

Double Visions in Feminist Theories of International Relations:  
Feminist and Feminine Subjectivity


by

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### ABSTRACT


Feminist theories of International Relations are attempting to deal with one of the central preoccupations of feminist theory as a whole: how to work on behalf of women by naming a category of "woman" and its political struggles, and simultaneously decentring that category to avoid universalising women's experiences and necessarily excluding many women from representation. This thesis argues that the most effective way of dealing with this problem is demonstrated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who suggests that feminists challenge specific instances of sexism by representing particular women as a category, but also challenge phallogocentric representation by foregrounding the impossibility of those representations of "woman" as knowledge. It then seeks to evaluate the work of six feminist International Relations theorists in light of Spivak's explorations. It concludes that all six remain captive of the politics of representation that they seek, in part, to challenge.

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## Chapter One

### Feminist Theories of International Relations and the Problem of Political Identity

With historically recent social, economic and political changes shaking the international environment and heralding a "new world order", the discipline of international relations (IR) has had opportunities as never before to examine itself and its fundamental categories of analysis. In this climate of change, research orientations favouring interpretivism and historicism - analyses of the discourses, contexts and processes of interaction providing the conditions of possibility in international relations - have had opportunities to enter the field of IR, which for the most part remains characterised by bounded, structuralist categories and closed narratives.<sup>1</sup> Critical theories of IR have particularly taken issue with IR's core concept, state sovereignty, which emerged out of the political, social and economic upheavals of early modern Europe, and as such is overflowing with biases that are particular to that time and place that critical theorists locate as Western modernity. As state sovereignty is the principal account of political identity in the discipline of IR, and as the formulation of that identity is currently a site at which world events persistently resist the traditional interpretations of IR and political theory, this category and the questions about political identity that it purports to resolve are of special interest to critics in IR.<sup>2</sup>

Feminist analysis has also gained access to the discipline through fissures opening between the theoretical diagrams of the world offered by IR and international political realities. Scepticism about political identity as delineated by state sovereignty is also an essential feature of feminist concerns about IR. Feminist IR theory has in fact revealed

the exclusion of women or the feminine as crucial to the founding of the sovereign subject that is instituted by state sovereignty. The problematics of subjectivity and identity politics are central concerns in feminist theory as a whole, which has devoted much energy to debating whether the modern subject can be feminine or feminist; that is, whether modernist formulations of identity are so indebted to the feminine's erasure that feminists must disown the idea of a feminist subject, and whether feminisms' obligation to attend to diversity among women requires them to reject the criteria for identity in identity politics. In effect, these questions surround the appropriateness of identity politics as the field for feminist theory and practice.

Questions surrounding identity bring feminism and critical social theory into tentative alliance more generally, but also in the discipline of IR.<sup>3</sup> Critical theory has read IR as promulgating a logocentric sovereign man as the paradigmatic identity in political life; feminist theory reads sovereign man as an identity built upon the exclusion of the abstract feminine and real women, built therefore upon phallogocentric principles. It follows from that that feminisms in IR do not want to repeat the processes of phallogocentrism inherent to the construction of sovereign identities, yet feminisms are by definition committed to creating new forms of politics in the name of women. The feminist problem, then, of deconstructing sovereign identities using the category of woman, or to put it another way, of deconstructing sovereign identity using a feminine sovereign identity, is at the heart of the problem of identity in feminist IR.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has suggested that as a way of participating in identity politics while also refusing essentialised identity, feminisms can establish "woman" as an oppositional identity category with which to fight particular instances of sexism while simultaneously emphasising that the identity taken up has representational status, and as such is as prone to deconstruction as the original object of analysis (sexism). Spivak's approach enables feminisms to maintain their commitments to

feminist subjects while also acknowledging that as phallogentric representations, those assumed subjectivities may be partial, may empower some while excluding others, and may be transient expressions of political needs. This approach also has the advantage of establishing at the outset its situatedness as Western feminism in relation to discourses of modernity that have determined its mode of critique, and yet by maintaining its openness to the object of analysis, it neither accepts nor refuses identity politics as its only ground.

Feminist IR has established its place in opposition to the modernist identity categories that suffuse the hegemonic narratives of IR. It has also been established as an instance of Western feminism, and taken seriously the contradictions identity politics pose for feminist theory and action. Keeping in mind that the context of feminist IR is between these two discourses, the project of reconstructing IR from a feminist perspective in the space opened by the feminist deconstruction of IR will be most successful if it takes into account the feminist debate about problematic subjectivities, and especially, if it seeks to avoid the contradictions of identity politics by, as Spivak suggests, constructing a feminine subject in opposition to specific instances of sexism, but simultaneously acknowledging that subject as catachresis.

### *Narrating the discipline*

The categories of IR form part of our received inheritance from earlier discourses which cumulatively invented the ethos of the modern Western imaginary as well as the discipline of IR. Our ideas about what the state "is" issue from stories about how states emerged, and from what; hence the Western definition of the state is closely connected with notions of what comprise the non-state arenas. All of these definitions crystallised in the early-modern period in response to significant changes in social organisation which culminated with the dissolution of the medieval world view. Questions about man's relationship to God, as universality, and hence humanity as a whole, and the nature of the

self in this relation, were answered with the formation of the modern sovereign state. State sovereignty was and remains an abstraction, formed through practices that engage with many strands of thought current in the early-modern period but originating long before. Therefore, we recognise in state sovereignty consonances with methodological individualism, liberalism, standards of objectivity in scientific investigation, and historical sedimentations of ideas about masculinity and femininity.

The principle of state sovereignty emerged out of the political, social and economic upheavals of early-modern Europe.<sup>4</sup> The great chain of being which had ordered medieval society in Western Europe had begun to dissolve. That order had posited that its ultimate authority derived from God and God's representatives in the Roman church. The church provided the universal, transcendent law which united society under its rule. Feudal political organisation, in its various forms, was sanctioned by the authority of the church, but was regarded as temporal and contingent in relation to it. The focus of identity was the church, and all Christians formed a "universal community."<sup>5</sup> This world separated truth and moral authority - the realm of God - from the realm of man, leaving no room for confusion about the nature of bodily life in the world: it was merely temporal and contingent, and man could transcend it only by God's grace. Politics and political identities were therefore also viewed as subordinate to and excluded from the transcendent realm.<sup>6</sup> History was not conceived as linear progression in the medieval world view; time was constructed as space, as either the endless fluctuations of earthly life or the eternal plenitude of heaven.

It was the dissolution of the medieval world view that ushered in as the central problematic of the philosophical bent called modernism questions of how to reconcile particularity and universality, temporality with eternity, and space with time. These questions emerged as the authority of the church waned and Enlightenment humanism endowed worldly activity with greater importance. The solution was to bring the realm

of universals, truths and moralities down to earth and to man's reach in theories of reason, or modern epistemology and subjectivity. The knowing subject of modernity constitutes itself as sovereign, with its ability to reason representing a kernel of the universal within, and an identity with other reasonable individuals without. It is a transcendence that supplants God, as the absolute, with the sovereign subject, but retains for the individual a privileged place in the infinite insofar as rationality is perceived to be derived from it. However, as structured by modernist dichotomies based on immanence and transcendence, the subject's rationality presupposes its difference from all that is characterised by an absence of reason, which is all that is associated with transience and materiality.

However, the promise of reason - the assurance that its foundation was the final word of moral law - could only be guaranteed by the political community of the state. The state became the arbiter of reason, enabling its universality to prevail within the circumscribed territory of the state. Richard Ashley explains that:

In all its varieties, modern discourse holds that the sovereignty of the state, including the citizen's duty to obey the law, does not derive from any source external to man. It consists...in subordinating *raison d'état* to the reason of man, making the former the guarantee of the possibility conditions of the latter *in history*. The result is a social "compact" between reasoning man and state - the former as the source of truth and meaning, the latter as the site and resources that modern discourse reserves for the exercise of force and violence wherever history refuses to bow to man's reason.<sup>7</sup>

The principle of state sovereignty thereby reconciled the dichotomies that had been released by the dissolution of the pre-modern order. It made the territory of the formerly contingent, earthly realm into the ground of the state; it contained transcendent laws and truths in these parcels of space, applying them only to those within the community; and it pressed historical time into the circumscribed territory of the state, providing a teleological history of progress for its inhabitants. History emerges in the modern

schema of the state as a reconfiguration of the medieval categories of heaven and earth; no longer separate spatial entities, history will maintain their distinction as opposite ends of the teleology of reason and the state.

While the nation state subsumed the universal community of its citizens within itself, it did so by delineating the antithesis of its universal identity in the realm external to its borders. The world at large was increasingly viewed as being composed of sovereign states in a lawless environment, devoid of transcendental or moral laws to provide identity or authority: "[o]utside of their boundaries, [states] might act with restraint but in no circumstance would they acknowledge an external authority higher than their own."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the anarchy of the international sphere is more crucial to the modern concept of state sovereignty than being simply the absence of community; it provided the threat of chaos from which the state could argue the need to protect its domestic sphere and uphold the claims to rationality founding the identity of its subjects. Joseph A. Camilleri and Jim Falk list as three "hallmarks" of the international system "sovereignty, territorial integrity and legal equality of states,"<sup>9</sup> demonstrating the crucial interrelationship between state sovereignty, or political theory, and IR. R.B.J. Walker maintains that the distinction between political theory and IR also works to limit ideas about political identity in international relations:

Delineations of political theory and of international relations repeat movements of "political differentiation." The principle of identity embodied in Christian universalism was challenged by the principle of difference embodied in the emerging territorial state. This was perhaps not much more than a change in emphasis, but this change in emphasis had enormous repercussions. From then on, the principle of identity, the claim to universalism, was pursued within states. International politics became the site not of universalistic claims but the realm of difference itself. Here lies the essential ground of civil society and the theory of relations between states ever since. Here also lies the point at which it becomes possible to understand the specific emergence of the modern state as the crucial mediator between the claims of identity and those of difference.<sup>10</sup>

Theorists critical of IR have seized upon these distinctions, which have structured the options available to theorists of the international since the inception of IR, and they have noted some of the problems resulting from modernist solutions to problems of identity and community. The dualist framing of these categories, combined with the belief in a bounded, universal reason as the core of identity, enables the simultaneous differentiation and devaluation of all that is outside of the community, and the homogenisation of all that is inside. As Jim George explains:

The modernist authority vested in "rational man," for example, has been used to liberate, to empower, to revolutionize - but at a cost. For in spreading the word of the (post-Cartesian) death of God, and in proclaiming its new secular rational-scientific substitute, Western theory as practice has, often brutally, invoked its strategies of control, its discipline, its unified frame of reference about the good life, its singular reality, its insistence on sovereignty, and its bulwarks against nihilism. It is in this quest - to impose a singular, foundational reality upon miscreants and unbelievers - that the post-Enlightenment "will to knowledge" has quite literally become the "will to power."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to modernist assumptions that these concepts are based on an indelible human nature and the nature of man in political community, critical theorists of IR insist that the ontology and epistemology created through the concept of "rational man" in the sovereign state are historical fabrications, and as such, are open to historical transformation.<sup>12</sup> Also in contrast to modernist assumptions, critical theorists of IR make visible the discontinuities in the narratives which construct the apparently solid edifices of modernist identity categories, discontinuities which provide alternative historical options. At this historical juncture, they argue, it is urgent that IR begin to examine the directions that have been covered over by the modernist narrative of progress through rationality in the state and anarchy between states. It is not just because this, as the hegemonic narrative, excludes alternatives and in doing so excludes many identities, communities and the narratives which sustain them, but also because as it informs the

intellectuals advising policy-makers, it has already led to inappropriate, modern responses to "post-modern" international events, with disastrous results.<sup>13</sup>

Theorists critical of the dominant strain of IR bring different perspectives to their object of investigation, and draw upon various approaches in philosophy and social theory to juxtapose against IR new and old possibilities. Those focusing on the particularly modern character of IR have applied poststructuralist arguments that rational man, and the identity formulations that have derived from it, has been constructed through logocentric processes, and therefore has no basis from which to proclaim universality and ahistoricity. Logocentrism refers to the operation in philosophy of the dichotomy of presence and absence as a means of establishing absolute truth; that is, truth "independent of interpretation and practice" and especially, independent of temporal or political contingencies.<sup>14</sup> The paradox encapsulated in the term logocentrism, however, refers to the notion that the idea of an absolute is constructed precisely by the apparent absence of its actualisation in representation. Therefore, meaning, which is supposed to be guaranteed as true by reference to the absolute, resides in the play between absent signifieds and their signifiers, which exist only in relation to each other, and the guarantee of finality and/or origination provided by the truth is continuously deferred.

Logocentrism also refers to the operation of hierarchy in the dichotomous relation, based on the notion that the reputedly "present" term gives being to the "absent" term, which derives from it, either as "a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption."<sup>15</sup>

As it relates to theories of IR, logocentrism informs the "paradigm of sovereign man," which is constitutive of our notions of state and domestic society.<sup>16</sup> The rational man referred to above is constructed according to logocentric principles and is even defined by it, since rationality itself is deeply indebted to the process of logocentrism. The identity of rational man, which is provided by the state, can transfer to the state, which then becomes the "foundational identity."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Richard Ashley explains that

the idea of "the sovereignty of man who would aspire to transcend history even as he is actively involved in history" is a "form" whose content might take many different appearances, including liberalism's possessive individual, and Freud's "man of basic drives."<sup>18</sup> Whatever the content, logocentrism arises to instantiate a foundation, or an absolute, which Ashley has called a "critical limit." This is the area beyond which reason cannot go, because it would mean examining the operation of logocentrism in the foundational categories of modern life and perhaps generate scepticism about the stability of their absoluteness. It would lead to an examination of the conditions of possibility enabling reason, sovereign man, and the state to persist as they do. Questioning the absolute foundation of reason would, in effect, push the reasoner over the limit, into the area designated as the absence of reason, identity, community and sovereignty. According to logocentrism, this nether region is the absence guaranteeing the presence of the aforementioned absolutes. In IR theory, it designates all that is exterior to the society of rational man:

On the one hand, state and domestic society assume the privileged place of the original rational identity, man, and they can easily assume this place because, in all its variants of modern political narrative, the state secures the legitimacy of its reason in a compact with rational man. On the other hand, and as before, the signs of anarchy and war betoken a residual domain of an indeterminate history escaping man's rational control.<sup>19</sup>

Theorists critical of the tradition in IR want to examine the operations of logocentrism, to reveal the function of the "critical limit" in circumscribing ways of thinking about IR and political community, and to demonstrate that there are more options for international relations than either anarchy or universal society. In fact, they want to reveal the options that are being lived in the interstices of these dichotomies, but go unnoticed and unacknowledged by discourses of IR and political theory. Some of the ways of thinking about IR, political community and identity in general that theorists of critical IR theory welcome as alternatives to the tradition are generated by feminist

theories, many of which pose difficult challenges to core concepts in modern social theory.

The critique of modernist configurations of identity and community is common ground upon which many strands of feminist theory join with critical theories of IR. However, since critical IR theorists have read the tradition in IR as having being conceived in logocentrism, they claim that feminist theory, in order to make a difference, must also address the categories of IR at their most basic site. For example, Walker writes:

If it is the case that recent feminist critiques do draw our attention to the problematic status of modern political identities, then these critiques also must be drawn to interrogate state sovereignty as a constitutive political practice...Critical theories of international relations, then, including those articulated under the specific rubric of feminism, must necessarily engage not only the parochialisms and closure of one modern academic discipline but also the limits of a specific account of political life..."<sup>20</sup>

More specifically, Walker says that "contemporary feminist critiques of the theory of international relations are inevitably drawn into struggles around that detonative site designated by the sign of modernity/postmodernity" because the gender relations ossified in theories of political community, political identity, state sovereignty and international relations have also infused "parallel elaboration[s] of these resolutions of space, time, and identity" - economic liberalism, social liberalism, reason and our basic assumptions about what it means to act politically.<sup>21</sup> Jim George similarly claims that "if anything, the problems of theory and practice inherent within International Relations go beyond even feminist articulations of them and require much more generalized critical attention before the significance of feminist arguments can begin to make an impact."<sup>22</sup> George argues that international relations must first make room for exploring "other ways of knowing and Being [than the positivist way]."<sup>23</sup>

These comments suggest a response to the argument, made by Christine Sylvester and others, that non-feminist critical theories of international relations do not give much thought to the contributions of feminism.<sup>24</sup> Their suggestions in fact add another dimension to the problem of identity in critical theories of IR; that is, they bring in feminisms' ongoing debate about the need for and nature of the feminist subject in the midst of deconstructions of identity politics. Such metatheoretical problems have been given considerable attention by feminists.<sup>25</sup> In the context of the arguments made by critical theorists of IR about sovereignty and the subject, feminist theories of IR which, in fashioning a feminist subject, replicate the process constituting the sovereign subject, institute a "critical limit" of their own, a limit by which they are unable to look squarely at the phallogentric processes of defining masculinity and femininity which structure the very dichotomies upon which modern categories of identity are based.<sup>26</sup> With this limit in place, feminisms will be unable to improve upon the categories of identity assumed by theories of international relations, because they will repeat the problems of those categories from a different centre of sovereignty: the category of woman.

### *Phallogentrism and sovereign subjects*

Feminist analyses have ascertained another order to the series of exclusions or dichotomies upon which the core categories of IR are based, particularly the version of political identity constructed through claims to state sovereignty. They claim that the concept of state sovereignty was constituted in opposition to feminized personifications of anarchy as nature, and that as constituents of the state embodied transcendence in the form of reason, feminized elements of life were denigrated as the negation of rationality.<sup>27</sup> On that basis, authors of feminist IR claim that characterisations of community and identity in IR are constituted by the exclusion of all that has been feminized in discourses of modernity.<sup>28</sup> It is because the feminine exists as a troubling

presence in theories about politics and international relations that the distinguishing categories of IR are easily destabilised by feminist critique. As Peterson describes it: "'adding women' to existing frameworks exposes taken for granted assumptions embedded in those frameworks. Across disciplines, feminist dis-cover the contradictions of 'adding woman' to constructions that are literally defined by their 'man-ness': the public sphere, rationality, economic power, autonomy, political identity, objectivity."<sup>29</sup>

In the writings of early-modern philosophers, for example, images of women reveal the position of the feminine in relation to political community and interstate anarchy.<sup>30</sup> In descriptions of political community, women were depicted as different from the citizen, whether their difference was viewed as antagonistic or complementary, and they were depicted as either purely internal to the state, existing in the sub-unit of the family, or as purely external to its workings; in either case, women were not viewed as participants in the civic life of the state. In their roles as dependants of the state, mired in the familial sphere, women were construed as either female counterparts to the citizen-soldier, carrying out their duties as mothers of future citizen-soldiers in the private sphere but with veneration for civic life, or as the other to the civic ideal, exemplifying peace and nurturance to such a degree that they were unable to sanction demands to sacrifice lives for the community in times of war. More famously, Machiavelli represented as feminine the whims of fate, an enemy at odds with the stability and order internal to the state. He depicts Fortuna as a woman; capricious and impulsive, she represents the chaos that masculine rationality and culture must rail against in their efforts to forge a stable political life. The feminine outside the polis represented the ultimate threat of disorder - loss of control or mastery over man's social or natural environment. Women or the feminine figure two ways in the schema of the state: they are purely internal to it, as dependants of citizens in the familial sphere, and they are purely external, representing

the danger of contingency. In both representations, the feminine is the principle that citizens must transcend to form political communities.

The gendered division of labour in the state was often allegorical but always a central and powerful influence on ideas about political community. Ann Runyan claims that "in Western political thought, the state becomes both representative of and a mediator for the production of white, Western, patriarchal culture [as different] from nature....the state has made women, people of colour, and the natural world with which they have become associated the objects of its taming function."<sup>31</sup> And Carole Pateman maintains that the differentiation between the public and private spheres, central to concepts of statehood, was the originary moment of *modern* patriarchy.<sup>32</sup> Because the rules of equality in rights and obligations pertain only to citizens and only in the public sphere, the sphere of the family and relations other than those between citizen and citizen or citizen and state are unprotected by the state and its interests. According to Pateman, women in democratic states have attained "formal citizenship", but only with the devaluation of feminine qualities and the traditionally feminine sphere; those aspiring to citizenship and public life have had to embrace the masculine values and activities associated with that sphere.<sup>33</sup> As V. Spike Peterson has noted, "definitions of citizenship are formal expressions of 'who counts' politically."<sup>34</sup> In many cases, however, women and others with feminized identity categories are not adequately protected as citizens, and some people are without citizen status at all.<sup>35</sup> Jan Pettman makes a similar point, but stresses that "not all citizens, and not all women, experience the state in the same ways."<sup>36</sup>

Because the citizen was stripped of any differentiating characteristics in favour of uniformity, which enabled the state to declare itself a community of citizens with similar interests, feminists criticising citizenship also demand recognition of other forms of

particularity effaced by statehood, most frequently those based on race or ethnicity. Jan Pettman explains that

Citizenship is conventionally understood as the individual's relationship with the state, and as an association of equals in its political community. For this reason, citizenship has trouble accommodating those who claim inclusion as category-group members, on the basis of difference rather than of equality with already-citizens, dominant-group men. Citizenship's construction of the individual citizen making up "the people" can silence or marginalise minorities and those whose interests or beliefs are different. This is especially so where the state itself is engaged in the definition of "the community" and in international relations where the state speaks for "the people". This fiction allows the state to construct "the national interest" regardless of dissent, and of exclusions from the national community and from state power.<sup>37</sup>

Pettman distinguishes between citizenship and nationality, explaining that formal citizenship may be granted while authentic membership in the political community may not. In many respects nationalism works in similar ways and to the same ends as definitions of citizenship.<sup>38</sup> Any citizen seeking identification and the pursuit of interests derived from any community other than the state will, like feminists, have to find it in the interstices of the state system: the private sphere or the international sphere, neither of which are considered traditional spheres of political activity.

The other option for women and others who resist masculinized public life is to demand that feminine qualities be incorporated into the public sphere. This, however, precipitates what Chantal Mouffe has called "the Wollstonecraft dilemma", meaning that such inclusion is impossible, since "patriarchal citizenship" specifically excludes activities, values and traits associated with the feminine.<sup>39</sup> As already remarked, citizenship is founded, quite expressly in the historical literature from which categories of IR derive, upon homogeneity, universalism, and the exclusion of particularity and difference, of which the feminine is one. Wollstonecraft promoted the extension of civic rights and obligations - shorn of militarism - to women. Human rights found the new

community; they form the basis of the new individual, who is teleologically driven to creating a liberal political community in which universalised individualism and rights will prevail.<sup>40</sup> As Elshtain explains, once "man" is construed as being naturally social, he is by nature unable to resist participation in the community:

Space for withdrawal or for dissent from the civic virtue of the mobilized people shrinks as the natural man absorbs social and political man. Wollstonecraft's "rights of woman" are the rights of man rendered as sex blind or gender inclusive. If the 'standing army' is a vice, as Wollstonecraft insists, it is a vice brought into being by the constellation of forces and ideas she herself endorses. The army model of discipline and mass force...is standing *in situ* when it doesn't stand in fact: it is a possibility that can be brought into being given the structure of the centralized nation-state.<sup>41</sup>

The so-named "Wollstonecraft dilemma" represents a potential for feminist thought, including but also beyond that of Wollstonecraft, to generate solutions ill-equipped to reconstruct the complex, intertwined concepts and ideologies of citizenship, statehood and international relations by drawing on conceptual foundations which are themselves constructed through the exclusion of the feminine. At the same time, it alludes to feminists' desire to foster alternative identifications and communities; ones which perhaps for some people are more aligned to their felt identities and interests than citizenship, narrowly conceived as universalised, abstract masculinity.

