', this essay also reflects the author's adaptation of Warren's framework in order to encompass the gender-selective targeting of males in understandings of 'gendercide'. This is most prominent in political-military campaigns of genocide, but also exists at a

structural and institutional level. The closing section of the chapter considers the implications of this reformulation for genocide prevention and intervention.

ORIGINS – AND OVERSIGHTS – OF GENOCIDE

In 1943 a Polish Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin resolved a quandary that had nagged at him remorselessly for over twenty years. Like others before him, Lemkin had long been struck by the blatant contradiction between laws governing homicide – the crime *nonpareil* in 'civilized' societies – and the absence of *international* prohibitions of homicide on a mass scale, so long as it was perpetrated by 'sovereign' nation-states. Especially vulnerable, as Lemkin perceived them, were indigenous peoples around the world – he was one of the first western scholars to recognize this – and ethnic and religious minorities who were victims of oppression and destruction by the majority

populations of states and empires. The survival of such groups and their cultures, Lemkin felt, was essential to preserving and advancing the human heritage. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Lemkin wrestled unsuccessfully with labels such as ‘barbarity’ and ‘vandalism’ to encompass both physical and cultural assaults on such populations. Only in exile in the United States – having fled Poland ahead of the Nazis – did Lemkin finally hit upon a neologism that would become perhaps the most powerful word in the English language – and, adapted, in others. Combining the Greek *genos* (race, tribe) with the Latin suffix *-cide* (killing, destruction), Lemkin invented the concept of genocide.¹

The word first appeared in print in 1944, in a long and little-read volume called *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Lemkin, 2008). More significant was what followed. In the space of just four years, exploiting the global revulsion at revelations of Nazi crimes and the great wave of post-war institution-building that also produced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lemkin persuaded delegates to the nascent United Nations to adopt the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). Having ‘recogniz[ed] that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity’ and expressed the conviction that ‘in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required’, the parties to the convention agreed to punish not only acts of genocide but conspiracies, attempts and incitements to commit such acts (United Nations, 1948).

Lemkin’s 1944 definition of genocide referred to ‘a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves’ through attacks upon ‘the political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health,

dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups’ (Lemkin, 2008; emphasis added). Genocide occurred when individuals were targeted ‘not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group’ (Jones, 2010: 10). His focus, clearly, was on the cultural and social foundations of groups. It was *this* destruction that, in Lemkin’s view, fundamentally deprived humanity of the group’s unique essence and its contribution to civilization.

This was inherently a somewhat romantic understanding of history and human rights, and in the complex negotiations that produced the 1948 Convention² Lemkin’s definition was both adapted and substantially altered. According to the convention definition, genocidal acts consist of:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and]
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (United Nations, 1948)

While Lemkin’s original sociocultural framing was still evident, particularly in the final two provisions, the emphasis was now squarely on the *physical* destruction and violation of the target groups. Of greatest significance for our purposes, however, were the variables of group identity that governed how the Genocide Convention would be applied and enforced. These were limited to ‘national, ethnical [sic], racial or religious group[s], as such’ (United Nations, 1948) – language that remained unchanged in the international-legal definition of genocide enshrined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998). Most controversially, this excluded *political groups* (which were in fact retained in the Convention until a late stage of the drafting process); *social classes* (such as the so-called ‘kulaks’, wealthier peasants, targeted in Stalin’s

USSR); and *gender groups*, which received no mention whatsoever.³

The limitations and ambiguities of the Genocide Convention produced one major attempt to reframe and redraft it: the so-called Whitaker Commission of the early 1980s, headed by the UK legal scholar Benjamin Whitaker. In the 1985 *Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, Whitaker's commission averred that political and social groups should receive the benefit of the Convention's protections. It also 'recommended that the definition should be extended to include a sexual group such as women, men, or homosexuals' (emphasis added).⁴

Whitaker's inclusion of 'sexual' groups reflected the dramatic increase in sensitivity to gendered violence, spawned above all by the 'second wave' of feminist activism in the 1970s and 1980s. It was also striking for its inclusion of males and homosexuals in the gender framing. The report, however, was quickly shelved. Though the politics of its abandonment have not been explored, to my knowledge, it seems that key actors felt that submitting the Genocide Convention for formal redrafting, including the expansion of the protected groups, would open a Pandora's box and undermine rather than strengthen the convention's position in international law. Various genocide scholars, however, have included gender groups in their own working definitions of genocide.⁵

Coincidentally, as Whitaker's commission was performing its work, an exponent of the feminist 'second wave' was herself revisiting the language of the Genocide Convention. Mary Anne Warren (1946–2010), a professor at San Francisco State University, was struck – as Whitaker had been – by the absence of protection for gender groups in the Genocide Convention. Feminists had attempted to construct a vocabulary that could address the selective targeting of women and girls for violence and destruction, but such language was itself inadequate, in Warren's opinion. It drew Warren to coin her own influential neologism:

The Oxford American Dictionary defines genocide as 'the deliberate extermination of a race of people.' By analogy, gendercide would be the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex (or gender). Other terms, such as 'gynocide' and 'femicide,' have been used to refer to the wrongful killing of girls and women. But 'gendercide' is a sex-neutral term, in that the victims may be either male or female. There is a need for such a sex-neutral term, since sexually discriminatory killing is just as wrong when the victims happen to be male. The term also calls attention to the fact that gender roles have often had lethal consequences, and that these are in important respects analogous to the lethal consequences of racial, religious, and class prejudice. (Warren, 1985: 22)

Warren's 1985 book, *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection*, was a landmark in the evolution of feminist critiques of gender and mass violence. Two aspects of Warren's framing merit particular attention. First, it expanded the understanding of genocidal destruction beyond the 'event'-based, political–military forms of genocide that had long monopolized the discussion. As the subtitle of her book indicated, Warren was concerned above all with what I would subsequently term *gendercidal institutions*, such as female infanticide and the selective abortion of female fetuses.⁶ (Equally significant, Warren expanded the understanding of 'gender' to include females and males, femininities and masculinities alike. The gender-selective targeting of males, she asserted, was 'just as wrong' as the selective targeting of females. This inclusive framing was not, however, accompanied by meaningful attention to male victims: the substance of *Gendercide* dealt with female victims alone).

I knew nothing of Warren's book when, in 1999, I arrived at the same reworking of Raphael Lemkin's famous term. The context was also starkly different from Warren's. Between April and June 1999 Serb forces in Kosovo engaged in a pattern of atrocity that had become familiar throughout the Balkans wars of the 1990s, and that I had first isolated in an article titled 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in ex-Yugoslavia' (Jones, 1994: 115–34). This, and subsequent writings,

explored the selective targeting of non-combatant males for abuse and atrocity, up to and including systematic mass killing. My activist concern with the phenomenon, and with its systematic under-reporting in media, scholarly and IGO/NGO circles, led me first to plug 'gendercide' into an early search engine, which led me to Warren's work and its gender-inclusive framing of 'gendercide'. Thereafter, it drew me to the small but rapidly growing field of comparative genocide studies, which has been my primary intellectual abode ever since.

In 2000 I published an article in the *Journal of Genocide Research* titled 'Gendercide and Genocide'. It sought to draw attention to the pattern of gender-selective slaughter of male non-combatants – a phenomenon that seemed almost inescapable in varied accounts of genocide throughout history, but one that had never been systematically studied in its global-historical context. In a central passage of the essay, I contended that

the most vulnerable and consistently targeted population group, through time and around the world today, is non-combatant men of 'battle age,' roughly 15 to 55 years old. They are nearly universally perceived as the group posing the greatest danger to the conquering force, and are the group most likely to have the repressive apparatus of the state directed against them. The 'non-combatant' distinction is also vital. Unlike their armed brethren, these men have no means of defending themselves, and can be detained and exterminated by the thousands or millions. The gender of mass killing, moreover, likely extends beyond the age range specified. Elderly males are probably more prone than elderly women to be caught up in the 'malestrom' of war; and modern warfare, with its relentless press-ganging and criminality, extends ever further down the age ladder in the hunt for child soldiers and street thugs – overwhelmingly boys. (Jones, 2000: 185–213)

'Gendercide and Genocide' also examined the selective targeting of women and girls in both political-military and institutional genocides, coined the term *gendercidal institutions* and extended that concept to include institutional forms of anti-male gendercide such as *corvée* (forced) labour and military

conscription. The intellectual project was accompanied by an activist one: a web-based educational initiative called Gendercide Watch (www.gendercide.org), which has attracted millions of visitors since its launch in 2000.

In the past decade the study of gender, mass violence and 'gendercide' has advanced considerably. Most noteworthy has been a gradual evolution in the feminist literature on gender and mass violence. From an initial framing of male perpetrators and female victims/survivors – provocative and constructive, but ultimately limited and unsatisfactory – analysts have moved to deepen understandings of female agency, including of women as perpetrators and collaborators in mass violence. Interpretations of both male- and female-perpetrated violence have grown increasingly nuanced and sophisticated. Gradually, as well, males have been incorporated as victims/survivors – most recently in the area of rape and sexual violence, discussed further below.

Something of a similar process, albeit a slower and more halting one, can be discerned in the operations of IGOs and NGOs. The great wave of feminist activism that produced the four United Nations Global Conferences on Women⁷ entrenched an understanding of 'gender-based violence' (GBV) that mirrored 'second-wave' feminism's near-exclusive focus on female victimization. Cracks in that well-armoured intellectual edifice are now apparent. It can be expected that, in coming years and decades, institutional framings of GBV will move increasingly in a gender-inclusive direction.

WOMEN AND GENOCIDE/ GENDERCIDE

Feminist critiques emphasize, above all, the structural and ideological underpinnings of gender-selective violence and destruction. The corrective is a vital one. Comparative genocide studies, like other fields studying 'conflict',

'war' and mass violence, has focused almost exclusively on political–military and temporally bounded genocidal 'events'. Canonically, these include the Armenian genocide of 1915–17 (or 1915–21); the Jewish Holocaust of 1941–45 (or 1939–45, or 1933–45); and the genocide of Rwandan Tutsis (April–July 1994). Anti-genocide activism has followed suit: its rallying cry of 'Never Again' promotes attention to specific 'warning signs' of impending genocidal 'outbreaks' – most famously, those encapsulated in Gregory Stanton's 'Eight Stages of Genocide' model, which discerns a series of steps typically taken en route to genocidal outbreaks and (in the case of 'the last stage', genocide denial) in the genocidal aftermath (Genocide Watch, n.d.).

On its own terms this project is a crucial one, and a gender framing can be extremely useful to it, as I will argue later. But the limitations of the model are cast into sharp relief by a feminist- and Marxist-inspired critique of structural and institutional forms of violence throughout history. There is no obvious reason, intellectually or ethically, to limit 'genocide' to stringently time-bound 'events', when processes, structures and institutions generally exact much more devastating death tolls. Indeed, genocide studies has moved to acknowledge elements of structure and process in at least one key subject area (subsuming thousands of distinct cases): genocides of indigenous peoples. Not only do scholars now tend to acknowledge that such genocides may be inflicted over decades and centuries, but some influential voices contend that they are still continuing – a motif captured by the subtitle of Ward Churchill's classic study, *'A Little Matter of Genocide': Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (Churchill, 2001).

Even more enduring and institutionalized genocidal formations, however, have been overlooked by most genocide scholars. In part, this is because the regular victims of such formations – those belonging to social classes (notably the poor) and to gender

groups (notably females) – lie outside the 'protected' groups of the UN Genocide Convention. Another challenge of structural/institutional framings is that genocidal perpetrators are more diffuse, decentralized and harder to isolate. Where and to whom does one assign culpability for global poverty, for example? Can one label as 'genocidal' the millions of grassroots, household-level decisions that cumulatively constitute the ancient (and highly contemporary) institution of female infanticide?

My own work in genocide studies has pointed to this conceptual deficit and sought to redress it: first with the feminist-inspired framing of 'gencercidal institutions'; subsequently by commissioning Peter Prontzos' groundbreaking chapter on 'Structural Violence' for the edited volume *Genocide, War Crimes & the West* (Prontzos, 2004: 299–324); and most recently by penning a chapter on 'Genocide and Structural Violence' for the edited collection *New Directions in Genocide Research* (Jones, 2011: 132–54). But the framing remains marginal in the field, as a glance at the leading anthologies and encyclopaedias of genocide and crimes against humanity demonstrates.

A broader framing is clearly essential if the historical and continuing vulnerability of females to genocidal/gencercidal destruction is to be recognized and confronted. For reasons explored further below, it is usually the case that women and girls are less likely to be targeted for outright genocidal killing in the type of violent political–military outbreaks that constitute and constrain most people's understanding of 'genocide.' Men and boys, especially males of an imputed 'fighting age', are generally depicted as dangerous and threatening *en bloc*, and their gencercidal destruction nearly always dominates at least the *initial* stages of genocidal outbreaks. Under conditions of patriarchy and patrilineality, women and girls are more likely to be prized as 'booty' and consigned to slavery and concubinage. This is all the more so since descent is generally traced through the male bloodline, meaning that

females are more easily incorporated into tribal/clan/state formations without destabilizing existing lineages. Crucial in the targeting of females is sexual assault, including 'genocidal rape' and rape–murder, which – thanks to decades of feminist activism around these atrocities – have attracted considerable legal and scholarly attention in recent years. This subject is also addressed further below.

Female victims are likely to assume primacy, however, when genocidal and especially gendercidal institutions are foregrounded. In my study of 'Gendercidal Institutions against Women and Girls' for the Swiss-based Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) (Jones, 2005a: 15–24) I highlighted female infanticide as the cause of millions of gender-selective deaths throughout history. The nutritional and educational deficits imposed on girls and women are harder to link, empirically, to gender-specific mass mortality except in the case of pregnant women, where such deficits are evidently connected to the holocaust of maternal mortality. Though the statistics evince a welcome decline in recent years, this gendercidal institution still claims roughly half a million female lives *each year* – a death toll far eclipsing most political–military genocides in recent decades. As Peter Adamson vividly described the crisis for *New Internationalist*:

They die, these hundreds of thousands of women whose lives come to an end in their teens and twenties and thirties, in ways that set them apart from the normal run of human experience. Over 200,000 die of haemorrhaging, violently pumping blood onto the floor of bus or bullock cart or blood-soaked stretcher as their families and friends search in vain for help. About 75,000 more die from attempting to abort their pregnancy themselves. Some will take drugs or submit to violent massage. Alone or assisted, many choose to insert a sharp object – a straightened coat-hanger, a knitting-needle, or a sharpened stick – through the vagina into the uterus. ... Perhaps 75,000 more die with brain and kidney damage in the convulsions of eclampsia, a dangerous condition that can arise in late pregnancy and has been described by a survivor as 'the worst feeling in the world that can possibly be

imagined.' Another 100,000 die of sepsis, the bloodstream poisoned by a rising infection from an unhealed uterus or from retained pieces of placenta, bringing fever and hallucinations and appalling pain. Smaller but still significant numbers die of an anaemia so severe that the muscles of the heart fail. And as many as 40,000 a year die of obstructed labour – days of futile contractions repeatedly grinding down the skull of an already asphyxiated baby onto the soft tissues of a pelvis that is just too small. (Adamson, 1997)

On a conceptual level, the institution of maternal mortality constitutes a significant 'plausibility probe' for the notion of gendercidal institutions. In legal terms, the defining feature of genocide is *intent*. For a charge of genocide to stick, it must be shown that perpetrators sought and meant to destroy individuals on the basis of their group membership 'as such'. How is this relevant for a woman dying in agony from eclampsia or sepsis?

The argument I advanced in support of including maternal mortality as a case study on the Gendercide Watch website (Gendercide Watch, n.d.a) is that these deaths are the result of culpable and gendercidal negligence. Even the poorest countries, with a modicum of effort, can dramatically reduce the toll of maternal mortality, and in a dramatically brief period. The case of Bangladesh is instructive. According to a November 2012 report in *The Economist*, this country succeeded in cutting maternal deaths *by over 75 percent* in just two decades: from 800 per 100,000 population in 1990 to 194 per 100,000 in 2010. Simple family planning and women's health initiatives, implemented by government and NGO actors working in tandem, were critical in bringing about this near-miraculous decline (*The Economist*, 2012). Such initiatives are uncomplicated and are available in nearly all stable sociopolitical formations. If developing-world governments choose not to pursue them, in full knowledge of the scale of the crisis and the gender-specific mortality that it perpetuates, then a case can be made not only for culpable negligence but for *gendercidal intent*.

ROOT-AND-BRANCH GENOCIDES

Even if one limits the analysis to genocidal campaigns as traditionally understood – that is, temporally bounded ‘events’ – it is hardly the case that females are exempted from slaughter. While they are less likely than males to be targeted for murder at the *outset* of genocidal campaigns (as traditionally understood), this partial exemption is frequently only temporary. In many cases of genocide, including the three ‘canonical’ cases from the twentieth century cited earlier (the Armenian, Jewish and Tutsi holocausts), we see that a gendecidal assault on a community’s males often serves as a prelude to ‘root-and-branch’ genocide – that is, a full-fledged assault on all the community’s members, whether male or female, young or old, able or disabled.⁸ In the World War One-era genocides against Armenians and other Christians of the Ottoman Empire, the extermination of Christian males was followed by the application of genocidal strategies (especially death marches) which exposed adult and adolescent females to direct massacre, rape–murder and mass death through starvation, privation and exposure, exacerbated by torture and psychological devastation. In the case of the Holocaust, Jewish males were targeted exclusively for roundup, detention and abuse prior to the outbreak of World War Two (as with the brutal detention of 20,000 Jewish men following the *Kristallnacht* of November 1938). When the ‘Holocaust by bullets’ was unleashed on the eastern front in mid-1941, males similarly constituted a vast majority of early victims – but only for a matter of a few weeks. Thereafter, females and males were exterminated together in the killing pits (Goldhagen, 1997). Distinctly gendered strategies were pursued in the subsequent turn to mass murder by poison gas (prompted in part by the distress and trauma that the up-close slaughter of children and women was causing to *the perpetrators*). But females and males were equally victimized – indeed, males may have been more likely to receive at least a temporary reprieve in the

death camps, since all pregnant women were killed outright, and men and older boys were usually deemed more capable of slave labour. As for the gendering of the 1994 Rwandan holocaust, it is extraordinarily – perhaps unprecedentedly – complex (see Jones, 2004: 98–137). But whatever exemptions were granted to women and girls were inconsistent, usually temporary, and by no means significant enough over the course of the campaign to preserve hundreds of thousands of Tutsi women from genocidal murder.

