Contents

Feminisms & Activisms

* This issue also includes a CDRom.

Acknowledgements

Editorial

This issue of the Annual Review of Critical Psychology has been conceived of and produced as a collective process, emerging through our collaboration as four young women situated at different academic institutions, coming from different countries, socio-cultural and language backgrounds, and having different research/activist commitments. Our paths initially crossed through our common – but not identical – theoretical and methodological engagements within the fields of Feminism and Critical Psychology. As such, this journal project was also born out of a desire to initiate a space of debate that would span and challenge our individual(ized) and categorized positions within and beyond the academy. We arrived at this issue's theme 'feminisms and activisms' after some debate, given that we each brought a slightly different understanding of, and engagement with 'feminisms' and 'activisms'. However, despite our kaleidoscope of multiple meanings, understandings and priorities, we held a common interest in these topics and practices that aspire to engage critically with the production of – dominant or radical – historically and geopolitically contingent knowledges, social and political interventions, subjects and subjectivities.

The intersections of our personal trajectories at several political, socio-cultural and theoretical junctures have shaped, but also been mirrored by, the scope and content of this journal issue. Between us, and together, we commissioned a wide and diverse range of contributions that in a way reflect our own mosaic of contexts and alliances. We felt strongly about exploring the ways in which the process could be a collective and reflexive one, where the 'behind the scenes' debates, discussions and negotiations could be more visible and accessible during the process as well as in the final printed 'product'. We wished to encourage contributors also to engage more explicitly with each other's work. Imagining this kind of multifaceted interaction, we hoped that the collection of 'individual' articles would represent one of many levels on which a dynamic exchange could develop within and beyond the boundaries of the journal. While we considered the possibility of an open-access website, we settled for a less dialogic but still inter-relating process, encouraging contributors to comment on the other articles (posted on a shared web space) by reflecting on how they were relevant, inspiring, or problematic in relation to their own work. These '**interrelating notes**' are presented in print, illustrating one possible interaction between contributors.

The journey of producing this journal issue has been new ground for many of us, one that we have traversed with much excitement, trepidation and hard work. We would like to briefly highlight some central questions that in various ways and forms have emerged and are articulated in both the content and the process of this work. We explore some of these questions further in our subsequent article.

Invariably, versions of the familiar 'theory/practice' debate came up. This reflected, amongst other issues, the complex implications of defining and naming 'feminisms' and 'activisms', and the ways in which these tensions are currently embodied and manifested in our professional,

political and private lives. While we experienced these tensions as an editorial group, we faced the challenge of navigating and negotiating our different theoretical/practical backgrounds and trajectories in order to establish some common ground for the production of this journal. Considering this journal to be a political project requires us to reflexively acknowledge and examine the particular politics of knowledge production that we engaged in while producing it. These include issues of power, authority, 'voice' and legitimation; questions of language use and criticality ; local and partial vs. institutional(ized) discourses; matters of academic vs. non-academic and activist forms of resistance and expression; the need of establishing and defending boundaries vs. transgressing and blurring them. In this regard we wish to explore the ways in which the exchange between feminist, activist and other critical practices and discourses can serve as a particular site for the deconstruction (and reconstruction) of dominant hierarchies of power and privilege across the socio-cultural spectrum broaching the broad question of the nature of social change.

And now, an opening glimpse of what lies ahead…!

As the **editorial team**, we accepted the challenge of collectively addressing in greater depth, through an opening article, some of the issues and debates highlighted above. This proved to be easier said than done, and we realized that the challenges of collective authorship were inextricably linked to the very issues we were aiming to highlight. Rather than attempting to construct and represent this article as some sort of unified entity of a homogenous and superficially coherent body of knowledge, we hesitantly weaved together aspects of our individual 'experience' of the project, making sense of what each of us saw as salient issues and debates and drawing on our own particular constellation of resources to do so. As such, we present a not-too-neat tapestry of multiple voices, in which we allowed and welcomed each other's comments, with this acting as a catalyst for a less restrictive and less regulated kind of dialogue. In this way we have not only raised what we consider to be some central issues and debates around 'feminisms' and 'activisms', but through our retrospective critical reflections, have also performed these central fault lines in and through our article.

The diversity of, and numerous connecting links between the articles defies any particular 'grouping' or categorization in our following brief overview. As such there is no particular 'order' in which articles are introduced. Nevertheless in our later arrangement of the contents, we have attempted to reflect some of the more tangible resonances between them.

Despite their differences, the three contributions from the Latin south of Europe have four basic commonalities: they are all written by collectives of feminist activists; they are powerful illustrations of reflexivity; they explain, explore and illustrate the implications of activist-action - militant research; and finally, they all address different aspects/effects of 'precarity'. Precarity is the translation of the terms *Precarietá* (It) and *Precariedad* (Sp) which became very popular in the Social Movement of southern Europe in recent years. Its meaning firstly relates to the unstable, flexible and unregulated condition of work of the post-Fordist capitalist system. Moreover, it is also strictly related to the lack of self control of our bodies and our lives typical of that social organization. The notion of precarity can be figured as the sensation of living in

a condition of insecurity, with strong feelings of dependence and a dismissal of social ties. The three contributions discuss ways in which that situation can be addressed and subverted from a feminist point of view. In this context the *GLF* (Catalan acronym for Lesbian Feminist Group) present their activism, directed not only against the misogyny and lesbophobia of our society, but also as a form of subversion of the capitalist system of control and oppression. In so doing they stress the alliances with other groups within Social Movements and the importance of using our creative imagination to take action. Their feminist practice is clearly related to practices reviewed by **Sveva Magaraggia, Chiara Martucci and Francesca Pozzi** from the *Sconvegno* group in their pioneering activist research on feminisms in Italy. In their article they puzzle over different embodied options for theorizing and 'acting' feminism in the post-Fordist era and present multiple voices in a provocative and stimulating way. The third contribution by *Precaria*s is an excerpt from a larger body of work that they have done. Starting from a self-reflection they move on to analyze the embodiment of precarity in 'women' and the way in which it can be used as a point of power instead of weakness. They focus on the (un)paid work of care, its meanings and the surpluses it produces in the capitalist society. They also present an account of the 'laboratory' (an ongoing workshop) they have started in order to collectively and politically debate the meanings and implications of 'private' life.

Anni Vassiliou and **Tina Ligdopoulou**, decided to explore a different, co-constructive and innovative way of representing and reflecting on their experience of developing a large-scale youth project in the province of western Thrace, through the double dialogic format of an interview conducted in the past and its present footnotes. The youth project, part of a larger long-term initiative for the development of educational structures for the muslim greek population, involved the creation of two Creative Youth Centers for adolescents in the cities of Xanthi and Komotini. Reflecting on their experience, the authors highlight the complex issues around building relationships of reciprocity and understanding of difference while developing alternative educational and creative practices underlying their engagement in this politically sensitive area in Greece.

Drawing on research conducted in Cyprus during the 2004 referendum, in both the greek-Cypriot and turkish-Cypriot parts of the island, **Vassiliki Katrivanou** explores the constructions and intersections of gender and race in the politics of inter-communal conflict/resolution. While active participants in the ensuing negotiations and debates, women's positions and discourses are subsumed under an all-encompassing and consuming nationalist agenda. In this way gender issues are marginalized, displaced onto and conflated with the racialized, national and ethnic practices of discrimination and enmity between 'greeks' and 'turks'.

Faidra Papadimitriou, member of the greek NGO 'ARSIS – Social Organization for the Social Support of Youth', describes and reflects on her experience of conducting theatre workshops with women prisoners in Korydallos penitentiary in Athens. Highlighting the multiple and intersecting identities of the women who participated, she calls for a radical reconsideration of the gendered and racialized constructions/stereotypes through which women prisoners are represented and positioned. The contribution from **Giota Touloumi**

of the **Feminist Center of Athens** focuses on the politics of trafficking and enforced prostitution in Greece. They highlight the spread of the phenomenon of trafficking and sexual slavery, and the role of clients, mainstream media and immigration controls and policies in the establishment of this new industry of exploitation of foreign women. In response to the situation, the feminist collective declares solidarity with the victims of enforced prostitution and suggests possible sites of resistance and struggle.

Other articles, in different ways explore and challenge current conceptualizations of sites and forms of resistance against dominant discourses. **Tine Jensen** reflexively examines the question of research as a site for resistance and/or empowerment with reference to her engagement in an interactive computer-based project that aimed at exploring forms of learning for children beyond curricula and beyond the hierarchical structures that govern school settings. By giving a detailed account of her own involvement in, and attempted use of the framework in a Copenhagen school, she shows how this form of activism to empower children by implicitly challenging the own adult position, produces quite complex problems. It becomes clear that facilitating new forms of learning and relating within a context that is simultaneously conceptualized as a critical research context can turn out to be intricately paradoxical for both, children and researchers.

Also exploring paradoxes, **Nancy Böttner** questions whether popular music can be/come a site of feminist resistance, a site of re-signification where traditional boundaries between male and female identities and practices are disrupted, blurred and/or inverted, thereby being a reclamation of the power to define bodies, spaces and discourses. She focuses on the music and performance of 'Peaches', a 'one-woman-collective' from the electro-punk music scene in Berlin, to illustrate how claiming power, through a dislocation of female/male subjectivities and the subversion of racist and sexist discourses, is not only oppressive, but also productive; yet of pleasure nonetheless. Likewise, **Ilana Mountian** picks up on the gendered tensions between pleasure, empowerment, victimization and moralized degradation, yet she follows a different trajectory into popular culture: Her article delivers a circumspect discussion of the social imaginary of women and drugs. Drawing on a detailed analysis of the visual representation of women in tobacco advertisements she outlines how e.g. discourses around 'madness' and 'addiction' operate to implicitly reproduce women as the dependent, naturally fallible 'other' that needs to be protected or else is seen as morally degenerate. Empowerment or pleasure are ruled out in this discourse. She develops her analysis to reveal similar tensions around women's drug use in relation to the nation, and with regard to the (sexualized) gaze.

As evident, many of the articles in different ways attend to notions and discourses of 'femininity' and the ways this articulates particular constructs and positions of women as political subjects and agents. Drawing on interviews with refugee women living in Johannesburg, South Africa, who have been forcibly displaced from the African Great Lakes region, **Ingrid Palmary** interrogates the intimate relationship between the state and the family. She explores the ways in which the depoliticisation of the family (linked to particular constructions of femininity and women's domestic roles) works not only to undermine women's political activity and

resistance, but to obscure the constructed assumptions of 'pure', 'racial' identity that often fuel the very conflict affecting these women. **Isabel Rodriguez-Mora** also explores notions and discourses of femininity as a political theme integral to women's activism. Looking specifically at the context of the present social and political polarisation in Venezuela, she considers the ways in which women are produced as political subjects, focusing particularly on the ways in which doctrines of femininity are differently drawn on (and/or contested) in constructing and representing the political participation of women of "chavismo".