### *The contradictions of feminist identity*

Feminist international relations authors are among those attempting to theorise new concepts of political community; they are trying to redefine ideas of political identity, in some cases to make identities other than national citizenship visible and functional in politics. The idea that one can make a claim on behalf of her status as part of a marginalised group, a claim based on an identity other than that of the international relations norm of individuality-as-citizenship and collectivity-as-state in itself poses a

challenge to international relations and its foundational categories. To claim rights based on anything other than individualistic citizenship, and to claim them from something other than the state, is to challenge the prevailing conception of political order and the concepts of political justice and ethics that presume such an order. In many ways, the question of political identity is an affliction brought to international relations by critical theorists, including feminists.

However, the structure of identity politics also presents a dilemma for feminisms. The crux of the problem of political identity as drawn by state sovereignty, and parallel modern identity categories such as liberalism, is the desire to resolve claims between universal and particular identities, and to install some form of absolute as a foundation to settle ontological claims. As a quintessentially modern structure, identity politics has limited its consideration of identity to privileging either the universal or particular identity. Usually it focuses on the universal, which provides a basis from which the subject can act politically, and particularised identities are constructed as the threat of relativism if politics refuses a universalised foundation. The quandary for feminism is that identity politics is equally as indebted to logocentric processes as the discourses feminisms have begun to criticise, so that the position from which feminists have traditionally sought to make political claims is fraught with similar problems as those they censure.

Feminism has as one of its central tenets the conviction that women have been marginalised by the modes of thought that have dominated representational life historically and in the present, and by personal and political actions based on those modes of thought. They take issue with narratives that objectify others and universalise knowledge from a singular perspective; hence, feminisms stress the necessity for feminists to avoid similar problems in their own practices. The conviction that feminists must avoid violating the subjectivities of others makes feminism principally a normative

theory, concerned with establishing values that improve upon existing ones.<sup>42</sup> Feminist theories of IR, for example, having discovered the violence of exclusion inherent in the modernist categories of identity in IR, do not want to uncritically reproduce the violence of identity politics.

The importance of feminism's ethical necessity has been demonstrated by the perspective that feminisms of women of colour and non-Western women have brought to feminist theory.<sup>43</sup> Until the mid-1980's feminist theories were largely blind to their own universalising and exclusionary tendencies, when non-white, non-Western women began to point out their own marginalisation in feminisms prejudiced by Western, white, middle-class perspectives.<sup>44</sup> Women speaking from the latter positions claimed that race and class were factors that divided women. They claimed that there were alliances between women and men of the same race, class, and nationality, while at the same time, there were divisions between women and men, even of the same race, class and nationality, due to gender oppression. For these reasons, taking the categories "woman" and "man" as universalist premises, rather than problems, situates one's analysis within the knot of puzzles feminism would like to expose: the problem of power and resistance in the politics of representation and interpretation.<sup>45</sup> These insights made women's emancipation even more difficult to conceptualise than second wave feminists had anticipated it would be to attain.

The conceptual basis of feminism has changed in response to these realisations. Naomi Schor argues that feminists responding to the above criticisms have now established that "falsely universalizing" the feminine subject is a form of essentialism: "Essentialism in the specific context of feminism consists in the belief that woman has an essence, that woman can be specified by one or a number of inborn attributes that define across cultures and throughout history her unchanging being and in the absence of which she ceases to be categorized as a woman."<sup>46</sup> As feminisms of the 1990's puzzle over

questions of identity in attempts to come to terms with a feminist epistemology, their dominant preoccupation,<sup>47</sup> most of them highlight the diversity of constructions of gender and the multiplicity of socially-established categories of women. In feminist IR, for example, J. Ann Tickner claims that feminisms, especially feminist IR theories which attempt to compensate for the ethnocentrism of traditional IR, must be sensitive to theorising from the multiple perspectives of women's lives in various cultural, racial and class situations.<sup>48</sup> Cynthia Enloe suggests that women are linked through "international frameworks" and that "social processes and structures that have been created and sustained over generations" have constructed women and femininity in such a way that they seem to have little to do with international politics.<sup>49</sup> Christine Sylvester has chosen a "postmodern feminist" approach which

wonder[s] whether it is preferable within feminist method to unlearn (deny) ourselves or to hyphenate with others empathetically in ways that avoid "progressive" replications of past erasures and reborn nostalgias for unity. Hence the emphasis on multiple standpoints, on being (ontologically) several things at once in a prismatic postmodern world - rural-black-mother-agriculturalist-socialist-cooperator - and therefore, being homeless as a single-identity knowing Self.<sup>50</sup>

Fracturing feminist subjectivities is one common response in contemporary feminist theories, in international relations and elsewhere, which have taken seriously the normative prescription that feminism must improve upon traditional constructions of subjectivity that rely upon homogeneous universals to ground claims to exclusionary knowledges.

Some feminisms - often those designated as French, postmodern, or poststructuralist feminisms - attempt to move feminist theorising away from its focus on epistemological concerns, on the premise that epistemology maintains a requirement for the distinctive subject-object formation feminisms have criticised as exclusionary and

logocentric, even if epistemology is splintered to include "knowledges" from various standpoints. Jane Flax argues that

A concern for epistemology can mask the desire to claim a position of innocence in which one person's clarity does not rest on the exclusion of an other's experience. It can also be motivated by an illusory wish to discover a set of neutral rules which guarantee that adherence to them will not result in the distortion or erasure of someone's 'truth.' Speaking in knowledge's voice or on its behalf, we can avoid taking responsibility for locating our contingent selves as the producers of knowledge and truth claims.<sup>51</sup>

According to Flax, an epistemological focus maintains the Enlightenment belief in knowledge as the opposite of power, and therefore as a source of just authority.

Feminists' focus on multiple subjectivities leaves intact the structure of the subject to the absolute, although it authorises almost everyone to claim a universalised but particular knowledge. For modernist thinkers this result is the actualised spectre of relativism. It leaves some feminists wondering how women can sustain a feminism with subjects who, theoretically, can have very little in common, and suggests that anti-essentialism may eliminate feminism altogether.<sup>52</sup>

The problem of essentialism, constructed by feminism as a "critical limit" in itself, suggests that feminisms preoccupied with the contradictions of modern identity politics risk perpetuating a circular logic which keeps feminism absorbed in attempting to meet the criteria of modernist discourses they stand in ambivalent relation to. For poststructuralist feminists, the criteria for determining appropriate feminist subjects arise from the political context of the analysis in question; neither anti-essentialism nor stable subjectivities are "disallowed," but the poststructuralist feminist commitment to either version may be temporary, freed from adherence to epistemological (and therefore ontological) standards.<sup>53</sup> Poststructuralist feminism has determined phallogentrism as a necessary part of the representational structure upon which epistemology is based, and have added another layer of reasons for feminism to be suspicious of grounding its claims

in epistemological standards by depicting "woman" and concepts of the feminine as not only the negation of "man" but as the absence of representational possibility.

Gayatri Spivak demonstrates how feminisms can maintain their political commitments while also playing on the discontinuities within modernist discourses by allowing them to coexist. Spivak claims that "The task of a feminist political philosophy is neither to establish the proper meaning of "true," nor to get caught up in a regressive pattern to show how the proper meaning always eludes our grasp, not yet to "ignore" it...but to accept the risk of catachresis."<sup>54</sup> She theorises subjectivity as occurring in different registers of representation. In construing a political identity, one first engages with the tropes offered in a political context - so the feminist in determining a constituency of women examines the workings of sexism in a particular context and from there establishes the interests of the constituency she will represent politically under the banner of feminism. Once established as a political identity, however, it must be recognised that that identity is a representation in the phallogentric order of language. The feminist and the women she represents are assuming an essentialised and representational identity to take part in a political context. "The universalism that one chooses in terms of anti-sexism is what the other side gives us....You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side..."<sup>55</sup> Maintaining the distinction between the two acts of representation in feminism also brings to awareness the difference between being "rhetorically committed" to the principle of anti-essentialism, and "strategically" committed to the subject of feminism.<sup>56</sup> Whereas a focus on only the former is in danger of leaving feminism with nothing but "theoretical purity,"<sup>57</sup> a feminism that focuses on the latter becomes, in effect, anti-sexism, abandoning the project of examining subject-constitution from a feminist perspective and therefore abandoning feminist critique on that register of representation.

Spivak claims that the moment of essentialising is not what feminisms should focus on: "The debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism is really not the crucial debate. It is not possible to be non-essentialist, as I said; the subject is always centred. The real debate is between these two ways of representing."<sup>58</sup> What is important is that the feminist maintain the separation of the two forms of representation so that the political action on the basis of identity is not foreclosed but the moment of essentialising is understood as a requirement of acting politically at all and that that requirement is itself structured by another discourse of gendered politics. To take action on the basis of a deconstructable identity is to accept the "risk of catachresis," knowing that the identity assumed is going to miss the mark. Maintaining the distinction between the two representations also foregrounds the site of feminist practice, since Spivak likens the political identity required by anti-sexism to be a function of ideology or culture, while the feminist critique of representational structures is a response born of the Western feminist ambivalence toward modernist phallogentrism.

#### *Variations on identity in feminist theories of IR*

Feminist IR theory is being written in the context of these two discussions: critical theories of IR deconstructing categories founded on the sovereignty of the subject, and feminist theories recognising the difficulties with sovereign subjectivity but debating whether or not feminisms can afford to forsake a feminist subject based on the traditional model. The double focus Spivak brings to the problem of representational or identity politics is also something she finds in some French feminisms. The "double effort" she encounters in "the best of French feminism" works *against* sexism and *for* feminism, with the lines forever shifting.<sup>59</sup> The feminist IR authors I focus on in the following chapters were chosen because they share an interest in the feminist "double program": that is, they simultaneously disassemble IR categories by interrogating those categories'

relationships to ideas of the feminine and to women themselves, and they attempt to reconstruct theories of IR from a feminist perspective.

As indicated earlier, feminist IR has effectively deconstructed the categories of IR; contrasting ideas of the feminine, at an abstract level, and actual experiences typical to some women, at a more concrete level, with the conceptual basis of IR has exposed a discipline which is founded upon the exclusion of feminine-gendered people and ideas. Understanding Spivak's notion of two forms of representation, however, it becomes important to examine the stance these feminist IR writers take towards the necessarily essentialised feminine subject that deconstruction required. This is especially important to evaluate in the task of rewriting IR that some feminist theorists have undertaken. Situated in a context of alliance with critical theorists in the third debate in IR and in a context of the struggle over feminine subjectivity in feminism, I argue that a feminist revision of the core categories of IR, which have traditionally been grounded in sovereign subjectivity which by definition is built on the exclusion of the feminine, must avoid duplicating phallocentrism in constructing an improved feminist IR theory. I attempt to evaluate their approaches to working through problems of representing women and their experiences as foundations for a reworked IR without replicating the violations of identity politics.

Chapter 2 examines J. Ann Tickner's *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* and "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation," and Robert O. Keohane's "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint." In these three writings Tickner and Keohane accept the epistemological claims of feminist standpoint theory, which either traces the feminist standpoint to object-relations theories of gender development, or to the sexual division of labour that predisposes women to a relational world view, resulting in a universalising category of woman that disregards differences

between women. Feminist standpoint theory does make attempts to incorporate the knowledges of the women it excludes by developing contradictory concepts such as "strong objectivity", which holds that knowledges are located, but can be evaluated objectively to determine which are less false. Feminist standpoint theory is ultimately unable to incorporate Western feminist demands to decentre objectivist knowledge because its justification as a feminist practice rests upon modernist concepts of the subject and epistemology. Similarly, standpoint feminisms in IR are unable to decentre feminist knowledge structured through phallogocentric representation because they concentrate only on oppositional anti-sexism in empiricist knowledge practices.

Chapter 3 examines Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* and Simona Sharoni's "Toward Theorizing International Relations from Women's Struggles" in which the Foucauldian-influenced authors attempt to improve upon the "identity" categories discussed in Chapter 2 by including the concept of location or context as a variable in constructing a category of women. I will argue, with reference to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", that Foucauldian theories of "micro-politics" run the risk of overlooking the particularity of their own locations (such as postmodernity) and can inadvertently interpellate "other" women to satisfy the requirements of their postmodern feminist discourse. Foucauldian feminisms need to carefully contextualise their analyses to avoid universalising their own contexts and power asymmetries, thereby constructing an agonistic ontology.

Chapter 4 focuses on Christine Sylvester's *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* and Nalini Persram's "Politicizing the Féminine, Globalizing the Feminist." These two authors situate their constructions of feminine subjectivity within the feminist debate between identity and non-identity, and evaluate the contributions feminist standpoint and feminist postmodern theory have made toward ideas of the subject that both enable feminist agency and avoid the essentialism that

would universalise the category of women at the expense of those women it cannot encompass. Persram identifies this dichotomy as a large problem in feminist theory, and outlines a strategy for maintaining a politicised feminine subject without succumbing to the essentialism of identity politics that is remarkably similar to Spivak's. However, her ambivalence about refusing identity politics - and not just identities - as the ground for her analysis leaves open the possibility that the feminine identities she endorses can become a version of the fractured feminine subject discussed in Chapter 3. Sylvester is more careful about providing the "anti-feminist" context for her work and for the work of other feminists she investigates. However, what is needed to transform Sylvester's analysis out of an identity politics is attention to Spivak's notion of representation as depiction. That is to say that while her categories are carefully contextualised, Sylvester needs to remind us and herself that the categories are also catachresis. Both of these feminist IR authors attempt to circumvent the circular logic of meeting the contradictory requirements of feminism and identity politics, but by staging their arguments on the terrain of finding an appropriate feminine subject, they remain committed to privileging identity and in fact risk producing a universalised fractured subject as a result of not situating their context as Western postmodernity.

My conclusion is that feminist IR theory, like feminist theory at large, is having to deal with metatheoretical questions about feminine subjectivity, as well as having to also consider the problematic categories of IR theory. The problems surrounding the feminine subject are not only problems for feminist IR that attempts to reconstruct the discipline, since the representation of the feminine subject posited in deconstructing IR must also be recognised as problematic if it is to meet the requirements of Western feminism - which is where the feminist critique of IR as a discipline is located. The project of reconstructing IR from a feminist perspective however, would be most successful in maintaining the space opened by the feminist deconstruction of IR if it remembers the

feminist debate about problematic subjectivities, and especially, if it seeks to avoid the contradictions of identity politics by, as Spivak suggests, maintaining an "anti-sexism" with a "for feminism": allowing for a feminine subject in opposition to sexism, but simultaneously acknowledging that subject as catachresis.

<sup>1</sup>R.B.J. Walker claims that "the most obvious way of understanding the overall coherence of the theory of international relations is in terms of a series of specific conceptual and philosophical differentiations, posed for the most part in oppositional form: politics and economics, high politics and low politics, science and tradition, rationalism and reflectivism, community and anarchy, ethics and power. All of these dichotomies converge in the grand opposition between political realism and utopianism." R.B. J. Walker, *Inside/outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 107.

<sup>2</sup>Walker, *Inside/outside* 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>Christine Sylvester, agrees with this, but suggests that the feminist and critical theory alliance in IR is undermined by a power imbalance that favours critical theory Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 150-152

<sup>4</sup>The sketch of early-modern state sovereignty I present here has drawn from several authors: Walker, *Inside/ outside*; Joseph A. Camilleri and Jim Falk, *The End of Sovereignty?: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmenting World* (Aldershot, England: Edward Elgar, 1992); Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); and Richard K. Ashley, "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," *International/Intertextual Relations*, eds. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989). All of these writers stress that modernity is not a flawless narrative progressing smoothly from one philosophical idea and social change to the next. They stress that the type of account I am presenting has glossed over disjunctures and inconsistencies through countless selective readings until forming a tidy compendium of cause and effect. For example, see Walker, *Inside/outside* 88-99. While noting that a history of state sovereignty is not so simple, I want to show through this summary only the contours and themes of early-modern state-building that have most influenced the categories of the discipline of IR as read by critical theorists.

<sup>5</sup>Camilleri and Falk 13.

<sup>6</sup>Walker, *Inside/outside* 39.

<sup>7</sup>Ashley 268.

<sup>8</sup>Camilleri and Falk 28.

<sup>9</sup>Camilleri and Falk 29.

<sup>10</sup>Walker, *Inside/outside* 117.

<sup>11</sup>George 32.

<sup>12</sup>Ashley 259.

<sup>13</sup>George 7-8.

<sup>14</sup>Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 92; Ashley 262.

<sup>15</sup>Culler 93; Ashley 261.

<sup>16</sup>Ashley 285.

<sup>17</sup>Ashley 287.

<sup>18</sup>Ashley 266.

<sup>19</sup>Ashley 286.

<sup>20</sup>R.B.J. Walker, "Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations," *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory*, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1992) 180.

<sup>21</sup>Walker, "Gender and Critique" 184.

<sup>22</sup>George 29.

<sup>23</sup>George 29.

<sup>24</sup>Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 228-229, note 15; Grant and Newland, "Introduction," *Gender and International Relations*, eds. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 3; and J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) 128-129.

<sup>25</sup>In fact, some feminists focusing specifically on post-positivism argue that feminist articulations of the problem - phallogentrism - "go beyond" critical theory. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, contends that the resuscitation of the feminine brought about as post-modernism's reaction to the crisis of modernity is really just another attempt to secure philosophy's hegemony in knowledge. As the instrumental reason of science gained prominence, and philosophic thought was threatened with irrelevance, she suggests philosophy may have turned to "the feminine" as a source of "new' truth." Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 5-10.

<sup>26</sup>"Feminist IR" in my thesis refers to the six authors I have chosen because their particular focus is on feminism and IR theory as a whole. I am not taking them to be representative of the entire field of feminist IR, but they do represent particular trends which recur.

<sup>27</sup>It was women's perceived irrationality which enabled many of the above associations to be drawn. From the earliest philosophical thought, difference was arranged in a dichotomous pattern, and the feminine linked with space, passivity, materiality, the body, and therefore nature. These ancient associations influenced later developments in "the philosophical imagination," so that today associations such as woman/body/nature and man/mind/culture are well entrenched. Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993) 16. Even the feminist distinction between "sex" and "gender" is rooted in the gendered dichotomy of nature vs. culture. (Lloyd xiv) Throughout the history of Western thought, reason and its offspring, civilisation, were theorised as the transcendence or conquering of nature. As Genevieve Lloyd claims: "What had to be shed in developing culturally prized rationality was, from the start, symbolically associated with femaleness." ( 3) Lloyd argues that gendered dichotomies structure values implicit in western thought:

Our ideas and ideals of maleness and femaleness have been formed within structures of dominance - of superiority and inferiority, 'norms' and 'difference', 'positive' and 'negative', the 'essential' and the 'complementary'. And the male-female distinction itself has operated not as a straightforwardly descriptive principle of classification, but as an

expression of values....What is valued...has been readily identified with maleness. Within the context of this association of maleness with preferred traits, it is not just incidental to the feminine that female traits have been construed as inferior - or, more subtly, as 'complementary - to male norms of human excellence. Rationality has been conceived as transcendence of the feminine; and the 'feminine' itself has been partly constituted by its occurrence within this structure. (103)

<sup>28</sup>Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 7-8.

<sup>29</sup>V. Spike Peterson, "Introduction," *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1992) 8.

<sup>30</sup>This section draws upon interpretations of ancient and early-modern philosophy by Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

<sup>31</sup>Anne Sisson Runyan, "The 'State' of Nature: A Garden Unfit for Women and Other Living Things," *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1992) 124.

<sup>32</sup>Chantal Mouffe, "Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 376.

<sup>33</sup>Mouffe 374-375.

<sup>34</sup>V. Spike Peterson, "Security and Sovereign States: What Is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?," *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory*, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1992) 45.

<sup>35</sup>For example, see Rudo Gaidzanwa, "Citizenship, Nationality, Gender and Class in Southern Africa", *Alternatives* 18:1 (1993).

<sup>36</sup>Pettman 14-15.

<sup>37</sup>Pettman 17.

<sup>38</sup>Peterson "Security and Sovereign States" 47. Fred Halliday discusses similar effects of nationalism on women in "Hidden from International Relations: Women and the International Arena," *Gender and International Relations* eds. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 164-165.

<sup>39</sup>Mouffe 375.

<sup>40</sup>Elshtain 72

<sup>41</sup>Elshtain 72-73.

<sup>42</sup>Elizabeth Grosz explains that for French feminists, ethics blends with politics as an element of the relation between self and other(s). Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989) xvii.

<sup>43</sup>Jane Flax argues that "As much, if not more than postmodernism, the writings of women of colour have

compelled white feminists to confront problems of difference and the relations of domination that are the conditions of possibility for the coherence of our own theorizing and category formation." Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 459.

<sup>44</sup>Linda J. Nicholson, "Introduction," *Feminisms/Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 1, 5.

<sup>45</sup>Joan Cocks, *The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, critique and political theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 11-12.

<sup>46</sup>Naomi Schor, "This Essentialism Which is not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray," *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, eds. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 59, 62.

<sup>47</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 30.

<sup>48</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 16.

<sup>49</sup>Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (London, Sydney and Wellington: Pandora, 1989) 5-6.

<sup>50</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 59.

<sup>51</sup>Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence" 458.

<sup>52</sup>Nancy Fraser, "Introduction," *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992) 6.

<sup>53</sup>Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott claim that categories and concepts used in poststructuralist analysis are determined by context. They suggest that poststructuralist analysis asks "how specific deployments of discourse for specific political purposes determine the very notions used." While poststructuralist analysis is released from the criteria upholding sovereign subjectivities, it does exist in relation to modernist discourses. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, "Introduction," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) xiii.

<sup>54</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism Revisited: Ethics and Politics," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 72.

<sup>55</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 12.

<sup>56</sup>Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution" 11.

<sup>57</sup>Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution" 12.

<sup>58</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 108-109.

<sup>59</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988) 150.

## Chapter Two

### Feminist Standpoint Theories of International Relations

Few feminist theorists accept the claim that "women" can be constituted as a group identity purely on the basis of biological similarity. After all, extreme forms of biological reductionism would make all kinds of social and political theory irrelevant, and obviate the possibility of political change. However, some theorists do claim that women's cohesion as an identifiable group with similar interests can be explained as a consequence of their common experience, both historically and sociologically. Chandra Mohanty argues that examining the way in which this experience is theorised can reveal whether the concept of gender informing the analysis of gendered experience is essentialist, and therefore apolitical, or whether it expresses a more politically strategic position chosen to disrupt gendered inequities.<sup>1</sup> Kathy E. Ferguson claims that rather than essentialising, feminisms that construct a category of woman from women's shared experiences are more accurately in danger of universalising that category.<sup>2</sup> However, Fraser warns feminists against eliding the concepts of essentialism and universalism with each other, or with the use of "unified coherencies" demanded by participation in language, which operates through the taking of parts for wholes.<sup>3</sup> Jane Roland Martin similarly argues that feminists' strenuous opposition to essentialism, if left unchecked, would lead to the conclusion that feminism should eliminate the use of language altogether.<sup>4</sup> Amidst debates surrounding essentialism and anti-essentialism, feminists are attempting to theorise on behalf of women on the basis of choices they make about women as a category. Martin reminds us that "just as different sets of categories will be consonant with a given body of data, alternate conceptualisations will be compatible with a given set of values and purposes. The question of which categories we should choose

cannot be answered in advance of inquiry or decided upon once and for all because the contexts of our investigations change over time and so do our interests and purposes."<sup>5</sup> The question of how to conceptualise a category of women is, then, a political question even when it is posed as an epistemological one.