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Gender-specific patterns of mass mortality in genocide also need to be investigated in the context of ‘excess mortality’ associated with the *complex humanitarian emergencies* that often accompany outbreaks of mass violence and genocide. The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, has attracted considerable attention in recent years, as estimates have circulated of a Holocaust-size death toll among Congolese civilians (the International Rescue Committee (2007) estimated 5.4 million ‘excess deaths’ in the DRC between 1998 and 2007). According to recent research by Thomas Plümper and Eric Neumayer, female life expectancy is disproportionately affected by outbreaks of mass violence such as those occurring in ‘failed states’ like the DRC. Plümper and Neumayer state:

Women are likely to suffer more from an increase in food prices and famines than men. For physiological reasons, women are particularly susceptible to vitamin and iron deficiencies in diets. In addition, in male-dominated societies, males get priority in food distribution at the expense of girls and women. The decline in basic health care hits women more because of their specific reproductive roles. Damage caused to the health infrastructure reduces obstetrical care and increases the number of miscarriages as well as maternal and infant mortality. For example, a recent study by the International Red Cross indicated an extraordinarily high maternal mortality rate of 3 percent in

the rebel-controlled areas of civil war-ridden Congo. The high levels of maternal mortality are associated with early sexuality and motherhood (the teenagers of less than twenty years contribute 20 percent to the total fertility), too many pregnancies and births (the total is estimated at seven children per woman), unspaced pregnancies (the average period between two births is less than two years), motherhood at a late age, and induced clandestine abortions associated with unwanted pregnancies that affect 30 percent of the teenagers. ... More generally, a significant decline in purchasing power will affect women differently than men because in many cultures men receive preferential access to resources. When resources become scarcer, then the part of the population suffering from discrimination is necessarily hit even harder. Many of the negative effects of armed conflict on women are thus not due to biological reasons, but are due to what [R. Charli] Carpenter calls 'preexisting gendered social structures.' ... Thus in societies where female discrimination is widespread even during peacetime, women will suffer particularly strongly from the destructive power of violent conflict (Plümper and Neumayer, 2006: 728–9).

GENOCIDAL RAPE

Few topics in the study of gender and genocide have attracted more attention in recent years than the phenomenon of rape-as-genocide. Sexual violence against females was, of course, a central focus of first- and second-wave feminists. Following the publication of Susan Brownmiller's groundbreaking *Against Our Will* (Brownmiller 1975),⁹ feminists and their supporters lobbied for a reconceptualizing of rape to focus on injury to the female victim – as opposed to violations of men's 'property rights' or abstract crimes against the state/Crown. The critique became truly internationalized in the crucial decade of the 1990s. First came the wars of Yugoslav succession at the outset of that decade, in which the rape of (especially) Bosnian Muslim women by (especially) Serb soldiers and paramilitaries attracted substantial attention among feminists and others in academia, the IGO/NGO community and mass media. In 1994 there followed the holocaust in Rwanda, in which the rape of Tutsi

women, often accompanied by mutilation and followed by murder, constituted the most devastating such campaign since at least the Soviet mass rapes in Germany at the end of the Second World War. Indeed, perhaps not since the 'Rape of Nanjing' at the outset of that war had rape, gang-rape, and rape–murder been so systematic and claimed so many female lives (See Chang, 1998 and Gendercide Watch, n.d.b).

Feminist initiatives gradually registered with governments, legal systems and security forces in many parts of the world, leading to greater receptiveness and sensitivity to female rape claims, the increased provision of female police and counsellors and the jettisoning of a male 'right to rape' within marriage. Changes were evident as well in the policies and priorities of international organizations, notably those composing the United Nations system. Thus, when 'ad hoc' tribunals were struck under UN aegis to try accused perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity¹⁰ in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, sexual violence against women increasingly moved to the forefront in international criminal prosecutions.

The watershed moment came in 1998, when the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) issued its famous verdict in the case of Jean-Paul Akayesu. A Rwandan burgomaster (mayor) at the time of the 1994 genocide, Akayesu was accused and eventually convicted of, among other crimes, sanctioning and directing the mass rape of Tutsi women. For the first time, the sexual assaults were considered not merely adjuncts to genocide, or indicative of genocidal intent, but as *genocidal in themselves*. The rapes supervised by Akayesu were held to violate Article 2(b) of the Genocide Convention – they 'caus[ed] serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group' with the requisite specific 'intent to destroy, in whole or in part' the ethnically defined group 'as such'.

The prioritization of sexual violence against women and girls has carried over to media and IGO/NGO analyses of war and genocide, notably in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo. Men on all sides of that conflict have targeted female civilians for rape and sexual assault. Given that war and genocide have waxed and waned in DR Congo for more than fifteen years, the rape of women has become ‘almost a cultural phenomenon’, with an ‘intensity and frequency [that] is worse than anywhere else in the world’, according to the UN’s coordinator of Humanitarian Relief (2007) (McCrummen, 2007). Severe physical injury to the female victims was likewise generalized, as the actor and activist Ashley Judd declared after visiting eastern Congo:

The vagina will tear when being forced to accommodate either a rapist’s anatomy or objects that are introduced: wood, rock, sticks, guns, bayonets. There will be perforation of the vaginal walls, perforation and ripping of the cervix, potentially, based on the extent of the penetration into the uterus. The wall between the rectum and vagina is ripped apart. The urethra, which goes to the bladder, is damaged. There is incontinence. The urine is constantly seeping out, because the muscles and mechanisms that hold the bladder intact are ruined; there is faecal incontinence, which of course can introduce faecal matter into the gut, which results in horrific infections. Does that paint the picture? (Dickey, 2008)

In both Rwanda and the DRC an additionally grim dimension is added to the concept of genocidal rape by the pervasive threat of infection by the HIV virus. Not only do the Central and West African countries where such ‘degenerate wars’ have been concentrated in the post-Cold War period evince especially high levels of HIV infection in general, but rates among members of the proliferation of armed factions are often much higher, reaching 40 to 50 per cent. Thus the murderous aspect of genocidal rape may be delayed (and prolonged) for years or even decades.

There is more, however, to these rape crises than sexual attacks on females alone. In the past few years scholarly attention began to be devoted to the plight of male victims of rape and sexual assault (see, for example, Sivakumaran, 2007: 253–76; Sivakumaran,

2005: 1274–306; Del Zotto and Jones, 2002; Jones, 2006: 451–69). A 2010 survey by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* ‘found that 22% of men’ in the DRC, together with 30% of women, ‘reported [suffering] conflict-related sexual violence’. The figure was cited in Will Storr’s groundbreaking article for the UK newspaper *The Observer*, which drew mass-media attention to the pervasiveness of sexual violence against males in the conflicts ravaging Central and East African countries (Storr, 2011).

This invited some searching questions, as well as criticisms of the framing of ‘gender’ and violence that was entrenched in academia and IGO/NGO circles. To what extent had ‘gender-based violence’ been constructed as exclusively targeting women and girls? What were the distinctive vulnerabilities of males (especially civilian males) in war and conflict? Was a framing of ‘gendercide’, including attention to gendercidal institutions, also applicable to males as victims, and not just as the (admittedly overwhelming) perpetrators of such crimes?

GENDERCIDE AGAINST MEN AND BOYS

We saw earlier that despite Mary Anne Warren’s gender-inclusive framing of ‘gendercide’ in the mid-1980s, she and subsequent academics and activists focused exclusively or almost exclusively on female victims of the phenomenon. This reflected prevailing understandings of ‘gender’, which tended to be defined as an ideological and institutional apparatus meant to control females and sanction their oppression. To cite one example from academia, the feminist scholar Mary E. Hawkesworth acknowledged in 2001 that ‘in principle, a gendered practice could privilege men or women. But the history of male dominance has resulted in systematic male power advantages across diverse social domains. Feminist usage of the adjective ‘gendered’ reflects this male power advantage. *Hence a gendered practice is*

synonymous with androcentric [male-centered] practice in common feminist terminology' (Hawkesworth, 2001: 235 no. 2, emphasis added). There was little room, in this framing, for consideration of the violence (including gender-based violence) that women may inflict. More significantly – in the rush to define males as power-wielders and perpetrators of violence – a vast category of victims was overlooked: male victims of predominantly male-inflicted and highly 'gendered' violence.

I noted earlier that my original engagement with the concept of genocidal violence was prompted by the phenomenon of gender-selective killings of non-combatant males in the Balkans wars and beyond. My 1994 article 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in Ex-Yugoslavia' cited testimonies from the Helsinki Watch report *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina* that had a starkly timeless feel to them. Indeed, the phenomenon to which they attested, like many genocidal strategies against females, is as old as recorded history:

My son's house was between the two bridges [on the Drina River]. They [the Serbs] drove the trucks containing the men up to the bridges, unloaded them and forced them to bend over the walls. ... Then they massacred them – some they slit the throats, some [were killed] with a knife in the back, some they shot. Their bodies were dumped in the Drina.

Our men had to hide. My husband was with us, but hiding. I saw my uncle being beaten on July 25 when there was a kind of massacre. The Serbs were searching for arms. Three hundred men were killed that day.

They were shelling our village [while] I was in a shelter. Some men got away. Those who were in their homes were beaten, tortured and killed by the Cetniks. ... We came out of the shelter. They were looking for men. They got them all together. We saw them beating the men. We heard the sounds of the shooting. One man survived the executions. They killed his brother and father. Afterwards the women buried the men. (Jones, 1994: 124–6; see also Helsinki Watch, 1993)

Apparently, however, until my article on 'Gendercide and Genocide' appeared in

2000, this targeting of males for gender-selective slaughter had never been explored in a comparative and global-historical context. Why not?

Clearly, the emergence of a feminist-dominated critique of gender and violence explained much of the oversight. Males-as-perpetrators were essential to feminist frameworks of violence against females; to broaden the analysis to include attention to male victims threatened both the stability of dominant framings and the policy attention and funding accorded to female victims. (Exceptions were sometimes made if an additional variable could be added to the mix. The plight of minority males in western societies, for example, sometimes did attract notice.) A further constraining factor was the machismo at the heart of many men's understanding of masculinity, including their own. From a personal perspective, I encountered considerable early resistance in feminist ranks to my explorations of non-combatant male victimization in war and genocide. But the resistance was probably greater among my fellow males, who often seemed either embarrassed by the subject or determined to prioritize female victims out of what frequently struck me as old-style chivalry. Perhaps counterintuitively, when a scholar or activist did lend a sympathetic ear to my critique, it was overwhelmingly likely to be a female/feminist scholar who did so. One of the first, and probably the most significant, was R. Charli Carpenter. Carpenter was struck by a brief passage in my 1994 article on 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in ex-Yugoslavia' contending that representatives of the UN and other IGOs/NGOs were shamefully oblivious to the vulnerability of non-combatant males – such as those trapped in the besieged city of Srebrenica (as of 1994) and slated for selective extermination (in July 1995). She subsequently carried out doctoral research in the Balkans. In a series of powerful and now widely cited articles, published in leading International Relations journals, Carpenter showed that my somewhat speculative

observation held true when tested in the field. Especially notable were the testimonies she elicited from UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) personnel, whose responses to questions about limited attention to male vulnerabilities ranged from the regretful to the fatalistic:

Evacuation was ... simply not an option for the men, tragic though that was...

Frankly in the case of Bosnia, most men were at least potentially fighters, so that every man had to be accounted for...

The Serbs felt they had to detain or interrogate all the men, and quite justifiably so, I think.

In hindsight it stands out [that men were overlooked], but at the time there were so many overwhelming problems, even to save a percentage of the women and children ... so you didn't even get to that stage where you could argue on behalf of the men.

When you start prioritizing, any way you go, there are certain categories that are easily dealt with. There's the vulnerable, but then there are the vulnerable who are politically easy ... Most of us on the ground there understood men were vulnerable, but we lived with it. I think it was unfortunately the reality and we knew we could get women and children out, so why not get them out. (Carpenter, 2003: 685–6)¹¹

If such comments today seem shockingly flippant or unjustifiably resigned to biased 'priorities', this reflects the measurable progress achieved by a small number of academics, advocates and media workers who have struggled to document and denounce violence (including sexual violence) against males in war and genocide. Notable, though still very partial, is the gradual transformation of notions of 'gender-based violence' (GBV) from an exclusively female preserve to one that recognizes and in some measure confronts gender-based violence against males.

Most understandings of gender-based violence, in both academic and IGO/NGO circles, define the phenomenon in a gender-inclusive way. For example, Shelah S. Bloom defines it as 'violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations

associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society'. Typically, though, the inclusive framing is unaccompanied by meaningful attention to men and boys who are victimized by GBV. Indeed, the USAID report from which Bloom's definition is drawn is titled *Violence against Women and Girls* (cited in Piccard, 2011).

A more genuinely inclusive critique may now be emerging, and a few milestones along the road should be noted. The report on the 1999 Kosovo war issued by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was perhaps the first human-rights investigation to devote an entire chapter to 'Young Men of Fighting Age' as victims of gender-selective killing and other atrocities. The chapter, moreover, preceded chapter-length treatments on 'Women', 'Children', and 'Elderly/Disabled', in keeping with the OSCE's finding that 'young men were the group that was *by far the most targeted* in the conflict in Kosovo':

Clearly, there were many young men involved in the UCK [Kosovo Liberation Army] ... but every young Kosovo Albanian man was suspected of being a terrorist. If apprehended by Serbian forces ... the young men were at risk, *more than any other group of Kosovo society*, of grave human rights violations. Many were executed on the spot, on occasion after horrendous torture. Sometimes they would be arrested and taken to prisons or other detention centres, where, as described afterwards by men released from such detention, they would be tortured and ill-treated, while others would simply not be seen again. Others were taken for use as human shields or as forced labour. Many young men 'disappeared' following abduction. (OSCE, 1999: ch. 15; emphases added)

In 2005 the annual report of the Human Security Centre expressed the conviction that 'the "gender lens" has been inconsistently applied' in analyses of conflict and genocide, 'creating a distorted picture of reality'. While acknowledging that men were 'overwhelmingly, the major perpetrators of violence', it was also the case that

‘men, not women ... “bear the brunt” of armed conflict’, at least directly:

Both in uniform and out, men have been, and continue to be, killed, wounded and tortured in far greater numbers than women. ... We know that women are far more likely to be the victims of rape and other sex crimes, but sexual violence is only one form of ‘gender-based violence.’ Men, too, are targeted because of their gender. (Human Security Centre, 2005)

R. Charli Carpenter has again been at the forefront of academic research and advocacy in this area. The essence of her 2006 article ‘Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations’ is conveyed by the abstract:

While gender-based violence has recently emerged as a salient topic in the human security community, it has been framed principally with respect to violence against women and girls, particularly sexual violence. ... Gender-based violence against men (including sexual violence, forced conscription, and sex-selective massacre) must be recognized as such, condemned, and addressed by civilian protection agencies and proponents of a ‘human security’ agenda in international relations. Men deserve protection against these abuses in their own right; moreover, addressing gender-based violence against women and girls in conflict situations is inseparable from addressing the forms of violence to which civilian men are specifically vulnerable (Carpenter, 2006b: 83–103).

For all these notable contributions and others, however, the situation in the policy and humanitarian spheres remains dire – indeed, scandalous. In 2010, Sandesh Sivakumaran, whose trailblazing research on sexual violence against males in conflict settings has already been cited, delivered a powerful critique of United Nations frameworks and policies on this subject. While ‘grand pronouncements’ were often made about the need to address ‘the problem of male sexual violence in armed conflict’, this amounted to little more than lip-service. Sivakumaran located a ‘disconnect’ between the rhetoric ‘and the lack of measures taken to address’ the phenomenon.

He cited the observation of the 2005 World Bank Report on ‘Gender, Conflict, and Development’ that recognized male victims of GBV, but called for the recognition to be extended to the policy level. ‘Despite the increased attention of all areas of the UN, this remains true today’, Sivakumaran concluded. ‘Somewhere down the line, something has been lost in translation’ (Sivakumaran, 2010: 276–7).

GENDERCIDAL INSTITUTIONS AGAINST MALES?

In my own work on genocidal institutions I have inquired whether the framing of ‘gender-cidal institutions’ can usefully be applied to males. I believe it can, and that it constitutes an important extension of a male-specific GBV framework. One of the most destructive of all human institutions – perhaps the most destructive – has overwhelmingly targeted males throughout history. I refer to *corvée* (forced) labour, which in pre-modern times exacted a death toll in the uncounted tens or hundreds of millions, and which is still prominent today in places such as Burma/Myanmar and Brazil. Significantly, and ironically, the relevant international instrument – the 1930 Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour – does not ban forced labour. Rather, it limits it to one group and one only:

Only adult able-bodied males who are of an apparent age of not less than 18 and not more than 45 years may be called upon for forced or compulsory labour. ... [T]he proportion of the resident adult able-bodied males who may be taken at any one time for forced or compulsory labour ... shall in no case exceed 25 per cent (emphasis added).¹²

The reason for the gender-selective exemption is straightforward: it was meant to preserve the right of states to impose a particular form of gender-selective forced labour – namely, military conscription. This too, at many times and in many places, can be counted as a genocidal institution.