Also focusing on the politics of feminization, but specifically within the realm of psychology, **Jane Callaghan**, drawing on her research on student's experiences of 'becoming a psychologist', explores the ways in which discourses of 'professionalisation' and the psychological construction of 'femininity' operate to constrain and block activism amongst South African women psychology students. A central aspect of this critical analysis includes an interrogation of the possibilities and limitations of particular constructions of 'care' as a site where discourses of femininity, professionalisation and resistance intersect. **Clare Shaw** attends to a different domain within the institution of psychology that broadly focuses on 'women and mental health'. She weaves theoretical and reflexive bodies of knowledge into a critical narrative that discusses the work and philosophy of the radical mental health campaigning group 'Women at the Margins' which has a particular focus on the psychiatric diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). She critically interrogates the notion of BPD, while simultaneously outlining and grappling with tensions and debates around activism within the field of 'mental health'.

Contributions of poetry by **Bandile Gumbi** and **Clare Shaw**, and the diverse visual material included in the CD-rom represent still-marginalized forms of knowledge production, and encourage us to acknowledge the multiplicity of ways of making sense of the world in which we live. Visual art by **Gabi Ngcobo** in its unique way makes critical commentary on diasporic cross generational references of historicised, racialised and gendered identities. The interactive presentation by **Anni Vassiliou** maps and animates parts of the creative youth project she developed, in an attempt to engage the audience in aspects of the process. Following the *drift* in the **Precarias** video we travel the normal daily life of a group of Madrid-based women reflecting on the condition of their life and work. The histories presented are at once a combination of performance, art, research and activism. The selections of flyers, posters and photos presented by the **GLF** are examples of the use visual images to connect with people in the street both as spectators and/or actors, resembling a postmodern version of the Living Theatre. Finally, **Tine Jensen** provided an interactive collage that contains internet links and pictures of the virtual computer worlds that are part of the '5th Dimension' learning project.

We hope that this journal issue informs, challenges and stimulates you to explore and grapple with 'Feminisms and Activisms' in many other forms and contexts!

The editorial team

Feminisms and Activisms:

Reflections on the politics of writing and the editorial process

Barbara Biglia, Jude Clark, Johanna Motzkau, Alexandra Zavos
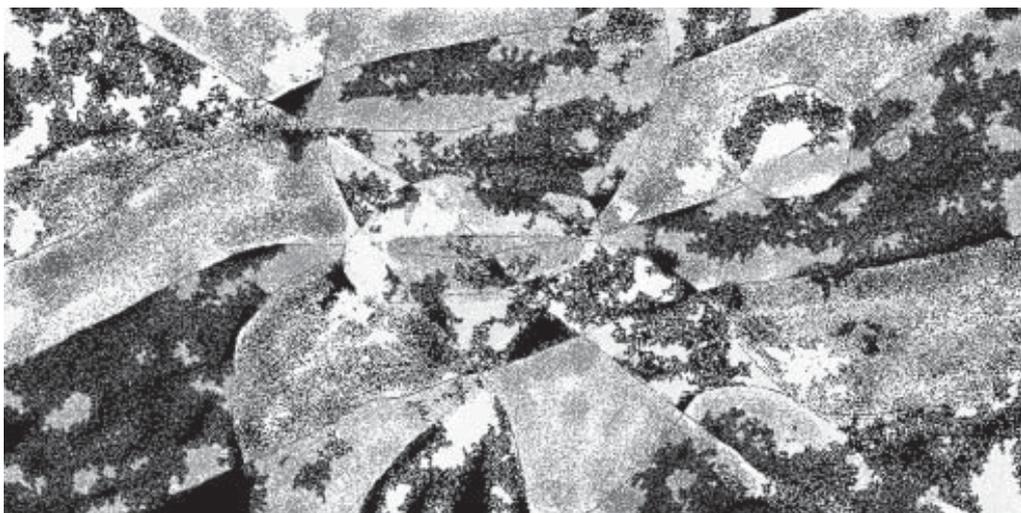
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This article addresses the questions and dilemmas that each of us has brought to the project. It traces their modulation, refinement and manifestation as they became part of a shared creative dynamic and thus subject to our personal experience and reflection thereon. The initial idea was to produce one text with multiple voices, yet considering our theoretical diversity, the geographical distance between us and the short time at hand we realized this, for the moment, was a too ambitious project. Hence, as a tribute to the diversity of our perspectives and reflecting the actual dilemma of seeking to 'speak in one powerful voice' while allowing heterogeneity, this article presents itself as a tentative pastiche of our four distinct yet overlapping and intersecting contributions.

To create a common basis for the writing process, we collected a pool of crucial questions that were then split up between us, following the idea that each of us would reflect upon the editing process by way of exploring her particular questions. This reflection obviously cannot capture either the complexity or the entirety of the experience of co-editing and producing the journal, it can only highlight some aspects of the contradictions, juxtapositions and intersections that emerged.

Alexandra sets the scene by outlining the intricacies of working across the multiple borders constituted by language, institutional backgrounds, gender, nationalities etc. and explores what it means to reflexively re-negotiate our own boundaries in this process.

[1] The colour version of this image can also be found in the Cdrom. The 'Klezmer Improvisation' which is included on the Cdrom, forms part of the article (it is played by the duo 'Double-Bind': J. Motzkau: s-saxophone & R.Dinges: double bass). For me (Johanna) this music and the joy of playing it in this particular situation comprises and expresses the intricacies and realities of numerous border crossings.

Picking up on the concrete ambiguity arising around the crossing of 'language borders', Johanna then discusses the paradoxes arising around the question of what qualifies as 'critical resistance' and how our experience of producing this journal could inform agendas of agency for social change. Jude inquires even further into the question of legitimacy and 'voice' and challenges our own position within a feminist agenda by exploring the complexities of working both within and against the power hierarchies, discourses and ideologies that framed our project. Finally Barbara concludes by interrogating the experiential and theoretical issues around dynamic conceptions of feminism itself and points to the exciting prospect of a stronger link to an activist agenda.

Working 'across borders': the journal as 'boundary object'
Alexandra Zavos

"Boundary objects are thus a means of producing sufficient coherence to enable interaction without this being predicated on the erasure of heterogeneity; nor on the imposition of uniformity or transparency. Thus boundary objects offer a site or medium for the negotiation of identity and difference" (Burman, 2004: 370).

I would like to use this opportunity to reflect on the production of this journal – both as process and as object – in relation to notions of space, borders and boundaries linked to the construction and negotiation of a gendered and racialized politics of writing.

On space(s) and boundaries

The process of producing this journal is as much a physical and material one, as it is an intellectual and ideological one. In its physical and material aspects we need to write in the temporal and spatial dimensions around which our work was structured; dimensions that to some degree determined the relationships between us, as editors, and with the contributors. More often than not the spatial distance between us and the time restrictions, imposed an operational/task directed framework at the expense of an attention to the multiple and diverse relations and seemingly 'personal' issues that were emerging.

The journal/project was conceived as an attempt to push or disrupt the boundaries between academic and non-academic writing, between feminist and other kinds of engagements, between academic and activist practices, between scientific and artistic representation, and to do so across several territorial (national), linguistic, cultural and racial borders. However, as an object primarily located and circulating in institutional spaces, it is inescapably inscribed in and by the practices (demands, expectations, technologies, protocols) of academic writing and publishing that organize the discursive, temporal, relational limits (or borders) of its production. In other words, regardless of its breadth and diversity in content and the challenges it wishes to pose, this journal is produced as an institutional object and is determined by the relations and means of production that organize this space.

At the same time, 'space' in this journal figures metaphorically – reflected in linguistic expressions such as e.g. the 'space' of the journal, or 'space' for reflection and discussion – which does not preclude its being constructed through and embodying, in its concrete materialization, very 'real' social relations (Massey, 2005). The textual space of the journal is produced through, and as, a relational space. In this sense it articulates, in its specificity, a range of available – even if

contested or marginalized – subject positions and relationships of power(lessness).

Understanding the process of the production of this journal as a space that articulates and juxtaposes different positions, we can look at the texts included as outlining positions of identity (e.g. feminist, lesbian feminist, activist, feminist activist, black, black activist/feminist, critical researcher, youth worker, psychologist, critical psychologist, artist, musician); spatial positions (e.g. positions of closeness, or distance); positions of power (e.g. positions of authority, hegemonic positions, marginalized positions, liminal positions); relational positions (e.g. positions of similarity, difference, agreement, opposition). The space of this journal is also inscribed with its own historicity, it is in other words invested with its own – however multiple, or heterogeneous – identity captured under the title of 'feminisms and activisms'. And finally, with its own temporality, as evidenced not only through the closure of the different phases of its production, but also through the patterns of communication it engendered and followed.

In this respect, the journal itself can be seen as a boundary object (Burman, 2004), one circulating between physical and symbolic/textual/linguistic spaces, circulating between different discourses (academic, non-academic, theoretical, experiential, feminist, critical), different practices (academic, activist, educational), and different locations and performances and representations of identity.

One of the striking contradictions illuminated is that between academic and non-academic writing, whether drawing on discourses of 'experience' or 'art'. As long as this juxtaposition remains unbridged and untheorized, it produces the effect of the 'different', in the sense of not-belonging, texts occupying a more or less tokenistic position in the overall, academically overdetermined, context. Johanna and Jude elaborate this point

further in relation to the linguistic, racialized and gendered accessibility and visibility of texts. This can be seen as a function of the institutional space within which the journal is produced and intends to circulate, the reproduction of which we are also implicated in, however unwillingly.

On borders

We need to register at least two levels of working 'across borders': on the one hand it refers to the collaboration amongst the editorial team, and between the editors and the contributors; on the other it refers to the texts themselves, both as separate, self-contained units and in their conjunction and co-articulation within the 'space' of the journal. In this sense, the texts speak for themselves, enter into dialogue within the framework of the journal, and, also, as a whole, represent a particular manifestation (or construction) of the diversity of feminist and activist engagement. As is evident from the diversity of articles included in this journal, both in topic/theme, as well as in academic and activist engagement, and in location/origin, the project articulates a high level of complexity and a wide breadth/scope.