The argument of this chapter is that although J. Ann Tickner and Robert O. Keohane have adopted object-relations influenced forms of feminist standpoint theory for their ability to highlight deficiencies in realist IR, in the context of modernist critiques of IR and feminist critiques of phallogentrism, standpoint feminism is inadequate for rebuilding a critical theory of IR from a feminist perspective. To the extent to which they advocate reconstructing a feminist IR on the basis of women's purported qualities, their analyses falsely universalise women as a group, and by building on a constructivism which maintains that the qualities of men and women are instilled through fixed psychological processes that follow ultimately from biological sex, their analyses may contribute to the continued association of gender and sex differences that most feminisms agree detract from feminisms' efforts to invalidate the common sense belief that women and men are naturally suited for different roles. These consequences follow from tendencies inherent to standpoint feminisms which in their efforts to forge an objectivist feminist epistemology construct a singular women's standpoint based on women's experiences as caregivers. In addition, Tickner's and Keohane's efforts to establish a feminist epistemology based on the standpoint of women incorporates the contradictory concepts of embodied objectivity and levels of objectivity into their theories of feminist IR. These problems not only detract from the epistemological validity of feminist standpoint theory, but attempt to ground feminist politics in epistemology, which many feminist theorists are currently refusing because of its phallogentric structure.

*Feminist standpoint theory in International Relations*

The standpoint feminist authors of international relations theory that I will be examining in this chapter are Robert O. Keohane and J. Ann Tickner. Adding women's experience to international relations, they argue, will bring about a change to the discipline. Most feminists agree that this will alter international relations' categories of understanding since including women's experiences of international relations can reveal different perspectives on its practices. As Tickner says, "making women's experiences visible allows us to see how gender relations have contributed to the way in which the field of international relations is conventionally constructed and to reexamine the traditional boundaries of the field. Drawing attention to gender hierarchies that privilege men's knowledge and men's experiences permits us to see that it is these experiences that have formed the basis of most of our knowledge about international politics."<sup>6</sup> In this respect, standpoint feminist theories of IR have meaningfully contributed to the critique and deconstruction of traditional IR, which they have successfully argued rests upon "hegemonic masculinity."<sup>7</sup>

However, standpoint feminisms also have a reconstructive role: they suggest that examining IR from the perspective of women's experience can provide international relations theory with a model that is closer to the objective reality of international relations.<sup>8</sup> Keohane sees feminisms' role as "generat[ing] novel hypotheses that could then be evaluated with evidence, in a way that could lead to convincing results."<sup>9</sup> For example, the "feminist emphasis on connectedness" could enable IR theorists to reconceptualise power as the collective ability to create order, to create notions such as diffuse reciprocity, and to construct network models of relationality in IR as opposed to hierarchies.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Tickner suggests that incorporating knowledge from women's experiences into reformulated concepts and practices in IR might enable progress towards a more peaceful and ethical world:

the feminist perspectives that I develop...are but an intermediate step toward the eventual goal of a nongendered perspective. I shall

also argue that this nongendered perspective could truly offer us a more inclusively human way of thinking about our collective future, a future in which women and men could share equally in the construction of a safer and more just world.<sup>11</sup>

Tickner situates her analysis of IR in the context of women's real exclusion from positions of power in foreign policy arenas and from discourses of traditional IR, especially realist security studies, which Tickner claims is the "privileged core" of the discipline.<sup>12</sup> She demonstrates that the dominant, realist paradigm of international relations, its emphasis on liberal individualism and instrumental rationality, and the analogies used by Hobbes and Rousseau for their models of human society "are all, in analogous ways, based on a partial masculine model of human behavior."<sup>13</sup> She also problematises the emphasis on rationalism in neorealist security studies, noting that this subfield has mechanised world politics with scientific methodologies that use "operations research" and "game theoretic models" to come up with what are believed to be rational strategies of nuclear deterrence and war.<sup>14</sup> Focusing on the concept of security, Tickner wants to see what kind of place IR would become for women if gender hierarchies were eliminated and if gender and women's experiences became accepted subjects of investigation. Her research leads to the redefinition of security in ways that show the inadequacies of the term as it is conventionally defined: women outside of policy-making arenas reveal that to them security means safety from structural violence based on sexism and racism, economic justice through the rethinking of profit-oriented rationality to include responsibility for human relationships and natural resources, and ecological security through the deconstruction of hierarchies between nature and culture which have also contributed to the subordination of women.<sup>15</sup>

Deriving a theory of international relations from a human model of experience rather than a masculine one, Tickner argues, would improve international relations theory. Bringing women's experience into the public realm and revaluing it can counteract the androcentric bias inherent in international relations categories. The

reevaluation of masculinity's "other" is where new resources such as non-hierarchical, non-binary, and self-reflexive ways of thinking can be found.<sup>16</sup> For example, Tickner believes that standpoint feminisms can reform notions of citizenship:

In contrast to a citizenship that rests on the assumption that it is more glorious to die than to live for one's states...a more constructive view of citizenship could center on the courage to sustain life. In similar terms, Jean Elshtain asserts the need to move toward a politics that shifts the focus of political loyalty and identity from sacrifice to responsibility. Only when women's contributions to society are seen as equal to men's can these reconstructed visions of citizenship come about.<sup>17</sup>

In Tickner's work, "women's contributions" are those gendered attributes - relationality, connection, and responsibility for the others around us - that feminist standpoint theories hypothesise are central elements of a feminine perspective.<sup>18</sup> In fact, Tickner endorses theories of maternal thinking and object-relations forms of psychoanalytic theory for explaining the emergence of gender differences. In *Gender and International Relations* and "Hans Morgenthau's Principle's of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation," Tickner surveys the work of "mothering theorists" Sara Ruddick and Carol Gilligan, who both advocate a feminist theory based on psychological qualities socialised into girls and women as a result of women's caregiving roles, and several feminist standpoint theorists, including Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, and Evelyn Fox Keller.<sup>19</sup> Standpoint feminisms are related to the "mothering theorists" and often drawn upon object-relations theory in an effort to define a distinctly feminine standpoint.<sup>20</sup> Sara Ruddick, for example, argues that because in most societies women share the experience of caring for children, they develop qualities of compassion and responsibility for others.<sup>21</sup> Carol Gilligan claims that because "women are socialized into a mode of thinking which is contextual and narrative, rather than formal and abstract, they tend to see issues in contextual rather than in abstract terms."<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller's critique of scientific objectivity is also based on the maternalist argument that objectivity is associated with

masculinity due to the gender development of males which emphasises separation from others more than the gender development of females.<sup>23</sup>

Tickner also relates postmodern and poststructuralist feminist concerns that women's perspectives not be distilled into a singular, universal position. She insists that biological essentialism is not an issue with feminists' use of the category of woman - "when feminists use the term *gender* today, they are not generally referring to biological differences between males and females, but to a set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity. These characteristics can and do vary across time and place"<sup>24</sup> - and she further emphasises that feminisms must avoid constructing a Western-oriented knowledge that would rival patriarchal discourses in their ability to simultaneously interpellate, explain and speak for the less powerful people it marginalises. She refers to "hegemonic masculinity" to describe the masculine bias pervading the models of interaction in IR theory. "Hegemonic masculinity" is a symbolic and normative social construction defined in an oppositional relation to femininity and to "subordinated masculinities" such as homosexuality.<sup>25</sup> Poststructuralist feminists' explanation of phallogentric gender organisation is also evident in Tickner's explanation that masculine and feminine are arranged dichotomously in the hegemonic discourses of Western culture, so that characteristics believed to be feminine are hierarchically inferior and opposite to those perceived as masculine. Because these concepts have a material role in sustaining women's oppression, she argues that "we must analyse the way these binary oppositions operate in different contexts and, rather than accepting them as fixed, seek to displace their hierarchical construction."<sup>26</sup>

While Tickner insists that gender is a construction, her claim to that effect does not help to deconstruct the gender categories that she uses profitably to expose gender bias in categories in IR. Throughout her analysis, she refers to women's experiences as mothers and caregivers as determinants of women's characteristics. For example, she

cites Birgit Brock-Utne's research which concludes that women lose interest in Prisoner's Dilemma games because they are less attuned to instrumental rational behavior.<sup>27</sup> Also, while Tickner affirms her intention to debunk the stereotypical association of women with peace, not only because evidence suggests that historically women have been largely supportive of war efforts, but also because it is based often on "essentializing myths" about women's natures that only reinforce the hierarchical gender dualisms that have excluded women from IR in the first place, she goes on to suggest that "even if not all women are pacifists, peace is an issue that women can support in their various roles as mothers, war victims, and preservers of states' and the world's good health."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, her focus on eliminating gender hierarchy in favour of masculine and feminine equality suggests that feminist poststructuralist notions of phallogentrism have not been very influential in her argument:

the ultimate goal of...a reformulation [of international relations] must not be to replace the masculinist perspective on international relations that presently obtains with a feminist perspective. The integration of feminist perspectives into the discipline is but a necessary first step toward transcending gender as a category of analysis. The possibility of moving beyond these gendered perspectives would depend on redefining the discipline of international relations in such a way that women's experiences were included in its subject matter on an equal basis with men's. Such a transcendence can come about, however, only when oppressive gender hierarchies are eliminated.<sup>29</sup>

As poststructuralist feminisms have determined that the feminine as constructed by phallogentric representational structures amounts to the absence of masculinity more than any positive femininity, they would be suspicious of feminist attempts to reclaim this false positivity as the basis for reconstructing a world view.

Keohane also advocates standpoint feminism for comparing individualist, atomistic concepts of IR, such as power, sovereignty and reciprocity, with women's perspectives, and possibly for strengthening "a network-oriented, institutionalized

approach that is truer to the emerging reality."<sup>30</sup> His standpoint feminism draws upon object-relations notions of connectivity and empathy that have been developed by Carol Gilligan's "ethic of care" and Joan Tronto's "connected self", and standpoint epistemology's notion of "dynamic objectivity."<sup>31</sup> He also shares standpoints' optimism concerning objectivist epistemology:

a major aim of science, even social science, is to provide us with a common set of epistemological tools, in a discipline, for ascertaining the nature of reality and therefore testing the adequacy of our theories. This is not to pretend that any knowledge is perfectly "objective": clearly our values, our upbringing, our bodily experiences and our positions in society - gender, class, culture, race - all affect what we believe. But science has the value of narrowing gaps in belief by providing common standards to test beliefs, and therefore disciplining our minds, protecting us to some extent from bias. The very difficulty of achieving social scientific knowledge is an argument for cherishing rather than discarding social science and the aspiration for a more or less unified epistemology.<sup>32</sup>

The role for standpoint feminism in IR, Keohane argues, is to reconceptualise concepts in IR based on women's standpoint and to provide a contrast with which to evaluate IR's traditional categories and to see how relevant they are to the current state of world politics.<sup>33</sup> This is not so different from what he sees as feminisms' strengths elsewhere: "generate novel hypotheses that could then be evaluated with evidence, in a way that could lead to convincing results."<sup>34</sup>

While object-relations psychoanalysis and modified objectivity are frequently characteristic of standpoints, Keohane does not explain the ontological status of the women from whom the attributes of care and connectivity are drawn. This is a significant part of standpoint theory, which has an interest, as most feminisms do, in avoiding charges of essentialising or universalising the category of women. Instead of examining object-relations notions of "woman," he adopts the category unproblematically. I would argue that it is because Keohane has a vision of what kind of feminist theory would be most helpful to international relations that he endorses the

maternalist model of women as a category - the model of women as more relational and nurturing than men. As explained, he draws upon the arguments of Carol Gilligan, Joan Tronto and other feminists who focus on "a way of thinking that identifies with others rather than differentiating oneself from others."<sup>35</sup> Keohane claims that feminist theories of relatedness can help to emphasise interdependence in international relations and the interconnectedness of many contemporary issues of world politics. For example, he claims that "A feminist theory of international relations could help to articulate an institutional vision of inter-national relations - a network view, emphasizing how institutions could promote lateral cooperation among organized entities, states or otherwise."<sup>36</sup> In effect, Keohane makes a number of assertions concerning the nature of international relations (it is interdependent); standpoint feminism (it emphasises relationality); and the relations between them (they complement each other).

By ignoring the significance of the agency/non-identity problem in feminism, Keohane also appears to have simplified the feminist standpoint effort to reconfigure epistemology. For example, Christine Sylvester sees him as trying to "uncover universals that can allow us to explain in grand terms," and because Keohane does not attend to the significance of this dichotomy and the theoretical gymnastics that feminisms have invented in order to mediate each of its terms, Sylvester is able to claim that his attempt to unite IR and feminism amounts to a "*faux* tolerance for ways of knowing that defy one's proclaimed method [and which] smokescreens a strategic orientation aimed at controlling the other."<sup>37</sup> Keohane concedes that his article is meant as a preliminary sketch to suggest possible interactions between IR and feminism, rather than a firm position based on a thorough reading of feminist theory.<sup>38</sup> It is valuable nonetheless as an example of how the ideas of feminist standpoint can be appropriated and women as a category too easily caricatured as personifying the caring, nurturing role that object-relations and standpoint theories have conjectured for particular feminist ends.

Tickner's and Keohane's use of standpoint theory to reconstruct IR's categories of analysis from a feminist perspective run the risk of entrenching gender-biased grand narratives because they have adopted them unproblematically. Even founding feminist standpoint theorists now recognise that the feminist standpoint is most beneficial when used as context-aware, primarily political position, so that the essentialism and universalism inherent to standpoint theory are circumscribed.<sup>39</sup> Cressida J. Heyes has suggested that "third wave" feminists should be careful to evaluate the work of "second wave" feminists, such as Chodorow and Gilligan, as responses to academic discourses in the humanities and social sciences that at one time both literally and implicitly excluded and /or disparaged women.<sup>40</sup> For example, by keeping in mind that Gilligan was writing to dispute Lawrence Kohlberg's psychological theory that derived universalised claims about moral development from a study of boys and which as a result found girls responses deficient, Heyes concludes that "without Gilligan's generalizations, we would be left to depend on psychological theories that ignore girls' narratives or rate them as second class...thus the political salience of Gilligan's project lay in creating a space for girls to be heard."<sup>41</sup> Rather than espousing a methodological anti-essentialism, Heyes suggests that "third wave" feminists work toward "more nuanced anti-essentialisms that...offer resources for making judgements about the political salience of particular axes of difference among women, and can reveal exclusions and make visible the circulation of power in ways that permit continued practice."<sup>42</sup>

Charges of methodological essentialism and universalism that have so often been directed against the ideas that were original and provocative in feminisms' second wave are in fact more plausibly made against subsequent work that has indiscriminately and uncritically adopted them.<sup>43</sup> Tickner and Keohane take up some troublesome premises from standpoint epistemologies to develop a generalizable woman's perspective by extracting the category of woman from each of these respective approaches and the

contexts that gave rise to them, and they apply the category in ways that are unable to guard against its latent essentialising and universalising tendencies. It is only by examining the specific contexts within which these arguments were framed that it is possible to assess the contributions they make as oppositional discourses.

As already explained, feminist IR has established itself as an oppositional discourse to the modernist identity categories that shape the hegemonic narratives of IR. Also, as an instance of Western feminism, it takes seriously the contradictions identity politics pose for feminist theory and action. Keeping in mind that the context of feminist IR is between these two discourses, it is difficult to see how building phallogentric knowledges based on a universalised women's standpoint would be adequate to the task of rethinking IR. The project of reconstructing IR from a feminist perspective in the space opened by the feminist deconstruction of IR will be most successful if it takes into account the feminist critique of the knowing subject, which is something that feminist standpoint epistemologies are unable to do.

### *Modern epistemology*

Their claims of feminine difference based on object-relations theories of gender development and the maternal role lead Tickner and Keohane to presume that women as a category with similar ways of thinking and behaving originates with socialisation. Judith Grant claims that "mothering theory" is characterised by the attempt to find "an allegedly *socially produced, universalizing experience* that would both substantiate the category Woman and serve as a starting point for further theorizing about women and gender. [In these theories] mothering is being explored as both a universal experience and a patriarchal institution, which can account for the unique behavior and epistemological perspective of women."<sup>44</sup> Object-relations and mothering theory are closely associated with feminist standpoint theory, which emphasises the epistemological advantage of

marginalised perspectives, and are often called upon in standpoint theory to attest to a common woman's standpoint. Most recent object relations and standpoint theories move away from universalising women and women's experiences; in current versions of standpoint theory, women's mothering role is placed in its social and historical context. Grant argues that this leads to a paradox in that standpoint feminism attempts to unite women into a category on the basis of "a female experience" that varies culturally and historically.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, paradoxes abound in feminist standpoint theory as a result of standpoint's perplexing relationship to epistemology. Two problems that recur in feminist standpoint theories are the feminist critique of hegemonic knowledges which gave rise to the notion that there was a distinctive woman's knowledge, and the feminist difficulty in creating, as a requirement of a feminist epistemology, an unproblematic category of woman. In other words, the assumptions of women's solidarity due to shared experiences that produce women's distinctive knowledge rests upon similar foundations as that of the "undeconstructed" subject of modernity.<sup>46</sup> For all similar experience to be apprehended in the same way is to claim the same psychological or individual foundations for interpreting experience. However, whereas feminist psychoanalytic theory makes a narrative of psychological development primary, the subject of Western thought is established upon reason.

Modernity has posited the subject as a rational being who can discover the truth of the reality lying outside of him or her self, and also know the truth of his or her own rationality.<sup>47</sup> Truth is derived from the proper use of reason, and is distinguished from what is not true by its adherence to universal principles that reason has determined to exist. Reason has a privileged place in the metaphysics of modernity, since it is believed to transcend both physical and temporal limitations, giving a "God's eye view" of the world.<sup>48</sup>

However, reason is available to most of us, and in fact, its presence bestows upon us the capacity for individuality and freedom. It is only through our access to reason, which is transcendental and universal, that we have the ability to know ourselves as individuals, and to have the freedom of thought to live autonomously. Persons with reason are assured to have both freedom and autonomy since these are the ends that are reason's originating purpose. Accordingly, obeying the laws of reason gives freedom; or, as Flax points out, we are predetermined to be free.<sup>49</sup> It is through conforming to universal reason that each individual transcends his or her particular existence. Paradoxically, by exercising free will as a necessity of reason, the subject can be both an individual and part of a common (transcendent) humanity.<sup>50</sup>

Central to the concept of modern subjectivity is the supposition that the mind and its rationality are capable of finding the truth due to the separation between the subject and its object. Of particular importance for gender is the assumed a priori separation between mind (transcendent reason) and body (particularity and immanence). The process by which the subject constitutes its identity involves the subject finding an "other" that is different from the subject/self and recognising it as different. From the position of the subject, transcendent knowledge is available of the world outside itself. In other words, the modern idea of subject/object that enables objective knowledge is a spatial formation in which the objective world is separate from and outside of the subject. In this sense, the modern formation of subject and object is constituted through creating disjunctures between locations. The separation of the body from the mind also enables the mind's separation from a particular place and time, thus allowing all three- body, locale, and history- to become objects of the subject's knowledge.

For Cartesian epistemology, the body - conceptualized as the site of epistemological limitation, as that which fixes the knower in time and space and therefore situates and relativizes perception and thought - requires transcendence if one is to achieve the view from nowhere, God's

eye-view. Once one has achieved that view (has become object-ive), one can see nature as it really is, undistorted by human perspective.<sup>51</sup>

The fact of making the body an object of knowledge, a referent that reason can see and "know", precludes the possibility that particular bodily experiences will produce diverse forms of mind. Knowledge's security against charges of relativism rest upon this distinction, disallowing challenges to the universality of true knowledge by claims to particularity of locale, history or bodily difference.

The critique of modern philosophy as being founded through the logic of "presence" and "absence" can help to explain why some feminist theories are critical of humanistic solutions that only attempt to improve women's access to humanist concepts such as objective reason.<sup>52</sup> The transcendent universality of reason has been unveiled by feminists as a masculine signifying economy maintaining itself as the standard for humanity by a trick of phallogentrism; that is, by excluding a range of possibilities represented as the alterity of reason. Feminist poststructuralism finds phallogentric reason actually dependent upon the exclusion of the feminine and many "others": "the disqualification of the woman is a structural need of the phallogocentric system of knowledge, which is read in the light of the 'metaphysical cannibalism' that consumes the many 'others' of theoretical reason, in order to legitimate itself."<sup>53</sup> An understanding of phallogentric logic can also help to explain the enduring binary configuration masculine and feminine gender categories.

Modern epistemologies have been described as working according to a "logic of visibility," or as relying on a "metaphysics of substance."<sup>54</sup> They refer to the construction of ontologies of the subject through appropriation and reductionism:

theory, as a form of knowledge and understanding of the spectator, is constitutively unable to let the other remain outside itself, outside its representation of the panorama which it surveys, in a state of singularity or separation. This will also be true of any concept, because by definition the concept "cannot capture the absolutely-other"; and to the extent that it must invoke a form of generality, of language itself.<sup>55</sup>

Modern theories of knowledge order the categories of subject and object into a hierarchy: recognising difference through the categories by which the subject constitutes itself in effect erases the difference of the "other" by subsuming it into the negativity of the subject's own identity. Similarly, the subject's recognition of the "same" works to impose its positive identity upon another. The subject's grasp on the objects it knows explains why some believe that "being" is constituted through a violence analogous to war, and ontology "amounts to a philosophy of power."<sup>56</sup> An object constituted by the subject's knowledge enters into a hierarchical binary relation to the subject; it is either "same" or "other" according to the categories by which the subject has come to know his or her self, but either way is its reflection.

The subject of reason, the modern subject, has therefore defined itself against the elements of "unreason." Western thought has established the human as a being endowed with reason, the defining characteristic which separates him from the non-human. As already noted, freedom and mastery derive from reason, shaping the non-human world, as the antithesis of reason, into a realm of passivity and necessity.<sup>57</sup> In Western thought, "the emotions, the body, the passions, nature, the non-human world, faith, matter and physicality, experience and madness" have all been positioned as opposites to reason.<sup>58</sup> Similar principles of exclusion and inclusion are applied in the designation of attributes according to gender. For example, male and female become masculine and feminine and set in a hierarchical pattern. As dichotomies, only one of the pair can be aligned with reason and subsequently, with humanity. The association of the masculine with reason means that the model of humanity is gendered and male; the ideal feminine, on the other hand, is in contrast to reason and the human.<sup>59</sup> The dichotomies between masculine and feminine are well documented in feminist thought. The character of dichotomous thought, or phallogentrism, which includes the constitution of the feminine as the negativity of the masculine, is one reason that some strands of feminist theory have

refused to accept a simple reevaluation of the feminine as a solution to gender inequality, or an equally simple renunciation of the feminine in favour of the human: because it would not change the structure of domination.<sup>60</sup>

Using a feminist critique of phallogentrism, it becomes evident that in the Western tradition, masculine and feminine are both equally products of the masculine rather than being distinctions between two autonomous forms. This is the case in that what is masculine is defined with positive attributes: rational, sovereign, free, while the feminine is the absence of the masculine and its attributes.<sup>61</sup> Being essentially, in Western thought, a negativity, the feminine is open to infinite interpretation.<sup>62</sup>

If masculine and feminine are thus derived from the logic of presence and absence, then gender distinctions based on dichotomous sex cannot be transcended into a human composite made out of the most beneficial characteristics of each. Male and female cannot become one when the existence of either depends upon the dualistic structure of dichotomy. Only one term in the dichotomous pair has positivity, or presence; its opposite is the absence of the qualities of the first term.<sup>63</sup> So if feminine is the alterity of masculine, it cannot exist without the masculine to define it. Further, given that only one term has "positive reality," the feminine formed in dichotomous thought is not properly feminine at all, being no more than a continuation of the masculine-masculinity's negative form.<sup>64</sup> One could say that in the realm of phallogentric thought, the feminine is inauthentic, a catachresis for all that is non-masculine, and that therefore gender cannot be transcended, gender being only the condition for (masculine) being itself.

As Linda Alcoff explains, feminists having an awareness of the dichotomous structure of gender "cannot demarcate a definitive category of 'woman' without eliminating all possibility for the defeat of logocentrism and its oppressive power."<sup>65</sup> In other words, participation in representational structures or claiming knowledge requires

taking up the masculine position in logocentric thought, which is simply a reversal of gender categories and does not affect change in the form of gender organisation.