Feminists and others, distrustful of sometimes antiquated and paternalistic framings of female victimization, have increasingly engaged with the issue of female agency in conflict and genocide, including the role of female perpetrators and supporters of violence. The title of Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark's edited collection, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?*, reflects this broadening of the framework beyond female victimization to include women as agents and accomplices in mass violence (Moser and Clark, 2001).¹³ However, it cannot be denied, and must not be forgotten, that the vast majority of perpetrators of gender-cidal violence are men and boys. In tandem with explorations of female agency, an ever more nuanced and relational understanding of male/masculine violence has evolved, building on Raewyn Connell's crucial delineation of (plural) *masculinities*, notably their hegemonic/dominant and subordinate variants (Connell, 2005). This is well exemplified by the work of the historian and genocide scholar Elisa von Joeden-Forgey. Her revelatory study of 'genocidal masculinity' shows how bearers of such masculinity devise atrocity 'scripts' that are 'written' on the victims of mass violence, particularly with regard to the 'life-force atrocities' inflicted on females and males alike. Von Joeden-Forgey defines such atrocities as 'violence that targets the life force of a group by destroying both the physical symbols of the life force as well as the group's most basic institutions of reproduction, especially the family unit' (Joeden-Forgey quoted in Jones, 2010: 476; see Joeden-Forgey, 2012b) Her forthcoming book, *Gender and Genocide Prevention*, seeks to integrate such findings with the agenda of prevention and intervention that has underpinned comparative genocide studies from the start (Joeden-Forgey, 2012a: 89–107).

GENDER AND 'HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION'

Genocide scholars may have as much in common with physicians as they do with

historians, sociologists and moral philosophers. An understanding of genocide is sought – perhaps naively – as a means to diagnosis and treatment, inoculation, perhaps even cure. In this respect, genocide scholarship parallels feminist intellectual endeavours, which have generally contained a strong component of activism and advocacy. If medical-style intervention and prevention are indeed central to both gender studies and genocide studies, how can a deeper understanding of gender, 'gendercide' and genocide assist in crafting effective means of prophylaxis and cure? Let me highlight, in closing, three lines of investigation that seem to me especially useful.

A holistic and gender-inclusive understanding of gender-cidal strategies – extending beyond the gendering of time-bound genocidal events, and encompassing gender-cidal institutions and processes – is vital if the core vulnerabilities of females, in particular, are to be grasped. Consider a case of female-specific victimization already explored in this essay. In 2001 the Canadian government-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty issued its influential report on *The Responsibility to Protect* (ICISS, 2001). The responsibility was subsequently enshrined in a United Nations resolution that, in turn, supplied the legal underpinning for the international intervention against the atrocities of the Qaddafi regime in Libya. The ICISS argued that *military* intervention could override the standard protections of state sovereignty

in two broad sets of circumstances, namely in order to halt or avert: large scale loss of life, actual or apprehended, with genocidal intent or not, which is the product either of deliberate state action, or state neglect or inability to act, or a failed state situation; or large scale 'ethnic cleansing,' actual or apprehended, whether carried out by killing, forced expulsion, acts of terror or rape. (ICISS, 2001: xii)

The specific reference to 'rape' showed how far international initiatives had moved to

recognize sexual violence against females as a crime against humanity – even, under certain circumstances, as genocide. But when I read the first set of conditions justifying military intervention my mind leapt immediately to a crisis that surely was not on the minds of the drafters of the Report: *maternal mortality*. ‘Large scale loss of life’? Undeniably. ‘With genocidal intent or not’? Thus, whether one feels that the phenomenon meets the requirement of genocidal or gendercidal intent is not relevant. ‘The product either of deliberate state action, or state neglect or inability to act’? Neglect, surely. Inability, only rarely.

Thus, maternal mortality in a Third World country would seem to meet the Commission’s standards for urgent military intervention. Assuming that this was not the Report’s intention, and assuming as well that military intervention is a blunt and untenable instrument for addressing structural sexism and derelict public-health institutions, a set of questions arises. What might ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘protection’ mean in the context of half a million women dying annually in pregnancy or childbirth, or shortly afterward – the equivalent of a new Rwanda-scale genocide every couple of years? What does ‘conflict’ mean, if it cannot encompass such a massive conflict between the rhetoric of humanitarianism and the global reality of violence against women and girls? If we do not plan to send in the troops, what sort of ‘intervention’ can meaningfully be mounted?

In addressing such institutionalized crises, perhaps what is required is a new concept of *humane intervention* – one that promotes a long-term commitment of resources and sustained campaigns, rather than the kind of limited ‘firefighting’ efforts that usually pass for ‘humanitarian intervention’. If the problems are structural, the solutions must be as well.¹⁴ Likewise, if the validity of a ‘gendercidal institutions’ framing extends to males, then so might the prescription of humane intervention. It seems to me astonishing, for example, that the global humanitarian instrument that

regulates the institution of forced labour permits the practice as long as men are the targets. It is difficult to imagine such a law remaining in place unchallenged if the designated victims were female.

In the more limited context of political–military genocides, we now have both a much more nuanced understanding of the sexual violence endemically inflicted upon females and the beginnings of a substantial humanitarian response to it. Sexual violence against males continues to receive little attention in the academic literature and virtually no institutional response has been mounted; this needs to change.

However, it is the wider range of gender-selective measures directed against male non-combatants, particularly those of an imputed ‘battle age’, that seems most significant in developing effective mechanisms of genocide prevention and intervention. *The selective roundup, detention, torture, ‘disappearance’ and murder of males is perhaps the most universal and reliable indicator of an impending campaign of generalized and genocidal violence*, as such campaigns traditionally have been understood. Certainly, when the United Nations and other actors confront the challenge of rescuing besieged civilian populations there is no justification for assuming prime facie that ‘women and children’ are the most vulnerable members of that population, if by ‘vulnerability’ we mean liability to slaughter above all.

In 1993, for example, I pilloried UN workers for ‘accommodat[ing] themselves to the blatantly discriminatory rules laid down by Serb occupiers’ for the evacuation of civilians (Jones, 1994: 124, 131). The following year, quite predictably, the Serbs invaded Srebrenica and massacred thousands of men and adolescent boys, as they had done throughout the Balkans wars. How might this have been prevented? After the massacre I suggested that, among other strategies, ‘a stronger line towards Serbs guarding checkpoints’ would have been justified, ‘making it clear that “battle-age”

civilian males had the same guaranteed right of refuge under international law as did any other members of the population, and perhaps the use of force to defend convoys against Serb attempts to seize and abuse these prime human targets'. It might also have prompted a 'humanitarian emphasis on ensuring that all "battle-age" civilian males, as the most vulnerable members of the community, be given priority in the evacuation process ...' (Jones, 2009: 267). Whatever the validity of the specific prescriptions, it was – and remains – vital that the subject of male 'vulnerability' under such circumstances be engaged with properly. Despite promising movement in this direction, we are still far from this goal.

If 'genocidal masculinity' lies at the heart of much collective violence, including the mass violence of genocide and crimes against humanity, what can be done to mute it and transform it? Many societies have, in fact, moved decisively in this direction, as reflected in the dramatic declines in violence (overwhelmingly male-perpetrated) that Steven Pinker charts in his encyclopaedic study *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2012). In some societies where domestic and sexual violence against females was once the norm it has been effectively confronted, though hardly banished. Violence by males against other men and boys has registered a similar decline. In many of the world's worst current conflicts, however, 'toxic' and 'genocidal' masculinity continues to run amok, and one can anticipate that this will hold true for the foreseeable future.

Apart from education and child rearing aimed at suppressing and transforming these violent expressions of masculinity, intervention strategies must acknowledge and address their structural roots and the ways that they reflect and respond to gender-specific pressures and expectations. Consider, for example, the construction of genocidal masculinity in Rwanda in 1994. It has long been appreciated that economic crisis fuels conflict. Less commonly is it recognized that it also produces

a crisis of masculinity, as in Rwanda in the early 1990s:

Rwanda ... was one of the poorest countries in the world, with some 86 percent of its population living below the poverty line, and this situation affected women (and children, and the elderly) no less than young men. But for younger Rwandan males, the crisis was additionally an *existential* one: 'Without land or employment, young men cannot advance in life, they cannot marry or achieve the social status of their parents.' When the genocide erupted, the temptation for Hutu men to kill their Tutsi counterparts and seize their land, cattle, money, and belongings must have been irresistible. One might even argue that the genocide represented, to some extent, an attempt by Rwanda's 'Hutu Power' extremists to solve the gender crisis of young Hutu men by making available resources (land and other property, positions in higher education, work in the bureaucracy and private industry, etc.) that the government itself could not otherwise provide for them. ... One is not surprised to learn that the genocidal killers of April–June 1994, according to Human Rights Watch, 'included many young men who had hung out on the streets of Kigali or smaller commercial centres, with little prospect of obtaining either the land or the jobs needed to marry and raise families. They included too thousands of the displaced who focused their fear and anger on the RPF and defined that group to include all Tutsi' – or at least all Tutsi males. (Jones, 2009: 198)

The lessons to be gleaned here are numerous. But, from the perspective of the western actors who dominate the international political economy, it is vital to recognize how significant were economic decisions taken elsewhere in generating Rwanda's crisis – for example, those dictating commodity prices and imposing harsh 'structural adjustment' measures. If we recognize that many such crises have their origins in such negative 'interventions' by outside actors, how those interventions nurture and fuel society-wide crises and how those crises in turn produce distinctively gendered 'scripts' of genocidal masculinity, we may arrive at both fresh understandings of genocidal processes and important new strategies for preventing and intervening in them.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have sketched the origins of the concepts of ‘genocide’ and ‘gendercide’ and considered some of their applications to modern discourses on human rights and gendered violence. While I believe the terminology is useful, however, it would be disastrous if a preoccupation with language distracted us from confronting the core phenomena under consideration. In the words of the Zen adage, we should not confuse the finger pointing at the moon with the moon itself.

Consider a cautionary example. The impressive range of popular (particularly student-led) initiatives that thrust the Sudanese region of Darfur into the international spotlight in the mid-2000s concentrated so intently on labelling the violence as ‘genocide’ that when US Secretary of State Colin Powell finally used the term in public it seemed to suck the air out of the discussion. What came next?¹⁵ Surely, whether the Sudanese government’s mass violence in Darfur was more appropriately defined as ‘genocide’ or ‘crimes against humanity’ or ‘atrocities crimes’ was secondary to the need to *stop the violence*. Likewise, it matters little to me if someone confronting the holocaust (as I perceive it) of maternal mortality chooses to adopt a ‘gendercide’ framing or not. What is critical is that s/he acknowledges the severity of the suffering, recognizes its roots in patriarchy and sexism and seeks to confront it and banish it to the extent possible.

I nonetheless contend that Raphael Lemkin’s brilliant neologism, and Mary Anne Warren’s innovative reworking of it, facilitate attention to crimes that for millennia were viewed as part of the natural order of things. We are far from inhabiting a world in which these forms of human destruction have been vanquished. But, thanks to the efforts of committed activists, engaged scholars and millions of conscientious others, we are arguably closer to that goal. Both genocidal outbreaks and the devastation caused by genocidal and

gendercidal institutions appear to have declined in recent decades and centuries (Pinker, 2012: 386–414). Inspiration should be drawn from these accomplishments, just as the remaining challenges and crises should be confronted squarely.

NOTES

- 1 On Raphael Lemkin and his concept of genocide, see Power, 2007: chs 1–3; Jacobs, 2012; Jones, 2010: ch. 1.
- 2 On the discussions and debates surrounding the Convention, see Schabas, 2009 and Abtahi and Webb, 2009.
- 3 For the full text of the Genocide Convention, see www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm, accessed 28 March 2014.
- 4 For the full text of the Whitaker Report, see www.preventgenocide.org/prevent/UNdocs/whitaker/, accessed 28 March 2014.
- 5 My preferred definition of genocide, for example, adapts that of Steven T. Katz: ‘[Genocide is] the actualization of the intent, however successfully carried out, to *murder in whole or in part* any national, ethnic, racial, religious, political, social, gender or economic group, as these groups are defined by the perpetrator, by whatever means.’ See Jones, 2010: 18; the italicized phrase substitutes for Katz’s ‘murder in its totality’. This definition greatly expands the range of groups requiring protection against genocide. While emphasizing the element of mass murder, it stresses that killing (including gender-selective killing) can be carried out ‘by whatever means’: that is, it allows for the incorporation of a structural-institutional framing.
- 6 In legal terms, this understanding overlaps with Article 2(c) of the Genocide Convention, with its recognition of more indirect and institutionalized strategies of ‘inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction’; and with Article 2(e), citing ‘preventing births within the group’ as a genocidal strategy.
- 7 For a summary and overview of the Global Women’s Conferences, see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/hist.htm, accessed 28 March 2014.
- 8 Note that the term ‘root-and-branch’ is implicitly gendered: it implies that the killing has moved beyond the initial target group (adult males) to encompass adult women (the ‘root’ of reproduction) and children (the ‘branch’).
- 9 Subsequent contributions focusing on the rape of females in war and genocide include Stiglmeier, 1994; Allen, 1996; Rittner and Roth, 2012).

- 10 The concept of 'crimes against humanity' is wider than that of genocide, but also overlaps with it in important ways. Notably, among the crimes so designated are rape and sexual violence when inflicted as part of a 'widespread or systematic' campaign against civilian populations. For further exploration, see Jones, 2008, especially chapter 7, 'Rape and Sexual Crimes': 105–20.
- 11 See also Carpenter, 2005: 295–334. This series of articles formed the basis for Carpenter's book *'Innocent Women and Children': Gender, Norms And the Protection of Civilians* (2006a).
- 12 Article 11.1 and 11.2 of the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (1930); full text available at www2.ohchr.org/english/law/forced-labour.htm, accessed 28 March 2014.
- 13 The Rwandan genocide provided a bellwether, since it appeared to be unprecedented in terms of the large numbers of women who were mobilized (or eagerly volunteered) to play diverse roles as genocidal perpetrators. The African Rights report *Rwanda – Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers* (African Rights, 1995) may still be the only human-rights report to focus on female perpetrators of mass violence. The iconic Rwandan figure in this respect is the former Minister of Family Welfare and the Advancement of Women (!), Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, who was convicted of genocide and incitement to rape in 2011. See Landesman's profile of Nyiramasuhuko (2002).
- 14 These passages on maternal mortality and humanitarian intervention are adapted from my chapter 'Gendercide: The State of Study,' in Jones, 2005b: 185–97.
- 15 For an evaluation and critique of the anti-genocide movement on Darfur, see Hamilton (2011).

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Understanding Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

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Sexual violence and its extreme consequences are not intrinsic to conflict and displacement. Rather, there is a sense that rape leaves the perpetrator without blood on their hands – that it can be put down to ‘biological need’ or the ‘fog of war’. So we must be clear: mass rape is no more natural, inevitable or acceptable than mass murder.¹

The soldiers went after my daughter and I knew they would rape her. But she resisted and said she would rather die than be with them. They cut off her left breast and put it in her hand. They said: ‘Do you refuse still?’ She said she would rather die than be with them. They cut off her labia and showed them to her. She said: ‘Please kill me.’ ‘They took a knife and put it on her neck and then made a long vertical incision down her chest and opened her body. She cried, but eventually she died. She died with her breast in her hand.’ (Reuterskiöld, 2009)

Reporting on rape as a particularly gruesome and heinous form of wartime atrocity, exemplified in the above quotations, has become familiar in (high) policy circles and in the global media. Indeed, sexual violence has

finally been acknowledged as an aspect of warfare that commonly occurs and that must be addressed. Accounts of the brutality of wartime rape have been accompanied with condemnations and assurances that something can and indeed is being done to prevent it. Hence, after far too many centuries of silence and neglect, the pressing issue of sexual violence in armed conflicts is now finally recognized as an acute and serious global security problem.

While the history of rape in war is as long as the history of warring itself, until recently it has been largely ignored. Rape was generally treated as if it were an ‘unfortunate by-product’ of warring (Seifert, 1996), warranting little if any attention in the ‘high politics’ of global and national security. In the aftermath of the international recognition of mass rapes during the armed conflicts in both Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1995), much policy and media attention has since been paid to the scourge of

conflict-related sexual violence. This includes the role of sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). During this period there has been a marked shift in the ways in which sexual violence has been framed in the global policy debate. Dominant understandings have moved from seeing rape in war (if remarked upon at all) as a regrettable but inevitable aspect of warring to seeing it as a strategy, weapon or tactic of war that can be prevented, or at least severely limited. Indeed, several United Nations Security Council Resolutions have confirmed the United Nations' commitment to combatting conflict-related sexual violence and in 2010 United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Margot Wallström (of Sweden) as his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict – the first time such a post has been in existence.

The ways in which we may attempt to prevent or reduce wartime sexual violence, however, depend upon our understanding of why rape occurs in conflict situations. How can we understand sexual violence in war? This chapter will offer an overview of the main ways in which conflict-related sexual violence is understood and theorized in academic literature and the policy world. It aims to place those strands of feminist scholarship that focus on understanding rape in warfare in conversation with scholarship on conflict-related rape more generally. As an overview, it will therefore both introduce different perspectives on conflict-related sexual violence and raise some lines of critique that these perspectives elicit.²

We will outline five explanations of sexual violence in war: 1) 'boys will be boys': biology and (hetero)sexual urge; 2) cycles of violence and the 'craziness of war'; 3) gender: militarized masculinities and femininities; 4) rape as a weapon of war; and 5) military motivations and structures. While some of these approaches overlap (such as 'gender: militarized masculinities and femininities' and the notion of 'rape as a weapon of war'), making it difficult to separate them, others are poles apart. The understanding of 'rape as a weapon of war', for instance,

stands in sharp contrast to, and has been developed in opposition to, the 'biological urge' explanation (and also to some extent the 'cycles of violence' perspective).

In the final sections of this chapter we will briefly explore three additional issues in academic and policy debates on rape in war, namely: the question of the relation between peacetime and wartime rape, the issue of men and boys as victims of sexual violence in war and, lastly, the power and politics of representing sexual violence. The new-won attention to sexual violence not only warrants increased efforts to better understand the dynamics behind this violence but also demands probing into the question of whose voices are heard and whose excluded in stories of wartime rape. But let us first attend to the various attempts at explaining wartime sexual violence.

EXPLAINING WARTIME RAPE

'Boys will be Boys': Biology and (Hetero)Sexual Urge

Historically, rape has been seen as integral to warring because war is (supposedly) enacted by men and men are subject to their biologically driven heterosexual needs; hence men rape. The main line of argument according to this explanatory framework is twofold.