Focusing on the first aspect, the 'relational' one, I would like to list a number of 'borders' we have had to work across in the process of producing this journal:
•   physical borders: living in different parts of the country and/or in different countries limited the possibility of face-to-face meetings between us to very few and far removed; this we had to compensate for with ongoing email communication and a circumscription of the necessary debates amongst ourselves.
•   cultural borders: coming from different backgrounds impacted not only on how we related but also on how we understood and engaged with the themes of this journal. We had to acknowledge between us the historical

specificity (and differences) of the articulations of feminisms and activisms and our experiences of them.

• language borders: the fact that not all of us were 'native' english speakers presented a necessity for continuous translation; at the same time it highlighted the conditions of privilege and accessibility which use of a dominant linguistic currency, namely that of the english language in international academic publications, determines.

• disciplinary borders: coming from different theoretical backgrounds presented the need to interrogate the intersections and points of connection between different discourses and traditions in order to establish a common (and multiple) overarching framework.

• positional or identity borders (including gender, class, race, political commitment): while these were least explored between us they most certainly shaped our individual positions, resistances and alliances, constructing a dynamic group field of constant negotiations of (mis)understandings and distance or closeness.

Writing as gendered politics: Is feminism an identity?

Writing from a feminist perspective and engagement is not relevant because I 'am' a 'woman' – although of course how I enter the space of writing, theorizing and activism is determined by the multiple ways in which gender is written into social relations – rather this commitment, which I take to be first and foremost a political one, is a strategic and ethical choice related to the politics of knowledge production. To put it more directly, I do not believe one can practice good theory, research or activism without embodying or performing a feminist approach; that is without an attention to all the issues around gender and power that feminist scholarship and praxis have brought to the foreground. Barbara further

illuminates the articulation of feminism(s) and activism(s).

Writing as racialized politics: Is it enough to remember whiteness?

While it is common to equate concerns with racism and racialization with the exposure of discrimination exercised in institutional and personal contexts against 'black' people, I would like to draw attention to 'race' as a constitutive social relation for both 'blacks' and 'whites', much in the same way that 'gender' is constitutive for both 'women' and 'men'. If I understand 'race' not as skin colour but also as a particular relationship to power, authority, and legitimization, then I would argue that 'forgetting' race needs to be inscribed within those very same practices that establish and reproduce racialized hierarchies and entitlements. In this sense skin colour as embodied privilege is important.

'Whiteness' does not only reference skin colour, but moreover – and for my argument here – it signifies a position of power that is constitutive of our subjectivities and the ways in which we author our personal histories around forgetting the multiple ways in which they are racially inscribed. As a 'white' author and editor I don't have to worry about whether or not I have the right to speak, or the authority to represent myself, these are givens, I experience a condition of 'natural' entitlement. Forgetting 'whiteness' is thus another manifestation of racial discrimination. And 'whiteness' in its forgetfulness embodies the practice of power that renders certain bodies more visible and more accountable than others. In our case here, as Jude illustrates further, we might question how it is that concerns about institutional racialized discrimination, as practiced in the context of academic journal writing, became marginalized and/or the 'natural' responsibility of those editors variously identifying as 'non-white' (or 'black')?

This forgetfulness, however, is only experienced from within the context/location of 'whiteness', i.e. as Sara Ahmed (2004) points out: "*Whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it*. To those who don't, the power of whiteness is maintained *by being seen*; we see it everywhere, in the casualness of white bodies in spaces, crowded in parks, meetings, in white bodies that are displayed in films and advertisements, in white laws that talk about white experiences, in ideas of the family made up of clean white bodies. I see those bodies as white, not human" (ibid: 14). In this sense the forgetfulness of 'whiteness' cannot be posited as a general condition, and furthermore its recognition cannot serve to dissipate or absolve institutional(ized) racial discrimination, as it is individually and collectively practiced.

Editorial privileges

Finally, I would like to end with a brief reference to the extraordinary power and responsibility the editorial position placed upon us. From deciding which contributors to invite, to deciding about the relevance or appropriateness of a submitted article, to extensively reviewing and commenting on the texts, to deciding and enforcing deadlines, to initiating (successfully or not) different processes of interrelating between contributions, to deciding on the published form of the journal, to ensuring the terms of its material production, our engagement has been pivotal. Thus, it is reflected in the final product, which is as much an illustration of the collection of texts and discourses as of our own efforts and inclinations, aesthetics, and negotiations.

Across borders, towards resistance…
What is critical? What is resistance? Dilemmas of self-positioning within agendas for social change
Johanna Motzkau

There is no such thing as 'resistance' or a 'critical stance', as neither of these has an abstract momentum of its own. They are meaningful only as manifestations of the concrete act of e.g. collecting and featuring marginalised and critical voices that expose and challenge the dominant structures of power and knowledge production, as is our intent in 'Feminisms and Activisms'. Yet paradoxically this 'act' in itself means to be drawn into those dominant discourses and to exercise power. So while negotiating and crossing the borders Alexandra has pointed out above, there were various instances when our self-evidently mutual direction of critique and resistance suddenly appeared utterly dispersed and the diversity we invited seemed to undermine the process. I would like to invert the question of resistance in order to explore one of those concrete instances where

critique resisted us – where resistance itself became problematic to our very agenda, putting us at risk of silencing ourselves.

Resistant Language Borders – Politics of Expression:

In order to create an internationally accessible space for sharing with a larger audience, perspectives on marginalised issues from different regions, journal contributions needed to be in English. Yet with English being the dominant linguistic currency, the lack of proficiency or confidence in using the English language is also part of the reason why issues remain marginal. Thus for most of those we encouraged to contribute, writing in English was very challenging or formed part of an implicit struggle they routinely faced.[2] I

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[2] And this is certainly true for myself.

understood it as a self-evident aspect of our intent to make 'voices' heard and empower contributors, to extend revisions beyond feedback on contents, and to share language skills by including suggestions concerning grammar, expressions or the reconstruction of whole paragraphs. Yet during the revision process this sparked an intense debate among us about the degree to which we should see ourselves entitled to interfere with the contributions. On the one hand there is the danger of an over-zealous and patronising revision that coercively smoothens original expressions chosen by the authors and sanitises their subversive use of language in the name of correct grammar and standard English. Hereby we would implicitly acknowledge the legitimacy of the dominant language of academia and impose it on the contributors, instead of challenging it. On the other hand there is a fine line between a loose and subversive use of language and a text that fails to communicate its message because the more and less intended diversions from 'standard English' make it difficult or impossible to understand what is being said at all. Hereby we would equally fail the contributors and simply pass the ambiguity over to them as we provide a space for resistance without facilitating its use or sharing our privileged knowledge about the means of expression within this space.[3] Here two trajectories of resistance short-circuit: Our subversive aim to 'give voices' and to 'feature diversity' collides with the critical awareness of power-relations and hierarchies that manifests in our ambiguity and unease when exercising editorial power. And here we were at risk of silencing ourselves, of getting stuck in the politics of critical expression and the wish to steer clear from the dominant discourse but nonetheless challenge it.

Depicting this instance in such a static and abstract fashion makes it look more irresolvable than it was. But for me experiencing this unexpected void in our taken for granted critical agenda, exemplified in a condensed form that a critical position could never be a predefined static point of departure but only the effect of a very concrete and dynamic activity. To move beyond the dilemma we began to reflect upon questions of legitimacy, entitlement and power in very actual and personal terms. What is our position within the 'dominant language discourse'?[4] How are our concrete personal commitments related to producing this journal at this point in time and in how far do they entitle us to assume and exercise editorial power? Answering these questions it became clear that issues of legitimacy and power repeat themselves infinitely into the micro levels of our activity and that we could not be outside the dominant discourses or above power. Yet, simultaneously we realised that critical momentum and legitimacy were gained at that very concrete level by a dynamic, constant move in and out of the dominant discourse, in and out of power positions. Taking responsibility of editorial power, exercising it consciously and temporally assuming authority to structure one concrete move and then passing it on, distributing it again. As a similar dilemma persists within research itself, I would like to sketch out an instance from my own research to show how the thought outlined so far, could be developed even further to shed a new light on

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[3] This will additionally double the disadvantage of those who are not proficient in English, because they will be the ones who struggle most with reading texts that are formulated in a less 'standard' language.
[4] To stick with my language example: Only two of us are native English speakers. Yet again neither of these two have grown up in the UK or North America. What does that mean for the way they relate to (are positioned towards) the English language as a dominant linguistic currency? Does it make them 'superior revisers' or does it disqualify them as biased?

questions of research positions and impact for change.

The dilemma of critical research positions and impact for change:

For my current research I am interviewing legal and psychological professionals to explore the ways in which the British and the German legal system deal with child witnesses.[5] Looking at some accounts it is quite apparent how the discourses about who is seen as a reliable witness implicitly rely on problematic paradigms of developmental psychology and gendered stereotypes. The following excerpt from an interview with a crown prosecutor is an example for this. She talks about the recently implemented practice of video recording child witnesses' initial testimony to the police and how it helps her decision to prosecute or drop a case:

> "[...] I had ahm a video tape that I watched for a <u>five</u> year old, now that's <u>young</u> for here we don't normally prosecute on the evidence of a five year old [...] ahm and <u>she</u> was an absolute <u>star</u> [...] and she described it <u>perfectly</u> this and <u>this</u> was a child who could <u>not</u> have made it up you know her <u>innocence shone</u> through on the video <u>absolute</u> oh she was a <u>doll</u> absolute doll ahm [...] <u>that's</u> a really good example of I think how helpful having a video can be because it helps to ass' you to you know just <u>assess</u> what they are like you know you get you get some that're sort of look shifty but then [...] I think you've got to take into account that they might look

shifty and uncomfortable because they <u>are</u> uncomfortable you know so ahm [...]"[6]

I cannot go into detail here, but it is clear how the video instead of amplifying the girl's own voice, perpetuates her passivity: Not the girl's actual statement, but the degree to which she fits the criteria of a pretty little girl, naturally innocent, a doll, passive, in need of protection and with no mind of her own to fantasise, outweighs the fact that her young age would have disqualified her as a reliable witness. Here it worked in her favour, yet the practice shows that when unable to fit the 'doll-category', "looking shifty", or indeed having reached an age where girls as adolescents are by definition seen as prone to deceit and promiscuity, they hardly stand a chance of even getting to court.[7] These insights are not new, but certainly crucial, and I am indebted to those feminist critiques that prepared the grounds for this analysis,[8] yet sadly enough it is not at all unusual that this prosecutor draws on these discourses to guide her decisions. So in this particular situation I suddenly wondered what actually constituted my critical position. Tempted to introduce my critical reflection and to challenge her account, I realised that the likely antagonism I was going to summon might well cause my interview to terminate prematurely, but would hardly help to change her view or the practice in general. But what was the point in doing this interview if the critique could not be fed back to undermine this practice?[9] Similar to our situation in the editorial team, I felt stuck between options of inefficient resistance and mere listening to collect data. This created an

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[5] Here mostly in relation to cases of an alleged child sexual abuse.