### *Standpoint feminism*

Judith Grant, in her book *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core concepts of Feminist Theory*, traces the course of three pivotal concepts that have both benefited and obstructed feminist theory - woman, experience, and "personal politics."<sup>66</sup> She claims that experience arose as an epistemological foundation for feminism as a result of second wave feminists' discovery that the apparently objective knowledges of leftist radical politics could not recognise women's oppression.<sup>67</sup> The contradiction between women's awareness and official knowledges led feminists to suspect that epistemology hid male bias and that feminists needed to posit a distinctively feminist epistemology to counter masculist prejudice in common knowledges. Flax claims that a feminist epistemology also serves the purpose of moving feminism away from purely political premises and providing authoritative evidence to ground its political claims.<sup>68</sup>

However, the feminist standpoint attempt to construct a feminist epistemology has run into contradictions based on the feminist critique of epistemology outlined above. Epistemology based on object-relations theories constitute two locations from which to know- the masculine or the feminine mind. Standpoint feminisms based on object-relations theories start with a common structure of psychological development which looks to male/female difference in generating masculine/feminine difference, and assume that empirical epistemology from two distinct standpoints is possible as a result of the two universalised subjects. In this line of thought, the attainment of subjectivity respects the humanistic tension between universal and particular, but universalises from two, rather than one. By universalising women's experience, mothering theory is able to claim that there is a truth in women's experience that can be discovered empirically.

However, creating two humanist subjects fails to problematize the modern process of understanding and constituting reality, because it re-establishes individual(s) as the foundation of thought. For example, object-relations forms of standpoint feminism repeat the universal/particular dichotomy, since they attempt to universalise the feminine perspective to include all women, thereby giving women's experience the status of women's truth. The difference between the humanist subject and the woman "knower" of standpoint feminism is gender and a contradictory "embodied objectivity". As Susan Hekman notes, feminists in the 1980's realised that object-relations theory was incompatible with the notion of objective reality.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, while epistemology based on object-relations contradicts the possibility of objectivity, it does repeat the exclusion of unrecognised knowledges. For example, gender is the only form of embodiment that can produce embodied knowledge, to the exclusion of the possibility of knowledges produced by bodily experiences of race, age or physical ability.

In fact, while object-relations theories have successfully demonstrated that gender does not flow directly from biological sex, they have posited psychological structures so primary to human experience as to inadvertently effect essentialism in gender categories. Judith Butler has explained that construction can be easily misconstrued as "not an activity, but an act, one which happens once and whose effects are firmly fixed. Thus, constructivism is reduced to determinism and implies the evacuation or displacement of human agency."<sup>70</sup> She notes that "[s]uch theories do not need to be explicitly essentialist in their arguments in order to be effectively essentialist in their narrative strategies."<sup>71</sup> According to Butler, construction is accomplished by a structure which takes the place of the subject in the "metaphysics of the subject", since the structure becomes the subject that acts upon objects to create them.<sup>72</sup> Object-relations theories insert psychological development into the subject position, making it the agent that constructs genders.

Psychoanalytic explanations of gender also produce closure by creating a

narrative of development, in which key experiences in an infant's life, in this case the degree to which the child identifies with the mother, founds gender as masculine or feminine.<sup>73</sup> In the object-relations formulation of gender, a universal process of gender acquisition is posited as prior, and sex is a variable that determines which of two directions psychological development will take. The result is a universalisation of developmental processes into two gendered paths which will produce either masculine or feminine perspectives. "[G]ender meanings are circumscribed within a narrative frame which both unifies certain legitimate sexual subjects and excludes from intelligibility sexual identities and discontinuities which challenge the narrative beginnings and closures offered by ... psychoanalytic explanations."<sup>74</sup> Butler maintains that the narrative of infantile gender development found in object-relations psychoanalytic theory "effects a narrative closure on gender experience and a false stabilization of the category of woman" which hinders feminist attempts at offering a theory of social change.<sup>75</sup>

In keeping with the feminist need to establish a female subject, the narratives of psychoanalytic theory construct a coherent category of women.<sup>76</sup> However, the need to establish unity in the category also establishes universalism as central to psychoanalytic feminism. Any woman's experience conflicting with the established notion of the feminine cannot be incorporated into standpoint analysis. This explains why object-relations forms of feminist standpoint epistemology have been accused of an effective, if not overt essentialism, and falsely universalising the category of woman.

Feminist standpoint theory, while drawing upon some of the arguments of object-relations, have attempted to avoid its problems by developing an epistemology from women's experiences structured by the traditional sexual division of labour. Nancy Hartsock develops the feminist standpoint based on the Marxist theory of knowledge. Her position therefore rests on a number of epistemological claims: that knowledge of social relations is both structured and limited by material life; that occupational

differences between powerful and less powerful groups will result in inverse knowledges; that the knowledges of the powerful shape the material relations of society, so that they cannot be considered "false" and so that the less powerful in society must achieve their own standpoint through politicisation and education; and finally, that the standpoint of the oppressed suggests future liberation in that it reveals that the social relations as structured by the powerful are distortions of the true nature of things - informed by "partial and perverse" knowledges.<sup>77</sup> Hartsock claims that this type of epistemology posits "a duality of levels of reality, of which the deeper level or essence both includes and explains the 'surface' or appearance, and indicates the logic by means of which the appearance inverts and distorts the deeper reality."<sup>78</sup>

The specifically feminist standpoint originates with the institutionalised sexual division of labour, which results in developmental differences between girls and boys. Their different developmental experiences, as delineated by object-relations theory, "both structure and are reinforced by the differing patterns of male and female activity required by the sexual division of labor, and are thereby replicated as epistemology and ontology. The differential male and female life activity in class society leads on the one hand toward a feminist standpoint and on the other toward an abstract masculinity."<sup>79</sup> Developmental experiences, socialisation and everyday life experiences dispose women to view themselves in relation to others and the world, to refuse dichotomization and the separation of material and mental activity.<sup>80</sup> Hartsock concludes that the feminist standpoint, once achieved, can expose the reversed values of abstract masculinity as they structure society and demonstrate how to include values based on women's experience:

Generalizing the activity of women to the social system as a whole would raise, for the first time in human history, the possibility of a fully human community, a community structured by connection rather than separation and opposition. One can conclude then that women's life activity does form the basis of a specifically feminist materialism, a materialism which can provide a point from which both to critique and to work against phallographic ideology and institutions.<sup>81</sup>

Hartsock acknowledges that by positing an institutionalised sexual division of labour in an effort to determine similarities, she will suspend the theorising of differences between women.<sup>82</sup> Yet, she argues that the discovery of a feminist standpoint works on the assumption that Western women do have experiences in common. By concentrating on organised social practices, Hartsock intends to avoid theorising the activity of individual women who do not subscribe to institutionalised norms.

In fact, by examining more recent feminist standpoint theories' attempts to include diverse women's knowledges in the feminist standpoint, it becomes clear that problems of universalising are inherent to the requirements of epistemology. As Hekman remarks, these attempts produce "odd results" insofar as they do not want the proliferation of knowledges from the various standpoints of women to erode the concept of enhanced objectivity.<sup>83</sup> For example, Sandra Harding posits the idea of "strong objectivity" as a means of deciding which subjugated standpoint produces the most objective knowledge. Harding explains that strong objectivity requires the feminist standpoint to recognise "historical or sociological or cultural relativism - but not judgmental or epistemological relativism"; it requires "a scientific account of the relationships between historically located belief and maximally objective belief."<sup>84</sup> Harding's attempt to include diverse standpoints, Hekman concludes, "necessarily presupposes a shared discourse - a metanarrative, even - that establishes standards by which these judgements can be validated."<sup>85</sup> However, like most feminist standpoint theory, Harding's theory is built upon the argument that such metanarratives are masculine ideological bias.

While feminist standpoint epistemology cannot help but contradict the criteria for objective knowledge unless it universalises a singular woman's perspective, by suggesting that there are degrees of objectivity, it also contradicts epistemological standards from another angle. It simultaneously claims that all knowledge is socially situated, but that women's standpoint provides a true view of social relations.<sup>86</sup> As explained, Hartsock

claims that the feminist standpoint can reveal abstract masculinity as being "partial and fundamentally perverse" and as "reversing the proper valuation of human activity."<sup>87</sup> Sandra Harding also claims that "the standpoint of women - or of feminism - [is] less partial and distorted than the picture of nature and social relations that emerges from conventional research."<sup>88</sup> Harding insists that knowledge is always political, and yet can also maintain the characteristics of empiricism and objectivity.<sup>89</sup> To summarize, feminist standpoint theory does not address the problem of universalising the experiences of some women into knowledge, and has questionable validity as an epistemology.

Hekman traces feminist standpoint's contradictory relationship to epistemology to its tendency to privilege reality over abstraction, and finds three problems with this approach:

First, it assumes that the dichotomy between concepts and reality can be resolved by embracing reality and rejecting concepts. This strategy is self-defeating. The two elements of the dichotomy are interdependent; to embrace one is to acknowledge the epistemological validity of both sides of the dichotomy, not to solve the problem it poses. Second, it denies that the lifeworld is, like every other human activity, discursively constituted. It is a discourse distinct from that of abstract science, but a discourse nonetheless. Third..., one can argue that sociological analysis *should* begin with the actors' concepts and that any other approach will miss the object of its study - the lifeworld - but that this requires a specific *argument*. Opposing concepts to reality is not an argument and, furthermore, entails an epistemological fallacy.<sup>90</sup>

Hekman concludes that feminist standpoint theory, rather than attempting to maintain epistemology, is most effective as a participant in a paradigm shift away from it. And probably the most telling critique of the feminist standpoint epistemology is that some feminist standpoint thinkers now agree.<sup>91</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Feminist standpoint theory enables Tickner and Keohane to conjecture, like Carol Gilligan, that "the failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing instead two different modes, we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience."<sup>92</sup> Recent writings from feminist standpoint theorists emphasise that such statements in the original theories of the feminist standpoint are best understood as primarily oppositional discourses situated in time- and place-specific discourses. Sandra Harding acknowledges that feminist standpoint appropriations of Marxian epistemology attempted to constitute "an ideal unitary knower no less than did social contract theory's 'rational man,'" and consequently the problems associated with that construction that feminists have identified.<sup>93</sup> Nancy Hartsock makes a similar claim, and both Harding and Hartsock also agree that standpoint feminisms are less interested in determining optimally objective accounts of reality than in identifying the relations between power and knowledge.<sup>94</sup>

Their re-readings of the feminist standpoint suggest a form of postmodern subject, whose identity and knowledges constitute and are constituted by changeable webs of material relations. Hartsock argues that "the constitution of the subject...is the result of a complex interplay of 'individuals' and larger-scale social forces....the constitution of the 'collective subject' posited by standpoint theories requires an always contingent and fragile (re)construction/transformation of these complex subject positions."<sup>95</sup> These current revisions or clarifications help to ameliorate the methodological essentialism and universalism of feminist standpoint theory. As it is taken up in Tickner's and Keohane's feminist theories of IR, however, feminist standpoint theory is locked into modernist notions of epistemology and subjectivity. Keohane examines neither the process of subject constitution in standpoint theory, nor its epistemological validity. Tickner overlooks the epistemological question, and although she does consider the problems of

the feminist standpoint's knowing subject, it is difficult to read her as having incorporated anti-Enlightenment critiques into her analysis due to numerous assertions that women embody the relational self of maternal thinking.

By drawing on feminist standpoint theory, Tickner's and Keohane's theories of feminist IR provide masculine and feminine genders as foundations of experience that produce gendered knowledge, and both assume a progression toward a non-gendered or human perspective through the synthesis of both gendered knowledges. Still, the dichotomous form is required to constitute the gendered characteristics that they would like to adopt for a human model, and therefore the genders that they would like to transcend will remain. In fact, their approach reinforces gender dualism by accepting object relations explanations of masculine and feminine personalities being effects of sexual difference, which structures male/female difference as complementary. They also accept the feminist standpoint as epistemology, where most feminists, including some standpoint theorists, now qualify their earlier emphasis on knowledge claims as examinations of the discursive power relations involved in making them. Tickner's and Keohane's feminist theories of international relations attempt to rectify the empiricism of conventional international relations theory by adding gender as a variable. However, their empiricism is weakened by the attempt, and their feminism is flawed by their adherence to concepts of gender which naturalise phallogentric, universalising concepts of woman, repeating the logocentrism that some feminists and others have criticised as being central to the workings of oppression. Jane Flax criticises standpoint feminisms on similar grounds:

The notion of a feminist standpoint that is truer than previous (male) ones seems to rest upon many problematic and unexamined assumptions. These include an optimistic belief that people act rationally in their own interests and that reality has a structure that perfect reason (once perfected) can discover. Both of these assumptions in turn depend upon an uncritical appropriation of...Enlightenment ideas.<sup>96</sup>

From the perspective of feminist and poststructuralist accounts of subjectivity and epistemology, the Enlightenment ideas underlying Tickner's and Keohane's standpoint theories of gender are not just problematic, but seriously undermine the feminist attempt to imagine a "more just world."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience", *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, eds. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) 76.

<sup>2</sup>Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1993) 81-82, 85.

<sup>3</sup>Ferguson 87.

<sup>4</sup>Jane Roland Martin, "Methodological Essentialism, False Difference, and Other Dangerous Traps," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19.3 (1994): 631, 636.

<sup>5</sup>Martin 637-638.

<sup>6</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* xi.

<sup>7</sup>Tickner uses R.W. Connell's term "hegemonic masculinity" to refer to a set of characteristics that are normally associated with masculinity and disassociated from femininity, although those stereotypical characteristics may have little to do with actual men. *Gender in International Relations* 4-5.

<sup>8</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 36. Robert Keohane does not state this explicitly, but because he adopts standpoint feminism as preferable to postmodern feminism on the basis of its ability to maintain some epistemological standards of objectivity, and because the notion of enhanced objectivity is a feature of standpoint feminism, I believe he does imply that feminist standpoint theory can produce greater objectivity in the study of IR.

<sup>9</sup>Keohane 46-47.

<sup>10</sup>Keohane 47. Tickner also discusses power as "mutual enablement". *Gender in International Relations* 65.

<sup>11</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 24-25.

<sup>12</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* x.

<sup>13</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 63.

<sup>14</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 12.

<sup>15</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 54-55, 66, 91-92, 124-126.

<sup>16</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 65-66, and J. Ann Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation," *Gender and International Relations*, eds. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 28.

<sup>17</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 62.

<sup>18</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 61.

<sup>19</sup>"Mothering theory" is a term used by Judith Grant. Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminism*:

*Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 59.

<sup>20</sup>Susan Hekman, "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22.2 (1997): 344.

<sup>21</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 61.

<sup>22</sup>Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles" 31-32.

<sup>23</sup>Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles" 30.

<sup>24</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 7.

<sup>25</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 6-7.

<sup>26</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 8.

<sup>27</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 83.

<sup>28</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 59-60.

<sup>29</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 130.

<sup>30</sup>Keohane 48.

<sup>31</sup>Keohane 44.

<sup>32</sup>Keohane 46.

<sup>33</sup>Keohane 45-46.

<sup>34</sup>Keohane 47.

<sup>35</sup>Keohane 44.

<sup>36</sup>Keohane 44.

<sup>37</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 62-63.

<sup>38</sup>Keohane 48.

<sup>39</sup>Sandra Harding, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Revisited': Whose Standpoint Needs Regimes of Truth and Reality?," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22.2 (1997): 383-384.

<sup>40</sup>Cressida J. Heyes, "Anti-Essentialism in Practice: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Philosophy," *Hypatia* 12.3 (Summer 1997): 142-144.

<sup>41</sup>Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press: 1982) 18. Heyes 149. Heyes also notes that Gilligan herself responded to criticisms of her early work by saying they were "based on counterexamples to those favored by dominant psychological theories, not on generalizable or statistical claims." (149)

<sup>42</sup>Heyes 144.

<sup>43</sup>Judith Grant makes the point that "it is the nature of words, once uttered, to become subject to interpretation by the stream of history and debate....What matters is how the ideas have been used by subsequent feminist theorists and how they have evolved to become contemporary feminist theory." (5) She also points out that theorists can be unaware of all that is contained within the original ideas they are taking up. (6)

<sup>44</sup>Grant 59.

<sup>45</sup>Grant 90.

<sup>46</sup>Mohanty 82-83.

<sup>47</sup>This section draws from Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), and Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>48</sup>Nicholson, "Introduction" 2.

<sup>49</sup>Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations" 41.

<sup>50</sup>Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations" 41.

<sup>51</sup>Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism", *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 143.

<sup>52</sup>The laws of logic, formulated originally by Aristotle, are the laws of presence and absence. The three primary laws are: "the Principle of Identity (if anything is A, it is A); the Principle of Contradiction (nothing can be both A and Not A [sic]); and the Principle of the Excluded Middle (anything, and everything, must be *either A or Not-A*)". As Nancy Jay explains, most societies conceive of gender as dichotomous difference: everyone is either male or female, but not both. Nancy Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy", *Feminist Studies* 7.1 (Spring 1981): 42-43.

<sup>53</sup>Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 211.

<sup>54</sup>Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 336.

<sup>55</sup>Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990) 14.

<sup>56</sup>Robert Young 13.

<sup>57</sup>Val Plumwood, "Woman, Humanity and Nature," *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader*, eds. Sean Sayers and Peter Osborne (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 211.

<sup>58</sup>Plumwood 211.

<sup>59</sup>Plumwood 212. Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 95.

<sup>60</sup>Gatens 94. Plumwood 221.

<sup>61</sup>Gatens, 93.

<sup>62</sup>Gatens 93.

<sup>63</sup>For example, Jay notes that "[i]n A/Not-A dichotomies only one term has positive reality. Not-A is only the privation or absence of A." (44)

<sup>64</sup>Jay 44.

<sup>65</sup>Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13.3 (1988): 417.

<sup>66</sup>Grant 4.

<sup>67</sup>Grant 28-30.

<sup>68</sup>Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 447. Grant similarly maintains that "the search for a feminist epistemology has also sought a foundational grounding in 'truth.'"

<sup>69</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 344.

<sup>70</sup>Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 9.

<sup>71</sup>Butler, "Gender Trouble" 329-330.

<sup>72</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 8-9.

<sup>73</sup>Butler, "Gender Trouble" 329.

<sup>74</sup>Butler, "Gender Trouble" 329.

<sup>75</sup>Butler, "Gender Trouble" 329.

<sup>76</sup>Butler, "Gender Trouble" 332.

<sup>77</sup>Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," *Feminism and Philosophy: Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation and Application*, eds. Nancy Tuana and Rosemarie Tong (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1995) 71.

<sup>78</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint" 71.

<sup>79</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint" 80.

<sup>80</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint" 81.

<sup>81</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint" 85-86.

<sup>82</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint " 74-75.

<sup>83</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 350.

<sup>84</sup>Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991) 142.

<sup>85</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 350-351, 355.

<sup>86</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 349.

<sup>87</sup>Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint" 84.

<sup>88</sup>Harding, *Whose Science?* 121.

<sup>89</sup>Harding, *Whose Science?* 10-12.

<sup>90</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 348. The specific standpoint theorists Hekman refers to in this passage are Nancy Hartsock, Dorothy Smith, Hilary Rose, Iris Young, Mary O'Brien, Alison Jaggar, and Jane Flax (in her earlier work). However, she does note that "other early formulations of feminist standpoint theory reflect this dichotomy between concepts and reality, specifically, the abstract world of men and the concrete world of women." (348)

<sup>91</sup>Hekman, "Truth and Method" 356-357, 358. For example, in "Comment on Heckman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Truth or Justice?", Nancy Hartsock draws out the similarities between the concepts of truth and subjectivity informing her feminist standpoint epistemology and Foucauldian theories of discursive power. Sandra Harding stresses that standpoint feminist theories "were constructed in opposition to the all-powerful dictates of rationalist/empiricist epistemologies and methodologies ("positivism")" as well as "interpretationist" accounts which were thought to be the only other option. She also admits that "at least this standpoint theorist thinks that feminist standpoint projects and the modernist discourses they used turned out to be on a collision course." Harding, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" 383.

<sup>92</sup>Gilligan 173-174.

<sup>93</sup>Harding, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" 382.

<sup>94</sup>Harding, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" 382. Hartsock, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" 370. As Rosemary Hennessy argues in *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*, these attempts by standpoint feminists to mitigate the problems of universalizing "woman" with theories of discourse are not always successful in establishing the relationship between women's lives as empirical referent and feminist knowledge as discourse (67-74). Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>95</sup>Hartsock, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method'" 272.

<sup>96</sup>Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations" 56.

<sup>97</sup>Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* 24-25.

## Chapter Three

### Theories of Location and Postmodernity in Feminist International Relations

Embodied experience and location are often used interchangeably in feminist discourse. As Mohanty explains, "location, for feminists, necessarily implies self- as well as collective definition, since meanings of the self are inextricably bound up with our understanding of collectives as social agents."<sup>1</sup> A common location can be substituted for a common gender in order to provide the collective identity necessary for articulating a self. Location is also a way of examining difference between women, and therefore can improve upon the category of women as established by feminist standpoint theories. Location has been considered a way for feminist theory to dislodge any universalist pretensions about the category of "woman". Feminist theories of location situate the categories of both women and location in historical, material circumstances, allowing one or the other to come to the fore depending upon the requirements of the political environment. Chandra Mohanty, for example, looks for "imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by *political* threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic."<sup>2</sup> These feminist theories insist that "it is not the experience of being woman, but the meanings attached to gender, race, class and age at various historical moments that is of strategic significance."<sup>3</sup>

Location is viewed by certain feminist theorists as a relevant axis of inquiry especially when they situate their work in the postmodern era. In their introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan make a case for the separation of the terms "postmodernism" and "postmodernity", stating that "the most compelling definitions or analyses of

postmodernism make a clear distinction between the aesthetic effects of postmodernism in contemporary culture and the historical situation of postmodernity. Therein lies the difference between the *ism* and the *ity* of the postmodern."<sup>4</sup> By postmodernity they mean a historical phase of late capitalism characterised by the spread of Western, modernist social forms through transnational capitalist integration, which emerge as "scattered hegemonies" when combined with local power formations in diverse sites.<sup>5</sup>

Postmodernism is "a critique of aesthetic movements in modernist traditions" with an emphasis on decentring the subject and challenging the certainties maintained by master narratives.<sup>6</sup> Grewal and Kaplan argue that feminisms may want to discard postmodernism as antithetic to feminist politics, but they insist that feminisms must acknowledge the effects postmodernity if they want to avoid universalising binary gender categories and feature differences between women.

Cynthia Enloe and Simona Sharoni are two feminists whose IR theories perform this distinction. They adopt a Foucauldian model of power/discourse formations to depict the terrain of global feminisms. Foucauldian feminisms theorise that identity and knowledge are effects of shifting networks of power, so that unlike modernist representational forms, they make no claim to universality or an omniscient perspective; instead, they emphasise the production of knowledge through various material locations. As a result, Foucauldian feminisms appeal to women to participate in the production of new feminist discourses - because power is fractured and shifting, feminist resistance must be, as well. This model highlights the local particularities of various categories of women and attempts to displace the representational inadequacies of their own (and any) feminist theory by urging women whose identities are obscured to speak out on their own behalf.

In effect, Foucauldian feminisms adopt the discourse of power/knowledge as a means of criticising the hegemonic power of Western, modernist discourses on identity and knowledge. They democratise the power of knowledge, providing multiple

resistances to women who cannot see themselves represented by the specificity of any one particular feminist analysis. It is in this sense that Grewal and Kaplan insist that feminists can produce a critique of modernity through the analysis of postmodernity, even without the more philosophical focus of postmodernism. However, a reading of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" suggests that theorists presuming that postmodernity is the context for the interpellated "others" who are called upon to provide evidence of difference to undermine the power effects of their theory can easily establish postmodernity as an all-encompassing location and the postmodern subject of desire as the ontological equivalent of the modern knowing subject. Feminisms like Enloe's and Sharoni's interpellate women "others" to destabilise the exclusionary effects of their own representations, and without an explanation that theories of the postmodern are themselves located as anti-ideological critiques of modernity, they ignore the effects of power that enable Western feminism to interpellate other women as contestants in an agonistic ontology. Enloe and Sharoni might avoid this problem by investigating their own positionality and their investments in the discourses of "othered" women.