First, the (male) soldier's libido is understood as a formidable natural force, which ultimately demands sexual satisfaction (ideally from women). Maintaining multiple sexual relations and displaying sexual potency is seen as a 'natural' effect of male heterosexuality. Seifert has referred to this framework of understanding as the 'sexual urge' (Seifert, 1996: 36) or the 'pressure cooker theory' (Seifert, 1994: 55). According to this line of thinking, wartime rape is a result of the men's heterosexual desires, resulting from their biological make-up (e.g. Paglia, 1992; Thornhill and Palmer, 2000).

This basic storyline comes in various forms, from the more determinist form, in

which rape functions to fulfil the male biological drive to perpetuate one's genes, to more biosocial theories (for a discussion of these variations see Gottschall, 2004). The more popular version of this 'sexual urge' discourse is often referred to as the 'substitution' argument (see Wood, 2009: 135). According to this line of reasoning, sex by force occurs in military contexts because soldiers do not enjoy 'normal' access to women in other ways: they are not granted leave, are far from home or are otherwise denied access owing to the basic travails of war. If men are not able to achieve sexual relief in the socially acceptable way (through consensual sex with wives, girlfriends or prostitutes), then they will 'substitute' sex by force for 'normal' sex out of sheer necessity. Many refer to the notion of a 'recreational rape' (or in the case of the DRC a 'lust' rape), which occurs if soldiers are deprived of the normal outlets for sexual desires (see Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2009; Enloe, 2000: 111).

In line with this reasoning, in many military contexts, men's sexual needs are presented as the reason for the need for regular leave (which is also intended to reduce the risk of supposedly unhealthy homosexual acts (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001). Thus 'solutions' to such sexual violence can be found in increasing soldiers' access to women, either through more generous leave or through 'comfort women' (as was the case in Second World War Japan). Prostitution rings have surrounded military bases throughout history and in diverse global contexts, including UN peacekeeping missions (Higate, 2004; 2007; Higate and Hopton, 2005; Whitworth, 2004). This perspective is particularly dominant in military contexts and underwrites generalized (military) accounts about male sexuality that celebrate virility and sexual potency.

Second, and intimately connected to the first line of reasoning, is the rationale that war suspends the social constraints that hinder men from being the sexual animals that they 'naturally' are/can be. According to this

perspective, society 'normally' acts as a hindrance to male's natural sexual drives – a hindrance that is often removed in the climate of warring. As Stern and Zalewski have argued elsewhere (Stern and Zalewski, 2009), this narrative reproduces the notion that boys are subjects who exist biologically and ontologically prior to socialization and who will follow a certain predestined development into civilized citizen-men (also a known category) if given the right conditions. These conditions reside in their being in society; presumably a civilian space where they can be nurtured by mothers and, later, wives.

In this story, the army/military is a space of suspended civilizing processes. It is, in other words, a special domain, which is separate from the homeland, the sphere of civilian life where normal civilization resides. Hence when in a situation of extreme violence all men, theoretically speaking, are potential rapists, as their biologically driven natural sexual urges are no longer tempered through society.

It is important to highlight that many military staff (as well as people in general) understand conflict-related rape in this way.³ However, despite its prevalence as an accepted explanation of an unfortunate (yet unavoidable?) reality in military contexts and in society at large, official discourse and academic arguments refute the 'sexual urge/substitution' theory, which is seen by many to be both essentializing and deterministic (e.g., Alison, 2007; Bourke, 1999; 2007; Connell, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1997; Enloe, 1990; 2000; 2007; Goldstein, 2001; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013; Higate and Hopton, 2005; Kirby, 2013; Leatherman, 2011; Morgan, 1994; Morris, 1996; Pankhurst, 2009; Price, 2001; Stern and Zalewski, 2009; Whitehead, 2002; Whitworth, 2004; Wood, 2009; 2010). According to its critics, it also naturalizes and thus depoliticizes rape in war and waylays efforts to stop its occurrence (e.g. Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013). Moreover, the empirical basis of this argument is weak (Brown Travis, 2003; Morris,

1996; Wood, 2009), to say the least. The occurrence of rape (committed by biological males) differs in different conflicts. In addition, and in contrast to the substitution theory, there is no evidence that troops that have access to sexual encounters (through access to prostitutes, for instance) are less prone to commit acts of sexual violence (Morris, 1996; Wood, 2009; 2010).

Yet, if one rejects the notion that biological urges 'lead' to rape in the extreme circumstances of warring, does this mean that substitution theory is totally erroneous? Not necessarily. Sexual behaviours and norms can be seen as produced through discourses about sexuality (which distinguish between the normal/healthy and the perverse). Viewing sexuality as produced through discourse helps us understand the power of soldiers' (and, more generally, society's) investment in the idea of male heterosexuality as a natural driving force that can hardly be heeded (see Foucault, 1984). In this sense the sexual urge, or substitution theory, may itself be seen as a discourse (See Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013). As a discourse, it produces certain truths about male sexuality, in particular military or militarized masculinities – truths which militarized men try to live up to – thereby underwriting the 'rationale' for rape (See Morris, 1996).

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AND THE 'CRAZINESS' OF WAR

Another explanatory framework understands sexual violence in the framework of the micro-sociology and psychology of violence in war, highlighting the workings of spirals of violence and 'the craziness of war'.⁴ In this line of thinking, it is the way in which people act in violent situations and how violence acts upon people that is the focus of analysis. Building on studies of violence more generally, a frequent 'explanation' for rape locates the problem in a 'spiral of violence': those who feel humiliated, mistreated and victimized by the enemy (or even through

the context of warring more generally) become more prone to enact violence (e.g. Kassimeris, 2006; Horwood et al., 2007; Horwood et al., 2007; Weiner, 2006; cf. Morris, 1996).⁵ Violence loses its edge of taboo: the more violence one witnesses, suffers from or inflicts, the easier it is to become 'morally disengaged' from those whom one sets out to harm (Muñoz-Rojas and Frésard, 2004; Staub, 1989; 2011; Zimbardo, 2008). Facets of such a spiral include the perpetrators viewing themselves as victims, finding 'justification' for violent behaviour (they 'deserve' it and therewith it is 'right' to seek revenge), shifting blame away from themselves and distancing themselves from their victims through processes of Othering. Furthermore, the prevalent use of drugs and alcohol among combat troops enables the perpetrator to feel even more removed from a sense of agency and responsibility (Kassimeris, 2006).

Randall Collins offers another perspective in his (2008) micro-sociological analysis of violence in and outside of war. A central concept in his analysis is 'forward panic', which can be understood as an emotional state that feeds a frenzy of excessive and non-utilitarian violence. Through an in-depth reading of perpetrators' experiences of violence, he provides examples from several atrocities connected to 'forward panic', from the 1968 Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam (as well as others during the Vietnam war) to 'The Rape of Nanking' to several ancient battles. Collins describes 'forward panic' as an emotional flow that can arise in circumstances of intense tension or fear. Forward panic occurs when such situations transform 'into a sudden rush of frenzied overkill in an atmosphere of hysterical entrainment' (Collins, 2008: 100). Collins' analysis of violence generated by forward panic includes all forms of violent acts, including rape – particularly so violent rapes featuring mutilations and/or the subsequent killing of the victims.

Numerous testimonies by soldiers in war feature a sense of chaos in violence. Many speak of the 'craziness' of war, which incites

a sense of being out of control (e.g. Collins, 2008; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2008; 2013; Goldstein, 2001). Soldiers often explain that combat removes them to an 'alerted state' in which they 'no longer are themselves', and they become 'different people', 'terrible people' and do 'terrible things' in relation to the violence that they are subject to.⁶ Hence, in these accounts they often describe their acts as residing outside of themselves as ethically responsible agents.

As in the sexual urge framework discussed above, according to this rationale rape appears somehow as a byproduct of war. This also evokes much critique, particularly so from proponents of the 'weapon of war' theory (see below). As reflected in the initial citation by the Special Representative to the Secretary General, both the 'biological urge' and the 'craziness of war' perspectives are highly contested by proponents of 'rape as a weapon of war' (particularly in policy circles). They are represented not only as erroneous but also as unwanted and dangerous explanations detrimental to the fight against sexual violence. However, it is important to note that the line of reasoning that attributes rape (in part) to the 'craziness' or the 'fog' of war or the perpetuation of cycles of violence does not necessarily argue that rape in war cannot be reduced. Moreover, it highlights important aspects of the 'messy' and painful realities of combat that often are ignored in other perspectives.

Yet, a focus on cycles of violence and the messiness of warring offers little explanation as to why such violence in some conflicts becomes so pointedly sexualized, while in others it is less so (see Wood, 2009; 2010). This is partly a reflection of the fact that most of this literature deals with violence more generally, not sexual violence specifically. Nor does this perspective take into account the mechanisms at play among those who resist 'cycles of violence' or 'forward panics': for instance, those who refuse to rape, sometimes at the risk of being killed.

The two perspectives presented above play a rather minor position in current efforts

to explain sexual violence. Let us now attend to the more dominant approaches, both in the mainstream policy world and in feminist analysis. The two following and interrelated perspectives represent the dominant strands of thought in current efforts to explain sexual violence in war.

THE GENDERED STORY: MILITARIZED MASCULINITIES (AND FEMININITIES)

Building upon a wealth of feminist research into the connections between gender, militarization and warring, scholars and, later, policy makers/advocates have shed light on the power of gender ideologies as underlying rationales for the 'use of' sexual violence in armed conflict. According to this line of reasoning, rape in warfare is understood as a product of gendered militarization, and decidedly not as a 'natural' result of biology. Rape in conflict settings is seen as an effective tool of humiliation and intimidation of the enemy and a disciplining tactic against those who pose threats to (national) security. Many understand this as a vital component of rape as a strategy of war, as we will discuss further below. Here we will mainly focus on how rape in war is made intelligible through gender. What are the basic lines of argumentation in this explanatory framework?

Instead of seeing the military as a venue through which boys can achieve their natural potential as men, research underscores how men/boys (and women/girls) learn to be 'masculine' and violent in the military through methods specifically designed to create soldiers who are able (and willing) to kill to protect the state/nation (see Alison, 2000; Bourke, 1999; 2007; Connell, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1997; Enloe, 1990; 2000; 2007; Goldstein, 2001; Higate, 2007; Higate and Hopton, 2005; Kirby, 2012; Leatherman, 2011; Morgan, 1994; Morris, 1996; Pankhurst, 2009; Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005; Price, 2001; Shepherd, 2007; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Stern and Nystrand, 2006; Stern and Zalewski, 2009; Whitehead, 2002;

Whitworth, 2004). The logic of militarization, in part, depends upon particular articulations of ideal types of masculinity and femininity, whereby, through the discourses of war, men are cast as heterosexual masculine-citizen-soldiers. By contrast, women and (and 'the feminine') are stereotypically associated with a need for protection, with peacefulness and with life-giving; these associations serve as the necessary counterpart to the supposed 'masculinity' of protecting, warring and killing (Enloe, 1990; Goldstein, 2001; Higate and Hopton, 2005; Masters, 2008; Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005).

Importantly, such associations render women/girls particularly vulnerable to the logics of rape in conflict and post-conflict settings. For instance, rape can be symbolically conceptualized as a way to punish, humiliate or torture, seemingly 'subversive' women for threatening national security (and identity) through their perceived challenges to strictly defined notions of femininity and masculinity (Enloe, 2000; Stern, 2005: 86; cf. Morris, 1996). The women in 'need of punishment' challenge the notion of femininity that is 'worthy of protection'. As women are often cast as the symbolic bearers of ethno/national identity through their roles as biological, cultural and social reproducers of the community, the rape of 'enemy' women can also aim at destroying the very fabric of society (e.g., Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001; Stern and Nystrand, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Conceptualizations about ideal femininity that link femininity to chastity and virginity also play a particularly important role. These ideals add to the effectiveness of rape as an act of humiliation and destruction, since it 'sullies' women and renders them seemingly unsuitable for present or future marriage and love relationships. As we have seen in many contexts worldwide, wartime rape often leads to the raped woman being rejected by her husband/family or seen as unsuitable for marriage. Moreover, and importantly, rape in wartime can be seen as a particularly effective means to feminize and thus humiliate the enemy by defiling 'his'

women/nation/homeland and proving him to be an inadequate protector.

Some scholars have focused on the notion of 'failed masculinity', exploring what might be at play in the claim that war needs men to be 'men'. This strand of feminist theorizing tells us that the desirable type of masculinity produced within the military celebrates violence, order, masculine-coded obedience and domination (cf. Morris, 1996; Higate, 2007). It serves to form soldiers along strictly disciplined codes of behaviour that designate any deviance from the norm as inferior, feminine, effeminate and dangerous. Boys/men undergo a form of indoctrination that includes the humiliation and breaking down of the civilian (feminized) boyish identity and then the building up of the macho soldier. Indeed, all that is associated with femininity is often (but not always) seen as corrosive of the required militarized masculinities. Therefore, violence is also directed inwards toward the 'others within'; killing the 'women in them' becomes necessary for soldiers in their attempts to live up to the myths of 'militarized manhood' (Whitworth, 2007: 176). In sum, militarization requires the production of different violent heterosexual masculinities (including both generals and foot soldiers). Furthermore, racial, ethnic and class hierarchies are 'woven into most military chains of command' so that the category 'militarized masculinities' also includes intersecting relations of power, where some militarized masculinities are subordinate to others (Enloe, 2000: 152; see also Higate, 2004; Higate and Hopton, 2005).

Militarized (and mythologized) masculinities and the attendant promises and entitlements associated with inhabiting these masculinities, however, rarely resonate with soldiers' sense of self or lived experiences, or with the actual conditions of militarized men's lives (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2009; Higate, 2007; Whitworth, 2007: 166). The fragility and indeed impossibility of militarized masculinity therefore requires continual concealment through military institutional practices and in the individual expressions of

such masculinity. This line of thinking builds upon a notion of identity as a continual process that can never be fully realized; the fulfillment of any identity position is therefore impossible and bound to 'fail' (see Butler, 1990; Hall, 1996a). Feelings of 'failed masculinity' can thus contribute to sexual violence, in that rape becomes a means to perform militarized, mythologized masculinity in an attempt to regain power (see Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2009).

The gendered story of sexual violence in war presented above makes much sense. In contrast to both the 'sexual urge' and 'craziness of war' explanations, it seeks to address the specific logics of sexual violence in war. Indeed, without this perspective, it is impossible to understand why sexual violence is an effective way to punish and intimidate civilian populations. However, it still fails to account for why violence becomes so pointedly sexualized in some conflicts but not in others (see Wood, 2009; 2010). A common (or at least a popular) assumption held by some scholars and policy advocates who look to the 'gendered story' for a framework for understanding wartime rape is that levels of sexual violence in conflict settings are connected to levels of gender inequality in that particular society during peacetime (e.g. Card, 1996 cf. Cohen et al., 2013). However, as we will argue below, there is presently not much empirical support for this assumption, even though it seems to make some sense intuitively.

An additional problem with this approach is that it tends to isolate sexual violence from other violence. Through focusing on and defining sexual violence as gendered, other violence appears as somehow un-gendered and, above all, sexual violence appears as fundamentally different from and outside of other forms of violence. Through a singular focus on rape as a violent act *sui generis* other forms of violence are normalized, even naturalized.

Moreover, this perspective largely assumes that we know what gender is and what it does, and thereby forecloses questions about

how gender works in particular settings and how it interacts with other dynamics, such as those explored in the section on the 'craziness of war', above. It can be argued that such a singular focus ultimately contributes to dehumanizing those who rape and also those who are raped, making it difficult to see and hear those who are subject to sexual violence in ways that we do not expect (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013). While sexual violence surely has a particular gendered logic of its own, it is not the only form of violence in war that is 'gendered'. Years of feminist research has forcefully argued that warring and its attending and multiple forms of violence are always gendered (See Enloe, 2000 as an excellent example of such research.) Moreover, isolating sexual violence from the dynamics of other forms of violence in war can hamper our efforts to understand when and where sexual violence is likely to occur.

RAPE AS A GENDERED WEAPON OF WAR

In line with the above reasoning and with the long (and important) political struggle to legally decree sexual violence as a crime against humanity⁷ and a war crime, sexual violence in conflict settings is now increasingly described and understood as a 'weapon' or 'tactic' of war (Card, 1996 Kirby, 2012; Leiby, 2011; Seifert, 1996; Skjelsbaek, 2001; 2012; see Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013 for a more comprehensive overview). While other narratives of wartime rape surely resonate for many, the storyline of rape as a weapon of war has become the most prevalent framing for understanding and redressing conflict-related sexual violence globally.⁸

Accounts of the strategic functions of rape differ in wordings and typologies between writers and appear differently in the various contexts that they address. There are, however, some significant overlaps. While some refer to rape as a 'weapon' of war (or as a 'martial weapon'), some use the term 'strategy'.

Others, more recently, refer to it as a ‘tactic’ of war. Often, however, these terms are used interchangeably; little difference occurs in terms of the overall meanings. The basic argument is that wartime rape is described (albeit in different ways) as a strategy of war (Isikozlu and Millard, 2010: 19), as a ‘martial weapon’ (Card, 2009)⁹ that enables armed groups to achieve military and political goals. Instead of being driven by a ‘natural’, even animalistic, sexual urge or being the result of the messy and crazy ‘cycles of violence’ in war, rape in war is about pursuing military and political goals.