[6] This is an excerpt of an uninterrupted account she gave during the interview. To amend it for this text, I have omitted a few lines, as indicated, but the overall character of the statement is not altered by the omissions.

[7] Here I can paraphrase a judge I interviewed who resignedly recommended: 'As a witness you shouldn't be female and between 13 and 17!'

[8] Among other important contributions: Burman (1994; 1998); Walkerdine (1987; 1993).

[9] A legitimate caveat is that I am in the 'wrong' discourse here. Should I not be talking to child witnesses instead to hear their views? I perfectly agree, and that is what I have done in earlier work. Yet this also

uncomfortable void within my assumed critical position and forced me to re-focus on the concrete situation. And here a hint at how to move beyond this dilemma could be found in the tiny void, the tension the prosecutor herself creates by concluding with paradoxical plausibility that child witnesses also "...might look shifty and uncomfortable because they are uncomfortable..." and thereby implicitly disqualifying her earlier rationale. Interesting is not so much her self-contradiction, but the fact that this void in her account offers a glimpse at the multiple uncertainties that already perforate and undermine this concrete practice. As such this is one of many potential entry points that could be collected, theorised and used to introduce critique to practitioners on a pragmatic level and with reference to points in their practice that they experience as problematic themselves. And this could effectively undermine and challenge legal practice from inside while avoiding complicity with it.

With regard to legal practice this is certainly a tentative suggestion, but it exemplifies how the dynamic that emerged from our experience as journal editors repeats itself with regard to critical research positions: In order to not silence myself I had to move in and out of the legal discourse, subversively use the concrete voids within it and re-examine what constituted my actual critical position. Again it is apparent how critical momentum and thus agency for change is not guaranteed and legitimised by some predefined criticality, but generated via the immediate activity of relating to a concrete practice in a way that could make a specific critical stance bear upon it and incite change.

It is this understanding of 'critique' and 'resistance' that made the idea of juxtaposing, merging and intersecting feminisms and activisms such an exciting prospect, and thus producing this journal could be seen as a concrete attempt of 'doing' critical theory while simultaneously theorising practice. This journal produces and exposes a multitude of those resistant, reflexive or indeed dubious voids that manifest at concrete instances of action, when people are drawing on, speaking up against, or struggling within dominant discourses, and as such this journal is an invitation to you to spot, make use of or even enlarge these voids, because they are passages for change.

'Talking the Talk & Walking the Walk': Some Reflections On The Politics Of Knowledge Production
Jude Clark

This journal venture has brought to life in an 'up close and personal' way the intricacies of the politics of knowledge production. It has been mainly in retrospect that we have felt more able to interrogate the kinds of politics (workings of power) that constructed the *meaning* of the project and informed our editorial actions. Despite the value of a temporal critical distance, it needs to be noted that 'looking back at what it all meant' and 'how it could have been done differently' is a familiar and perhaps less unsettling recourse than doing so 'in the moment'. Nevertheless, at certain points we *were* pushed to engage more explicitly and critically with the institutional and discursive conditions that shaped the project, and the experience of the many women who participated in it. I'll call these junctures 'critical moments', instances that either vaguely or abruptly create a rupture, and

raised my awareness for the intricacies of transmitting their voices, speaking 'for' them and the difficulty of having an impact for change.

trigger a shift in the way the process is/was thought about and understood. Subjectively experienced as a kind of discomfort, these 'disturbing' moments can tell us something about what is going on, making an aspect that was implicit more visible. As such, they carry great potential, particularly when explored as part of broader questions on how the subjective investments we make in our everyday practice can be traced/linked to networks of institutional power and the discourses and ideologies that inform them (Parker, 2005).

One example of this subjective investment was characterised in the moment(s) when we began to feel quite protective over the contributions we had each solicited, while at the same time feeling anxious once these had been requested, that they would be 'good enough'. This tension of recognising the value of a contribution yet being wary of its representation and articulation within a broader corpus of knowledge such as this journal issue, is an important illustration of the recursive relationship between the epistemological and the political. Historically, the establishment and protection of power, privilege and status has been integrally linked to the ways in which realities have been 'knowledged'. The academy has played a pivotal role in inscribing and prescribing a hierarchical system that differently and unequally values ways of 'knowing' and of representing that knowledge. These dominant inscriptions and prescriptions have meant that critique with distinctly different ideological underpinnings, intellectual genealogies, theoretical trajectories and political implications, has been systematically marginalized. Preoccupations with this 'good enough' notion is a powerful illustration of the ways in which we internalise, individualise, depoliticize, and often – in our representations – *perform* the regulatory systems of control that are so much a part of academia.

The diverse resources drawn on by the articles in this issue, and the different ways that they are positioned in interrogating the 'feminism/ activism' theme necessitates that they, in a way, each be 'read' differently. This nexus of engagement, with writers all articulating different positions from their particular locations in and out of the academy, holds much promise. If we *emphasise* rather than evade the 'critical relationality' represented by the various articles, and the cognisant positionality of the authors, we can negotiate the "variety of identities, theoretical positions and textualities without falling prey to schisms and dualistic or binary thinking that dismisses one dynamic to privilege another" (Boyce Davies, 1994:57). Through this kind of reframing we avoid a superficial representation of both 'diversity' and 'ontological unity'. In this way, rather than *meaning* being merely asserted, it can be rewritten, (re)produced and re/deconstructed as a fundamentally relational activity.

Some 'critical moments' of this journal project showed the ways in which power is both regulatory and productive, working on many levels and in diverse ways, pinning down and opening up possibilities for forms of meaning-making and action, and impacting practices and social institutions that fall far outside academia (Weedon, 1987). As an editorial team we were pushed to question our own complicity and collusion with the very authoritative discourses and exclusionary tactics we sought to challenge. Signals to this (apart from our own almost imperceptible and unwitting recourse to a specific 'goal-oriented' discourse of 'aims', 'tasks', 'responsibilities' and 'deadlines'), included occasions where contributors sought clarification on the meaning of an "abstract", or when there were requests for a more understandable version of our introductory email. These are totally reasonable and legitimate responses and provide critical commentary on how the dominant discursive resources we drew on powerfully precluded other meaningful ways of engaging with and articulating the

project and our positionings within it. This is a central complexity we faced as an editorial group working both *within and against* the power hierarchies and discourses that framed our project. Of course this is a slippery slope to tread, and represents a central question that has long challenged feminist projects: In this process, how do we avoid ultimately reproducing that which we seek to transform?

The extent to which contributors felt able/ willing to enter a space of dialogue (as in the 'interrelating notes' process), or to 'speak back' (to the review process), and how this was manifested, is tied to many issues, not least of which are the implications of 'speaking back' in a language that is (literally!) not your own (the complexities of which are discussed by Johanna). We can understand any hesitance/ resistance to/ lack of engagement in a space such as this, when we see it as a forum, which, despite its invitation, is discursively constructed in a way where one might feel pushed to 'know' or to convey knowledge in ways that are unfamiliar or problematic, if not oppressive. Here there are resonances with bell hooks' description of the implications of talking to those who can't / won't talk back (hooks, 1989). These dynamics are intricately connected to the many other dimensions on which power works, and has significant implications for identity politics. For example, an initial commitment from a sizeable number of Black women, submitting as individuals or collectives, by the end of the process was down to two individuals. Consequently this meant that the only representations from Black women were poetry and art. As valuable as these contributions are as representations of marginalised knowledge (on a few levels), in the broader constellation of the journal, how does this avoid being conveyed as some kind of essentialised epistemic homogenisation (as a racialised representation of how Black women 'know')? What broader politics prevent us from

conceptualising *every* article as a particular artistic/ cultural production, 'voicing' a particular (racialised, gendered) location? This is just one example of the complex relationship between historical epistemological shifts and representational politics (which includes the process of 'naming'). This raises the following further question: What are the implications of involving marginalized women in what – for the most part – are mainstream forums without first interrogating those forums themselves?

The insistence that "subordinated groups be empowered to articulate their realities and become subjects rather than objects of knowledge-production processes", has been a significant one, and is largely the outcome of the political impact of Black women within feminism (Mama, 1995:14). However, as argued by Burman (2000), the ushering into discourse of subordinated knowledges creates its own difficulties. "... the project of "giving voice" threatens to reproduce the very paternalistic relations it claims to dismantle, this by virtue of presuming the power to afford that "giving" of voice" (p. 54–55). This necessitates exploring what the "alternative ways are of conceptualizing and negotiating structural relationships, such as those organized around racialized, gendered, and professional identities" (Burman, 2000:50). This is not merely an intellectual exercise involving discourse, but integrally tied to that of formulating a cogent political programme of action. We need to ask, as Butler (1995) does, what possibilities of mobilisation are generated on the basis of existing arrangements of discourse and power. How can we change that very matrix of power by which we are constituted to destabilize existing power regimes? This journal, and all that it 'represents' is a small, but significant step in response to some of these questions, and of course, the struggle continues…

Feminists and activists diffractions[10]
Barbara Biglia

Thinking trough Feminisms
I find it quite easy to define myself as a feminist, but when I have to explain to someone else what feminism could be, I become confused. It is not that I don't have a clear idea of what I feel and mean by the concept, but because the term is nowadays used with a very large multiplicity of meanings, my choice between any one of them will be inevitably reductive. On the other hand, assuming a political compromise within feminism, by not being critical with some uses of the word, is clearly impossible. So how to fuse, engage and respect these two tensions simultaneously? The idea of inventing a new word is in some ways frustrating because it implies the renouncement of the powerful history of women's every day subversions.[11] But, on the other hand, some of the imaginaries evoked by the use of that concept are far removed from any possible meaning of feminism I can imagine and, in some cases, can reinforce heterosexist and/or patriarchal practices (like some essentialist feminisms did in the past).

But what are feminisms? Without giving a definition, I feel that feminisms are both an ontology of life and an articulated and polymorphic project of collective lives; in this sense it is also, and perhaps primarily, a politics. Then, considering that *Feminism is for everybody* (hooks, 2000), the critique of black/non-white[12] and lesbian feminists – during the so called 'second wave of feminism[13]'– around the discriminatory construction of women as a unified category (for an overview: Nicholson, 1997; Tietjens Meyers,1997), has to be extended to the definition of feminist politics as well. In fact, feminist agendas and priorities still tend to hide the needs and the agency that is emerging in minoritised groups and geopolitical arenas[14] (Cooper, 1995). So even if we may be able to recognise the multiple,

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[10] Thanks to Haraway (1997) for her fascinating definition of Diffractions.