### *Foucauldian feminisms*

Feminisms of location evoke the politics described by Foucault, who envisaged webs of power relations cutting across and through society at multiple points, and these unstable locations interacting with each other to create new power configurations.<sup>7</sup> Jana Sawicki claims that Foucault's notions of politics and change make "difference" a resource productive of resistances to power.<sup>8</sup> This politics is based upon the decentering of power and subjectivity. Foucault questions the idea of a foundational "binary and all-encompassing opposition" like those underlying the traditional political categories of "rulers and ruled," (or perhaps patriarchy and women).<sup>9</sup> He claims that "[t]here is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it."<sup>10</sup> As Sawicki points out, the consequence of Foucault's objection to models of

originary binary power relations is that "the notion of a subject of history, a single locus of resistance, is put into question."<sup>11</sup>

Foucault also rejects the oppositional configuration of "nature" and "culture" in which oppression is figured as some form of human contrivance imposed upon the natural state. The body, in Foucauldian theory, does not stand in for "nature" as it does in certain feminist theories; it instead represents the focal point, or site, for disciplinary knowledge practices and their attendant power relations.<sup>12</sup>

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals....The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.<sup>13</sup>

Foucault seeks to show how power, rather than simply naming the already-given, has a role in constructing materiality; for example, he wants to make visible the complex connections between technologies of power and biologism. Previous sociologists, he claims, made biological facts seem temporally prior to history, and therefore causal.<sup>14</sup> Others explained bodies and materiality only through our perceptions of them, thereby maintaining an idealist chasm between thought and the real.<sup>15</sup> His own approach is to show how what we perceive is itself a power which has been constructed, and which simultaneously constructs the objects of our perception, by particular desires. In the case of sexual difference, what we apprehend is shaped by a discourse desirous of controlling the means of reproducing life. Hence, gendered embodiment is made possible by the particularities of discourses on sexuality: "Is 'sex' really the anchorage point that supports the manifestations of sexuality, or is it not rather a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality?"<sup>16</sup> Foucault does not answer this question, but notes that "in any case, one could show how this idea of sex took form in the different strategies of

power and the definite role it played therein."<sup>17</sup> Foucault refuses to endow biological sex with originary status, or not, but makes clear that the fact of sex as an idea plays a significant role in the deployment of the sexualities he examines as discourses of power/knowledge.

Foucault claims that individuals are constituted through the relations of power which converge upon them. Processes of knowing are disciplinary practices and how we come to know ourselves and others is determined by knowledge conventions and discourses. Foucault's account of "confession" demonstrates how self-knowledge confers the desired status of self-conscious, autonomous subject, and yet how self-knowledge is unmistakably moulded by discourse.<sup>18</sup> He shows how confession has structured the Western subject's relation to truth, how the truths we confess appear to arise naturally from our individuality, providing signs of consciousness. However, the confessor's truth does not emerge complete, but must enter into the power relationship between himself and the listener; only the latter has the power to "interpret" and "verify" the confession as truth by bringing it into discourse.<sup>19</sup> "The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power."<sup>20</sup> In this way, authority becomes involved in the very production of one's self. Even the body signifies not through its substance, but through repetitive enactments which will be recognised in discourse as embodiment.

However, because particular discourses are the parts making up a field of mobile points, they are always open to transformation. Power being relational, its "existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance."<sup>21</sup> Resistances are everywhere in the field of power relations:

They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. Hence they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a

definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior.<sup>22</sup>

Subjectivities, written by multiple, shifting discourses, are thus themselves sites of traversing power relations. Individuals may at different times find themselves identifying with particular aspects of their subjectivity, positioning themselves strategically in relation to a specific power formation. It is the mobility of the points making up any subject that enables "difference" to increase resistances, and the fluidity of the relations of power that make mobile resistances necessary. Sawicki argues that "the practical implication of [Foucault's] model is that resistance must be carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations."<sup>23</sup> According to this politics, "difference" feminism is more effective than a feminism based on a unitary category of woman.

#### *Cynthia Enloe and Simona Sharoni*

Cynthia Enloe's work in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, and Simona Sharoni's work in "Middle East Politics Through Feminist Lenses: Toward Theorizing International Relations from Women's Struggles" represent feminisms influenced by Foucauldian ideas. They theorise women as multiple subjects, and allow that in various contexts different subject positions will be required for feminist politics. They also urge women to articulate their own subjectivities and political struggles by locating themselves as they see fit. Enloe's emphasis on a world-wide subject position "women" is validated through the discipline of International Relations, which is constituted through the gendered opposition of masculine and feminine. She also locates her analysis within Western feminist theory, which, as an oppositional discourse to hegemonic knowledges, attempts to diffuse the phallogocentric power of feminism by creating a feminism attentive to differences between women. Simona Sharoni exemplifies Foucauldian feminism on a smaller scale, taking the Israeli/Palestine conflict and Western and Middle Eastern

feminist discourses as the contexts within which to locate a category of women, and from there to decide what problems or oppressions should be privileged. While acknowledging that their feminist analyses are determined by and effective within their stated contexts, Enloe and Sharoni invoke the experiences of other women to displace the discourses they construct. In the absence of any acknowledgement that postmodernity is a temporal and spatial location itself, however, these feminism appear to posit an agonistic ontology where "woman" is inevitably fragmented and "woman's experience" pluralistic. By adopting "postmodernisms", or deconstructive techniques, in addition to genealogies of power/knowledge, location feminisms would be able to themselves undermine the moment of phallogentric representation, instead of asking that interpellated "woman-others" do it for them.

In *Bananas, Beaches & Bases*, Cynthia Enloe offers a feminist critique and a feminist politics of international relations. Keeping in mind post-structuralist warnings about the violence of universal categories, asymmetries of power, and consequently, the need to acknowledge the partiality of discourse due to multiple subjectivities, Enloe situates herself at the intersection of feminist theory and international relations, remaining aware of differences between women, but also aware of the similarities among them. Enloe shows how both differences and similarities are constructed materially through the practice of international politics, especially its implicitly gendered paradigm of domestic community and national interest resisting international anarchy. Her "sociology of women" helps to deconstruct this paradigm. Enloe is not interested so much in bringing women into international relations, but transforming the idea of the political in international relations to acknowledge that women are already there. As already discussed, post-structuralist insights into subjectivity converge with feminist theory, giving rise to a debate over the need for, but the problems with, universalising women as a category, and the necessity of rooting identities in material circumstances to avoid an apolitical theory of "difference". Feminist International Relations theory needs to

carefully negotiate the pitfalls of identity politics; claims about world-wide feminist sisterhood can become a form of Western imperialism,<sup>24</sup> and yet to ignore global ties between women in an effort to let the differences between them speak can result in a relativising oppositional politics that in its own way ignores the material conditions of women's lives. Kaplan also argues that the latter is a kind of "aestheticized post-modern 'play' of difference" that ignores the asymmetries of power involved in differences between women, and their historical production.<sup>25</sup> She argues instead for "connections between women based on the material histories of their differences."<sup>26</sup>

Enloe is mindful of this debate, and does a sociology of women based on their links to the international system.<sup>27</sup> She historicises both masculine and feminine as they are used in international politics, and the associated terms that go along with each. By historicise, I mean that Enloe wants to demonstrate how social categories are constructed through specific relations of power- specific to particular conjunctions of time and place. In this respect she is using a genealogical analysis in which theory is contiguous with power relations and their material forms.

Taking as her object of analysis the domestic society vs. international anarchy paradigm of international relations, with its emphasis on domestic security amid the imminent danger of the international field and its consequent valorisation of masculinity, Enloe analyses the ways in which the feminine is constructed politically in this same international relations paradigm in order to uphold it. Just as the Cartesian subject is gendered, so is the state, since state sovereignty replicates the process of subjectification that founds the rational individual. The body is thought to contain the subject, and be subjected to its rationality. The gendering of international relations occurs (at least) twice, repeating the dichotomy between mind and matter. Within the state there is a gendered distinction between the nation and the state, with the nation as the material or body of the state being associated with the feminine, and the state, as ruler of the body as in the Cartesian subject, being masculine.<sup>28</sup> Also, the state as an ethical and reasonable

unit analogous to a Cartesian individual, is represented as masculine, in contrast to the international domain which is depicted as unpredictable and chaotic, or feminine.<sup>29</sup> The needs of the state are determined by this paradigm: since its moral order depends upon sovereignty and control, its task is to protect itself from the anarchy found outside the state.

The defensive model of international relations and the supposed need for masculinity in the international environment are the starting points for Enloe's critique. She claims that assumptions about dangers and threats to domestic security help to justify the assumption that characteristics attributed to masculinity are required in international relations. Enloe points out how "the current international system pits men against each other so often that their only congenial common ground is a shared notion of masculinity," though she claims that it is an insecure one that needs some idea of "the feminine" to uphold it: "Marines, diplomats, corporate managers and military dictators may mostly be male, but they tend to need the feminine 'other' to maintain their self-assurance."<sup>30</sup> She also claims that gendered assumptions about state sovereignty result in the practical association of domestic society with women:

To accept the Cold War interpretation of living in a "dangerous" world also confirms the segregation of politics into national and international. The national political arena is dominated by men but allows women some select access; the international political arena is a sphere for men only, or for those rare women who can successfully play at being men, or at least not shake masculine presumptions.<sup>31</sup>

Enloe explains how women's concerns in international relations are treated as domestic issues, privatised and individualised: "it has almost become a cliché to say that the world is shrinking, that state boundaries are porous. We persist, none the less, in discussing personal power relationships as if they were contained by sovereign states."<sup>32</sup> In showing how this general privatisation of women helps to uphold the politics of international relations, Enloe legitimates her "sociology."

By positing a community of women in the international system, Enloe blurs the distinction between international and domestic, and their associations with masculine and feminine. This move enables her to criticise both the notions of International Relations and the state as they are constituted through each other. For example, she argues that international power structures have helped to create a global community of women. Her discussion of base women shows how the militarisation of the world, through networks of alliances that operate as though the world were one market, creates a community for women that goes beyond domestic spaces. Her analysis also challenges the association of women with the nation and "national interest" by asserting their ambivalence as members of the security state and questioning whether the usual definitions of "danger" and "security" make sense in terms of women's lives. And she undoes the public/private distinction that makes some actions political and others not. For example, she claims that women's choices as tourists and as consumers are political acts that have the potential to either uphold existing world inequalities or to change them. In other words, the construction of inside and outside, private and public are shown to be political acts in themselves.

In this sense, Enloe offers a feminist politics, based on her claim that "women are not just the objects of... power, not merely passive puppets or victims."<sup>33</sup> She shows how women have the ability to reinforce the oppression of other women who differ from them in nationality, class, or race. She argues that women's commonalities in international relations are not enough "to suggest that all women everywhere are willing to see other women as allies rather than as competitors or strangers."<sup>34</sup>

"Difference" can be less than helpful for feminism. Ideas about what is feminine and what isn't, for example, are patriarchal ascriptions that help to divide women. For instance, Enloe shows how imbuing ideas of femininity with images of Western, middle-class whiteness makes the feminine ideal an impossible goal for many women. Similarly, she demonstrates how maintaining a hierarchy of differences between men on the basis of

nationality or race helps to keep asymmetries of power in place. Sawicki also acknowledges that differences are slippery, noting that they can entrench division or improve feminist categories. Sawicki claims that because differences can be volatile, women themselves must make feminist use of them: "[i]f we are not the ones to give voice to them, then history suggests that they will continue to be either misnamed and distorted, or simply reduced to silence."<sup>35</sup>

Using a similar argument, Enloe claims that undoing "those confining notions of femininity" that have been constructed by patriarchy will be "a key to remaking the world."<sup>36</sup> Finding women's voices, Enloe suggests, is how the reconstruction can begin: "Making feminist sense of international politics, therefore, may compel us to dismantle the wall that often separates theory from practice....Every time a woman explains how her government is trying to control her fears, her hopes and her labor...a theory is being made."<sup>37</sup> She urges women to think about how the international is implicated in their lives, how "the personal is political" and how "the political is personal." She emphasises respect for diversity and difference, and a politics based on women's local needs with an awareness of how they are implicated in the international.

Taking up an approach similar to Cynthia Enloe's, Simona Sharoni in "Middle East Politics Through Feminist Lenses: Toward Theorizing International Relations from Women's Struggles," advises Israeli and Palestinian feminists to name their own communities and struggles even if (or especially if) they do not align with the dominant representations of Middle East politics or Middle East women. Sharoni explains that the purpose of her writing is to provide an alternative "location" from which to theorise Middle East politics, one that challenges categories and stereotypes given by the dominant discourses on the Middle East.<sup>38</sup> To that end, she sorts through the interwoven identities constructed for Middle Eastern women, and evaluates how their gender has been manipulated for nationalist, internationalist, and feminist purposes. In particular, Sharoni points to instances of women's intervention in the politics of the region that have

been hidden by hegemonic representations attempting to reinforce either nationalist rhetoric or Western interests.

Sharoni locates herself and the Middle Eastern women she studies in the contexts of American hegemony in international relations, Middle Eastern nationalisms, and Western and Israeli feminisms. She insists that "Middle Eastern women" is a constructed category: "discourses of struggles cannot be fully understood in isolation from the time, place, and sociopolitical structures that inform them; they are shaped and transformed within networks and alliances."<sup>39</sup> The particular category "Middle Eastern woman", for example, is produced by the interaction of orientalist, sexist, and nationalist stereotypes of women in the Middle East. These stereotypes operate together in Western scholarship and media to establish the Middle East as "other" by contrasting Western and Middle Eastern cultures. By imposing the Western model of separate and distinct public and private spheres on the Middle East, and comparing Occidental women with Middle Eastern women, Western discourses then represent Middle Eastern women as oppressed in relation to women in the West, effectively erasing instances of their political activism and resistance. On the other hand, the West represents Israeli women as liberated because, Sharoni says, they must serve in the military, which Western discourse classifies as a masculine sphere, and because their image sharply contrasts with that of "veiled Arab women." This image of Israeli women, however, belies the fact that their voices are rarely heard unless they support the national status quo.<sup>40</sup>

Sharoni goes on to show how Western representations of women's oppression by Middle Eastern culture serve to obscure the ways in which the integration of the Middle East into Western-dominated institutions creates different problems for women living there: Algeria's acquiescence to International Monetary Fund policies has meant higher unemployment, housing shortages, fewer subsidies for basic needs, and cuts in health care. Nevertheless, in order to prevent economic hardship from encouraging an anti-

American fundamentalism, Western policies and media have picked up the discourse of "democracy, human rights, and women's rights."<sup>41</sup>

Sharoni also notes, however, that Middle Eastern feminists fight certain shared stereotypes in regional discourses. For example, Palestinian and Israeli women are constructed through nationalist discourses as "fighters" or "mothers of the nation."<sup>42</sup> While nationalist rhetoric can upset imperialist representations, they are less useful for feminist purposes. Sharoni claims that her own subject position- Israeli feminist- is articulated against nationalist ideas of Israeli identity, because being "feminist" enjoins her to work with feminists across borders, even within the Middle East.<sup>43</sup>

Sharoni's genealogy of Middle Eastern women indicates that feminist work in the Middle East must work with and between nationalist and imperialist discourses, and with an understanding of national, regional, and international power networks. Her method involves three moves: situating oneself and one's research in the social and political context of the work, analysing work already done on the same subject, and hearing women's understandings of their lives so that their experiences can provide "new questions and conceptual frameworks."<sup>44</sup> The contradiction between ethically responsible feminism and the impossibility of neutral theorising has led Sharoni to endorse "a new genre in feminist critique" that produces "self-reflexive and explicitly political academic projects that are grounded in the sociopolitical context that they seek to change."<sup>45</sup>

Sharoni is aware of the power of "knowledge production" by academic discourse, admitting that it is impossible to write impartial scholarship on Middle East politics and women in the Middle East, and consequently insisting on the need to produce research that reflects and responds to the needs of the people researched.<sup>46</sup> Sharoni also locates herself, informing readers of her identity as an educated Israeli woman who defies Israeli nationalism through feminist solidarity with other Middle Eastern women. Significantly,

Sharoni acknowledges that she is privileged in being able to voice her perspective, an option unavailable to many women in the Middle East.

It is also significant that Sharoni realises that the women "others" interpellated by Western feminism might have their own agendas when speaking in the spaces we allow. Sharoni gives the example of Julie Peteet's study of Palestinian women, which found that the women participants intended to engage in international politics by relating their own stories to "the West" through Peteet's ethnographic research. Understanding the agency of women invited to speak leads Sharoni to claim that "scholars and researchers...have a responsibility to listen closely, grasp the messages, and deliver them to their audiences as they constantly ask themselves if and how women...can benefit from such projects."<sup>47</sup> She cautions that inviting women "others" to speak requires sensitivity to their own agency, intention, and subjectivity. Yet, as Nahla Abdo remarks, there is nothing "inherently unethical or immoral in the concept 'outsider'," and to prohibit "outsiders" from theorising "insiders'" identities authorises *someone* to decide where the boundaries separating insiders from outsiders should be drawn.<sup>48</sup>

### *Postmodernity as a cultural context*

The questions raised by my reading of Cynthia Enloe and Simona Sharoni surround the relationships between power and knowledge in feminist discourse, and the interpellation of female "others" as a requirement of Western feminist scholarship. In this section I will examine the assumed foundations from which Enloe and Sharoni are able to propose a network of affiliated relations mutually engaged in struggles for power. I will also maintain that postmodern foundations (without postmodernisms) hinder self-reflexive contextualisation and may reproduce the transcendent subject, and its attendant identity/difference paradigm, through the decentred subject. A feminist theory that both interpellates an "other" female subject and wants to hear the truth of her voice would do better to reveal its own location as the condition making such an interpellation possible.

There is a popular notion in feminist theorisings of international relations that the "ism" postmodernism is destructive to the task of liberating women because it destroys the possibility of the subject, but that feminists can safely theorise post-modernity because it agrees with a feminist theme of basing one's research in the material experience of feminist subjects. Grewal and Kaplan, for example, argue that postmodernism is primarily an aesthetic movement used as an oppositional critique of modernity that remains within it, and can easily replicate the homogenising universals of modernity by universalising or relativising difference.<sup>49</sup> They claim that postmodernisms are often used without attention to historicity and the needs of praxis, which is why postmodernisms have been rejected by some feminisms. And, while some threads of feminism can choose to disavow "postmodernisms", studies of postmodernity are needed to provide feminists with heterogeneous and interactive models that upset modernist narratives. Grewal and Kaplan state that they advocate feminism and welcome its "possibilities for political work within post-modern cultures that encompass, though very differently, contemporary global relations."<sup>50</sup> In other words, Grewal and Kaplan assume, in the course of their theorisation of postmodernity, the incorporation of the world into a global conversation.

However, feminisms of postmodernity without postmodernisms also replicate homogenising universals, beginning with their assertion that we live in postmodernity. It claims to speak on behalf of women in one of their locations, global postmodernity, but sees no difficulty in allowing differently-located women to speak as well. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak addresses this problem in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" As framed by Spivak, postmodernisms and postmodernity must be contextualised through an analysis of Western ideologies, the interpretive grid these ideologies provide for the Western intellectual, and the intellectual's ability to interpellate the subaltern through this interpretive grid. As Spivak shows, it is dangerous for theorists to allocate places in their discussions under the guise of letting the "other" speak for herself. It is to assume that the

"other" is situated in the discussion prior to their interpellation, and to assume therefore that the discussion does not need to be contextualised itself. Thus transcendentalised, the post-modern "location" produces closure where Spivak believes one might instead open intertexts between ideology and discourse.

Spivak begins by noting that Foucauldian philosophies unwittingly attempt to conserve the "subject of the West, or the West as Subject."<sup>51</sup> These theories, in their attempt to decentre the individual, or fracture the subject, actually disguise the "inauguration" of another subject, which is another subject of the West in the form of the split subject. The roots of its investiture are in Foucauldians' failure to, first, locate their object of critique, the sovereign subject, in Western narratives, and second, to note that its "death" is another Western phenomenon.

The underlying issue concerns assertions that the term "postmodernity" marks only temporal boundaries, separating itself primarily from the modern era of unproblematic sovereignty, rationalism, Cartesian subjecthood, and oppositional ideological critiques. Spivak exposes the latter concepts as both temporally and spatially located, being discourses of the modern West. As an oppositional critique of Western modernity, postmodernity is also located there. Spivak claims, for example, that with capitalism as the vector of Western intellectual productions, capitalism's territorial expansion brought the globalisation of Western ideologies. Capitalist imperialism is followed by the discourses of "law, political economy, and ideology," which are narratives of Western history.<sup>52</sup> Western narratives, universalised by economic expansion, enable the western subject to disappear- the globalised political economy is no longer a Western narrative, but a universal, or at least global, phenomenon. The subjects of these narratives, and their locations, are concealed by their ubiquity. When other parts of the world and other peoples are interpreted through the lens of these narratives, they are appropriated as objects of Western discourse. Insofar as they adopt the narratives

(and can be incorporated into the economic system) these non-Western others become subjects of the West.

By way of example Spivak shows that in the case of India, to find a subaltern historiography, colonialist elites' narratives and "bourgeois-nationalist" accounts of Indian history must first be identified.<sup>53</sup> This is because "certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other."<sup>54</sup> In addition, the already-defined of India, those elites privileged by proximity to Western discourses, provide the only link the historiographer has to the subaltern group:

In subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms [recovering a subaltern historiography] must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences. The object of...investigation...is a *deviation* from an *ideal*- the people or subaltern- which is defined as a difference from the elite.<sup>55</sup>

In order to reclaim the place of the subaltern in Indian historiography, historians must examine their own discourse, and "rewrite its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility."<sup>56</sup> As Spivak notes, this procedure of recovering the knowledges of the Other is very different from "the self-diagnosed transparency of the first-world radical intellectual."<sup>57</sup> It foregrounds the pervasive Western influence even upon our ability to think of the "others" that both Western and non-Western academics would like to recover. Spivak says "for the 'true' subaltern group..., identity is its difference."<sup>58</sup>

The pervasive Western influence is what Spivak calls ideology. Ideology has been criticised by Foucauldian theory for suggesting a crude, deterministic, and seamless form of power. It does have a place in Foucauldian webs of discourse, however, as it may appear as one of the strands of power and resistance. For Spivak, however, ideology is something which must "philosophically subtend" the pronouncement of discursive

reality (or the thinking of history or culture).<sup>59</sup> This is not to say that ideology temporally precedes postmodernity, only that postmodernity entails it:

We want to see the individual consciousness as a crucial part of the effect of being a subject, which is itself a part of a much larger structure, one which is socio-political, politico-economic, psycho-sexual. Now all of these elements are discontinuous with each other so that you can't easily translate the one to the other. But, nonetheless, all of these things are organised as narratives which reflect a sort of weave of presence and absence. As a result of this, you lose the confidence of *having* something which is *causing* something or *controlling* something. And from this point of view the question what is that whole thing, the whole network, no longer remains pertinent except in the context of the universalizing subject of knowledge."<sup>60</sup>

Spivak finds the play between these discontinuous elements to be fertile. For example, she reads Marx as having underdetermined the relationship between consciousness and "the role of the economic," and having thereby produced "powerful moments of bafflement that one can work at."<sup>61</sup>

To demonstrate how these moments are useful in defying closure, Spivak discusses the difference between two senses of representation: representation as proxy, and representation as trope. These two are complicit, she argues, in that they form an "identity-in-difference": the proxy's presence implies the absent trope. The "place of practice" is in between these two, in the uncertain link between being-in-discourse and being-in-ideology.<sup>62</sup> The proxy is the representation of identity, and gives identity presence through its presentation. The proxy itself, however, is trope. It engages a politics by participating in the discourse in which the interests of identity are pronounced: "The event of representation as *Vertretung* (in the constellation of rhetoric as persuasion) behaves like a *Darstellung* (or rhetoric-as-trope), taking its place in the gap between the formation of a (descriptive) class and the nonformation of a transformative class."<sup>63</sup>

The enactment of a proxy for the class identity makes apparent the disjuncture between the descriptive class and the transformative class. The proxy embodies the trope and suggests the futurity (or the current absence) of the transformative class. However, the consciousness of the descriptive class (represented by the proxy) "is strategic, artificial, and second-level consciousness."<sup>64</sup> It is the staging of identity in discursive practice, responding to a political need. "What we *call* culture [or ideology]... may be shorthand for an unacknowledged system of representations that allows you a *self*-representation that you believe is true."<sup>65</sup>

Spivak argues that Foucauldians, insofar as they ignore the generative difference between ideology and textual practice, make textual critique into an totalising, formulaic model.<sup>66</sup> They are "obliged" to dispute the possibility of a mechanistic ideology construed as a binary opposition between unified power and unified resistance- unless it is incorporated into the Foucauldian web as one of the many powers and resistances- but paradoxically, they are "equally obliged" to produce a mechanistic opposition between "interest" (derived from ideology) and "desire" (the power giving rise to discursive or textual enactments).<sup>67</sup> Interest, for Spivak, denotes the social realm, while desire marks the subjective. The Foucauldian alternative to ideological sociality is a reproduced modern subject operating through the constitutive contradictions universal/particular in the guise of "desire". Foucauldians, Spivak says, "align themselves with bourgeois sociologists who fill the place of ideology with a continuous 'unconscious' or a parasubjective 'culture'."<sup>68</sup> She finds them unaware that desire, as facilitator of both self and other, is itself experienced through the lens of awareness, the sociality or "interest", which Spivak variously refers to as ideology or culture.