Related to the term ‘strategy’, the notion of ‘tactic’ also often figures in policy texts, perhaps most prominently the Security Council resolutions 1820 and 1888.¹⁰ Additionally, most other policy documents, with minor variations in wording, refer to UN Action’s statement – under the heading ‘Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War’ – that wartime rape is ‘a military tactic, serving as a combat tool to humiliate and demoralize individuals, to tear apart families, and to devastate communities’.¹¹

In the policy world and the media, framing rape as ‘strategic’, a ‘tactic’, ‘systematic’ and ‘planned’ appears as if it were quite straightforward. Yet, it remains unclear *how* rape is ‘strategic’ in relation to the specific warscape in which sexual violence occurs. When explanations are given at all, they are generally rather formulaic and based loosely on the commonly accepted academic account as written through the Gendered Story. For example, in an interview in *The Nation* magazine, Margot Wallström, the former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, describes sexual abuse as a weapon of war targeting not only women and girls but also men and boys, as planned and systematic, designed ‘to control the territory, to instill fear, to terrorize the population’ (Wallström, 2011 quoted in Crossette, 2010). In relation to the context of the DRC, the prevailing framework for understanding is that rape is used as a systematic and strategic weapon or tactic of

war. For instance, the Special Rapporteur of the UN, Yakin Ertürk, concluded in 2008 that rape is ‘used systematically in operations against civilian populations’ (Ertürk, 2008: 10) and is ‘systematically employed to intimidate the local population’ (Ertürk, 2008: 8). Yet why and how wartime rape is considered ‘strategic’ in relation to the specific warscape in which sexual violence occurs remains often largely unexplained. (How/why, for instance, does rape ‘humiliate and demoralize individuals, ... tear apart families, and ... devastate communities’?)

In the academic literature explanatory frameworks are often more explicit. Inger Skjelsbaek, for instance, outlines perceptions of the ‘strategic effect’ of sexual violence as a weapon of war:

a) it reaffirms militaristic masculinity; thereby focusing on the perpetrator b) [it] attack[s] the ethnic/religious/political identity that the woman is seen to embody, thereby turning the focus on to the victim, and c) [it] masculiniz[es] the perpetrators by empowering their identity and feminiz[es] the victim by victimizing his/her identity, thereby focusing on the symbolic interaction between the perpetrator and the victim. (Skjelsbaek, 2012: 89)

Most explanations of the ‘strategicness’ of wartime rape rely on a broad notion of strategy that does not necessarily entail that rape be a direct order for it to be strategic (Allen, 1996; Card, 1996; Gottschall, 2004: 131; Littlewood, 1997; Skjelsbaek, 2001; Stigl-mayer, 1994). Implicit condoning of or encouragement to rape, as well as direct orders, can also serve strategic purposes. Furthermore, individual rapists’ actions can serve the strategic purposes of their superiors, even though that might not be the intention behind the act. In her work, Card leaves room open for complex and multiple motives for individual acts, even though she relies on the notion of authority manifested in orders being sent along a chain of command (see also Kirby, 2013). In short, wartime rape is described (albeit in different ways) as a ‘martial weapon’ (Card, 1996) that enables armed groups to achieve military and political goals.

How authors understand these political purposes¹² varies, of course – especially in light of the difference in the contexts of armed conflicts (See Skjelsbaek, 2010: 37).

Some scholars argue that, in order to further its aims, the military makes use of the notion of rape as a result of biological heterosexual urges, thereby excusing and naturalizing violence against civilians as a regrettable, unintended effect (Seifert, 1996: 38). Others focus on the ways in which patriarchal gender relations facilitate the effectiveness of a war waged on women's bodies for the purpose of furthering political, ideological or economic goals (see, for instance, Alison, 2007; MacKinnon, 1989; Niarchos, 1995). Undoubtedly, evidence of the widespread and strategic aspects of sexual violence in Rwanda and in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been well established both in international tribunals and in excellent academic and policy research.¹³

However, in general terms, the empirical proof provided to support the argument of rape being strategic is often its widespread occurrence. As Gottschall notes, 'While mass wartime rape can surely result in the damage discussed above [demoralized populaces or fractured families], it remains possible that the supporters of strategic rape theory may be confusing the consequences of wartime rape with the motives for it' (2004: 132). A circular reasoning occurs here in the extrapolation from what was arguably the case in Rwanda and Bosnia (the widespread aspect of sexual violence as part of ethnic cleansing). For example, a common argument is that sexual violence is simply so systematic and ubiquitous that its very pervasiveness serves as evidence that it is part of a conscious policy (see Seifert, 1996; cf. Skjelsbaek, 2010: 30).¹⁴ This is echoed in both policy reports and the media in, for example, the oft-repeated statement that the DRC is the 'rape capital of the world'.¹⁵ The implied reasoning is that the occurrence of 'mass rapes' must mean that they are systematic and strategic.

Another point of criticism against the 'rape as a weapon of war' explanation is that

it builds on a simplified understanding not only of military tactics but also of the workings of military institutions/armed groups. It assumes (erroneously) that institutions/armed groups embody and enforce their own ideals of discipline, hierarchy and control (Cohen, 2011a; Cohen, 2011b; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010; 2013; Gottschall, 2004; Wood, 2009; 2010).

MILITARY MOTIVATIONS AND STRUCTURES

One emerging research perspective interrogates sexual violence by analysing the motivations and internal structures of armed groups (cf. Cohen, 2011a; 2011b; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010; 2013; Wood, 2009; 2010). As touched upon above, this line of thought argues that the discourse of rape as a weapon of war is problematic in that it somehow assumes the existence of a uniform universal military strategy that is shared by all military/armed groups in all contexts (in which rape is construed as inherently and objectively strategic). Rather than simply perceiving rape as a weapon of war, this strand of research looks into the motivations, structure and ideologies of armed groups in order to understand why rape occurs (or does not occur). In so doing, it draws attention to how the discourse of rape as a weapon of war tends to ascribe too much 'rationality' and intentionality to acts of sexual violence.

Elisabeth Wood's work pioneers this line of inquiry (Wood, 2009; 2010). Her research examines the variation of wartime rape in order to better understand some of the mechanisms at play in situations when rape does not often occur (such as in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the insurgents in El Salvador (FMLN)). By focusing on military structure and the sociology of the military, she offers perspectives that allows for better understanding of how the military organizational structure, prevailing ideologies and relations with the (enemy) population are

important factors for understanding the 'reasons' behind rape. She convincingly attributes, for instance, the low levels of sexual violence committed by the FMLN to, on the one hand, its ideology, in particular the influence of liberation theology on new recruits, and, on the other, its dependence on and close and cooperative relations with civilian populations. She demonstrates how, despite a complicated command structure, the FMLN's ideological training produced norms against sexual violence in such a way that military commanders did not have to enforce these norms by severe punishments.

The fact that several armed groups (including state armed forces) often rely on civilian populations for survival (logistics, food, intelligence etc.) is often presented as the main reason why commanders might construe rape as counter-productive (see Wood, 2009; 2010; see also Weinstein, 2007). Needless to say, violence against civilians – including sexual violence – risks destroying the support and trust of civilian populations. Moreover, it is often reasoned that assessments of the (non)strategicness of rape depend on the long-term aims of the armed group itself. Drawing on Weinstein (2007), Wood (2009; 2010) distinguishes between ideologically and politically motivated armed actors, on the one hand, and 'opportunistic' armed groups motivated by resource extraction, on the other.¹⁶ This research suggests that armed groups driven primarily by goals of resource extraction would have less interest in controlling violence since they are not driven by a long-term goal to govern and gain the popular support of civilians. By contrast, armed groups with opportunistic motives, because of the availability of resources, are seen as less dependent on civilian support and are thereby assumed to lack the motivation to maintain cooperative and non-violent relations with civilians (Weinstein, 2007).

Wood (2009) argues that an armed group that is motivated by the long-term goal of governing civilians is less likely to tolerate or encourage the mass rape of its future

constituency, since that greatly reduces the possibility of gaining support and legitimacy. Similarly, armed groups with a strong ideological agenda, such as liberation movements, are assumed to be more inclined to limit crimes of sexual violence, as such violent behaviour contradicts and undermines the norms of the projected new society (Wood, 2009; 2010). This is particularly so, it is argued, in armed liberation movements that have placed gender equality on the liberation agenda and employ many women in their ranks. Hence, this research demonstrates how, in some contexts, military commanders do not simply encourage their foot soldiers to abstain from sexual violence, but go so far as actively trying to prevent it. As Goldstein concludes, 'commanders' attitudes range, in various ways, from relative tolerance or even encouragement, to relatively strict punishments of rape' (2001: 368).

In addition to the analysis of the ideologies and motivations of armed groups, a growing body of research also analyses the internal structures and chains of command within armed groups, exploring how these factors can influence the occurrence of sexual violence (e.g. Cohen, 2011a; 2011b; Wood, 2009; 2010). Military institutions seldom operate in orderly and efficient ways and, instead of reflecting the tidy workings of the military (effective command and control), the widespread occurrence of sexual violence can be seen to reflect the break-down of the chain of command; indiscipline instead of discipline, unrestrained fear rather than control (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013).

Moreover, research that queries military strategy opens up space to explore how violence against civilians, including sexual violence, stems not only from military tactics but also from the micro-dynamics of violence in war. Drawing on the work of Kalyvas (2006) we, for instance, explore how armed conflicts present plentiful opportunities for the use of violence (including sexualized violence) as a tool in attempts to resolve personal and local conflicts and animosities (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013).

While such research offers valuable insights that are neglected in the previous perspectives discussed above, it also has its limitations. For instance, while distinctions between the motivations of armed groups as either ideological or opportunistic can be useful, in that they illuminate the variety of warring contexts and motivations, they also risk producing a simplistic dichotomy between opportunistic and ideological motives that poorly reflects the complex and shifting dynamics of armed groups and armed forces (cf. Guichaoua, 2012: 3–4; Richards, 1996; Utas and Jörgel, 2008; Verweijen, 2013). Most armed groups can best be understood as being driven by a complex mixture of motives that may shift over time. As such, the levels of violence against civilians committed by a certain armed group and the forms these take often vary over time.

Moreover, as with the ‘cycles of violence’ approach, the focus on the motivations and structures of armed groups offers too little explanation – with the exception of the work of Wood (2009; 2010) – as to why violence against civilians in some conflicts becomes so pointedly sexualized while it is less so in others. In contrast to the ‘gendered militarization’ perspective, it does not explicitly distinguish sexual violence from other violence. This is partly a reflection of the fact that this analysis borrows many insights from literature such as military sociology, which deals with violence more generally, not sexual violence specifically.

As we have highlighted above, all these approaches have their limitations. No one alone can provide a satisfactory answer to the occurrence of sexual violence in all conflicts or armed groups. As we will argue in the concluding section, understanding the role and meaning of rape in any given conflict requires an in-depth analysis of the shifting dynamics of the particular conflict, the armed groups involved and the people targeted. However, let us first attend to some additional issues that arise when studying conflict-related sexual violence.

SOME ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Wartime/Peacetime Sexual Violence

Many have questioned the relationship between wartime rape and sexual violence in times of peace. Are there similar mechanisms at play, or are the logics of rape significantly different in conflict settings as opposed to peacetime settings (Bourke, 2007; Morris, 1996)? Many feminist theorists have dealt with this difficult question and connected wartime rape to patriarchy in different ways (Barstow, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Card, 1996; Seifert, 1996; Stiglmayer, 1994). Broadly speaking, a dominant line of thinking posits that sexual violence in conflict is largely a result of men’s domination over women and/or motivated by the desires of man to exert dominance over women in patriarchal societies. Wartime rape is thus similar to rape in peacetime. As Brownmiller explains, wartime rape is understood as being a result of male combatants who ‘vent their contempt for women’ (Brownmiller, 1975: 32). According to Seifert (1996: 37) a central aspect of wartime rape is ‘hatred of women in general’. The brutality of some rape cases has an important function in these explanations. In citing the ‘quasi-ritualistic’ nature of the mutilation of female body parts characteristic of some of the crimes in the Balkans, she contends that ‘only a hatred of femininity as such can account for that specific kind of violence’ (Seifert, 1996: 37).

According to this analytical framework, gendered power inequalities are embedded in the production and reproduction of gender norms, which regulate the character and behaviour of ‘good women and good men’. Such norms are produced and reproduced at different levels in society: in daily life (in the household, popular culture) as well as through the functioning and non-functioning of government institutions and through international interventions. For example, impunity for sexual violence cements the idea that a woman has no right over her body; a lack

of women's representation in political bodies reproduces the idea of women as not suitable for politics and so on. Hence, conflict-related sexual violence is linked to peacetime gender ideologies and gendered power relations. If we return to some of the rationales explained above we see how societal norms of ideal femininity and masculinity, as well as the dominant gender power relations in society, become particularly strict in conflict settings (Enloe, 2000). For example, the ideals linking femininity to chastity add to the vulnerability of raped women (as explained in theories about 'militarized masculinity'); similarly, the ideals of masculinity that require sexual potency measured through many partners can be seen as setting the stage for wartime rape (according to the sexual urge/substitution theory) (cf. Morris, 1996).

However, many other factors are at play in conflict and post-conflict settings that make simplistic explanations of wartime rape as a direct or even indirect consequence of gender inequalities problematic. Moreover, so far, there is little empirical data supporting a connection between gender inequalities in peacetime and levels of sexual violence in times of conflict (cf. Cohen, 2011a; 2011b; Leiby, 2011). While violence against women in the form of rape in conflict contexts is connected to certain conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity that also underpin gender inequalities in peacetime, one can question whether the problem of wartime rape should be reduced to gender inequalities in society. Arguably, wartime rape must be understood in relation to general efforts (strategic or not) to humiliate, punish and intimidate civil populations – including both men and women.

Moreover, civilian women are also subjected to other forms of violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, including but not limited to direct violence against their bodies (or those of their children), psychological violence and more indirect violence in the form of a climate of general repression and fear, poverty, loss of property and land, displacement

and loss of livelihood (see, for example, Aoláin et al., 2011; Cohn, 2013; El Jack, 2003; Moser and Clark, 2001; Nikoli -Ristanovic, 2002; Stern and Nystrand, 2005; Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 2003; True, 2012.)

MEN AND BOYS AS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN WAR AND WOMEN AS PERPETRATORS

In the different storylines of sexual violence in war recounted above, the casting has been quite clear: the role of villain/perpetrator is played by the man in uniform and the victim/survivor role by women/girls, especially raped women/girls. While women and girls undoubtedly are the main (non)survivors¹⁷ of rape, however, men are also victims of sexual violence in conflict settings (Buss, 2009; Carpenter, 2006; Dolan, 2011; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010; Johnson et al., 2010; Lewis, 2009; Sivakumaran, 2007; 2008).¹⁸ As with sexual violence against women, sexual violence against men and boys in conflict is often quite varied, extending beyond rape.¹⁹ Carpenter (2006), for instance, has identified three main types of sexual violence experienced by men in conflict situations: 1) rape and sexual mutilation; 2) civilian men and boys being forced to rape; and 3) 'secondary victimization', in which the rape of women forms part of the psychological torture of men. Testimonies of rape in the DRC draw attention to all these aspects of sexual violence experienced by men. There are accounts of male combatants being forced to rape. Civilian men and boys have been forced to have sexual intercourse with their daughters, mothers and wives publicly; if they refuse, they have then been punished, often by death. Men and boys have been forced into or subjected to other violent and denigrating sexual acts (e.g., being dragged with a cord connected to the penis or the testicles).²⁰ While men and boys are currently gaining some recognition *as* victims (reflected, for instance, in men and boys being mentioned in passing in the 2013 Security Council

Resolution 2106),²¹ they have been rendered invisible as victims of violence in both research and policy papers by international organizations for a long time.²² As Lewis (2009) has shown, international legal instruments have been developed in a way that often excludes men as a class of (non)survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict (see also Sivakumaran, 2010).

This invisibility reflects a general neglect of the ways in which wartime gendered violence also affects civilian men and boys. While the dominant story of war throughout history most certainly has been that of men on the battlefields, the more recent and welcome attention to women in conflict settings (most often conducted under the rubric of conflict-related gender-based violence) has tended to forget the ways in which civilian men and boys are targeted *as* men and boys in conflict settings. While women undoubtedly are the main (non)survivors of rape in conflicts, men tend to be more vulnerable to 'other' conflict-related violence, in particular forced recruitment into armed groups, mass killings and forced labour (Carpenter, 2006; Jones, 2000; 2002). As Carpenter and Jones argue, since men/boys are particularly targeted here because they *are* men/boys (and are expected to fulfil common 'masculine' roles, such as soldier, combatant and so on), this violence is also gendered. Nonetheless, Jones concludes (in relation to the genocide in Rwanda) that 'the general trend in discussions of "gender" and "human rights" tend to take women's disproportionate victimization as a guiding assumption, indeed almost as an article of faith' (2002: 76).

Additionally, while women and girls have participated in violent acts (including sexual violence) in the DRC as members of the state armed forces (FARDC) as well as of the various armed groups, both the reporting of their acts and their voices have been largely absent in academic and policy debates, as well as in the media.²³ In line with global norms, a 'collective amnesia' (DeGroot, 2000) seems to surround women's contributions (and complicity in violence) as

combatants (cf. Cohn, 2013; Mackenzie, 2011; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Sylvester, 2013; Åhäll and Shepherd, 2012).

The occurrence of sexual violence that troubles accepted sex/gender norms (women as perpetrators of sexual violence and men as survivors of sexual violence) is slowly but surely being recognized in policy reports and the media (e.g., Gettleman, 2009; Storr, 2011; UN OCHA, 2008). However, these subjects of violence and their experiences risk being reduced to feminized exceptions to the main storyline – men-as-victims/survivors emerge as exceptions to the (implied) real victims of sexual violence: women and girls. Similarly, in the still dominant storyline, female perpetrators are represented as being so masculinized that they no longer fit into the notion of 'woman', or are portrayed as masculinized deviant monsters (see Bourke, 1999; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013; MacKenzie, 2010; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Åhäll and Shepherd, 2012). Their experiences, suffering and desires are made intelligible to us through the familiar binaries – men/perpetrators and women/victims – that underwrite the notion that sexual violence concerns and involves only female-sexed bodies and thwarts the recognition of the agency of women/girls.²⁴

The relative silence around male rape and female perpetrators must, in part, be understood in relation to the gendered story accounted for above, and the 'uncomfortable subjects' it produces. Moreover, and relatedly, it seems to be connected to a fear that an increasing attention to male rape will distract from attention to the rape of women. Such fears are probably unfounded. The silence around male rape can arguably, on the other hand, reproduce the gendered logics of wartime rape. In addition to neglecting men's and boy's rights and needs as survivors of sexual violence, ignoring the ways in which men and boys are also victims of sexual violence tends to strengthen existing gender power inequalities and stereotypes. While women and girls are stigmatized and victimized, men are either silenced or figure

in a position of power (as perpetrators or as rejecting 'their' raped woman) and remain in most reporting untouched and unsullied by the victimhood, stigma and shame of sexual violence. Moreover, failing to recognize the rights and needs of men and boys connected to violent experience and performed masculinity risks manifesting itself in a perpetuation of cycles of violence. As argued by proponents of the 'cycle of violence' perspective described above, combatants (and others) who have experienced trauma and humiliation by being subjected to violence themselves or forced or encouraged to inflict violence on others tend to be more prone – in the short term and when proper counter-measures are lacking – to perpetrating new violent acts.