[11] Moreover the alternative-antagonistic concept of 'postfeminism' also conjoins in itself two different and opposite realms. On the one hand it can be related to queer theory (To maintain the open link with activism we would like to remind you that soon there will be the VII queer activist meeting, which will take place in Barcelona. More information at: http://www.queeruption.org/barcelona/english/index.htm) and the aim to deconstruct the dichotomized gender divisions (for an example of that use, see Preciado, 2003). On the other hand it tends to represent, with the complicity of the media, the negation of feminism, both by young women who assume contemporary stereotypical feminine constructions and sexist masculinised attitudes, and by liberal theorists who, starting from the negation of women's victimization, disqualify feminist analysis (Gamble, 2001).

[12] Whenever I have to talk about this concept I struggle with the definition, on the one hand the word 'black' homogenizes all the people not included in the allegedly 'white normality' and, on the other hand, the expression 'non-white' is white-centric. Alternative expressions such as: 'those who are not white-identified' seem to me too complex. Significantly the problem also exists because I am included in the white category, if I was not, my use of the term could be interpreted as a claim... ...finally, I have no solution to this dilemma, I do not want to be politically correct but I will be happy if someone has a good suggestion for me!! (Thanks Jude for highlighting this problem!!)

[13] This definition itself is incorrect and tends to render invisible the feminist practices and subversions that developed before the, so called, 'first wave' of feminism.

[14] Obviously there is a lot of work done in support of and in solidarity with 'third world' feminism (for example by NGOs) but unfortunately, in most cases, it tends to take over the agency of the protagonists of the fight and re-colonises their politics. Nevertheless, there are also interesting experiences that help the dialogues between women from minoritised backgrounds recognising their agenda, for example PGA (2001).

fragmented, cyborgs, nomads, borderline etc.. identities involved in 'womanhoods', the feminist political priority is still producing discourses that would like to be universal but represent just a particular version of reality. This implies, in my opinion, that one of the challenges of feminist politics nowadays is to find ways to fight for our legitimate situated claims (as example Biglia, 2005) without obscuring other feminist needs.

Although we tried to assume this complexity in the journal, with the presentation of very different collaborations, it is important to remember that they are just some of the possible points of view, the ones nearest to the editors. Nevertheless, we recognize these limitations and push for the enlargement of the interchange network that developed during this process, as a step in the direction of developing further the communications between feminisms (for another example: Zavos, Biglia, Hoofd, 2005). In this sense, we would like to remark that the editing process was extremely rich in collective self-reflections, with its inevitable stress and irritations, misunderstandings, etc… but in which the collective aspect was precisely one of the major aims.

As Erica Burman (2003) argued, the great importance given in recent years to introspection in feminism has produced (as a 'secondary negative effect') a reduction of the power of the collectivity. Sometimes we feminists, have spent too much time trying to redefine our differences instead of constructing alliances. So, according to her, if on the one hand postmodern feminism has provided a useful theoretical tool to question the depoliticization of psychology – a depoliticization effected trough the 'cooption' of the feminist claim 'the personal-is-political', on the other hand, through a displacement onto the self, it created new forms of pathologization, reducing the power of feminist

political psychology. In order to answer the call for collective action it is important not to idealize community, as some feminisms have done, because it can become a way of homogenising or neglecting differences (Young, 1990). But to experiment with new forms of relation and articulation, as we tried to do, by empowering networks or, using Plant's (1998) expression, 'weaving collectively'.

… and Activisms

Since the pioneering work of Le Bon and Freud, collective behavior has been seen as pathologic, childish, and uncontrollable, and Social Movements as the result of societal breakdown (Capdevila, 1999). Nowadays, this kind of interpretation has been mostly discarded, and, already in the '70s, a new generation of theorists have reinterpreted collective action in a more positive way (Johnston, Laraña, Gusfield, 1994). Nevertheless, and without entering an in-depth analysis of these theories in the limited space of this article, there was still a wish to *explain* and *understand* Social Movements and activism, so they tended to be objectified, reduced and homogenized. Some limitations particularly need to be highlighted, in that context, in order to outline the need for new approaches:
• From a social constructionist point of view it is not possible to understand the complexity and fluidity of social actions in different spaces and times without the recognition of the importance of **agency** as mobilizing factor (Reicher, 2004).
• Considering the NSMs (New Social Movement) as a cultural/identity project, as has been done by most theorists, is an exercise of power. Because, while the claim (for identity) may be considered an indulgence by those persons who recognize themselves as possible, it is a necessity for all those who, on the other hand, experience themselves as unreal (because they do not fit in any of the existing identities) (Butler, 2001). In this sense, a claim to re-

construct identity would be considered an a-political project only by those who are in privileged conditions. Moreover, defining the NSMs as a cultural project, implies reducing the notion of politics and activism to the formal arena and does not recognize, as argued by feminism, that **the personal is political** (Biglia, 2005).

• Most Social Movement theory is eurocentric (Gameson, 1992) but tries to assume a general value. The generalization of that partial view implies the loss of the differentiated and situated specificity of different realities. (Hetherington, 1997).

• Theories tend to be performative, creating new waves of 'activist practices' according to changes of paradigms in psychology, sociology or political theories, rather than attempting a situated analysis of realities. In this way, they obscure the ongoing work of activism (Plows, 2002) which then has to be genealogically recuperated (Roseneil, 2000).

• Last but not least, "traditional sociological models of movements players and their tactical interactions limit our understanding of movement as gendered. Adhering to these dominant constructions obscures the particular struggles and demands of women activists working for social change in the political arena." (Taylor, 1998:674)

Considering all these points it is clearly important to shift our approach to activism from an analytical and interpretative position to a more open hearing option. For this reason, and according with the tensions expressed in Activist Research (Investigacció, 2005), we offered the space of this monograph to feminist activists who, assuming their position as agents, have decided to recount different experiences of action, politics, life.

NETworking

After this brief excursion into the impossibility of defining the key concepts of this monograph it is important to try to understand the meaning and aim of this project. In the first place, the work produced has been constituted as an embodiment of some of the interrelated meanings between feminisms and activisms. In my opinion, knowing that theories and practices are not antinomies but could not exist independently, the interaction between the accounts collected, the practices and reflections behind the different themes, the network they imply, and the interconnections that grew through the attempt to engage in dialogues could represent, in itself, an activist practice. The Network(ing) was, therefore, simultaneously a space, a need, a process, a result, a limitation, a starting point, a political option and much more; it was also a cyborg (Haraway, 1991) constituted both by humans, non-humans and machine technologies, resources and energy.

In this context, the virtual space has been first of all a useful platform to facilitate interchange, both between the editors and with/between the contributors. Specifically the list and the web space offered by the **riseup** radical tech group (http://riseup.net) and the open source technology they use were extremely important and powerful tools. Moreover, using the Internet for a feminist project was a challenge to subvert the tecnological heteropatriarcal domain; a cyberfeminist action in which bastard daughters rebell against their fathers (Haraway, 1991)[15]. In this sense "one of the most exiting aspects of the Internet is its potential for the creation of communities that cut across border and distance." (King & Hyman, 1999: 13). Nevertheless, the difficulties of acessiblility and

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[15] Although I agree with Alexandra's suggestion that "the Internet too needs to be situated as medium/process/ technology specific to academic journal publishing and academic work", we have different

governamental restrictions (Quina & Miller, 2000) limit the potentiality of cyberspace which remains more open to priviledged people and/or communities[16]. This is one of the reasons why this processual network does not have to remain restricted to the virtual arena: it has to be spurious and contaminated, locating itself in all the places where it can be useful/enjoyable. In this sense we would like to transform the presentations of the printed version of this journal into spaces of debates and we hope this will allow, on the one hand, the proliferation of nodes and connexions between them and, on the other hand, the (re)utilization and transformation of the debates presented in the monograph and the production of more articulated collective knowledges.

This practice also respects the origin of the weaved network, which didn't rise up from nothing, but was (re)created based on the interconnection of different pre-existing networks. According to Plant (1998: 45) "If anything does emerge from the complexity of current shifts, it is the realization that cultures cannot be shaped or determined by any single hand or determining factor. Even conceptions of change have changed. Revolution has been revolutionized". In this sense probably one of the most important political aims of this work will manifest as it (de)generates in multiples and uncontrollable ramifications: it is in your hand!

Concluding … for the moment …

One of the important ways this journal has impacted on us, is to help us realize both the potentialities and the limitations of collective feminist/activist projects. Moving on, we acknowledge the ways in which the multifaceted travails of facilitating the creation of this journal have also inspired our renewed commitment and energy.

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understandings of the opportunity to use it. She is more pessimistic, thinking that, "because it is inscribed in the institutional space of the academy, I don't know if and how we can claim it as a 'revolutionary' [...] practice", but I still believe that the medium itself is neither revolutionary, nor conservative but its use can be subversive.... ...an open discussion!!

[16] Moreover, unfortunatly, most of the material in the web is in english.