Western representations of the subaltern, for example, do not function to speak for the interests of the subaltern; they serve to enable the interpellating intellectual to form an image of, a representation of, him or her self.<sup>69</sup> This, for Spivak, is the use of Western invocations of the other, and the motive which must be revealed: "What can the

intellectual do toward the texts of the oppressed? Represent them and analyze them, disclosing one's own positionality for other communities in power."<sup>70</sup> Spivak also claims that ultimately such critiques of Foucauldian practice would ensure that the very production of the West through imperialist ideologies would be foregrounded, and consequently Western discourses, about power and the other, for example, would be located and contextualised. Spivak recommends that instead of Foucauldian "invocations of the *authenticity* of the Other" through attempts to recover its voice, Western intellectuals should attempt to understand "the *mechanics* of the constitution of the other" through deconstruction.<sup>71</sup>

Spivak appears, then, to have inverted Grewal and Kaplan's argument that post-modernisms lead feminisms into transcendent abstractions while post-modernity can ground feminisms in discursive locations.<sup>72</sup> She has shown that there is a tendency in Foucauldian theories to globalise post-modernity, efface its roots in Western ideology, and effectively reproduce the transcendent modern subject in the decentred subject of desire. The Foucauldian stance toward the subaltern is evident in the connection between Western "location-feminist" discourses (related through opposition to Western ideology), and "third world" women, whose participation as subjects in fractured feminist discourses is required to authenticate the multiplicity of the latter.

Chandra Mohanty gives the example of the proliferation of autobiographies by Third World women in American feminist theory. She claims that these provide "evidence of diversity" in American feminism.<sup>73</sup> By observing that feminist writing is structured by particular market forces, she suggests that this proof of diversity is the use or production of Third World feminist struggles by and for Western feminists.<sup>74</sup> Foucault himself claims that autobiographical narratives have the same implication in power relations as the confession,<sup>75</sup> which suggests we should consider how and why some feminist projects construct "different" women as speaking subjects. It may be illuminating to ask, as Spivak suggests, what privilege enables authors to "give" non-

Western women room to speak. More specifically, what privileges enable Enloe and Sharoni to make space for the experiences of women-others in their projects of decentering International Relations from dominance in theorising the global? What cultural values have Enloe and Sharoni imported into their feminist theories of international relations?

### *Conclusion*

As already noted, Enloe and Sharoni locate themselves intertextually between international relations theory and practice, feminist theories, and in Sharoni's case, Middle Eastern nationalisms and feminisms. In terms of Grewal's and Kaplan's distinction between post-modernisms and post-modernity, Enloe's analysis is situated in globalised Western post-modernity: she writes against the dichotomous gender categories constitutive of International Relations, but she also writes to displace the universalised feminist subjects that have been criticised by contemporary North American feminisms. Throughout *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, Enloe remains aware of the power of interpretation: she emphasises how women as a category are constructed discursively, and with material effects, through International Relations theory and practice. Her genealogical analysis of International Relations theory shows how particular formulations of inverse genders are foundational to the discipline, and how certain disciplinary concepts such as security, may be destabilised by juxtaposing International Relation's constitutive genders with those generated in other locales. Some of the women interpellated by Enloe may be able to join the global conversation, as Enloe requests, like those Filipino women whose options are critically shaped by the movements of American military bases. These women may have the opportunity to articulate their interests as women in the international arena, and may be able to decentre that identity by reminding us that, as women of the Philippines, they have to negotiate local politics, as well.

However, by failing to situate her own writing within global postmodernity, Enloe erases the possibility of potential identities situated outside of it.

Although never explicitly stated, Sharoni's desire for feminist difference is similarly shaped by the demands of Western feminisms which would like to contest hegemonic, modernist discourses, including International Relations theories:

By turning the diverse and complex life stories of Palestinian, Israeli, and other women in the Middle East and elsewhere into locations from which international politics could be engaged and theorized, one not only challenges stereotypical depictions, but also responds to the need for new and innovative theorizing in IR and in related fields.<sup>76</sup>

The kinds of innovation required by these fields are the kinds demanded by global postmodernity. Even though Sharoni exposes the power relations inherent in dominant Western representations of Middle Eastern women, the discourses used to dislodge them arise also from globalised Western modernity. The perspective from which Sharoni views Middle Eastern women's struggles brings to mind postmodernity's demands for the decentring of hegemonic (ideological) interpretations and the Western feminist strategy of displacing national identities by asserting women's solidarity. Absent from her perspective is the possibility that some Middle Eastern women may constitute a "subaltern" group, in the sense of constituting the "impossibility" enabling Sharoni's theory. For example, Sharoni does not identify regional economic dependency as a major force influencing the subjectivities of women in the Middle East, nor does she locate Muslim fundamentalisms as a significant factor.<sup>77</sup> These are, possibly, two elements which could render postmodernity's requirements irrelevant and preclude the possibility of certain Middle Eastern women relating new struggles for Western feminist discourse.

Neither Enloe nor Sharoni situate their own analyses within the context of globalised Western ideologies, so they can only assume that their offer of decentred subjectivities is of value to the women-others they address. Both believe that the women named can speak in voices they can understand, and that these women can interpret the

invitations extended to them. Enloe's and Sharoni's feminisms appear to rest on a Foucauldian "agonistic" notion that "[s]ince struggle is continual and the idea of a power-free society is an abstraction, those who struggle must never grow complacent."<sup>78</sup> This would explain why Enloe and Sharoni urge women to persist with the struggle by articulating new, or at least different struggles. In this Enloe and Sharoni appear to adopt a Foucauldian idea that genealogy is resistance- a way of giving "voice to the marginal and submerged voices which lie 'a little beneath history'" - a way of producing new subjectivities to contest the subjectivities given by hegemonic discourses.<sup>79</sup>

In order for Enloe and Sharoni to decentre international relations, a global "woman" is necessary, but also, in order to meet the demands of Western feminist theory, "difference" between these global women must be demonstrated. This is why they urge women to speak: women must to continue to struggle, to prevent even well-meaning Western feminists' efforts from becoming entrenched. In other words, women *must* reply in order to legitimise Enloe's and Sharoni's power and knowledge as equitable, as demanded by Western feminisms, and as ethical, as delineated by Foucault's distinction between power and violence.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, unless Western feminist theorists have considered the ideological context of their relation to the woman-other, the reply cannot exonerate them.

The politics of interpellation does not end once difference is acknowledged: as Spivak demonstrates, alterity must be recovered meticulously from ideology (or identity) *and* difference. It is important that Western feminists, like Sharoni and Enloe, learn to acknowledge their privilege as their loss,<sup>81</sup> so that they recognise that interpellated "others" may be silenced by their discourse. What Spivak's critique of Foucauldian analysis does for Enloe's and Sharoni's view of women in International Relations is remind us that "the West"- even globalised Western post-modernity- is context and must be examined as such.

Genealogy would show that Enloe and Sharoni theorise from places that are thoroughly imbued with relations of power. This, however, is not an "error" that feminisms should (or could) avoid. Spivak, for example, stresses that we must make mistakes in grounding, or staging errors, at the outset if we are able to write at all. At the same time, however, she acknowledges "catachresis at the origin."<sup>82</sup> It may be useful to avoid the closure that comes from universalised contexts by thinking as if "feminist practice is the expression of women's ontological desire,"<sup>83</sup> and not a series of ontological truths about women in various space/time locations. Seen this way, the women in international relations that Enloe and Sharoni describe, and the women they encourage to speak of their own experiences, are still in process. Their feminist representations of women's interests (originating in postmodernity's critique of ideology) could then be seen as representing "women's" possible futurity as they interact with local discourses. As the site of practice, they could be assertions leading to a new socio-economic and political world in which the feminine can become.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters" 88-89.

<sup>2</sup>Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 4.

<sup>3</sup>Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters" 86.

<sup>4</sup>Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity," *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, eds Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 4.

<sup>5</sup>Grewal and Kaplan 7.

<sup>6</sup>Grewal and Kaplan 21-22.

<sup>7</sup>Michel Foucault, *An Introduction*, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 96.

<sup>8</sup>Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 28.

<sup>9</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 94.

<sup>10</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 101-102.

<sup>11</sup>Sawicki 24.

<sup>12</sup>Judith Butler argues that Foucault enacts the body as a site or surface for historical agency. She is critical of his "logocentrism" in what she views as his inscriptive history, and argues that despite his attempts to displace the opposition between the body and the agency of history, he failed. She concludes that Foucault's insistence upon a bifurcated "act" of construction and "object" of construction ends up undermining his useful suggestion that bodies have no ontological existence apart from the discourses which name them. Judith Butler, "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions," *Journal of Philosophy* 86.11 (November 1989): 601-607.

<sup>13</sup>Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 98.

<sup>14</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 152.

<sup>15</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 152.

<sup>16</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 152.

<sup>17</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 152.

<sup>18</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 58-59.

<sup>19</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 66-67.

<sup>20</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 58-59.

<sup>21</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 95.

<sup>22</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 96.

<sup>23</sup>Sawicki 23.

<sup>24</sup>Grewal and Kaplan 17.

<sup>25</sup>Caren Kaplan, "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Practice," *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, eds Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 150.

<sup>26</sup>Kaplan 150.

<sup>27</sup>Enloe 5.

<sup>28</sup>Campbell 91.

<sup>29</sup>Campbell 238.

<sup>30</sup>Enloe 114, 133.

<sup>31</sup>Enloe 13.

<sup>32</sup>Enloe 196.

<sup>33</sup>Enloe 198.

<sup>34</sup>Enloe 175.

<sup>35</sup>Sawicki 32.

<sup>36</sup>Enloe 16-17.

<sup>37</sup>Enloe 201.

<sup>38</sup>Sharoni 7.

<sup>39</sup>Sharoni 18.

<sup>40</sup>Sharoni 15.

<sup>41</sup>Sharoni 12-13.

<sup>42</sup>Sharoni 12, 15.

<sup>43</sup>Sharoni 10.

<sup>44</sup>Sharoni 7.

<sup>45</sup>Sharoni 10.

<sup>46</sup>Sharoni 8, 10.

<sup>47</sup>Sharoni 11.

<sup>48</sup>Nahla Abdo, "Middle East Politics Through Feminist Lenses: Negotiating the Terms of Solidarity," *Alternatives* 18.4 (Winter 1993): 35.

<sup>49</sup>Grewal and Kaplan 4.

<sup>50</sup>Grewal and Kaplan 8-9, 4, 2.

<sup>51</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 271.

<sup>52</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 271.

<sup>53</sup>Ranjit Guha qtd. in Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 283.

<sup>54</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 284.

<sup>55</sup>Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 285.

<sup>56</sup>Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 285.

<sup>57</sup>Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 285.

<sup>58</sup>Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 285.

<sup>59</sup>Spivak, "Acting Bits, Identity Talk," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Summer 1992): 775. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation," *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 54.

<sup>60</sup>Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" 51.

<sup>61</sup>Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" 55

<sup>62</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 277.

<sup>63</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 277. Spivak defines *darstellen* as representation as "tropology" or "portrait" and *vertreten* as representation suggesting "persuasion", "substitution", or "proxy". "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 276.

<sup>64</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 278.

<sup>65</sup>Spivak, "Acting Bits, Identity Talk" 785.

<sup>66</sup>This is not necessarily the same criticism she makes of Foucault himself, though she stresses that these problems can be found in the work of those influenced by Foucault's writings. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 274; "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" 56.

<sup>67</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 274.

<sup>68</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 274.

<sup>69</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 289.

<sup>70</sup>Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" 56.

<sup>71</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 291, 294.

<sup>72</sup>Kaplan, in "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice" argues that "examining the politics of location in the production and reception of theory can turn the terms of inquiry from desiring, inviting, and granting space to others to becoming accountable for one's own investments in cultural metaphors and values" (139). This contradicts, however, her privileging of global postmodernity as a location from which to theorise.

<sup>73</sup>Mohanty, "Introduction" 33.

<sup>74</sup>Mohanty, "Introduction" 34.

<sup>75</sup>Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 63.

<sup>76</sup>Sharoni 16.

<sup>77</sup>Abdo 30.

<sup>78</sup>Sawicki 27-28.

<sup>79</sup>Sawicki 28.

<sup>80</sup>Foucault contrasts power with domination or violence, since power requires two "free" subjects in relation; the corollary is that there are also relations of domination and violence which involve subjects of unequal power. Monique Deveaux "Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault," *Feminist Studies* 20.2 (summer 1994): 233-234. Jana Sawicki explains that Foucault's notion of freedom denotes a negative freedom: "'Freedom' in Foucault's politics consisted of a 'constant attempt at self dis-engagement and self-invention'". We are free in being able to question and reevaluate our inherited identities and values, and to challenge received interpretations of them ( 101). The Foucauldian notion of discursive freedom has significant implications for Foucauldian feminisms. For example, for the subaltern woman, whom Spivak considers in "Can the Subaltern Speak", the possibility of questioning received identities appears remote, since she has not yet been brought into the identity she is to refute. In this sense, the Western feminist's relation to the subaltern woman is one of asymmetrical power in which the subaltern woman has no freedom from the interpellation of Western discourse.

<sup>81</sup>The idea of unlearning privilege as loss is from Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990): 9.

<sup>82</sup>Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 308.

<sup>83</sup>Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 166. Rosi Braidotti also discusses the idea that feminism expresses the feminine subject's desire for being throughout her article "Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject," *Hypatia* 8.1 (Winter 1993).

<sup>84</sup>Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 251.

## Chapter Four

### The Problem of Incommensurable Identity Paradigms in Feminist International Relations

For Spivak, one of the best things about French feminisms is their ability to pursue two feminist objectives at the same time. She claims that the "best of French feminism" implies a "double program": "*against* sexism, where women unite as a biologically oppressed caste; and *for* feminism, where human beings train to prepare for a transformation of consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Sexism, the heterogeneous object against which feminism is organised, defines the categories of feminist critique. The positive moment in French feminism, or the horizon to which feminisms look for the possibility of different futures, suggests the disposition it will take towards the structure of thought that enables both sexism and the feminist critique of it. The feminist subject can take on the task of challenging sexism, as a substantial, persistent subject takes on its object in a traditional oppositional figuration, and can interpret this oppositional work in such a way that we recognise the dichotomy between the "given to be seen" and the actual (or future) feminist subject.<sup>2</sup>

The feminist "double program" is an approach to the agency/structure problem that circumvents the categorisation of feminisms into "standpoint" and "postmodern" on the basis of only their notions of agency; poststructuralist feminisms do not need to be enriched with standpoint theory in order to maintain a subject or a notion of agency. The poststructuralist feminist's dual focus maintains the separateness of the projects of both standpoint and poststructuralist feminisms, the former providing an oppositional alternative to social arrangements or discourses that privilege an unproblematised "man," and the latter destabilising representational structures as phallogentric. To that end, the debate which frequently animates feminist IR thinking, and feminist thinking in general -

the difficulty of choosing between standpoint and postmodern approaches, or sometimes, the stalemate between agency and non-identity - is a red herring which obstructs useful feminist activity; that is, activity focused on working against sexism in theory/practice.

However, the tension between these two strands of feminism, standpoint and postmodern or poststructuralist, is a persistent theme in feminist theory, including Nalini Persram's "Politicizing the Feminine, Globalizing the Feminist" and Christine Sylvester's *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*. Persram concludes that the opposition is a false one. She claims that the dichotomy between the need for an all-encompassing feminist subject and the actual diversity of women can be reconciled by deconstructing Western feminism and Western concepts of woman and reconstructing a feminism which works for "universality or globality not *over* difference and heterogeneity, but *through* it," in a method she calls "radical situatedness."<sup>3</sup> Sylvester maintains that by keeping a foot in each camp, a feminist can have the best of both. Standpoint feminism enables feminism to retain a subject, and postmodern feminism prevents that subject from becoming an entrenched, transcendent subject by introducing partiality and mobility.

The problems framing Persram's and Sylvester's arguments are themselves symptoms of the phallocentrism which has structured Western concepts of identity and agency, and which has also positioned woman as a subordinate category in need of feminism to address imbalances of power. The modernist discourse of identity structures identity as partaking of both particularistic and universal qualities. Its relation to universality guarantees that identity will provide epistemological and ontological certainty, and therefore knowledges and moral awareness. Refusing universalism in this formation leads to relativism. Nihilism comes from refusing the modernist structure of identity altogether, leaving no guarantee of unity, knowledge or morality. Obviously, both of these threats emanate from within the category of identity itself, and Persram's and Sylvester's references to these problems as difficulties in constructing a feminist

subject through standpoint or postmodern feminisms indicate that their arguments have been shaped by the criteria demanded by modernist identities. The fact that both of them fear the deconstruction of phallogentrism enables a reading of their work as reproducing the "owlish" view from nowhere of universalising theory.

I will argue that in contrast, feminist poststructuralism recognises the necessity of allowing the object of analysis to determine the parameters of analysis (whether the category Woman is required, multiple women, or other permutations of the feminist subject). Feminisms concerned with the problematic nature of modernist identity - like Persram's and Sylvester's - need to focus on the dichotomies of phallogentrism as an object of analysis separate from the examination of various forms of sexism which requires the construction of a category of woman. As feminists writing against the backdrop of modernist categories of IR, they need to accept the irreconcilable, oppositional dualisms of identity and stand in opposition to them by accepting the partiality and contradictions of their own analyses and critiques as situated practices. Situating their own analyses in terms of opposition to the modernism of IR would accentuate their locatedness and undermine their own apparently sovereign discourse. It would be more difficult to read them as striving for the perfect feminist subject if their own partiality were foregrounded through awareness of their own implications in phallogentric representation. It would help to make clear that the partial and mobile subjectivities they espouse are the result of their own perspectives - without diminishing the value of their analysis as feminist practice.

### *The "double program" of poststructuralist feminism*

While much of feminisms' attention is taken up by the problem of how to reconcile the contradiction between feminist difference and feminist agency, Spivak is proclaiming the productivity of the "double program" in French feminism; in essence, the uses of exploiting these irreconcilable differences. The "double program" can be

explained using the two senses of representation discussed earlier. Spivak identifies two forms of representation: representation as stand-in, or political representation, and representation as depiction. The crucial terrain, for Spivak, is in between these two, where what is made present through proxy and what is depicted come to crisis in their non-identity. The proxy, in defining the interests of those she is standing in for, must also represent in the other sense: she must depict her constituency through existing languages.<sup>4</sup>

Using these two senses of representation as examples, Spivak demonstrates how various discontinuous narratives help to constitute our identities. The feminist, for example, defines herself as feminist and necessarily imitates the discourse of the sovereign subject. When she then says that she is representing, as in speaking up for, other feminists, it may easily be forgotten that the issue of phallogentric representation has entered the debate. What must be remembered, Spivak says, is that in speaking up for others, the feminist (who is first of all depicting herself) is describing both the category of feminist and the category of woman - those she would like to stand for in the political instance given by the strand of discourse she is countering.<sup>5</sup>

Spivak has referred to the grounding mistake also as "strategic essentialism."

This is an essentialist moment which Spivak claims can be put to use.

The relationship between the two kinds of representation brings in, also, the use of essentialism because no representation can take place - no *Vertretung*, representation - without essentialism. What it has to take into account is that the "essence" that is being represented is representation of the other kind, *Darstellung*.<sup>6</sup>

This is essentialism which maintains the separateness of the two senses of representation, and for that reason, leaves open the possibility that the duplicity of the essences will unsettle each other. However, Spivak refuses to privilege either a "self-conscious" or "unself-conscious" use of essentialism,<sup>7</sup> because invoking nonclosure as a principle in itself entails closure.

Elsewhere Spivak has referred to this "grounding mistake" or "essentialism" as a staging of identity. The stage is the master discourse, the culture or ideology, and the identity is a category to put on, one that doesn't truly fit: it is "the approximate size, a hand-me-down, to others who must stage the same collective origin as yourself," and to those who staged it before you.<sup>8</sup> The identity the master discourse(s) gives, then, fails identity as it gives one; as representation, it has no referent. Spivak further demonstrates this by examining the roots of the word identity. She traces the roots to Latin and Sanskrit words meaning copy, repetition and many, and argues that to confuse this meaning with the sense of singular, or particular, is another example of how identity politics fudge the concepts of identity, consciousness and interests. In fact, identities are produced as copies of something articulated in culture. They are repetitions of cultural ideas.

The part of this that feminisms need to regain, especially those focused on the problems of identity and agency, is the ability to sanction commitments that is enabled by this view. The moment of theorising or acting requires a grounding mistake as positioning, as the place from which one gets the premises upon which to act. For the intellectual, Spivak says, the difficulty of combining activism and theoreticism is overcome with the "double session," since neither theory nor commitments must be sacrificed; in fact, mastery, containment and completion are the only things that must be foregone. "In a crisis" (in the moment of action) the disjuncture between the analysis and the ideology analysed is highlighted (it brings them to crisis). Analysis is set aside from action as a discontinuous element, a different action in itself, and performance is role provided by a narrative distinct from analysis, since one knows that the categories into which one steps to take action do not (necessarily) coincide with those provided by the analytical act:

In a crisis, no hand is clean. Analysis is action there, performance is art. One does not speak of art there as a specific terrain, and does not mention

the possibility that rights as written by Law are not "experienced" as such by an individual-in-identity, but rather animate an abstract agent-in-experience.<sup>9</sup>

Spivak describes the form of this difference in terms of the "short-haul/long-haul," saying there is an "important difference and relationship" between joining together for the "body count" and the more long-term effort to counter the master narratives.<sup>10</sup>

Spivak notes that even feminisms' aspirations to be both things leads, often, to dissension,<sup>11</sup> because without acceptance of partiality and nonclosure, these feminisms feel obliged to privilege one over the other. What the "double program" can do for feminism is sanction it to do both at once, and consequently, to accept that its hands aren't clean. Spivak believes that this is actually where the debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism should take place, these two forms of representation being the true source of conflict.<sup>12</sup> Failure to understand and accept discontinuity, she argues, will create division among the critical or "radical" theorists which can be exploited by the hegemonic narratives: "Unless there is this understanding, there will be divisiveness in the radical camp. Crisis management in the global economy will, in fact, act according to these productive interruptions, and we, on the other side, like stupid fools will take the interruptions as divisive positions so we are at each other's throats."<sup>13</sup> Dissonance is not necessarily divisive for feminisms, and more specifically, the dissonance which comes from simultaneously sustaining the different criteria of modernist and poststructuralist approaches does not have to be fatal for feminisms.