HOW DO WE REPRESENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

The renewed attention to sexual violence also calls attention to the question of the post-colonial politics of representation:²⁵ how are our representations of sexual violence and, particularly, its subjects (victims and perpetrators) shaped by the colonial library? These questions are particularly crucial since the renewed attention to sexual violence, to a large extent, has been directed towards rape 'elsewhere', to sexual violence committed in settings branded as Other – particularly the DRC, dubbed the 'rape capital of the world'. We therefore turn our attention more specifically to the Congolese warscape to flesh out this point.

While the global attention on sexual violence in the DRC has been welcome, it is important to realize that this attention also reflects a fascination for the exotic and spectacular among (particularly) a Western audience. The stories told often fit well into preconceived colonial images of Africa and the Congo; soldiers and (male) combatants are often described as barbaric, brutal and vengeful killers and rapists, or simply sometimes as animals (see Eriksson Baaz and

Stern, 2013 for further discussion). Such representations are not only racist but hinder the ability to meaningfully analyse and understand the violence committed.

As exemplified through the opening quotations to this chapter, the ways in which outsiders have rendered survivors' testimonies in the conflict zone have frequently been characterized by a pornography of violence in which observers try to 'outdo each other with the most barbaric gang-rape scenario' (Stearns, 2009). Numerous journalists, activists and representatives of diverse international organizations and governments have made pilgrimages to the DRC to meet and listen to survivors first-hand, often through visiting the hospitals treating the most brutal rape cases. The patients have been encouraged to tell their stories to and have their photos taken by a steady stream of visitors. It is only the worst cases, featuring detailed accounts of almost unthinkable violence, that seem worthy of retelling to a Western audience. Among other things, these representations provide a skewed image of the character of the rapes – and, thereby, of the brutality and the (supposed) inhumanity/bestiality of the perpetrators. While all rapes are terrible crimes, most of the rapes committed in the DRC are not as brutal as the ones making headlines in Western media and reports.

Moreover, intimate representations of injured bodies and suffering have often been composed in a way that would be downright unthinkable in relation to survivors of sexual violence in most countries in Europe and the US. As Sontag explains, women in the West are subjects 'who see'; when victims of violence, they are cast as subjects who are to be protected from intrusive visits and representations. Congolese women, on the other hand, appear as women who are there 'to be seen' (Sontag, 2003). These subjects do not require, it seems, protection from reliving the traumas of rape by retelling their stories over and over again. They emerge instead as the visitors' 'private zoo[s]' (Trinh Min-ha, 1989: 82) – as objects whose sufferings are

there to be consumed by a Western audience. Much commitment to alleviating the plights of the raped Congolese women bears witness to how the raped woman's 'voice(s) remains conveniently ignored by her white feminist benefactor' (Syed and Ali, 2011: 358). Large parts of their stories – related to other forms of suffering – simply often remain unregistered. Hence, 'Western' observers have tended to produce Congolese raped women to suit their own images and desires – desires for the spectacular and for an Other in need of being saved by 'the fitter Self' (Spivak, 2004).²⁶

In sum, the renewed attention to sexual violence calls attention to the question of the power relations at play in representing and addressing sexual violence. It reminds us that we must try to learn how to engage more seriously in efforts to 'learn from below' (Spivak, 2004). Particularly it calls attention to the need to better resist the temptation to produce the raped 'Other' woman to suit our own interests, including resisting occupying the centre stage and writing ourselves as indispensable saviours.

CONCLUSIONS

Sexual violence in armed conflicts remains a pressing issue that requires extensive empirical research and global policy attention. Rape is – as is all violence in conflict settings – gendered. However, all of the explanatory frameworks explored above (perhaps with the exception of the 'biological urge' theory, at least in its most essentialist form), can offer some 'truths' about sexual violence and how we can best redress it. Importantly, all conflict settings differ and wartime rape cannot be explained by one single explanatory framework.

The conceptualization of wartime sexual violence as a strategy of war has undoubtedly been important for breaking with the view of rape as a tragic but inevitable outcome of war. There is surely a pressing need for a policy-friendly platform through

which to redress sexual violence within high-level global security policy and the attendant rejection of essentialist and deterministic arguments. Nonetheless, in our efforts to address this need we risk rendering a reductionist and universalizing theory of wartime rape that could hinder us from paying attention to the particularities of conflict settings (cf. Buss, 2009). The dominant (and simplistic) notion of rape as a weapon of war rests, we argue, on its promises for change and the policy implications it offers in conceiving of rape in war as an avoidable condition that can be treated, particularly though the threat and enactment of punishments.

The currently dominant and universalizing narrative of rape as a weapon of war, in its present form, is not indispensable in order to understand rape in war as avoidable. Notably, it is not universally applicable to all conflicts or armed groups. Understanding the role and meaning of rape in any given conflict (and whether it is used strategically or not) requires an in-depth analysis of the shifting dynamics of the particular conflict and of the armed groups involved. Even within the same conflict and armed group sexual violence can be driven by different motivations, depending on time and context (cf. Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013; Leiby, 2009). In addition, the renewed attention to sexual violence warrants more consideration of those who may be excluded in the narratives of wartime rape and of how we represent both its perpetrators and victims. There is an alarming dearth of more inclusive and less sensational accounts where we humanize not only the victims but also the perpetrators of sexual violence.

This in no way implies condoning or abrogating responsibility for the violent acts of sexual violence. We do, however, call for recognition that sexual violence is not a distant and ultimately inexplicable form of violence that takes place 'Elsewhere'. While the logics behind violence vary, sexual violence is committed in all countries, not simply during and in the aftermaths of conflict, but also

in peacetime. Further, the relation between sexual violence and other forms of violence in different contexts remain under-researched and under-theorized. Exploring the particular logics of wartime rape, therefore, warrants further careful and grounded empirical research, as well as interdisciplinary theoretical exploration.

NOTES

- 1 Security Council Open Meeting on 'Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict' Statement by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Margot Wallström, New York, 27 April 2010.
- 2 This overview draws directly on our monograph *Rape as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013). We have liberally picked and chosen segments of that text that help provide insight into the different perspectives presented. Therefore, portions of this chapter appear verbatim in the original text, although in a very different order and line of argumentation. We offer this footnote instead of citing this book in each instance.
- 3 Indeed, in our research in the DRC military personnel from the FARDC as well as external actors often described rape in war as somehow normal, as an unavoidable consequence of warring or as a consequence of bad discipline (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2009). This line of argument has been supported by much research in other contexts (Seifert, 1996: 36).
- 4 This term is originally attributed to Clausewitz and has come to signify the uncertainties and ambiguities in warring: 'war is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty' (Clausewitz, 1976: 122). For a discussion of this see Keilsing, 2001. We use the term 'craziness', which evokes this notion of uncertainty but also a sense of madness. 'Craziness' also figures as a common description in the testimonies in the soldiers we have interviewed (see Eriksson and Baaz and Stern, 2008). Wallström refers instead to the 'fog of war' in the opening quotation to this chapter (Wallström, 2010). Kirby, 2012 also refers fruitfully to the general idea as 'unreason'.
- 5 See also Kirby's discussion (2012) of 'unreason' as a mode of wartime rape.
- 6 These explanations occurred frequently in our interviews with FARDC soldiers in the DRC. They are commonplace in testimonies of soldiers from other war contexts (see, for example, Goldstein, 2001; Collins, 2008; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2008; 2013; Kirby, 2012 for further discussion).
- 7 See Henry, 2011 for a fascinating account of the politics of wartime rape and the law.
- 8 For UN documents referring to rape as a weapon of war see, for example, Johnson, 29 September 2009; MONUC Human Rights Division, 2007: 19; UN Action, 2007: 3, 5, 2011: 12, 18; UN OCHA, 2008: 3, 8, 12.
- 9 For an interesting critique of Card see Schott, 2004. See also Schott 2011.
- 10 Resolution 1820 states: '[...] sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, affirms in this regard that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, and expresses its readiness, when considering situations on the agenda of the Council, to, where necessary, adopt appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence' (UNSC, 2008: 3). Resolution 1888: 'Reaffirms that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security; affirms in this regard that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security; and expresses its readiness, when considering situations on the agenda of the Council, to take, where necessary, appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence in situations of armed conflict' (UNSC, 2009).
- 11 It reads: 'Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War: Conflict creates the climate for rampant sexual violence. Sexual violence has been dismissed as random acts of individual soldiers. But in armed conflict, rape is also often a military tactic, serving as a combat tool to humiliate and demoralize individuals, to tear apart families, and to devastate communities. Armed forces use sexual violence as the spoils of war for soldiers who see the rape of women as their entitlement. Lawlessness allows perpetrators to act with impunity and leaves survivors with little to no recourse' (UN Action, 2007: 5).
- 12 Paul Kirby (2013) interrogates the notion of (collective) responsibility for war rape, adding a well-needed dimension to the discussion.

- 13 For accounts on sexual violence in Rwanda see, for example, Human Rights Watch/Africa, and Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project, 1996; Sharlach, 1999; in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina see EC investigative mission, 1993; Hansen, 2001; Niarchos, 1995; Skjelsbaek, 2010; Stiglamayer, 1994; United Nations, 1994; Zarkov, 1997.
- 14 In remarking on her overview of articles and publications addressing sexual violence in the 1990s, Skjelsbaek comments on the general consensus in scholarly literature: 'There is strong consensus that sexual violence is being used as a weapon of war [...] The use of sexual violence in the warzone is simply too widespread, too frequent and, it seems, too calculated and effective for it not to be part of a larger political scheme and hence a weapon of war' (2010: 30).
- 15 Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström cited in UN News Center, 27 April 2010 (www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.UkGwx7ynXM4S, accessed 7 April 2014); in addition, 'For more than a decade, eastern Congo has become infamous as the "rape capital of the world" and the "worst place on earth to be a woman"' (Wallström cited in Viner, 2011).
- 16 See also Kirby's discussion of 'instrumentality' as a mode of wartime rape (Kirby, 2012).
- 17 We use the term '(non) survivor' simply to point to the fact that not all victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) survive.
- 18 The stigma attached to male rape is often particularly strong owing to the strong disjuncture between masculinity and victimhood. Being a victim – especially of sexual violence – symbolizes 'failed masculinity', which occupies a position of weakness associated with femininity. Moreover, the stigma is further exacerbated since male rape tends to entail imputing a homosexual identity to the victim (see Lewis, 2009).
- 19 It is difficult to assess the frequency with which men are raped because of the extreme stigma attached to sexual abuse of males and the ensuing reluctance to report such rapes. Nonetheless, it is clear that men are raped in the DRC, as in other conflicts, but it is only recently that such violence has received attention (Sivakumaran, 2007). The highest percentage of male victims of sexual violence medical clinics report treating is 6 per cent, while legal clinics report an incidence of 10 per cent (Gettleman, 2009), but the real levels are probably much higher.
- 20 For testimonies on the latter, see Lewis, 2009.
- 21 The Resolution 2106 (2013) Adopted by the Security Council at its 6984th meeting, on 24 June 2013, notes 'with concern that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately affects women and girls, as well as groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted, while also affecting men and boys'.
- 22 At the time of writing, this invisibility is starting to be addressed. Some reports do mention that men and boys are affected by sexual violence. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women states, for example: 'Women are brutally gang raped, often in front of their families and communities. In numerous cases, men are forced at gunpoint to rape their own daughters, mothers or sisters' (Ertürk, 2008: 7; see also UN OCHA, 2008). However, as is often the case, the consequences for the male victims forced to rape are not further commented on, and only the raped women are mentioned in discussions of reparations, compensation and justice. Sexual violence is still presented simply as a 'war against women' (Johnson, 2009).
- 23 See Johnson et al., 2010. According to this survey, based on 1000 villagers in North and South Kivu and Ituri in March 2009, nearly 40 per cent of women and more than 23 per cent of men surveyed reported having suffered sexual assault, mostly rape. Moreover, 41 per cent of female and 10 per cent of male survivors of conflict-related sexual violence said the perpetrator was a woman. However, there are many reasons for treating these high figures with caution, including the length of the questionnaire, the short time allocated for responses, the methodological difficulties involved in getting accurate responses on such sensitive issues and the conclusions, which contradict other reliable studies, regarding, for instance, the level of civilian abuse and the absence of reporting of the FARDC as perpetrators. Importantly, since the definition of combatant includes civilians (men or women) abducted and forced to act as sex slaves, it is impossible to decipher much from the 'female perpetrator' category and their actual role in the act.
- 24 This point has been well addressed elsewhere. See, for example, Moser and Clark, 2001.
- 25 As a number of post-colonial theorists have demonstrated, colonization was part of an essentially transnational and transcultural global process that has marked and continues to mark the colonizing societies as powerfully as it has the colonized (cf. Hall, 1996a; Mudimbe, 1988; Bhabha, 1994. As Stuart Hall put it: 'one of the principal values of the term "post-colonial"' has been to direct our attention to the many ways in which colonization was never simply external to the societies of the imperial metropolis. It was always inscribed deeply within them – as it became indelibly inscribed in the cultures of the colonised' (1996a: 246).
- 26 For further elaboration see Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2013.

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(En)gendered Terror: Feminist Approaches to Political Violence

Swati Parashar

INTRODUCTION

Sadly, the practices of violent politics show few signs of letting up, giving up, or relinquishing a hold on the imaginary of international politics and over the lives of so many people caught by it. (Sylvester, 2011a: 1)

Between 2003 and 2006 my research as an analyst in two policy think-tanks in India and Singapore¹ allowed me to gain insight into the workings of the counter-terrorism industry that flourished after what was perceived as the dramatic and world-changing events of 9/11. Terrorism and political violence became the most widely studied and analysed global phenomenon; one estimate suggests that a new book on terrorism is published every six hours (Dolnik, 2011). Through policy research in these think-tanks I observed first hand the (in)securities at play and the fear-mongering sustained by government propaganda and by the steady supply of terrorism and political violence experts expounding in the media, their salaries the envy of corporate professionals. The counter-terrorism

industry thrives on intelligence inputs and analyses from field informants or from open sources, none of which are easily verifiable; unreferenced and opinion-based ‘facts’ are then presented to the public and policy community.² Think-tanks fail to convert the advantage they have over university-based research: of actually ‘touching’ violence and terror through access to resources and to sites where violence occurs. A robust research methodology is not usually their strength and the analyses fail to capture the complexities of political violence and motivations of groups and individuals.

I learnt two important things during my association with the mainstream counter-terrorism industry. Firstly, the stories that dominate media headlines and policy discussions usually talk of RDX (Research Department Explosives), landmines, bombs, intelligence, policing, training, strategies, tactics and the ideology and network structures of terror groups in graphic detail. There are no real people or their experiential narratives. Terrorists and militants are described as violent

and irrational killers, not ordinary human beings enacting a certain kind of violent politics that challenges social and political norms. Their victims are ‘soft targets’ and ‘collateral damage’ while their violent attacks are attempts to weaken democratic governance, global order and the power of states. In mainstream terrorism analyses the word ‘human’ is usually used when there is talk about HUMINT: human intelligence gathering and espionage through interpersonal contacts.

Secondly, popular images about political violence are dominated by the militarized and violent masculinity of the perpetrators, whose actions emasculate the ‘enemy’ (Kimmel, 2009). The pictures drawn by words or figures have no women doing anything apart from mourning, while men are all so keen to engage in ‘the politics of injury’ (Sylvester, 2013; Parashar, 2014). These pictures do not capture the complete or even an accurate story of how ordinary people are transformed into brutal killers and what drives people towards political violence – how political violence transforms states, people and their everyday lives. Every time I have talked to people on the ground, people other than academics, other than those in the media, other than policy think-tank analysts, people who have lived within wars, participated in political violence and experienced it on their bodies, I was definitely more convinced that the ontology, epistemology and methodology deployed to understand political violence needs to change. This is where my ‘feminist curiosity’ (Enloe, 2004) inspired me to take up research on women’s roles in militant projects and the gendered nature of political violence in South Asia (Parashar, 2014)

In the last five years feminist approaches in International Relations (IR) and security studies have contributed immensely to the study of political violence, particularly state militaries, anti-state resistance/guerrilla wars and terrorist activities. Feminists have focused on gendered bodies and agency; ‘everyday’ lived experiences and memory; and ‘affect’ that produces political violence

and in turn is also produced by it (see Ahall and Shepherd, 2012; MacKenzie, 2012; Youngs, 2006; Shepherd, 2006; Sen, 2008; Sarkar and Butalia, 1996; Bacchetta, 2004). Political violence is neither exceptional nor related to high politics and state behaviour alone (MacKenzie, 2011). Political violence is not only fundamentally gendered, in that it impacts differentially on men and women (and children) and is primarily a performance of femininity and masculinity, but it also influences the choices made in daily lives, from what to wear, where to go, what work to do and who to socialise with. A significant contribution made by feminists in recent times has been in highlighting the gendered bodies of political violence and recognizing, in particular, women as perpetrators of political violence and war (Goldstein, 2001; Parashar, 2009; 2011a; 2014; MacKenzie, 2012; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Ahall and Shepherd, 2012). In this chapter I emphasize three specific feminist approaches to studying political violence: the political ethnography that maps the ‘everyday’ sightings of war, injury, trauma and death; women’s active participation in political violence as combatants and militants, as stakeholders and gendered revolutionary bridges; and the importance of accounting for/taking seriously affective encounters in feminist IR research methodology, by which I mean the foregrounding of emotions as important sites of knowledge production and dissemination.