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Alexandra Zavos comes from Greece and is currently a PhD student at the Discourse Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University, working on migration, gender and cities. She worked for a number of years as a youth worker and has been long involved in activism around issues of migration, primarily in Athens. Her involvement with feminism came at a later stage, mainly through her academic studies, and has been an inspiration for developing her research in relation to her activism and political engagements. Her experience of the feminist movement and its 'discontents' has been shaped by the controversial development of left feminism in Greece. Contact email: azavos@otenet.gr

Johanna Motzkau is originally from Berlin, Germany and has studied Philosophy and Psychology. She is now resident in the UK finishing a PhD at Loughborough University. Her current research is looking into theories of memory and suggestibility in the context of child abuse and child protection in Britain and Germany, focusing specifically on the way the legal systems deal with children as witnesses. Her activism has so far been aimed at issues of children's rights, the problem of child sexual abuse and sexual violence in general. Coming from a background of Marxist oriented German Kritische Psychologie, and later moving towards discourse analysis, deconstruction and critical developmental psychology, she has remained sceptical about the concrete value of these critical stances and thus maintains a general focus on the question of the actual impact of critique and on new forms of resistance; as could be generated from the intersections of feminisms and activisms. Email: j.f.motzkau@lboro.ac.uk

Jude Clark is from Durban, South Africa, and is a lecturer within the School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu Natal. She is currently completing PhD studies at Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), looking at gendered discourses of socio-political transition in the life narratives of Black South African women. Her research interests include processes of memorialisation and reconciliation, critical trauma theory and discursive constructions of research activity. Her activism has been broadly situated in the area of violence against women, and draws on her commitment to African feminist praxis. It includes feminist activism within the realms of 'popular/urban culture', and increased visibility of knowledges generated by Black women in Africa. Email: judeclark3@yahoo.co.uk

Barbara Biglia, is finishing her PhD on 'Women's narratives on gender discrimination within Social Movements' at the Universitat de Barcelona and she is teaching Social Psychology at the Universidad Oberta de Catalunya. Her research interests are centered on feminist epistemology, activist feminist research, feminist politics, cyberfeminism, gender violences, social change and critical theories-praxis. She has been involved since the early '90s in the non-hierarchic and anticapitalist Social Movement based in Italy and Catalonia but also in Chile and the UK. The participation in different feminist autonomous groups has been fundamental for her theoretical and practical development and has been a resource of strength to deal with the misogyny of some activists and the falsity and antagonism of most academic spaces. To be in contact with her: bbiglia@uoc.edu

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The great fresco painting of the Italian feminist movements

Sveva Magaraggia, Chiara Martucci and Francesca Pozzi[1]

Abstract

In aiming to map present Italian feminist movements we have to talk of plural "feminisms", which comprise of not just one feminist movement, but rather a variety of different actions. This dialogue piece intends to enable some of the protagonists of this movement to speak of their bonds with historical feminism, with the movement of movements (MoMo) and about their different feminist practices. Individual women and groups criss-cross each other in our mapping. This project based on conversation, can, of course, only be partial and continuously open to re-definition. Like the people we interviewed we share a common and ancient intolerance towards fast labels and well established definitions.

Keywords: *third wave feminism, Italy, activism, subjectivity*

Introduction: an emblematic genesis

We are a group, named 'lo Sconvegno', made of six women, aged around thirty, from Milan. We first met three years ago to organise a seminar about the different meanings of being a feminist today. We meet quite regularly in our homes or at our working places. Our gathering stems from our own experiences to try and understand, and possibly transform, what exists around us, in order to think and act politically. We try to do this, though, without dogma nor categorical imperatives to guide us. According to each of us, Sconvegno is a political space/time that our presence creates, a laboratory where emotions and experiences become a reading key to interpret the world. It's a magic that makes each of us individual and collective at one time: Sconvegno is more than the sum of all of us, and less than a separate and autonomous identity.

As a group we have written documents, we have built national and European political relationships and, we have gone to several varied meetings. Guided by shared interests and specific objectives, we have tried to focus on the ambivalent, unclear and potential character of the issue of precariousness/ flexibility, stemming from the transformation of work, time and life as we daily experience it. Our objective is to collect and comprehend the strategies that – more or less consciously – we apply. In those strategies we try and identify the "cre-a(c)tive[2]" potentialities that help to face and manage discontinuities, transformations, dumping and contradictions. We have been working with many other groups and

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[2] That is a translation of *cre-attivo* that is the combination between creative and active.

individuals, each very different with regard to age, gender, sexual preferences, nationalities and 'race'. We have been building a network and looking for the sense and pleasure of transformation – that is of ourselves and of the world in the present time. The painting of feminisms that we are trying to describe, is of special interest and curiosity to us, as it is from practices that we might get to know what the possible strategies, types of struggles or resistances are that women have put into action, individually or collectively, and with what instruments.

Within our on-line network we happened to meet Barbara, who later asked us to contribute to the present issue of ARCP[3]. In order to map current Italian feminisms in the social movement we designed a short questionnaire and made a list of groups and persons whom we have cooperated with in projects and political actions, and have experienced different ways of being feminists or have worked in different parts of Italy. Importantly, this allowed us to collect examples of different local level practices. In the definitive sample we 'selected' twelve contacts who belonged to collective groups. These included women members of A/Matrix from Rome, Mafalda from Turin, the group in charge of the Milan Women Library web site[4], the Sexyshock of Bologna, the Priscilla of Verona, the Assalti-

A-Salti of Turin. In addition we made contact with individual women interested and involved in feminist practices: Eleonora Dall'Ovo and Daniela Danna from Milan, Rosella Simonari who lives between London and Jesi (in the Ancona province), Laura Fantone living between Bologna and New York, Sara Ongaro, who is from Lodi but moved a few years ago to Modica (in the south of Sicily), and Sabrina Ponsi, from Bologna.

It immediately became apparent to us that there are strong connections, similarities and differences between these groups and individuals that offer interesting reading keys. In our reflexive roles as intermediaries we focused on the tales and stories relayed to us by each interview.

Presentations

The persons interviewed were first asked to introduce themselves by answering to a list of questions[5]. The beginning immediately tells us that young feminists are not keen at all to underestimate the meanings of the words they use, as the 8 members of the A/Matrix group say that *"the concept of "auto-introduction" itself is to be taken with the due caution"* and prefer to present themselves in weaker terms.

Our sample is aged between 18 and 44 years old, but with a significant concentration around

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[3] Barbara is from Milan, but now living in Barcelona. Some months ago we got in touch with Barbara through e-mail, as she is organizing a meeting on "Activist Research and Social Movements" with the Investigaccio group. We met when she came back during the summer. We immediately liked each other, it was a mutual feeling. She proposed that we write an article outlining the actual feminisms in Italy, to understand who they are and what they do.

[4] From now on, more simply, we will refer to them as the Library.

[5] Where do you gather? How often? Are there are other people meeting in the same place? Who? When was the group born? How many women are members of it and what's the average age? What is the main activity of the group (self-help, auto-consciousness, cultural activities, social local activities..)? Do you have a specific target you work at (schools, households, companies, city areas, political parties, social forum/movement of movements)? Has the group produced documents and texts? If it did, was it for an internal use, or was it meant to be delivered outside your group, and what kind of document was it? Was the group born *ex novo*, or was it a sort of branch coming from another group or surviving the end of past experiences? Were other groups born from yours lately?

the age of 30. The number of the members of the different groups varies between two, as the "crazy monads" of the so called Assalti-A-Salti, to twenty "Betties" that form the Sexyshock. In some cases the number can't easily be defined, in others it is always the same, but all the groups are linked in a network with other groups or single women.

Researchers, journalists, experts of statistics and informatics, expert in "marketing fighting", but also social or health assistants, librarians, scientists, professionals, programmers, PhD students, teachers, students: almost all from the heterogeneous galaxy of *precogs* – that means producers of immaterial goods, especially knowledge, characterised by precariousness and multiplicity of the jobs done.

Preliminary information on the protagonists of the debate: who are we?

The groups are mainly collectives that were born at the beginning of the new millennium, as they felt the need to take part in different and specific ways in the forums, movements and demonstrations, particularly after Genoa 2001[6]: *"We were definitely born ex novo! More precisely we were born after that night during the Genoa Social Forum. We were shocked because of what happened and among tears-gases we saw for the first time a political and lively action, we were all fighting, not making war"* (Assalti). *"[We were born in 2001], but also thanks to a well known Women*

Cultural Association (Il Filo d'Arianna of Verona) which made it possible for us to meet the first time. The association meant to gather together young women willing to compare experiences on feminist issues. This interested us and we decided to keep on meeting between us, in a place of our own" (Priscilla).

Some of them built their own meeting place where the so called "historical" feminism used to meet: *"We started from what we had inherited: the Library represented a political project and a special gift to take care of. This was a gift we wanted to make ours, by enriching it with new ways and practices of expression. We thought that the web site could be a useful instrument to our challenge, we are confident with informatics and therefore the web represented a sort of continuity with our daily life. We got into it, and we tried to involve also those that were less computer skilled (…). Our trajectory, which often presented occasions of conflict, originated from us as a group of young women, and then developed and reached a major involvement. An editorial unit was born out of a group of women differently aged and with various stories behind, each of us with a different sensibility and way of living the present time"* (Library).

In most of the cases the meetings of the group are organised on a weekly basis. Apart from the meetings, they exchange tens of e-mails everyday. That is our case as well, actually: We e-mail every day, sharing our own little experiences, information, documents, collaborations and support. Obviously we interact and keep in touch with each other not only virtually, we also see each other personally. In between the weekly

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[6] Genoa, in July 2001, has hosted a great three day international demonstration against the G8, the big/ rich 8 governors that gathered in Genoa. The 18th of July had been the migrants' day, who basically invaded all the streets in a big colourful parade; on the 19th of July there was supposed to be a march towards the "red zone" (that is the historical city centre which had been strictly forbidden and filled with military forces in order to protect the "big" eight), and the different groups decided individually the way to demonstrate along the march. On the 20th of July, there was the biggest demonstration of the '90s. Those days are remembered for the extraordinary participation of thousands of persons and for the violent repression by the military forces. Carlo Giuliani was killed by a policeman in those days, the school ("Diaz") where some people were being hosted has been removed and there has been an indefinite number of injured and arrested persons.

meetings – when free from workloads, special events and personal problems – the two levels described tend to mix, and we, as a group, interact with the computer. As we read the material collected for our research, we realize that we are not the only ones to do so: *"we discuss, think, by talking together but most of all by e-mail, and if we find a "meeting point" we keep on writing, drawing, communicating, on it, etc.[7]"* (A/Matrix).

Beside cre-actively exchanging points of view, the different groups usually write down documents, both for themselves and to be delivered outside the group. Better, they produce *"con-testing texts for external use, and surrounding texts for internal use"* (Assalti), and generally they take part or organise initiatives or actions – but then, again, and particularly in this case – it is quite difficult to describe them.

Often the places where women groups meet are their private houses, to the pleasure of the participants: *"The group doesn't have any institutional form or registration. We meet weekly at someone's place, we don't have (and we don't actually feel the need of) an official location (…). The group doesn't have a specific action place. Both because of our jobs and because of the informal local network, our action goes through, more or less directly, social spaces, education and training worlds, as well as companies"* (Priscilla).

In other cases meetings take place in community centres: *"Sexyshock – public space for contamination – is a women's group with the aim of informing politics and communication with 'pleasure', 'sexuality' and that beautiful and revolutionary energy they have. The project, born from a lot of 'Betties' that met in Bologna, used to meet in a squat until some months ago. Sexyshock* *said hello to this space because the latter was too small for its desires. Sexyshock is composed by a lot of (biological and not-biological) women and men, heterosexuals, gays, lesbians, transgenders spread all over Italy and interconnected with each other through the web"[8]. Ours is a project mainly based on the local and national level, and it is an 'original' project. It gathered interests and desires of women coming from different political experiences, it concentrated them, catalysed them and finally made them burst in a provocative and creative way: the first sexy shop made of women and for women has been created in Italy"* (Sexyshock).