### *Framing the problem of feminist identity*

Two feminist IR authors who agree with Spivak on this last point are Nalini Persram and Christine Sylvester. Both recognise the necessary multiplicity of feminist struggles, since fighting many-sided sexism with a monolithic feminism will not work. Both also struggle with the related dichotomies surrounding establishing woman as a

category and political agent, and deconstructing the category of woman to avoid false universalism but at the expense of maintaining any feminist politics. These dualities lead to the perceived difficulty of choosing between feminisms which dissolve the subject statuses of women and men and abandon the aspirations that other feminisms have for women in their efforts to decentre authoritative subjects and their narratives, or feminisms which entrench women's identities to a point which can become uncomfortable for those wearing them, but allows for political action on behalf of those identities. As Sylvester asks: "must we chose between identity and resistance to identity?"<sup>14</sup> Or as Persram asks: "is my route to empowerment via the retrieval or generation of the value of my femininity...[or] is the way to equality...through the contestation of the closure of sex/sexuality/gender?"<sup>15</sup>

Nalini Persram focuses on two related sets of dualisms which occur regularly in feminist thought. These are agency versus non-identity and practice versus theory. Her argument is that these are not real dichotomies,<sup>16</sup> and that in fact the "Woman/women schism" is "reconciled" in her essay by employing both a feminism which deconstructs Western philosophical categories of "woman" and western feminist methods, and a feminism which reconstructs women's identities according to floating historical and cultural determinants and the varied political needs arising from them.<sup>17</sup>

Persram begins by examining the constant tension in feminist theory between embracing a feminine identity and avoiding paralysing essentialism. She explains that biological essentialism - which posits a direct connection between feminine traits and female biological characteristics - is no longer the issue it once was in feminism. She claims that now essentialism results mostly from reducing the category of woman to the various explanations of how that category arose. This reductionism has the same political effects as biological essentialism: that is, by definitively explaining what the category of woman is, it inhibits political action intended to open up both the category and the options available to real women. The instances of reductionism that Persram focuses on

are the cultural feminist "relativism" which derives from the attempt to recognise every diversity and particularity of woman as a category (in reaction to the "universalism" which results from Western feminisms notion of a singular category of woman), and the poststructuralist feminist "nihilism" which is the result of the deconstructive denial of feminine subjects and feminine qualities, except as discursive components of masculine projections. Both of these, she argues, avoid essentialism by eliminating feminine difference. They prevent women from taking shelter in feminine stereotypes and from thereby preserving the oppression associated with them.<sup>18</sup> However, she also mourns the loss of agency that comes from sustaining a positive identity through which women can take action on behalf of the group constituted identity "woman".

Cultural feminisms respond to the (once) hegemonic Western feminist understanding of the category of woman as being opposite to the Western, Enlightenment man<sup>19</sup> by attempting to fracture its cultural origins and enable visions of women from other cultures to be included in the feminist discourse. The underlying imperative driving cultural feminisms is the equal distribution of power (as discourse). This means that each culturally-derived feminist category of woman is equally plausible to any other: "there is, ultimately, no philosophical means by which one may choose one over the other in regard to justice or politics," and that "leaves the cultural feminist approach caught in a politically conservative and ineffectual relativism."<sup>20</sup> Persram also says that cultural feminisms "essentialize female differences."<sup>21</sup>

Persram notes that while cultural feminisms are able to construct subjects which adhere to their criteria of multiplicity and representational non-violence, they leave intact notions of autonomous subjectivity and the unquestioned authority of subjective experience.<sup>22</sup> The result may be relativism, the situation where each individual's subjective universe exists as distinctly, uniquely and legitimately as any other's, or a kind of melting pot "stew", where liberal individualism is retained but enacted through distinct cultural groups.<sup>23</sup> Either way, there is very little left of the notion of woman as a

positive, common identity. Persram therefore concludes that by not addressing the underlying paradigms that set general and particular identities into nullifying opposition, cultural feminisms do not make political gains.

In Persram's assessment, poststructuralist feminisms also react to the hegemony of Western categories, but in this instance it is the category of the sovereign subject, and particularly its gender, that is in question. Poststructuralist feminisms analyse identity categories using deconstruction, a process of showing how categories define themselves by what they exclude and how they are therefore dependent upon and even comprised of the excluded. Poststructuralist feminisms deconstruct the category of man to show that woman is in actuality its underside, resulting in the conclusion that woman is not a positive category and does not exist except as the unacknowledged and banished extension of the masculine category. Persram says that poststructuralist feminisms "make strange" the qualities and categories assigned to women at various places and times, viewing them as constraints which deconstruction can unfasten by exposing their instability and immateriality.<sup>24</sup> However, Persram's criticism of poststructuralist feminisms concludes that they are unsuitable for feminist practise, because "the philosophical preciousness of difference in this approach often seem[s] to outweigh the structural politics of subjectivity," and its "focus on 'the temporary, fluctuating character of identity' can undermine any 'positive identities' women may construct for themselves."<sup>25</sup>

Christine Sylvester, in *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*, also focuses on standpoint/cultural and postmodern feminist theories. Like Persram, she classifies various feminisms and their uses, beginning with feminist empiricism and liberal feminism. These two, she concludes, attempt to point out the inadequacies of the scientific method and liberal individualism respectively, because these discourses cannot accept women's difference as something that needs to be taken into account when hypothesising or offering equal opportunities. Empiricist and liberal

feminism unsettle both discourses through their critiques, but Sylvester concludes that these feminisms are nonetheless constrained by their efforts to rehabilitate these discourses: "Political liberals in general, echoing some scientists, believe that the generically rational human has particularities of 'race, class, and gender [that] are ultimately irrelevant to questions of justice because 'underneath we are all the same'".<sup>26</sup> These are the male-defined parameters of empiricism and liberalism, and feminist attempts to incorporate women, Sylvester says, are "compensatory" rather than "transformational."<sup>27</sup>

Because women fit so awkwardly into modernity's discourses and concepts - discrediting notions of scientific objectivity and universalised humanism by their very presence - Sylvester argues that feminisms are "situated" as postmodern, even if they are not "postmodernist."<sup>28</sup> They belong to the postmodern era of uncertainty in knowledge, explanation and interpretation. The postmodern era, as Sylvester defines it, is

a time of simultaneous struggles, of storms with many centres unfolding on many fronts at once....This stream of messy, contradictory incoherences with several overlapping and semi-permanent fronts means that no one is fully in charge or entirely successful in installing a new program, project, theory...and no struggling centre loses absolutely....It is not so much where 'women' are located and which causes they espouse (or others assign to them) in this era as the ways in which their cross-cutting struggles mobilize their subjectivities and rescript aspects of their identity while contributing to a general subversion of modern expectations and rules.<sup>29</sup>

Rescripting identities is one of Sylvester's most significant objectives. Rejecting unproblematised modernist identities and the unproblematised category of woman in empiricist and liberal feminist theories, she intends to "homestead" identities as a way of grounding herself and her politics while remaining aware that the identities of others may have been affected by her taking of that place, that it is not the only place she inhabits, and that the movements of others' identities may cause her own ground to shift. Her emphasis on simultaneously grounding her theory in politics and remaining open to

possible disturbances of that ground translates into a feminist theory, which she calls postmodern feminism,<sup>30</sup> that integrates elements of standpoint, postmodern and socialist feminist theories. Like Persram, Sylvester chooses multivectoral feminisms because of her concern to referee the dualisms of agency and non-identity, practice and theory. She intends to mediate standpoint feminisms' too deeply-rooted category of woman and the supposed evaporation of the real brought about by "feminist postmodernism", while also refusing to inherit the hegemonic narratives of modernity that would require a feminist subject to be either all or nothing.

The particular "standpoint feminism" Sylvester adopts and hyphenates with postmodern and socialist feminisms resembles Persram's cultural feminism in several key respects. It involves reaping the insights coming from those with minority identities, recognising that they can point out the blind spots of discourses sponsored by those inhabiting dominant subjectivities, and also simply offer alternative views. It also recognises that the standpoints of women, and other minorities, cannot be generalised and made to fit a universalised category of "the subjugated":

From feminist standpoint thinking of all kinds come particularistic lessons on how to tap the "potentiality in the actuality" of different tasks. There are valuable lessons here on theorizing more generally from the lives of a variety of outsiders within, whether or not the touchstone is women's lives only and whether or not those lives are consistent with one another (which, given class, race and imperialism in the world seems very unlikely).<sup>31</sup>

Conversely, Sylvester mentions the need to recognise that the identities of those in positions of cultural dominance cannot be characterised as monolithic, either.<sup>32</sup>

Sylvester's standpoint feminism recognises all these things, but at the same time allows that there are material women, third world "others", working class men, and many more inhabiting subjugated identities who in various ways experience inequalities of power in their everyday lives and who need a politics in which they can correct these inequities.

She summarises that

Tensions and controversies in feminist standpoint epistemology notwithstanding, the approach makes us aware of people called women as agents of knowledge and theory. It draws attention to the incompleteness and failure of objectivity in any project that purports to be generalizable while giving voice and agency only to a privileged few.... Moreover, it does not require us to think in terms of abstract "individuals" who have no characteristics in life except rationality and the drive to be free of involuntary obligations.<sup>33</sup>

Like Persram, Sylvester concedes the possibility of relativism with proliferating cultural-standpoint feminist identities.<sup>34</sup> She also recognises standpoint tendencies to posit "truths" that can be discovered with proper "attunement" to one's identity, to therefore seek authenticity in identities, and to suggest that because subjugated knowledges are less distorted than hegemonic ones, "if we won a war of epistemologies we would be the new hegemons of social order."<sup>35</sup> These tendencies replicate the problems with dominant modern narratives, and they are what lead Sylvester to investigate feminist postmodernism.

Feminist postmodernism, Sylvester says, is derivative of French poststructuralism, which uses deconstruction to question the authority of established modern categories, such as the self as sovereign individual, and focuses on language as the medium establishing phallocentrism and, hence, the means through which to subvert it.<sup>36</sup> Poststructuralist feminists "see sexual difference constituting itself discursively through inscribed meanings... [and] the feminine [as] that which is repressed, misrepresented in the discourses of Western culture and thought."<sup>37</sup> Sylvester acknowledges the feminist poststructural impulse to dismantle the certainties and prescriptive truths of modern ideologies, yet she implies that as part of poststructuralism in general, it is itself "an emergent ideology" that demands loyalty from its adherents.<sup>38</sup> She also fears that in deconstructing, or making uncertain the idea of either man or woman as a place from which to speak or act, feminist poststructuralism may lead feminism to discard its visionary elements - which are crucial for feminism in that they

present the images of things to strive for, the possibility of a different future.<sup>39</sup> In abandoning the concept of woman, Sylvester argues, feminist poststructuralists may also abandon the knowledges women's standpoints provide, their awarenesses about the nature of patriarchal hegemony and how to help women make real-life changes for the better:

To reject gender as another oppressive and oppressing social construct is all well and good on an abstract intellectual level. In practice, it means erasing people who do not agree with our interpretation of gender as the futile, the fleeting, or the fatuous. And out with those people...go many possibilities for empathetic forms of cooperation with difference. "Women" can be erased once again and homesteads can be built once more by those with "delusions of purity - delusions that are particularly galling (and self-contradictory) when they claim to be 'beyond' dualisms and hierarchical thinking."<sup>40</sup>

In short, Sylvester shares Persram's view that rather than opposing the dualisms themselves, poststructuralist feminism - or Sylvester's feminist postmodernism - falls squarely on the "non-identity" and "theory" sides of the agency versus non-identity and practice versus theory dichotomies.<sup>41</sup>

While both Persram and Sylvester criticise feminist poststructuralism as inherently dangerous because they claim it denies the possibility of a feminist subject, their own solutions to the problem of feminist politics and women's agency sound very similar to Spivak's notion that women's identity must be used politically but simultaneously undermined as being problematic. Their proposed solutions to the problem of reconciling feminine identity and agency with feminist attempts to avoid essentialism involve merging standpoint/cultural feminisms and poststructuralist feminisms. For example, in "African and Western Feminism: World-Travelling the Tendencies and Possibilities," Sylvester paraphrases Elspeth Probyn's suggestion that unless the investigating subject becomes open to transformation through its relation to the object of study, then it risks being a form of "feminist tourism" in which the Western feminist self-importantly assigns identities and interests to the women she investigates.<sup>42</sup>

Here Sylvester also quotes Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", and asks whether the subaltern can be free of Western-imposed otherness.<sup>43</sup> There are tendencies in Sylvester's writing to stress the virtues of fragmented subject positions in the abstract; in other words, to suggest that subjective multiplicity is an end in itself as a solution to feminist problems of constructing feminist subjects. For example, she writes that

A "multiple-voiced subjectivity"...makes us less amenable to arguments about "experiential foundationalism" and more open to the possibility that any one experience can hide the other realities of our lives. If we hope to theorize "women," we must realize that there is no necessary "life" that any one of us inhabits. "Women" is shred to bits and this cancels out "the" subject, but not necessarily subjects with multiple and mobile (transversing) subjectivities."<sup>44</sup>

Yet before anyone can suggest that she is constructing an ontology of fractured feminist subjects with her focus on clashing feminist standpoints and stories, Sylvester goes on to state that

In this moment people are called upon to be politically active as a social and intellectual response to diffusion and splitting; else the spoils could indeed go to those who fancy themselves at home in the turmoil....We have overemphasized deconstruction and underemphasized the importance of conceptualizing methods that revision' the world as coding trickster *with whom we must learn to converse*!"<sup>45</sup>

The "postmodern feminism" Sylvester adopts as her strategy is a hyphenation of standpoint knowledges and poststructuralist scepticism about absolute knowledge claims and objectivity:

Postmodern feminism assumes a (probably ongoing) process of identity slippage that leads to simultaneous and changing homesteading strategies. Moreover, although postmodern feminism recognizes that positivism is not necessarily "the" enemy of feminists, it is not content with feminist empiricist methods. Nor, by the same token, is it enamored with the commonplace deconstructive task of levelling subject statuses on principle. It is postmodernism with a standpoint bent.<sup>46</sup>

Combining the elements of openness to the object under investigation, of political commitment as the key to grounding feminisms amidst fragmentation, of situated knowledge and the simultaneous questioning of the status of knowledge, Sylvester achieves a balance between the dual purposes that Spivak finds most useful in French feminisms.

This dual strategy is also evident in Sylvester's survey of IR and the diverse critical feminist IR literature. In showing how various feminist subjects (represented by Sylvester in terms of the type of feminism employed) are appropriate to the critique of various concepts in theories of IR, Sylvester demonstrates the context-based anti-feminism that Spivak has suggested. For example, the first debate in IR which established the field as a struggle between claims of idealists or realists is countered, Sylvester demonstrates, by liberal feminists who challenge women's exclusion from both realist and idealist discourses of IR on the basis of women's equality with men.<sup>47</sup> However, she also documents how object-relations theories of gender development can destabilise the claims of liberal individualism as inherently masculinist constructs, thereby questioning the basis of liberal feminist claims.<sup>48</sup> Sylvester insists that there are insights to be had from all types of feminist analysis and the feminist subjectivities that go with them,<sup>49</sup> although she is quick to point out their shortcomings, too. She also indicates that her postmodern feminism might be determined through its relation to the object of analysis, mainstream theories of IR:

Postmodern feminism can usefully raise "strange" questions about stories we have accepted about "his" world that deny "us" agency in IR. Who indeed is ontologically "him" and how does "he" connect with "our" notion of IR? How do "we" write IR without encrusting an artificial "our" selves within theory and practice? If "we" are indeed hyphenated, then do not the voices of "we" comprise a cacophonous anarchy against which to judge the ordered anarchy of the "anarchic" international system?<sup>50</sup>

Nalini Persram has also chosen a dual-purpose feminist practice to investigate the possibilities for feminist re-writings of IR. In her effort to conceptualise a "*critical* feminist theory of international relations,"<sup>51</sup> she draws upon Chandra Mohanty's arguments about the exclusivity of Western feminism to deconstruct the feminist subject, and upon Kumkum Sangari's and Sudesh Vaid's attempts to theorize women's positivity through material locations. The historiographers Sangari and Vaid, Persram says, are able to construct appropriate feminist subjects by "structurally identifying women as historico-cultural subjects, and expanding the category of woman to include race, class, and nation without positing a conception of fixed identities which nevertheless are constituted by these intersecting dynamics."<sup>52</sup> Persram claims that this enables multiple identifications which can shift "according to different material circumstances, and to the political imperatives that accommodate these changes."<sup>53</sup> Persram suggests that Sangari and Vaid's analytical practice does not disintegrate into pluralistic relativism because they are aware that "no one discourse of historiography has the ethicopolitical legitimacy to represent the totality...the concept of 'totality' should be understood not as a pregiven horizon but as the necessary and inevitable 'effect' or function of the many positions (and their particular-universal ideologies) that constitute the total field."<sup>54</sup> "The category of gender is thereby understood to be an empirical point of origin, thus allowing for a specifically feminist project, but it is not subject to closure; nor, therefore, is it subject to any deterministic politics."<sup>55</sup> The variations on women's identity ensure that change in the category of woman will continue to occur and theorising renew itself on that basis.

Mohanty agrees that feminisms need to investigate the social conditions through which particular understandings of the category of woman are produced, but she also contributes to Persram's analysis the idea that the discursive construct of "woman" does not have to be, and should not be, conflated with "the universalistic proof and instantiation of this category".<sup>56</sup> Persram develops this idea as part of her critique of

feminist poststructuralism, which she argues has a tendency to repeat the reductionism that is the substance of any form of essentialism:

Just as primordial essentialism collapsed biological sex into notions of femininity and masculinity, and cultural feminisms sometimes reduced the multiplicity of identity into a pluralism of finitudes, so the nihilism of the poststructuralist project is revealed to come only at the price of representational reductionism. The tendency in some poststructuralist analyses to deconstruct women out of existence, thereby removing the central subjects and objects of feminist theorizing, thus represents the greatest achievement of closure for feminist conceptions of agency.<sup>57</sup>

The source of the poststructuralist problem, she argues, is in its conflation of the discursive category of woman with real women. Here Persram acknowledges that feminisms must address the patriarchal structures of representation if they are going to be able to avoid conflating women with their images - something I have identified as a property of feminist poststructuralist analysis - but she does not indicate that this should be a feature of feminisms other than poststructuralist theories which, she says, conflate their discourses with the real. However, Persram claims Sangari and Vaid speak "both representationally and post-representationally,"<sup>58</sup> suggesting that they distance themselves from the discourse of representational politics even as they use it. Persram herself states that

the politics of interpretation are a fundamental part of understanding the dynamics of social and political change....How we view the world is incredibly significant to how we live in the world, and although the realm of the symbolic is not the only critical space for intervention, how we understand the categories of "woman", the female, the feminine, and the feminist is crucial to whether or not we materially remain in them.<sup>59</sup>

While I have concluded that Persram and Sylvester take similar approaches to the problem of women's agency and the feminist subject's need to address problems of essentialism, Persram reads Sylvester's project as quite different from her own. Persram does not see any "radical theorisation" of feminist subjectivity in Sylvester's postmodern

feminism, and claims instead that Sylvester's work wavers ambiguously between the problems of feminist agency and essentialised women. One specific criticism Persram makes concerns Sylvester's use of object-relations psychoanalytic theory to counter the social contract theory underlying conventional conceptualisation of civil society. Sylvester, drawing on Carole Pateman's arguments, suggests that sexual difference permeates notions of the political because women's subjugation by men prior to the social contract became naturalised through the repetition of relations inscribed by social contract theory.<sup>60</sup> Persram claims that by positing a category of women in the state of nature prior to the social contract, Sylvester specifies the context "after the fact," and as such constructs an identity "based on universalistic, ahistorical categories" that attempt to explain the "origin of the various oppressions women face."<sup>61</sup> While Persram acknowledges that this type of argument can expose gender bias in supposedly neutral categories, such as the individual, she claims that Sylvester repeats the false universalising of women's identity and source of oppression that non-Western women have criticised because, she says, Sylvester does not point out the inadequacy of the approach.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to Persram, I likened this aspect of Sylvester's argument to Spivak's "for feminism" phase, when the feminist subject authorised by the theory is determined by the political trope taken up. I disagree with Persram's evaluation of Sylvester in this respect, and argue that far from ignoring "specific and variable social and material conditions,"<sup>63</sup> Sylvester has appropriately located social contract theory as a particular moment in Western social theory that has a great deal of currency in the categories of IR. As an oppositional "anti-sexist" form of critique, Sylvester's and Pateman's alternative narrative of the social contract can expose the gender implications of a supposedly gender-neutral paradigm. I agree, however, that Sylvester's case would be strengthened by explicitly specifying the context against which she is writing, and reminding us of the phallogentrism inherent in the representation she offers.

Persram also comments on Sylvester's emphasis on multiple standpoints, and suggests that Sylvester sees maintaining fluid subjectivities as a cause more important in itself than the various political causes the fragmented subjects espouse.<sup>64</sup> Persram concludes of Sylvester's overall argument that

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that, by showing the complexities of a particular subjectivity, and by celebrating and insisting on the way this complexity allows for political agency, Sylvester assumes that her analysis has radically theorized these concepts. Moreover, this radical subjectivity has implications bordering on notions of autonomy that are very much associated with modernist understandings of freedom and the individual.<sup>65</sup>

Having seen that Sylvester understands and acknowledges the problems with the binary categories that structure identity politics, it is difficult to maintain that she falls into those traps. It is easy to read Sylvester's argument this way nevertheless. Her frequent suggestions that the feminist subject should be multiple and shifting - in the absence of any explicitly noted context<sup>66</sup> - can imply that she is constructing an essentialising ontology of fragmented subjects. In fact, this ambiguity Persram finds in Sylvester's work between deconstructions of the feminist subject and the attempt to construct an unproblematic alternative, is also detectable in her own. For example, Persram implies that a feminist theory of IR, such as the one she is working towards, should draw upon "the experiences of all women" and she states that

the women referred to include all historically and culturally written figures of women as collected into one gendered description of identity. It is an identity comprised of many speaking subjects who, in making themselves heard from vastly different sites and through a variety of constitutions, and in asserting their subjectivities in multiple, contingent, but very real ways, continue to undermine the Western category of "woman" as the hegemonic source for ontological and epistemological understandings of gender relations.<sup>67</sup>

Persram and Sylvester may be read as attempting to avoid making a "grounding mistake" by outlining all the requirements for feminist subjectivity and feminist IR - but

the grounding mistake is what determines the political stand taken and the catachrestic identity assumed. By focusing on the problem of how to construct an unproblematic feminist identity, Persram and Sylvester can be read as reproducing a foundational claim to an ontologically split feminist subject, and therefore the narrative drive toward the transcendental, all-encompassing theory that Western feminisms, including theirs, have tried to avoid. I believe their arguments about the necessity to avoid poststructuralist "nihilism" enables this type of reading, and creates confusion when attempting to evaluate the ability of their revised feminist theories of IR to theorize women's agency without succumbing to the pitfalls of identity politics. This approach implicitly commits to upholding the modernist form of identity politics, and the ontology of the fractured feminist subject legitimates their feminist claims. This criticism coincides with Persram's claim that the "attempt to operate from the bases of two explicitly incommensurable paradigms" - standpoint and postmodern - or to "oscillate between concentrating on women and refusing gender categories" in fact sustains phallogentrism within feminist theory and leaves its terms of debate fixed on problems of subjectivity that ultimately make feminisms choose between thinking or acting,<sup>68</sup> rather than politicising both thinking and acting as distinct strands against which feminisms can simultaneously construct and deconstruct necessary feminist subjects.