RETHINKING POLITICAL VIOLENCE: THE ‘EVERYDAY’ EXPERIENCES

‘It was violent action anyway, and without such violence you do not obtain anything; violence has to be answered with violence, there is no other way.’ Mara Aldrovand. The terrorist of the Avanguardia Operaia (AO) [Workers’Avant-garde] (Neuberger and Valentini, 1996)

Violence (both discursive and physical) seems to be at the heart of much of the recent scholarship and theorizing within IR. Terrorism and suicide bombings, rebel movements

and insurgent wars, religious and ethnic riots, wartime rape and genocide are all examples of extreme forms of violence that have puzzled IR scholars and policy makers alike. Feminist curiosity has extended to forms of political violence, its moral and ethical exclusions and inclusions, when and how we may be outside violence or inside it and, most significantly, how the 'political' of violence interacts with the 'personal' (Sylvester, 2011b; 2013; MacKenzie and Parashar, 2011; Hutchings, 2007). In other words, how does political violence mark the 'everyday' and the 'descent into the ordinary' (Das, 2007)? Feminist research suggests that the 'everydayness' of political violence has a deep impact on how communities are constructed and how resistance is organized. It is not the extraordinary or exceptional moments of violence but the daily lived experiences of and through acts of violence that transform social and political values and community life. In this respect, the contribution of anthropologists (e.g. Das et al, 2000; 2001; 2007; Nordstrom, 1997; 2005; 2002), together with feminist IR and security studies scholars, is noteworthy and path-breaking.

In her work on political violence, Veena Das (2007) demands a reconsideration of dominant metanarratives. She argues that violence cannot be understood as exceptional or as events in isolation from the everyday. Das' work on the 'everyday' locations and interactions of violence through her ethnographic research among urban Punjabi families in India affected by the 1947 Partition of the subcontinent and among the victims of the anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 inspires a rethinking of political subjectivities and public violence (of state building, regime politics or consolidation of a national/post national identity). Private pain, trauma and acts of witnessing and experiencing violence by each individual constitute the 'political' in ways that determine power relations. Political violence, therefore, is not an interruption of ordinary life but something that is implicated in the

ordinary. Das suggests that the 'ordinariness' of violence is marked by the blurring of boundaries between perpetrator, victim and witness and the social space shared by entities. Larger socio-political actors, such as state, media and international organizations, are implicated in the actualization of violence in its different manifestations which transforms the everyday life of people as individuals and communities as collectives.

My field research has focused on political violence in South Asia (India and Sri Lanka in particular) and reveals the intersections between everyday lives and collective ideologies. In Kashmir, where conflict has raged since 1989 with periods of intense political violence in the form of militant attacks on civilians and clashes between Indian security forces and militant groups, the everyday experiences of oppression and performances of violence have sustained the conflict. The uncertainty of everyday life, Indian state violence and oppression and Jihadi influence and logistical help from the neighbouring state of Pakistan have inspired many Kashmiri men towards armed militancy; women have contributed to the militancy in various ways not all of which is publicly recognised or acknowledged (Parashar, 2011b; 2014).

During my field trips in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2007 and 2008 (to study women's contribution to the militancy) interviewees described their anxiety at having family members leave for work, school or college in the morning with doubts about their safe return in the evening. Violence and terror in Indian-administered Kashmir³ have affected various aspects of daily life, including relationships within the family and with neighbours, daily work and education, public prayers and mourning for loved ones. Violence has, to some degree, transformed gender roles as well. Women have adopted more militant and public roles, resisting the 'occupation' in various ways. With militant groups imposing the *burqa* and other such Islamic diktats from time to time, the secular and Sufi ethos of Kashmir has undergone

rapid transformation. This, again, has an impact on how everyday lives are constructed, how Kashmiri identity (Kashmiriyat) is defined and who is considered an ally or an 'enemy'.

In Sri Lanka, during the civil war between the security forces and the Tamil Tigers⁴ (1975–2009), 'living inside the war' had deep implications for people's daily lives (Parashar 2013; 2014). The disruption of daily activities by intense bombing or shelling resulted in internal displacement and life in refugee camps. However, this disruption was also marked by continuity in how people negotiated daily lives amidst violence and war. This continuity was even observed by women cadres of the LTTE who had picked up arms in their cause for a separate Tamil homeland. The war offered opportunities for them to realize their potential and ambitions and gave meaning to their everyday lives (Parashar, 2009; 2014).

The Maoist cadres in India have narrated similar stories connecting their daily activities to the broader goals of the movement and marking the 'everyday' as sites of oppression and resistance and as essential to their role as revolutionaries. Feminist author and activist Arundhati Roy (2011) has narrativized the presence of an 'everyday' life of dancing, singing and merriment, of poetry and theatre, of humour and dreams, of grief and mourning in her works on the Maoist wars in the Dandakaranya. The stories of everyday struggle provide a holistic picture of violence and conflict and offer nuanced understandings of political violence: how it erupts, its root causes, transformatory potential and the actors involved.

Veena Das contends that the process of recovery from violence is very much a subsuming or weaving together of the violence with the everyday. She writes about the 1984 anti-Sikh riots:

My engagement with the survivors of riots also showed me that life was recovered not through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary. There was, I argue, a mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary so that I ended up

by thinking of the event as always attached to the ordinary as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways. (Das, 2007: 7)

Das extends her conceptualization of violence beyond spectacular physical events to psychological impacts. By emphasizing the everyday, Das encourages us to re-examine and even redefine violent events. In fact, her description of war seems to subvert most general perceptions of warfare:

Indeed, the mise-en-scene of nature itself is that of heads of households at war with other heads of household's over the control of the sexual and reproductive powers of women rather than unattached 'natural' men at war with each other. (Das, 2007: 33)

While Veena Das is concerned with the psycho-social impact of political violence and how it transforms the everyday, Carolyn Nordstrom rejects the grand theories of war and its singular focus on fighting. Her studies of political violence from war zones lead her to conclude:

Literature, movies, and media have created an image of war as 'fighting.' Only fighting. It is easy to forget in the adrenaline rush of a two-hour movie or a media sound bite on exploding bodies and weapons that people live their lives amid these explosions. They must eat, sleep, find food and clothing, work, care for loved ones, and craft resistance. (Nordstrom, 2005: 404)

Ethnographic insight as direct observations from war zones have enriched the debate on political violence and terror, and more feminists are now undertaking difficult and challenging research in the field. 'It is observation, and not the printed word, that in this instance takes the mantle of empirical and theoretical objectivity' (Nordstrom, 2005: 403). Feminist methodologies have long emphasized the importance of linking the personal to the political (Ackerly et al., 2006) and the focus on 'everyday' lived experiences has been instrumental in putting the much-needed flesh and blood to narratives about violence and war. Feminist analysis

reveals the contradictions and comparisons between what is understood as *exceptional* political violence and *everyday* forms of violence. It questions the obsession, within IR, with the former (Parashar, 2013). Feminist IR scholar Christine Sylvester has emphasised the importance of touching and experiencing war and violence. She argues:

Reconfiguring war as experience requires an intellectual-emotional leap towards appreciating that war is commonplace in many people's lives as well as exceptional. It is about the ordinary as well as extraordinary, the lived experiences of wars that drag on and on, as so many do today. (Sylvester, 2011a: 127)

It is in accounts of everyday lived experiences during war that women's participation in political violence and terror becomes visible: women who are not just victims but also perpetrators and witnesses of violence, as I discuss in the next section.

THE 'WOMAN' QUESTION IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Women at the epicentres of political violence who are not part of a formal military are fighting, uniformed or not. (Nordstrom, 2005: 402)

A gendered understanding of political violence involves a closer look at women's roles and involvement. First, the largest numbers of victims of militancy emanating from long-lasting conflicts are women and children, who suffer violent deaths, displacement, trauma and a range of emotional and physical problems as they reconstruct life in conflict zones. This has been highlighted in feminist scholarship, where the unique experience of women as victims of conflicts and militant attacks has been clearly demonstrated (Moser and Clark, 2001; Manchanda, 2001). It is the suffering of women that has been invoked by women's groups, which stand in opposition to conflict and militarization and advocate for peace (Cockburn, 2007).

Second, some feminists have argued that a more peaceful world is possible only where

women realize their full potential in an environment of equal opportunities. Sarah Ruddick (1989), for example, states that feminist politics is consonant with the practice of peacemaking and indeed can catalyse a latent peacefulness in maternal practices focusing on the protection and nurturing of children. Betty Reardon (1993) suggests that feminist and peace research projects have much in common and should be merged. These problematic and essentialist arguments entrench conventional gender roles allowing little room for questioning or social transformations. 'Feminist scholarship has brought into focus the notions of negotiation, good offices, mediation, articulation, multi-track diplomacy and other such methods of peaceful resolution of conflicts' (Parashar, 2009: 238). While recognizing women's activism and scholarship in calling for an end to political violence it is also important to recognize the complexities of women's roles and participation in violent conflicts and to avoid gendered assumptions of what women 'do' or 'experience' in conflicts; how they may only desire and work for peace. (see Sylvester, 1987; Parashar, 2014).

Third, warring sides present women as the cultural bearers of national identities and as the *raison d'être* of wars and violent militant projects (Yuval-Davis, 1997; D'Costa, 2011; Caiazza, 2001; Youngs, 2006; Shepherd, 2006). Religio-political militants claim to 'protect' their women and 'liberate' them from Western commodification, 'unholy' influences and cultural invasions. Western states, on the other hand, present their logic of protecting women from militants and their pernicious and backward ideology (Shepherd, 2006). In other cases of political violence, too, women are at the centre of the conflict. Sexual violence is either inflicted on them because it is easy to target the 'enemy' by raping their women or perpetrated to uphold the honour of women, which is associated with the honour of the nation. Bina D'Costa (2011) and Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) effectively show the linkages between gender and nationalism and how women's bodies

become cultural symbols of the nation. Afghanistan is a case in point, where veiling practices have been a site of contestation for both sides (Taliban and the US and its allies) in the 'war on terror' (Shepherd, 2006).

The fourth point relates to the increasing militarization of women who participate in political violence and who support militant activities. However, it remains under-researched in terms of the impact it has had on women's lives and on movements that espouse violence. New feminist approaches are engaged with this trend of women embracing violence 'as the best means to their political ends' (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007: 4). Feminist scholars, in particular, have recognized women in combat and soldiering/militant roles and accounted for their 'political labour' and complex experiences in armed resistance and guerrilla warfare (MacKenzie, 2009; 2012; Parashar, 2009; 2011b; 2014; Alison, 2008; Roy, 2009).

Groups and individuals who engage in political violence, such as armed guerrilla groups, non-state militant organizations and state military institutions, have traditionally been masculine domains. Though a phenomenon that is under-researched, women have performed different kinds of roles in violent militant projects, challenging traditional notions of femininity, patriarchal models of political violence and militarized masculinity. In a domain which has traditionally tested and certified the masculinity of men, the presence of women 'contributes to the erasure of this symbolic feature' and destabilizes the gender hierarchy (Addis et al 1994: xii). Women have participated in modern violent nationalist movements since the mid-nineteenth century⁵ (with anti-state subversive movements in Asia, Europe and Russia), and have also been part of some state-run armed forces, although the latter in many countries continue to exclude women. Significant structural, psychological, ideological and organizational adjustments are made to accommodate women,⁶ and it can be argued that women's participation provides violent militant movements with

much-needed moral legitimacy and popular support base. A number of examples from Latin American guerrilla movements and from religious and ethnic armed conflicts worldwide demonstrate the significance of women's active participation in political violence.

Women as supporters of and active participants in the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador were able to 'bridge gaps between the guerrillas and the unincorporated Salvadorian civilians, thus expanding the revolutionary base and movement' (Shayne, 1999: 93). A similar model can be seen in the role of militant women in the resistance movement in Kashmir, women who bridge the gap between the unarmed civilians and the militants and thus lend credibility to and widen the support base of the militancy (Parashar, 2011a). The significant contribution of women in the Salvadorian struggle was in building political cultures of opposition that inevitably became foundations for the revolutionary movement. Their resistance strategies included national strikes against the state. A parallel can be drawn in Kashmir, where women were instrumental in organizing resistance against the Indian state in the early years of the insurgency, thereby ensuring strong popular support to the militant resistance. Women in Salvador, Kashmir and other places provide the human face to what is otherwise called a 'terrorist' movement, by the government and the media. The women of the FMLN in El Salvador, writes Julia Shayne, 'served as role models, challenging the stereotypes of women as unfit for military tasks. In this sense, women guerrillas served as gendered revolutionary bridges through their mere existence' (1999: 93).

Women's proximity to violence and terror is marked by a convergence of 'ideology' and 'nation' and this convergence is 'suffused with both organized violence and selfless sacrifice' (Enloe in Addis et al., 1994: 82).⁷ Women and their concerns are excluded from masculinized state practices and discursive ideologies and it can be argued that non-state resistance movements, at the margins of the IR theatre, offer scope for gendered

manoeuvrings and fluidity in the roles of men and women. (Parashar, 2014). Women militants have the onerous task of securing socio-political legitimacy for the violent resistance. These women, in their multi-pronged roles as patrons, planners and perpetrators of political violence, work to expand the support network of militant projects while their own status is mired in ambiguity and their behaviour considered deviant. Suicide bombings by women has been much debated in the case of Palestine, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Iraq. Women have been actively involved in the ethnic conflict in the north-eastern states of India. The 'Maoist' guerrillas in India and Nepal have also had several women cadres. As women continue to swell the ranks of militant groups and engage in the brutal killing of men, women and children who are defined as the 'other', there is a need to locate their voices and 'explain both their complexities and their rationale' (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011: 14).

Woman's roles in nationalist projects as perpetrators of violence are not restricted to armed combat, and not all militant women wield arms and fight on the front line. Apart from armed attacks, women lead protests and demonstrations in support of political violence; they arrange logistics for the militants (carrying weapons and money, acting as couriers and intelligence gatherers and cooking and cleaning for the male militants); they are ideological supporters of the militant project; and they aid in mobilizing other women and men towards the militant cause. It is important to recognize all these activities that women undertake in militant projects in order to counter the highly sexualized and gendered references to militant women only as suicide bombers, which reduces women's violent politics to their 'victim' and manipulated bodies transformed into bombs. It is equally important to critically understand women's politics in violent militant projects through the variety of roles they perform and to give due recognition to women's multiple contributions to armed militancy, in the absence of which women are not considered

eligible to participate in peace talks and political processes (Parashar, 2014).

Existing literature on women's participation in 'terrorism' has interpreted this involvement as a sign of women's newfound empowerment or as an indication of ongoing gender oppression (Bloom, 2005; Pape, 2005; Victor, 2003; de Mel, 2001). Cunningham contends that female involvement with 'terrorist' activity is widening ideologically, logistically and regionally for several reasons:

Increasing contextual pressures (e.g., domestic/international enforcement, conflict, social dislocation) creates a mutually reinforcing process driving terrorist organizations to recruit women at the same time women's motivations to join these groups increases; contextual pressures impact societal controls over women thereby facilitating, if not necessitating, more overt political participation up to, and including, political violence; and operational imperatives often make female members highly effective actors for their organizations, inducing leaders toward 'actor innovation' to gain strategic advantage against their adversary. (2009: 561–75)

A number of studies have discussed the contributions of women to political violence in its various manifestations and have especially reflected on the ways in which gender norms are either endorsed or challenged. Eileen MacDonald (1991) carried out a series of interviews with women belonging to a wide variety of groups to which the term 'terrorist' is often applied. She argues that violent militant women commit serious atrocities in killing innocent civilians and in that process they also destroy the traditional gender norm of women as nurturers and carers. She challenges traditional views that categorize women terrorists as sexual deviants, mentally unstable, deranged and demonstrably evil and suggests that these women had greater commitment to their cause and were in many cases more determined than the men, which made the security agencies overcautious about these 'lethal' women. MacDonald studied women who participated in political violence as members of the Basque Separatist

group, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), the Irish Republican Army, the Italian Red Brigades, the German Red Army Faction, the Palestinian women in the 'Intifada' and the case of a North Korean woman who was trained by the North Korean state to carry out acts of terror.

Arriving at a feminist position from different orientations, most of these women also hoped for equal opportunities in the new polity and society they were fighting for. Power was another important motivational factor, along with political ideologies, that prompted these women to take up arms, argues MacDonald. Violence was accessible to these women, who felt immeasurably empowered by using it. MacDonald shows militant women as far more brutal than men, fighting sexism as well as the external enemy; emasculating men and challenging the traditional gender order. Although her conclusions set the tone for further research on women and political violence, it sensationalized and 'exceptionalized' women's power and brutality over men. In several contemporary militant movements men have strongly advocated the enlistment of women cadres.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), which fought for a separate Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka for nearly three decades before its military defeat in 2009, had a huge presence of women who were involved in support roles as well as in guerrilla fighting and suicide bombings. The LTTE chief, Prabhakaran took special interest and initiative in setting up the women's wing in the early 1980s (Balasingham, 1993). The proactive enlistment of women in groups such as the LTTE was argued to be based on the notion of empowerment and gender equality, which would be achieved through women's participation in the national cause. This, however, remains debatable as even within these violent militant movements, women do not rise to higher ranks, operate within patriarchal structures and are usually accepted in their conventional gender roles.

As I have argued previously (Parashar, 2009; 2011a; 2014), in many cases (for example,

Kashmir) women's inclusion in political violence is not a complete disruption of gender roles and hierarchies and is often scripted in discourses of traditional wife and motherhood. It is important to move beyond the binary debate of empowerment or victimhood in the case of women militants and combatants. Women's engagement with political violence is dependent on factors such as the ideology of the group and its objectives, leadership, social milieu and prevailing gender norms.