"The feminist collective Mafalda meets at the Squat Laboratorio Sociale that was first occupied on April the 4th, 2004, and occupied again on July the 11th after we had been removed by the police a week earlier. Obviously we manage the Laboratory together with other groups like migrants, the university collective Rebeldia, squatters, collectives, groups of civil disobedience" (Mafalda).

Those who are not members of a specific group, act from within their professional job, they act politically and communicate through the web networks to make information and practices known. This is the case of Laura, university researcher, who is actively part of three different networks (NextGenderation, 30smthing and Prec@s, Precarious life Network[9]) – they gather a couple of times per year). Together with them Laura organises: *"initiatives and events aimed at giving visibility, delivering knowledge and offering debates about the problems of our generation, a knowledge society post-feminists generation. The guiding idea is to meet in different cities, or universities or other public places that have traditionally been open and friendly also towards the previous feminists generation, and it is*

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[7] A summary is available at the web site: www.amatrix.it.

[8] Sexyshock has a web site, www.ecn.org/sexyshock., and a mailing list open to anyone. To join the mailing list: infosexyshock@inventati.org.

[9] For details see: www.women.it/mailman/listinfo/30smthing and www.nextgenderation.net.

there that we organize debates and produce documents [that, again, will become public through the net]".

There are many different reasons for not being part of a group. Sometimes you can be a little sensitive towards small groups' dynamics: *"I have been part of a group of women in charge of a feminist radio program, then I have been a member of a communist women group, of a lesbian group, but I have always found difficulties in cooperating because of the small groups' way of working. Now I am looking at Attac Italia, as I am also interested in politics and economics, and these are the subjects I am trying to teach to my students"* (Daniela). Sometimes there is just no way you manage to be part of a group when moving frenetically and continuously from one city to another: *"I live in Jesi (Italy), where I take care of my mother, who can't anymore do it by herself, and of my family; then in Osimo (Italy), where I am a temp teacher (i.e. very precarious) at the course of "Dance and Pantomime" of the University of Macerata, and finally in London (UK), where I am staying to attend the Masters in Literature at the University of Sussex. I feel a little bit of a wanderer and a little bit of a care-worker. That is why being part of a group or of an association is being so difficult and discontinuous for me"* (Rosella).

Practices

Technologies

Technology, the web and the virtual space are part of the life of each of us. For all it represents a system of daily communication that offers possibilities of exchanges. The political meaning and the use we make of it are different. There are those who move freely *"in every virtual or material place"* (Assalti); there are those who more simply declare to act first *"at home, through the computer"* (Sabrina); and those who are part of a mailing list, and through it they act politically, without feeling in need of being always physically in touch *"as the net, by definition, has got very elastic membership and*

representativity limits" (Laura). *"In the reality of the web, it is possible to practice the gender difference"* (Library), as this represents a space *"you can deliver themes in"* (A/Matrix). That possibility stems from desire: *"What we want is to be able to translate ideas and desires into multimedia communication (…). Our web site represents a sort of politics gym. We select articles, we make comments on it, as we are not satisfied with immediate answers, we rather follow a sense that is not given for granted: that is the free sense of difference, which makes people confused, and change the meanings usually accepted. What we try and make through our web pages and those of other thousands', is to give a different interpretation of the events"* (Library).

Spaces of action

However a space of action might be defined, virtual, physical, symbolic, it is lived by many women with "cre-active" practices: *"among our attitudes, what prevails is the delirious confusion, some times it is creative, sometimes it is pure. We act everywhere, and nowhere. We are not kidding, it is exactly like this. What we produce is brief stories/ tales, articles for the press or for the web, communications, flyers, stickers, wall writing, banners, campaigns, individual or collective digressions (…). We took part in many public meetings and we launched the "egg campaign", which meant to spread eggs all over the urban and media space. We have used eggs, as it is an ancient symbol of life and fecundity. Eggs represent also the embryo that the present law considers an individual obliged to protect putting on a second level the woman's health. We studied the precarious forms of employment, the relationship between production and reproduction, wars and tortures. Against the Iraq war we reated some stickers with the erotic images of Betty Page together with peace catchphrases. This represented a trial to interfere culturally in a world of communication that keeps using women's bodies and sexual references"* (A/Matrix). It is precisely the group of women "Betty Page" who tells us about the origins of this practice: *"The practices that*

Sexyshock uses for expression are those of the "pink cre-activism", those practices that feminisms and the queer movement has developed in the last thirty years. They are practices based on fantasy, on the knocking down of stereotypes, on disguises during demonstrations and media events, through exhibitions and conferences" (Sexyshock).

Also the embodied reality is a space of action: *"since 1997 I have been writing and auto-producing lesbian shows as an aesthetic answer to the current cultural policies (…). My shows are mainly organized by lesbian local associations and they are played inside the associations themselves, or in public places like theatres or cultural centres"* (Eleonora).

These are just a few examples of how it is possible to intend and practice politics. The variety of the possible spaces of action is the crucial element that permits to singles and collectives a "modular particip/action" depending on the local context and personal attitudes.

Writing

In many of the cases described above, we can see that writing still represents a crucial practice as it is an efficient and well known instrument for political action and can have different forms. Some of the interviewees clearly express the importance of communication: *"the point was a thought about the language. The way a book or an article communicate is different from that of internet. Interactivity requires to be intellectually active, the way a text is presented is as important as the content of it. It seemed to us that what was at stake was a lot: is it possible to invest our political practice in internet? A neutral and universal language, a communication without body could ever contribute to flattening the gender differences? It is in this way that the web site of the Library lives inside the Library itself and, at the same time, the web site is bigger than the Library as it brings new ways of expression, new ambitions, desires, passions, political, technological and literary competences"* (Library).

The styles of writing then vary a lot according to the different attitudes, desires and objectives that the numerous groups and women have. They experiment with all of these possibilities. They range from the 'tale': *"against the Italian law regulating treatments for artificial insemination we produced a tale and a flyer in fanta-scientific and deconstructivist style"* (A/Matrix), to what is generally referred to as a 'document': *"mine is an intellectual job, and the way I can better express myself in is writing. Occasionally I have written and deliver flyers and I sometimes intervene at public debates"* (Daniela).

Daily life practices

Despite the great diversity of the issues, our interviewees often consider of especial importance the political meaning of their daily life practices and relationships. For instance, doing research on gender and homophobia is not considered only a theoretical action, but it is also *"putting into practice what you believe on"* (Sabrina), *"(…) I try not to escape these types of struggle in my daily life – for example, I do not hide homosexual preferences – though I realize how little impact they might have"* (Daniela).

Often the practices are collectively conducted, and in some cases, they are mixed: *"I work in a cooperative – Darea – with three other anthropologists (both female and male) and where there are also two men. We try and experience a collective organization of work, where we care also for the relations between us. We organize courses and we work with the attendants by conducting research with a participative approach that we apply both in the phase of designing the research and in the final practical application of the results. We work mostly with schools and associations"* (Sara).

Some traditional practices of the feminist movement are re-interpreted by the new generations: *"the mostly used practices are the free argumentation, auto consciousness practices, though*

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very spontaneous, and the exchange of texts that we have read or written" (Priscilla). What clearly appears as crucial, today and in the past experiences, is the role of the relationship within the group as an element towards the change. In each of the cases described, though, this attitude has both an inward direction, and an outward one: *"the lesbian theatre is to me a public space through which I get in touch with other women, with their ideas, lifes and fantasies, and where we share and build together a common language, a feminist argument" (Eleonora).*

To define ourselves …
not to define our selves …

In order to focus further on the world of the Italian feminist movements, we think it is important to understand how today's movements relate with the traditional feminist movement and with the definition of "being feminist"[10]. As we could experience in our own group, this is a quite sensitive and difficult topic. With regard to this we observed that the women interviewed express very different positions. On the other hand they all share the common view that there are many different feminisms, rather than just one.

Many women or groups decide not to define themselves as feminists because of different reasons. Someone thinks it is "diminishing/ narrowing" to be categorised in one established definition: *"collectively we did not define ourselves as feminists, both because not all of us, individually, agreed on it, and also because we felt it was "diminishing" to link our project and our experience to an established category. Beside this, there have been (and there still are) many femin-isms. We look at life and at politics with a gender approach, with the eye of post-identitarian and nomad women"* (Sexyshock).

The choice of not defining themselves is also meant to identify a clear separation with pre-established ideologies: *"I don't feel comfortable with –isms (I include also "ecologism", "third worldism", etc.), I don't like dogmatism and, on top of everything, I don't like to describe myself in these terms when I am talking about myself to other persons. Anyway I believe that the feminine topic is of crucial importance and has to be central in every form of critique, both as a matter of equity and as a need of consciousness"* (Sabrina).

New definitions

There are also those who try and invent new definitions: *"We do not define ourselves as feminists but rather "femminielle" (womanly) in the sense of post-everything, and particularly post-isms/post-ists. Basically a sort of "post-it", (that also gives an idea of our precariousness). The reason is that we would like to create visions and representations of future warring by struggling to build consensus and fighting against con-sensus, to make complementarity a strategic instrument of psychological action against the never ending repression of the male sex (by coincidence the same gender that dominate weapons, wars, violence, but also the feminist ethnocentric gender)"* (Assalti).

Some others offer a complex definition of themselves, that cannot be reduced to an *unicum*: *"A/Matrix is a post, trans, pop, cyber, neo, ultrà, meta, iper-feminist project. Despite appearance, we are very concrete, that is the fundamental element to avoid implosion and/or isolation"* (A/Matrix).

Yes, feminists, but…

Finally, there are those that describe themselves as feminists but who are also aware that such a label can "preventively" distance the audience.

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[10] Do you define yourselves as feminists? If you do, why? And if you don't, why? How would you describe your relationship with the historical feminist theories or with the historically known feminists? Do you have other points of reference (political persons, artists…)? And how about the international feminisms (postmodern approach, ecofeminism..)?

Therefore, these women decide to act and show practically the meaning of being feminists, rather than just defining themselves so: *"I think I am feminist if this means to start from myself, and to consider the logic a gender awareness offers as the right one. I pay particular attention to women's conditions and I feel very close to what the feminist thought has produced, and still does (that is where I come from, which is also part of what I am). But I have often had the feeling that declaring myself feminist would make more difficult, instead of easier, the relationship with other women. This is the reason why I definitely prefer concrete practice of the relationship both with men and women also when experiencing themes related to feminism, but without having to declare in advance that I am feminist (at the same time, I don't know how to define myself with the terminology currently on use)"* (Sara).