### *Contrasting incommensurable paradigms*

While there are some perplexing questions that could be raised about Persram's and Sylvester's readings of feminist poststructuralism, their suspicions surrounding the deconstruction of the feminist subject help to reveal that the criteria for identity politics are influencing their inquiries and have framed their arguments so that maintaining an appropriate feminist identity and epistemology is one of their primary concerns. The nihilism they suspect is at the end of feminist poststructuralist deconstructions of the category of woman betrays their adherence to modernist formulations of identity that are

bound up with the dichotomous relation between particular and universal. If relativism, which both Sylvester and Persram find in standpoint or cultural feminisms, is simply the absence of any universal or absolute,<sup>69</sup> then nihilism is a normative expression of fear of the inverse that is generated by the presence of the dichotomy of universal and particular: the absence of any universal/particular binary of identity and the epistemology and ontology that would flow from it. While standpoint or cultural feminisms adhere to the standards of modernist identity categories, and therefore the criticism of relativism is meaningful to those approaches, feminist poststructuralism is defined in an oppositional relation to the entire problem of reconciling particularity with universality and the charges of relativism or nihilism that can accompany it. Feminist poststructuralism, then, is incommensurable with the regulations governing modernist identity. As Jane Flax explains, "each discourse has its own distinctive set of rules or procedures that govern the production of what is to count as a meaningful or truthful statement...The rules of a discourse enable us to make certain sorts of statements and to make truth claims, but the same rules force us to remain within the system and to make only those statements that conform to these rules."<sup>70</sup>

By refusing poststructuralist feminism on the grounds that it fails to conform to standards set by identity politics, Persram and Sylvester lose an opportunity to highlight the "for feminism" phase of their feminist politics, in which phallogocentric structures are condemned by feminism as structures of domination and the possibility of new representational forms are suggested through feminist critiques. Persram and Sylvester commit to meeting the parameters of identity politics because they have constructed their arguments as part of its discourse. The result is that while Persram and Sylvester can posit various feminist subjects as determined by particular instances of sexism, they are hindered in their critique of the second stage of representation, the feminist critique of phallogocentrism as it operates in representational structures. Poststructuralist feminisms, on the other hand, can focus on two instances of sexism - in this case, conventional IR

theory and its categories, and phallogentric discourses of representation - and by constructing oppositional figures for each of them, it can simultaneously enable feminist agency while destabilising the categories of identity through which agency is authorised.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler argues that identity politics is an inappropriate foundation for Western feminisms whose premises are given in part by problems of exclusivity and attention to diversity. She begins by claiming that "*politics and representation are controversial terms*": "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 either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women."<sup>71</sup> Politics demands the representational form, which feminisms have also found to be political. She argues, tracing the operations of logocentrism, that the subject in representation is produced by the modernist discourse of identity as being prior to that discourse and its representation. The subject therefore acts to guarantee that discourse as it is produced by it. Discourses of identity can therefore only recognise knowing subjects as those produced by the discourse: "The domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended."<sup>72</sup> As already shown, various feminisms have rejected these qualifications, whether because they falsely universalise women into a single category, or because they construct "woman" as man's negative and leave women with no positivity.

Having criticised essentialising categories of women as they have been proposed in the succession of feminist approaches, many feminists attempt to "seek wider representation"<sup>73</sup> for the feminist subject. This is another attempt to overcome the problems of identity politics through reformulated identities. Butler says these attempts,

as well as attempts to construct "strategic" identities for feminist politics, are contradictory in that these representations have foundational claims that can themselves lead to "charges of gross misrepresentation."<sup>74</sup> However, poststructuralist feminisms take action to deconstruct identity politics even as they participate in them. As Butler argues, "It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought."<sup>75</sup> Butler, like Spivak, acknowledges that there is no place outside of representational structures from which to think or speak, but suggests that "[t]he identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation. Perhaps, paradoxically, 'representation' will be shown to make sense for feminism only when the subject of 'women' is nowhere presumed."<sup>76</sup>

An examination of the second register of representation in Spivak's "double program" can show how feminist poststructuralism imposes its own limit on both feminist and poststructuralist critique, and how it subverts the contradictions posed by feminine subjectivity. As explained, the first register of representation involves assuming an oppositional identity that will enable feminism to counter specific instances of sexism. The second register of representation follows from the first, and means that the identity assumed has taken the form of the sovereign subject and identity with others in the logocentric formation. Feminist poststructuralism rejects the logocentric position because it sets up a violent relation of hierarchy and opposition between the subject and any others, and between the subject and any objects it knows, which many feminisms would argue are unacceptable feminist practice. To further distance themselves from modernist identity and representational epistemology, poststructuralist feminism delineates how the feminine is produced as the negation of both the subject and its other,

how the binary coherence of either the subject/object or masculine/feminine dichotomies is predicated on the exclusion of the other-feminine as the ground or absence of representation. Feminist poststructuralist critiques of phallogentrism provide the "anti-sexist" opposition to modernist discourses of representation and are a necessary part of the "double program" Spivak has outlined.

The feminist critique of phallogentrism is best understood as both a critical and transformative process by which notions of woman as masculine projections of difference are disputed and feminine subjectivity is envisioned:

Women's thinking is always oriented towards creation, in several ways at once: whether it looks to the past, to recover cultural traditions and ways of knowing by women that have not been preserved by mainstream culture, or whether it aims at illuminating a present that women often experience as conflictual and contradictory, in feminist thought critique and invention progress together.<sup>77</sup>

Rosi Braidotti argues that because poststructuralist feminisms central point is that phallogentrism establishes the knowing subject by excluding its Other, they cannot subvert phallogentrism by reversing its terms. Poststructuralist feminisms have therefore adopted "a methodology" and "a political strategy" that does "a different reading of women's otherness, a radical redefinition of difference away from domination and subordination."<sup>78</sup>

Modernist subjectivity is the object which defines the parameters for poststructuralist feminism. The poststructuralist feminist narrative of phallogentric representation as built upon the exclusion of both the woman as other and the woman as absence of representation determines feminisms' role as confronting "linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being."<sup>79</sup> As "post" modern practice, however, poststructuralist feminisms can neither wholly accept nor refuse modernist habits of positing sovereign subjects, making truth claims, and using symbolic language predicated on women's erasure. To wholly refuse would, after all, duplicate the

modernist tendency toward narrative closure. Uncertainty is the "stand" given to poststructuralist feminism by its object of critique, which has already colonised certitude in its various forms. Uncertainty requires poststructuralist feminisms to take stands and take responsibility for imperfect and ultimately political choices.<sup>80</sup> Spivak explains that "deconstruction...is the critical moment, the reminder of catachresis, the reminder of the politics of the open end, or of the politics of great-narrative, depending on what the moment asks for, the reminder of the fact that any really 'loving' political practice must fall a prey to its own critique."<sup>81</sup>

While all of these feminist approaches struggle with the same contradiction and all of them want to destabilise the philosophical discourse that relegates identity to a choice between modernist identity or modernist nihilism, feminist poststructuralism is the only approach that is able, because it abandons the criteria of identity politics and challenges the phallogentrism which structures the dualisms of identity and non-identity. Their rejection of feminist poststructuralism on the basis of nihilism suggests that Sylvester and Persram are drawing upon modernist identity categories in their attempts to subvert those very same categories. Persram and Sylvester, by grounding their politics in the problematic of feminist identity, may be read as privileging one side of the duality, making fractured identities foundational much like those Foucauldian feminist IR theorists discussed earlier. Persram and Sylvester need to foreground their own locations as oppositionally related to the modernist discourse of hegemonic IR as the site which enables them to adopt poststructuralism as a critique of representational structures even while they posit various feminist subjects as oppositional, anti-sexist examples of the gendered core of the discipline.

<sup>1</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame", in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988) 144.

<sup>2</sup>Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked*, (London: Routledge, 1992) 148-149.

<sup>3</sup>Persram, "Politicizing the Féminine, Globalizing the Feminist," *Alternatives* 19 (1994): 291, 292.

<sup>4</sup>Here I mean language in the sense of "the syntax or grammar of culture or society....an articulated communication system." This is Margaret Whitford's explanation of Irigaray's use of the term language in *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 46.

<sup>5</sup>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 108-109.

<sup>6</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 109.

<sup>7</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 109.

<sup>8</sup>Spivak, "Acting Bits, Identity Talk," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Summer 1992) 788.

<sup>9</sup>Spivak, "Acting Bits, Identity Talk" 781-782.

<sup>10</sup>Spivak, "Acting Bits, Identity Talk" 782.

<sup>11</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 105.

<sup>12</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 109.

<sup>13</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 110-111.

<sup>14</sup>Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 12.

<sup>15</sup>Persram 277.

<sup>16</sup>Persram 278.

<sup>17</sup>Persram 303.

<sup>18</sup>Persram 286.

<sup>19</sup>Persram 284.

<sup>20</sup>Persram 285.

<sup>21</sup>Persram 286.

<sup>22</sup>I don't agree with Persram that they have done this, as is explained in Chapter 2. Persram 285.

<sup>23</sup>Persram.

<sup>24</sup>Persram 286-287.

<sup>25</sup>Persram 287.

<sup>26</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory*, 36-37; and Offen qtd. in Sylvester 37.

<sup>27</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 37.

<sup>28</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 16.

<sup>29</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 183-184.

<sup>30</sup>Sylvester emphasises the difference between her approach - postmodern feminism - and feminist postmodernism. Postmodern feminism, she says, is characterised by its ability to negotiate between standpoint theories and women's knowledges and poststructuralist "scepticism" about the possibility of defining "woman" as an unproblematic identity category. Feminist postmodernism, in contrast, is a feminism which Sylvester defines as "appended" to the poststructuralist "intellectual style" which deconstructs the notion of feminist identity to the point that it leaves feminism without a group on whose behalf to work. *Feminist Theory* 11-12; 52-54.

<sup>31</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 51-52.

<sup>32</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 48.

<sup>33</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 48.

<sup>34</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 48.

<sup>35</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 47-48.

<sup>36</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 11-12.

<sup>37</sup>Dallery qtd. in Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 12.

<sup>38</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory*, 12.

<sup>39</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 12.

<sup>40</sup>Bordo qtd. in Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 13.

<sup>41</sup>Persram acknowledges Spivak's contention that French feminism applies a "double program...against sexism...and for feminism" (Spivak qtd. in Persram 286), and she suggests that Mohanty's strategy does not conflict with Spivak's "strategic coalitions" of women (300 and fn91 p312). Persram does not, however, go on to examine the strategy indicated by French feminisms' dual purpose. Once acknowledged, Persram dismisses Spivak's comment by arguing that while the poststructuralist decentring of the sovereign subject fits with feminisms' interest in subverting essentialism, it renounces gender and invokes "nominalism" in the form of "cultural-discursive determinism." (DeLauretis qtd in Persram 287)

<sup>42</sup>Christine Sylvester, "African and Western Feminisms: World-Traveling the Tendencies and Possibilities," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20.4 (Summer 1995) 945.

<sup>43</sup>Sylvester, "African and Western Feminisms" 945.

<sup>44</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 59.

<sup>45</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 60.

<sup>46</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 62-63.

<sup>47</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 87-88.

<sup>48</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 89-93.

<sup>49</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 66.

<sup>50</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 62.

<sup>51</sup>Persram 287.

<sup>52</sup>Persram 303, 292.

<sup>53</sup>Persram 293.

<sup>54</sup>Radhakrishnan, qtd. in Persram 292.

<sup>55</sup>Persram 293.

<sup>56</sup>Mohanty qtd. in Persram 301.

<sup>57</sup>Persram 302.

<sup>58</sup>Radhakrishnan qtd. in Persram, 291.

<sup>59</sup>Persram 278-279.

<sup>60</sup>Sylvester, *Feminist Theory* 90. Pateman's argument can be found in Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988).

<sup>61</sup>Persram 300.

<sup>62</sup>Persram 297.

<sup>63</sup>Persram 297.

<sup>64</sup>Persram 297.

<sup>65</sup>Persram 298.

<sup>66</sup>It could be argued that her context could not be stated more explicitly than it already is - the title of her book being *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* - however, because Sylvester moves so frequently from context to context in her arguments, she needs to specify when she is choosing "postmodernity" as the context enabling her choice of fragmented subject positions.

<sup>67</sup>Persram, 288, 305.

<sup>68</sup>Persram 288-289.

<sup>69</sup>Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 452.

<sup>70</sup>Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence" 452.

<sup>71</sup>Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 1.

<sup>72</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 1-2.

<sup>73</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 4.

<sup>74</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 4-5.

<sup>75</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 2.

<sup>76</sup>Butler, *Gender Trouble* 5-6.

<sup>77</sup>Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, trans. Elizabeth Guild (New York: Routledge, 1991) 211; 216-217.

<sup>78</sup>Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 213-214.

<sup>79</sup>Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Feminism/Postmodernism* ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) 39.

<sup>80</sup>Flax, "The End of Innocence," 460.

<sup>81</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics" 110-111.

## Chapter Five

### The Productivity of Difference: Feminist and Feminine Identity

Critical theorists in IR have established that the modernist, logocentric form of autonomous subjectivity has been crucial in shaping concepts of state sovereignty and political realism that provide the framework for IR as a whole. The logocentric hierarchies established in the paradigm of sovereignty, including rational/irrational, public/private, and masculine/feminine, are also inherent to the concept of sovereign subjectivity. Questions surrounding political identity are primary concerns for poststructuralist analysis, because the epistemological focus of modern identity categories founded on the autonomous, knowing subject belies an underlying ontological injunction. Identity politics allows people to make claims and demands using the power of a recognised group status, but identity can only be defined by excluding what it is not, and it must disguise its origin as one of various permissible alternative identities provided by the particularities of the discourses intersecting at the site of any specific identity. On this basis critical theorists of IR argue that "epistemologies that simply affirm these dichotomies are not obviously the most appropriate place from which to investigate a world in which boundaries are so evidently shifting and uncertain."<sup>1</sup> Some theorists using a poststructuralist approach are attempting conceptualisations of political identity that render citizenship, national identity, the state, and other categories of international relations and politics as "microscopic representation[s] of a larger process of 'knowing' and 'meaning' intrinsic to modern social life since images of cogito rationality became fundamental to self-identity and the rational pursuit of foundational certainty became the *raison d'être* of modern theory and practice,"<sup>2</sup> and therefore as historicised objects of analysis from which we must proceed.

Western humanism also establishes the parameters of feminist poststructuralist analysis. It establishes that the task is to decentre knowing by valorising the inverse, the inability to know, and to mediate exchange between the pair of known/unknown with the notion of ethics.<sup>3</sup> The task of working "for feminism" in this context is best approached using a feminine subjectivity that destabilises phallogentric processes, such as the one theorised by Luce Irigaray. My central thesis relates with Luce Irigaray's contention that representational structures necessarily exclude the feminine as the constitutive outside of phallogentric signification. It follows from this contention that representational systems, including the structures of identity and the requirements of identity politics, can be thrown into question through analyses of gender. Another theme comes from Gayatri Spivak's suggestion that certain French feminisms maintain a "double program": one which fights sexism on the basis of a common identity among women, and one which tries to establish a positive feminism based on transformed forms of identity and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The feminine subject theorised by Luce Irigaray operates in both of these registers and provides a way of maintaining the space between them - "the reminder that any really 'loving' political practice must fall a prey to its own critique"<sup>5</sup> - so that the requirements of modernist discourses on identity cannot slip in and reproduce their relation in the form of binary or phallogentric unity.

As described earlier, feminist poststructuralist theories have determined that the gendered binary terms in modernist epistemology - subject and object, transcendent and immanent, masculine and feminine, among others - can in fact be reduced to a single term, the masculine, revealing that all that is figured as feminine is no more than the lack of the corresponding masculine term. However, deconstructive analysis discovers another "feminine" in addition to the masculine's negative. Judith Butler suggests that the binary terms we know as masculine and feminine" may well be constituted through [a further] exclusion and degradation of the feminine."<sup>6</sup> This is because binary forms are themselves constructed in the exclusion of a range of potentialities. This excluded is the

enabling "space" of figuration which cannot itself be inscribed. This is the case inasmuch as the logical form of binary oppositions encloses the binary system in its own dichotomy, as one pole of another opposition, the other to a pole which can have no binary coherence. This other space is what contains the logic of phallogocentric systems, by keeping all uncertainties and impossibilities in its realm. Butler claims that Luce Irigaray has figured this space as feminine, the other to the phallogocentric masculine-feminine pairing:

For Irigaray, the "feminine" which cannot be said to *be* anything, to participate in ontology at all, is...set under erasure as the impossible necessity that enables any ontology. The feminine, to use a catachresis, is domesticated and rendered unintelligible within a phallogocentrism that claims to be self-constituting. Disavowed, the remnant of the feminine survives as the *inscriptional space* of that phallogocentrism, the specular surface which receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a (false) reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency without making any contribution of its own.<sup>7</sup>

Representations of the feminine in phallogocentrism, to the extent that they are taken to be "real",<sup>8</sup> actually erase this other feminine as the condition of their visibility. As such, this place cannot be identified with the inscribed feminine, for example through maternal metaphors, because the moment it identifies with anything which it gave rise to (in symbolic language), it is erased or displaced. Once this space is associated with the maternal body, or any image of woman, it "invariably produces an 'outside' where the feminine which is *not* captured by the figure of the *chora* persists."<sup>9</sup> The "feminine" therefore exceeds its representation. This inscriptional space, as the opposite to representation in an encompassing binary configuration, is excluded only in the sense of binary operations: that is, it is not truly outside of the representational economy, but remains unspoken as the possibility of the eruption of irrationality into the system of language.

Irigaray declares that to rectify the position of the feminine and women in representation, we must create a new language, which also involves reconfiguring our most basic ontological categories: "The transition to a new age requires a change in our perception and conception of *space-time*, the *inhabiting of places*, and of *containers, or envelopes of identity*. It assumes and entails an evolution of a transformation of forms, of the relations of *matter* and *form* and of the interval *between*: the trilogy of the constitution of place."<sup>10</sup> This could occur if women were able to sustain their relation to "space" and "the fetal", which Irigaray claims are the dimensions needed for them to become subjects.<sup>11</sup> These, however, are precisely the substances that man takes from woman.<sup>12</sup> In place of her own "place", man situates woman in the private sphere, delimiting her as the concrete maternal and material, while simultaneously placing the feminine in the infinite, beyond either transcendental man or material woman. These are the two negations discussed earlier, where woman is the inscription of man's negative, and the feminine is the formlessness enabling the binary coherence of phallogentrism.

Instead of a masculine projection of otherness or pure absence, Irigaray wants the feminine to make women into the different sex, "irreducible to the masculine subject".<sup>13</sup> In order to do this, she suggests that each subject, masculine and feminine, claim the negative(s); each would be comprised of their self, its other, and the enabling space of inscription.<sup>14</sup> This means the woman "would have to re-envelop herself with herself, and do so at least twice: as a woman and as a mother. Which would presuppose a change in the whole economy of space-time."<sup>15</sup> That is, women would have access to the maternal-feminine of the inscriptional space and become subjects, while embodying their negativity, the concrete maternal.<sup>16</sup> This is not a simple reversal of phallogentrism, as the other is no longer externalised in an objectifying relation. Man in this relation would have to recognise the woman's subjectivity, and claim his own body as other.

The threshold is the symbol that Irigaray gives to the access of each subject to the absolute: "To symbolise the threshold...is an essential move to open up the container to

allow passage in and out, both to contest male ownership of the container, and also to give woman *her* space, where she can move freely."<sup>17</sup> This would enable the irreducibility of each self to each other in a relation of exteriority.<sup>18</sup> The exteriority of space to each subject would give that space in between the status of the threshold where they could meet in an ethical intersubjectivity. The place in between where this exchange takes place, "can be called God or love or [feminine] language".<sup>19</sup> The feminine language that Irigaray imagines is one of "temporary merging or crossing of boundaries"; it is a relation of contiguity with the maternal-feminine, not its erasure.<sup>20</sup>

Irigaray has, in this way, theorised a possible feminist subject and a possible epistemology which replaces the subject/object relationship with a relationship between distinct subjects that is characterised by "receptivity and openness to the other."<sup>21</sup> The self-other encounter depicted by Irigaray as envelopes of identity also represents the indeterminate relation of the feminine subject to the future, which Margaret Whitford understands as a "horizon":

crossing the boundaries in phantasy may have real and tangible results in the world. If the "object" (the mother or woman) is living and engaging in intrapsychic intercourse, that means that the desire for mastery may be temporarily in abeyance, and the destructive or immobilising phantasy has relaxed its grip. The language of amorous exchange is the language of phantasy; it offers an imaginary account of a different unconscious "scene". It should no doubt be seen as an ideal, a touchstone or horizon.<sup>22</sup>

As a new framework of thinking, Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference represents the subject's indeterminate relationship to knowledge, which is how I see it interacting with Spivak's call to work "for feminism" in working against phallogocentric representation. Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference works as an oppositional critique to modernist epistemology at the level of philosophical representation, codifying Spivak's claims of the inadequacy of representation as *darstellung*, and working "for feminism" by demonstrating the alterity of the modernism/nihilism dichotomy. In the productive

disjuncture between political and philosophical contexts that Spivak has outlined, political representation and the inadequacy of representation as knowledge claim interact to unsettle each other, disrupting the knowing subject's ability to assimilate the known object to him or herself a similar manner to Irigaray's depiction of ethical intersubjectivity between two different and discrete subjects.

Feminist theories of IR are also working in a doubled context. They work against sexism in the modernist, phallogocentric categories and narratives of hegemonic International Relations theory by holding up "woman" or the feminine to contrast with IR's masculine bias, while, as instances of Western feminism, they are wary of phallogocentric processes of subject and knowledge constitution. Feminist theorists in IR have investigated various theoretical approaches to address the dilemma posed by the latter context: how to engage in feminist politics while constructing a category of woman that will subvert phallogocentric representations. Feminist standpoint theory, Foucauldian-influenced location feminisms, and standpoint-postmodern feminisms in various ways attempt to posit woman as a category and simultaneously decentre that category. None of these approaches is as effective as Spivak's "double program", however, because hers is the only approach to investigate Western postmodernity as a context which gives modern representational structures as an object for analysis and deconstruction. In order to renew IR as a feminist perspective, the space opened by the feminist deconstruction of IR must remain unoccupied and avoid the contradictions of a feminist identity politics. This is possible by simultaneously working "against sexism" with a feminist subject, and "for feminism" with a feminine subject that posits any subject in representation as catachresis.

<sup>1</sup>Walker, *Inside/outside* 8.

<sup>2</sup>George 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ethics, as I am using the term here, refers to the ethics of sexual difference that Luce Irigaray sets out in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Rosi Braidotti explains that Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference reconfigures the relationship between the subject and alterity so each is positively maintained and receptive to the other. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 133.

<sup>4</sup>Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame" 144.

<sup>5</sup>Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," 110-111.

<sup>6</sup>Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 30.

<sup>7</sup>Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 39.

<sup>8</sup>Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 36.

<sup>9</sup>Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 42.

<sup>10</sup>Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell, 1984) 7-8.

<sup>11</sup>Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 11.

<sup>12</sup>Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 11.

<sup>13</sup>Luce Irigaray, "The Question of the Other," *Yale French Studies* 87 (1995): 9.

<sup>14</sup>Irigaray says that "[the] third term can occur within the one who contains as a relation of the latter to his or her own limit(s): relation to the divine, to death, to the social, to the cosmic. If a third term does not exist within and for the container, he or she becomes *all-powerful*." *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 12.

<sup>15</sup>Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 11.

<sup>16</sup>Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 42.

<sup>17</sup>Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 161.

<sup>18</sup>Irigaray, "The Question of the Other" 18.

<sup>19</sup>Whitford 167.

<sup>20</sup>Whitford 161.

<sup>21</sup>Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* 261.

<sup>22</sup>Whitford 166.

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