VIOLENT IDEOLOGIES AND MOTHERHOOD TALES

Among the various reasons why women support and participate in militancy is a strong sense of ideological motivation especially in their roles as mothers. Motherhood is a much venerated aspect of a woman's life and South Asia is particularly rife with stories of valiant, courageous, and even scheming mothers who have played major roles in politics, wars, and revolutions. (Parashar, 2011a: 309)

Hitler's words that 'every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people' (Rupp, 1977) or Mussolini's call for continual procreation as there is strength in numbers continue to reverberate in contemporary militant movements which deploy political violence against the enemy 'other'. Motherhood imparts tremendous legitimacy to militant projects. In Kashmir, mothers have an important role in supporting the militancy and (re)producing the *mujahideen* (holy warriors) who fight the *jihad* against the Indian state. The Sri Lankan Tamil militancy also venerated women in their role as mothers and so do most other national movements, such as those in Palestine and Chechnya. Enloe, while discussing militarized motherhood, suggests that 'long before man power strategists think about women as soldiers, they think about women as mothers of sons' (Enloe, 2000).

The role of mothers is much more significant than that of women soldiers or armed

women militants. It appeals not only to the conservative constituency which values women's traditional roles but also meets the demands of modern nationalist movements where women are not just victims but are active participants in the militant struggle towards nationalist aspirations. Representations of women as militarized mothers are often deployed to validate a nationalist project and the notion of sacrifice; mothers can be a compelling force in the recruitment of young men. Without the mothers, Nazism and Fascism could not have expanded by sheer military might, the Muslim youth in Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir would not have realized their mission for *jihad*, and guerrilla movements in Latin America would not have appealed to the masses. Paradoxically it is 'motherhood' that also provides the antithesis to political violence. Peace movements worldwide have used the gendered rhetoric of the nurturing and caring mother who is opposed to war and violence.⁸

In Kashmir appeals to motherhood and veneration of mothers form a widely prevalent strategy. Some women began to support the militancy in its early years (1989–1995) in their roles as mothers. Asiya Andrabi, a militant woman in Kashmir and founder of the women's radical group *Dukhtaran-e-Millat* (Daughters of Faith), has often said that a woman's most honoured achievement would be her son/s joining the *jihad*. She has also publicly expressed a desire that her two sons serve the cause of Islam and wage *jihad* at the appropriate time (Parashar, 2014). Farhat Haq (2007), in a detailed study of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*⁹ (LeT), a Pakistani militant Islamist group which is engaged in violent militancy and insurgency operations in Indian-administered Kashmir and in other parts of India, suggests how this group assigns a central role to motherhood. Haq concedes that, although the women who were mobilized by the LeT were mothers of martyrs who had been neglected by the Pakistani state and 'not Spartan mothers ready to sacrifice their sons for the mission

of the *ummah*' (Haq, 2007: 1024), they were instrumental in winning recruits for the LeT. In a situation of declining indigenous support for the militancy in Kashmir, the LeT stands out among the militant groups operating in Kashmir by virtue of its appeal among women through notions of mothers' grief that gives emotional sustenance to its *jihadi* project.

LeT propaganda consists of regularly organized conventions addressed by prominent leaders and a host of publications that are disseminated widely in Pakistan and in Kashmir on both sides of the border. The testimonies of parents, especially mothers, are an important part of these conventions and publications. Martyrdom is celebrated as mothers are requested to commemorate the death of their sons in the cause of *jihad*. The grief at the death of a son is transformed into a joyful and celebratory experience and serves to 'awaken the *ummah* to the mission of *jihad*'. A couplet attributed to Umm Hammad, a prominent LeT women's wing leader, in her 2003 publication *hum mayein hain lashkar e tayyabia key* (we are the mothers of LeT) can be translated as 'Every mother's heart is wounded, but every mother's lips make this plea/let the tree of my heart be sliced so that the garden of Islam stays green.' (Haq, 2007: 1038). The LeT's growing membership and influence has been attributed to its capability to mobilize women and particularly mothers for its cause, in contrast to other Islamist militant groups in Kashmir, who have not been successful in expanding their constituency by including women.

Though the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka historically relied on mobilizing women as guerrilla fighters as opposed to positioning them in their more traditional gendered roles, the group has invoked benign motherhood in a spiritual and religious way. Anthropologist Michael Roberts suggests that, although often cited as a secular group, the practices and statements of the LTTE were permeated by religio-cultural symbols, in particular of 'Shakti', a divine energy, essence and power

that is manifested in the iconography of the mother figure and appeals to both Saivites (Shiva worshippers) and Christians (Roberts, 1996; 2005; 2010). Most LTTE cadres were followers of Hinduism, which has a strong tradition of Goddesses, most venerated in their form as mothers who embody auspicious fertility, spirituality and strength (Shakti). The concept of 'Shakti' is also extended to the Christian followers and their belief in the Virgin Mary (Roberts, 2005; 2010). This analysis of religious symbolism in the LTTE discourse contradicts the view that religious symbols were kept at bay by the LTTE, which had within its cadres Hindu Christians as well as Muslims. The LTTE's agenda was always a homeland for the ethnic Tamils and there were no religious overtones in its ideology. However, images of the sacrificing mothers were always part of the LTTE propaganda. On many occasions Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader, honoured mothers of martyrs in glittering public ceremonies. (Parashar, 2014)

Guerrilla movements that are inspired by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (such as the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and India, FARC in Colombia and PKK Kurdish rebels in the Middle East) have a substantial number of women combatants but there is also a patriarchal division of labour. Women are relegated to the private sphere in support roles. Conventional femininity is evoked in these movements, as women are encouraged to perform their habitual domestic tasks of peacetime. Julia Shayne, writing about Salvadorian women, has cited examples of how women themselves believed that 'not only did they have to work two or three times as hard to prove themselves but because of their domestic and child rearing tasks they often failed to receive the training to rise above levels of support combat' (1999: 95). It can also be argued, especially with contemporary cases of women suicide bombers and militants, that women serve a strategic and even tactical purpose in their support roles. 'A group of women can operate safe houses or store weapons; women are also

able to pose as wives or mothers, permitting entrance to restricted areas such as government or business operations' (Reif, 1986: 154). In armed struggles, therefore, femininity and conventional roles are 'performed' by women as much as they are also resisted in their daily experiences.

Motherhood is an important gendered invocation within many violent militant movements and religious traditions have many references to 'mother' icons who have sacrificed their interests for the greater good. Mothers contribute in three ways: by extending support to the armed movement they enhance legitimacy and appeal among the masses; by encouraging family members to participate in the armed movement they contribute to the numerical strength of the cadre base; and by emphasizing their reproductive roles they become the embodiments of the nation, sacrifice and the cultural values, the nation upholds.

EMOTIONS, METHODOLOGY AND THE FEMINIST RESEARCHER

A significant debate that surrounds women's participation in political violence relates to the issue of emotions. While rationality and reason are invoked in the case of men committing acts of political violence, women are labelled as emotional and full of passion that either makes them inclined towards peaceful resolution of conflicts or drives them towards committing 'deviant' violent acts. This not only implies that women are incapable of violent politics but also denies them agency and choice (Ahall and Shepherd, 2012). Women who commit political violence are shown as purely emotional and exhibiting deviant behaviour (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). This has revived interest in affect and emotions as sites of politics. Frijda et al. have suggested, 'emotions can awaken, intrude into, and shape beliefs, by creating them, by amplifying or altering them, and by making them resistant to change' (2000: 5).

Emotions have been mapped onto militant women in gender-specific ways and at different historical junctures. It has been argued that there is a disharmony between consciousness and feeling that militant women experience as a result of the 'feminine' trait of their character. This endorses the widely prevalent view that violence and terror does not come 'naturally' to women. Amy Knight (1979), in her study of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary women, mentions several cases of women who were keen to commit an act of terror and violence and yet would often have emotional outbursts when they learnt the violent impact of their actions. There was an inability to reconcile their terror activities with personal morality and, while these women were ready to sacrifice their own lives for the revolutionary cause, they were unable to accept the violence itself. This 'conflict between the emotion and intellect was not confined to women', as Knight argues (1979: 151), but was a gendered response that emanated from deep-rooted 'feminine' traits. The personal, political and social goals were enmeshed as the women Social Revolutionary terrorists viewed 'their roles as revolutionaries in an intensely personal way, constantly striving for a sort of moral wholeness that would embody both private and public life' (Knight, 1979: 151). The militancy or terror campaign becomes the end in itself for these women, a rationale for their lives. Having rebelled against their families and rejected conventional social norms and values, the possibilities of going back to their past lives is very limited. The cathartic value of terror and political violence is then realized by these women, who participate with extreme vigour and commitment.

Feminist scholars have busted the myth that the personal and emotional remain separated from the political or rational. This myth has been propagated extensively to discredit women's roles in violence or combat and to present them mostly as manipulated victims and sufferers (Hunt and Rygiel, 2006; Ahall and Shepherd, 2012; Enloe, 2000).

Contemporary women militants in Palestine, Chechnya, Sri Lanka and Iraq have also been represented as emotional and deviant; their militancy and terror are ends in themselves, pursued to escape the indignities of their conventional lives (Bloom, 2005; Pape, 2005; Victor, 2003). Their personal aspirations are enmeshed with the political objectives of the militancy, and the desire for revenge for the death of their family members or personal experiences such as rape and violence propel them towards violence (Bloom, 2005). On the contrary, as recent feminist research shows (Parashar, 2009; 2011a; 2014; Alison, 2008; Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; 2011; Sylvester and Parashar, 2009), women's political commitment to revolutionary and militant goals have always been high; they are able to adapt to different roles and transform gender relations within specific cultural contexts. 'Everyday' experiences of violence contribute to the process of violent resistance and there is no contradiction between the emotional/personal and the rational/political.

Neuberger and Valentini's (1996) research on 'penitencism' further establishes that women adapt to and internalize violent militant roles much more effectively than is otherwise known and recognized. 'Women who have participated in armed subversive movements have shown greater resistance than men to 'penitencism', they argue (1996: 3). Drawing a distinction between repentance and penitencism, they argue that 'penitent (*penitencito*) refers to a terrorist who dissociates himself or herself from armed struggle and collaborates with the justice authorities'. Penitencism, therefore, is utilitarian bargaining and exchange while repentance is moral gratuitous sentiment that is meant only for the benefit of the repentant. The authors conducted a series of interviews among former Italian and German terrorists and concluded that women terrorists are not easily drawn to penitencism and even in cases where they have cooperated with the authorities they have preferred to maintain a low profile. If conventional understandings of passive and

emotional femininity were to hold ground, women would have been easily drawn to penitence on account of their 'feminine traits', but that was not the case. Women are radicalized by processes and emotions similar to those that affect men; the dominant socio-cultural and political milieu contributes to their militarization. In most cases idealism and rational choice often work together.

A significant and recent feminist contribution in studying political violence has been the acknowledgement of the emotional journeys of the researcher and scholar (Sylvester, 2011b). While addressing questions of political violence feminist scholars have invoked the familiar feminist axiom that the 'personal is political'. Personal narratives of and interviews with militant women have been included in feminist studies (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011; Parashar, 2014; 2011a; MacKenzie, 2012). However, there has been a neglect of the feminist researchers' own emotional account where they confront choices and politics at variance from their own. Oddly, feminists have mimicked mainstream practices of keeping their 'personal' away from their intellectual analysis. This trend was queried at a workshop entitled *Emotions and the Feminist IR Researcher* organized at the University of Connecticut in February 2010. Attended by feminist scholars who address political violence, soldiering, militarization, war and terrorism in their works, the workshop revealed a need to write emotions into scholarly works and the challenges of doing so. Reflecting on their fieldwork experience, workshop participants agreed that the emotional journey of the researcher was itself an important site of knowledge production and dissemination and needed to be acknowledged as such in research writings (Sylvester, 2011b).

I have reflected upon the absence of emotions and personal self-reflexivity in my own writings on militant women in South Asia (Parashar, 2009; 2011c; 2014). The practice of research involves many emotional negotiations of difference and, although there cannot be specific guidelines for writing them

into research, feminist methodologies must include more rigorous reflection on the process of 'becoming' the researcher. We just do not 'do' research but, become, it through the encounters with our research subjects. (Parashar, 2011c). In my interviews with militant women in Kashmir and Sri Lanka, I encountered moments when my sensibilities were affected by these women, who advocated violence in the pursuit of their political objectives.

I constantly made efforts (although without due realisation) to normalise alienation that I felt towards my subjects (women militants) and vice versa and on managing negative or ambivalent emotions about my subjects (Bloom, 1997). I believed that absenting myself (in my research) and my emotions was the best way of attaining a degree of credible distance from my subjects. Ironically, while I wanted to address the issue of silencing of women's violent politics in my research I might have ended up silencing and censoring myself in various ways. (Parashar, 2011c)

Feminist research is increasingly moving towards more empathetic modes of communication and writing research, particularly on the issue of political violence and terrorism. Political violence is driven by passions and emotions and feminists are best placed to study emotions through their commitment to the 'personal being political'.

Linda Ahall persuasively points out 'how emotions and emotionality function to reinforce essentialist understandings of gender in representations of female agency in political violence in two different ways: as women being emotional and as being emotional about women' (in Ahall and Shepherd, 2012). The gendering of emotions such as passive and peaceful femininity takes away agency from the actions of violent women. While it is necessary to focus on the emotional journeys of both male and female perpetrators of political violence and to study how personal experiences draw them towards militant projects, it is important to reclaim emotions from the gender codings that generate an emotional response towards violent women. Pure reason is not devoid of emotions and

emotionality is increasingly being considered as a driver in world politics (Crawford, 2000; Moisi, 2010). Reason and emotions are both involved in women's decisions to participate in armed political action. The practice of 'doing' research on violent militant women must consider not only the choices made by these women but also the emotional experiences of the feminist researcher.

CONCLUSION

The feminist methodology my project employs places women's words at the forefront of the IR agenda, and shows how marginalised research subjects have much to teach the field of IR—not only about the lived realities in sites not usually figuring in IR theory, but also about what may constitute relevant and critical research question. (Bina D'Costa in Ackerly et al., 2006: 152)

This chapter has tried to highlight three important feminist approaches towards studying political violence and terrorism. The first and foremost has been feminist recognition of the everyday experiences and performances of violence and terror as crucial in shaping gendered bodies and political movements. The 'everyday' accounts have been absent in mainstream analyses focused on the causes and consequences of political violence. Feminist IR scholars (drawing from anthropologists and ethnographical research) have suggested that political violence appears less exceptional when seen as ordinary human experiences that shape choices on a daily basis. The second contribution of feminist approaches outlined above has been in accounting for women as perpetrators and planners of violence, the warrior and combatant women, militant women who keep alive the violent resistance with their support and unwavering commitment. Feminist scholarship has highlighted the ambiguities surrounding the lives of women who support and participate in political violence, and has also emphasized the lack of research and theorizing on these militant women, who destabilize and simultaneously uphold conventional gender norms

and hierarchies. The third significant feminist contribution has been to understand the role of emotions in the act of violence and in the making of a female warrior and militant. Feminists have also highlighted the emotional journeys of scholars and researchers who study political violence and wars and have called for the urgent need to write emotions, as sites of knowledge, into scholarly works.

These three feminist approaches capture the essence of feminist engagement with the topic of political violence and terrorism. Within Feminist IR there is still much debate about the methodologies of studying political violence and terrorism. Feminists are still divided over issues of studying violence in preference to antiwar strategies and peace activism but the last decade has revealed growing feminist interest in how political violence shapes gender discourses around bodies and emotions. Feminist writings have emphasised the complexities in the lives of women militants who at one level challenge gender hierarchies and transform gender politics within their communities and militant groups and yet are unable to completely displace patriarchal norms. Moreover, emancipation, liberation and feminist goals can never be absolute concepts, as has been addressed in many feminist works (Alison, 2008; Parashar, 2009; 2014; Ahall and Shepherd, 2012). It is in these feminist engagements that a holistic picture of political violence can be drawn, societies and politics understood, gender roles decoded and policies shaped. Understanding the gendered nature of political violence is critical for understanding the politics around peace and for mapping silences and exclusions in 'post'-war societies and in the 'post'-terror moment.

NOTES

- 1 Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi and the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore.

- 2 Even terrorism researchers have admitted the problems of 'doing' research and acquiring reliable data (see Dolnik, 2011).
- 3 The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir is now divided between India and Pakistan. The Maharajah of Kashmir signed a controversial accession to India in 1948 after initially choosing to be independent in 1947. Pakistan captured parts of Kashmiri territory adjacent to its eastern frontier by sending tribal invaders in 1947. That part is now called Azad Kashmir or Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Much of the conflict rages in Kashmir that remains with India and is called the State of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union. Militant resistance supported and guided by Pakistan aims to help Indian Kashmiris achieve self-determination and freedom from India, or its merger with Pakistan. For details see Parashar, 2011a.
- 4 Tamil Tigers or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) were a separatist guerrilla group fighting the Sri Lankan security forces for a separate homeland (Elam) for the minority Tamil community in the north and east of Sri Lanka.
- 5 The mid-nineteenth century marks a time when nationalist consciousness was emerging, not just in Europe but also in parts of the colonized world in Asia and Africa. The success of the American and French revolutions and the establishment of nation states in Europe had launched a new era of national movements that mobilized the masses (many women included) and drew them towards violent resistance against unpopular regimes. For example, the 1857 revolt against the East India Company in the Indian subcontinent was the first national uprising against foreign rule that witnessed the participation of common people, including a large number of women.
- 6 For example, the Sri Lankan militant group the LTTE initially had no women and banned marriages for its cadres, but gradually began to recruit women when it saw the need to gain popular legitimacy and swell its numbers. The ban on marriages and relationships was also eased.
- 7 Enloe, discussing American women soldiers, has argued that women's proximity to the institution of the military is deemed closer than any other institution in which the state and the nation converge together and where that convergence is suffused with both organized violence and selfless sacrifice. I have borrowed Enloe's concept to include women in non-state militancy where 'ideology' and the 'nation' converges. See Cynthia Enloe's 'The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier' in Addis et al., 1994.
- 8 The use of motherhood by peace movements is beyond the scope of this chapter but it is important to remember that this most frequently

venerated of women's roles has been mobilized extensively in peace projects. Notable examples are the organizations Mothers for Peace in the US, The Mothers of La Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, Naga Mothers' Front in India, Israeli Women and Mothers of Peace in Israel among others.

- 9 Literally means 'army of the pure'.

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