Some groups or individual women actually choose to define themselves as feminists, but though they share this common choice, they have different approaches and meanings in its application. The definition of the self as "feminist" can be justified in terms of the importance that the traditional feminist practices had: *"Yes, I define myself as feminist, I can't really tell why. Feminist theories and practices helped me to understand myself and the world around me through the strategic meanings of the logic of power and r-e(xi)stence[11]"* (Rosella).

To some other women, the prior importance is due to the matter of the subordination of the feminine gender: *"I define myself as feminist because I am aware of the oppression that I had to deal with as a woman, and that is the same for other women too. According to me (and I feel sorry that the word Feminist has become "old"), the common ground to begin from is exactly the situation of oppression and repression, without having to define precisely what it means to be a woman"* (Daniela).

Many other collectives/groups define themselves as feminist, though they tend to underline that it is a definition related to the present, and not to the past. In this sense it implies a continuous daily practice and research: *"we are feminists and we try and decline this word in the present. We are not separatist, nor differentialist. We are part of the Movement[12], and we try and talk with it every time we have the chance to, in order to contaminate it and to be contaminated by it! We are part of the Women's World March, a women's international network that met together the first time in 2000, and that is now getting organised for a new international demonstration in 2005, to present the "world women's rights declaration"* (Mafalda).

Some other women underline not only the element of continuity with past feminist experiences: *"We define ourselves as feminists because we collect the heritage of the historical feminism's practices and thoughts, and we address our efforts to apply them in our daily lives"* (Priscilla), but they also stress the possibility of going on doing politics together, crossing different generations of women, starting from new common desires: *"We are feminist, but we haven't build the feminist movement. This could have brought us frustrations, we risked to be women with a sense of weakness towards the past, but it did not happen. We play the game with our knowledge and our desires, it's our challenge. Though also older women are part of it, the path we follow totally belongs to us"* (Library).

Relationship with the traditional/ historical feminism

We have our origins in the feminist movement that during the '70s represented a great turning point in the relationship between genders and in the role of the woman. But we "young

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[11] Form the Italian r-esistenze that combine the existence with the resistence.
[12] In Italy we use the generic Movement meaning the whole of activism space.

feminists[13]" recognize and appreciate the existence of different levels of family relationship with the historical feminism. Some identify in the old movement a sort of "symbolic mother", some see in it a sort of "aunty", some others feel towards it more like it was a "remote aunty emigrated somewhere", a kind of relative that you do not know directly, but that can leave you an inheritance that might change your life.

Some women first got to know the feminist movement through the readings of the classical texts, for some others the relationship is based on the gender discrimination, and finally there are women who met women personally involved in the first feminist movements of the '70s. Anyway, what the results of our research show is that there is respect and identification/ acknowledgment for what has been done, though there is always attention and a critical point of view linked to the present times: *"My relationship with the old feminists is based on great respect, without them we wouldn't be where we are now. I admire the courage and the strength they had because everything had to be invented and done, on the other hand, though, I don't want to feel reverence towards them, and from the plinth where they are, I kick them down, and start from them to build and re-invent other feminisms"* (Eleonora).

"The historical feminism represents our past, we have changed its spirit and its way of being combative, the analytical instruments and their practices, though trying to invent other instruments in accordance with our desires and the historical context we belong to" (Sexyshock).

Most of them have their own particular political, cultural, artistic and general reference points, that help them in the theories and political practices and that sometimes represent links – both physical and intellectual links – with the international feminisms. Rather than reference points, they often represent incentives, theoretical ties and flexible limits they deal with: a sort of heterogeneous view that is at one time contaminating and contaminated. Here comes a significant example: *"each of us has her own aesthetical/ political point of reference: Carla Lonzi, Russ Meyer, Tina Modotti, Subrosa, Arundathy Roy, Peaches, Deleuze, Guattari, Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Bifo, Chandra Divakaruni. We put them on the table and we see what comes out. We like quoting them and being grateful to those that gave us something"* (A/Matrix).

With an eye on theories and on the stories coming from the past times, but also allergic to well established and organic visions, the new feminists seem to be definitely post-ideological. Some times they sound visionary, other times they are hyper-concrete, in between materiality and desire, in funambulist equilibrium in the desert of reality.

Relationship and conflicts with the Movement of the Movements (MoMo[14])

Belonging to the MoMo is generally an individual choice, even when we talk about groups or collectives: *"A/Matrix is a bit allergic to classifications. It feels a bit MoMo and at the same time it escapes the relationship with it as a personified movement (...), each of us lives/critiques/ contaminates/refuses it in her own way"* (A/Matrix). There are those who feel *"a natural part of it"* (Sara), and those who take part in it *"as a*

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[13] This is the label we are sometimes defined by. We have a happily conflictual relationship with such definition.

[14] Movement of movements (MoMo) refers to many organizations, individuals, collectives, groups, media-activists, trade unions, subjects in movement that from Seattle 1999 onward has been experimenting and practicing "another possible world".

demonstrating body during marches" (Eleonora); some others would rather describe the relationship with the MoMo as *"a common ground of analysis and aspirations"* (Daniela).

Rather than "membership", it would be more proper to speak of "relationship" with the MoMo. It is considered as one of the many different spaces where it is possible to act: *"the chance to realize that it is not an Italian experience, but a world one, a way to meet, contaminate and share practices and intuitions"* (Sara). Sometimes the approach is still based on conflict, *"a conflict solidarity"* (Assalti). *"Sexyshock has always interacted with the MoMo when it agreed on struggles and practices, sometimes it did it in a critical way, some other times in a circumferential way. Sexyshock is born inside and outside this movement: it is born right from the need of thinking collectively to new practices and communication strategies of the social movements and of activism"* (Sexyshock).

More general critiques towards the MoMo are based on the sexist logic of it and the use that the media make of it. Just because:*"feminism taught us that "male" is not neutral! (…) Inside the MoMo the relationship between genders should be made clear, as it is also an important element of the production and reproduction of the unequal employment relationships, i.e. the gender/sexual division of labour (…). The re-proposal of the military logic, facing "the enemy", does not convince us: we prefer ironic and indirect strategies"* (A/Matrix). This sort of logic often keeps far away from the MoMo: *"in the Italian context the MoMo is very "macho" and the strategies to become part of it need to be better elaborated* (Laura).

These are the different reasons why many women think that *"passing through the MoMo is important, but it is not sufficient (…), that is why we try and dialogue also with lots of other social activist groups that are not always part of the MoMo"* (Sexyshock).

What to do

A final question had to be on what are the main matters there could be synergies and a common ground to work on. The creation of autonomous spaces, virtual or real, to meet and dialogue in, is still *"an urgent political dream"* (Eleonora), that each of the women interviewed interprets according to her own specificity.

The key-word is still "Net", meant to represent a crucial place of the political practice, a net that can be modified through a *"struggle based on communication and a light auto-organization"* (Assalti) to change the collective belief through the share of common thought about communication: *"what is needed is a great process of education, to contrast the vision of the world, the mainstream that mass media transmit"* (Daniela); *"we should take more advantage of channels like schools and mass media (marketing campaigns, but also soap-operas that could deal with these issues)"* (Sara).

From our point of view, another useful key-concept for the comprehension of the contemporaneity is to consider always the ambivalence of (all) the transformations acquired.

Precariousness of work/ Precariousness of lives

The material we collected suggests that there are "cross-interests". One of the first issues to think about and to experiment with is, for us as for the majority of the women/groups interviewed, the one of work, in all its contradictory aspects. Work goes through all the different spheres of life, it shapes and gives rhythm to them; it builds and imposes the limits of our daily life, it sculpts our identity, and becomes crucial in the organization of our life: it is here that we can build strategies for changes – learning from our experiences – and

it is here that we can identify the existing margins of ambivalence.

A gender point of view about the ongoing changes is definitely relevant. It is important to present *"the end of distinction between production and reproduction, the common ground that lie under the care work, sexual work (often "externalised" to migrant women) and work generally speaking, the end of distinction among cleaning-care ladies, sex workers, wives, unfair lovers, and girlfriends that in the heterosexual sphere still preserves a strongly asymmetric distribution of work"* (A/Matrix), and it is important not only to try and solve the continuous discriminations towards women, to intervene is of importance to everyone[15]. The "feminilization" of work *"in the sense of a flexible and precarious activity, that includes more and more relationships, care and affective skills traditionally belonging to women"* (A/Matrix), is something that affects equally both men and women.

The relationship between flexibility and precariousness is complex and contradictory: *"we are precarious with regard to every aspect of our life: in the sphere of education (where culture has been sold out to private institutions, and the right to study is guaranteed only to those who can afford it) and in the one of employment, where all the types of new contracts don't even allow you to afford a flu"* (Mafalda).

How much of the flexibility we experience is desired and how much of it is imposed?

Discussing the contents and the analysis of the contradictions and ambivalences of work through the practice of talking about ourselves and about our experiences like feminists used to do, seems to be an efficient methodology, it helps finding an answer to the above question, and it avoids risks of (easily) feeling victims.

Body and sexuality

To many of our interviewees other very important issues are still those related to the body and to sexuality, though these themes are discussed in a strict relationship with other matters like biotechnologies, TRA[16], contraception and laws regulating abortion, and then prostitution and sexism.

"We demonstrated against the Italian law on the medical treatments for artificial insemination[17], interacting with women and queer groups, medical scientists and researchers, associations of parents unable to have children and lawyers, parties, Italian Social Forums and with everyone who was fighting against that law. (...) We are fighting against a law on prostitution! Therefore, with the objective of avoiding victimisation and criminalization of the actors concerned, we are working with associations of prostitutes, both men and women,

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[15] There still are differences in the salary on the base of gender, and forms of segregation, both horizontal and vertical are still damaging women.

[16] TRA – acronym for the Italian "Tecniche di Riproduzione Assistita", which literally means "Treatments for artificial insemination".

[17] On **March 27th, 2002** a draft is presented at the Camera (a sort of House of Commons). The draft had been written by a small Committee of the commission of Social Affairs and it is supposed to regulate the medical treatments for artificial insemination.
On **April 2002** the Movement of Women organised many events (assemblies, petitions, open letters, etc.) to express a collective disagreement with the attack to the self-determination contained in the law draft. Between **June the 11th and the 12th** of the same year, the draft law n. 47 (better known as Law on the medical treatments for artificial insemination) is discussed again at the Camera. Regardless of the many demonstrations in front of the Parliament, at the end of the first day, article 1 of the Law and some other amendments are approved. What happened was that, basically, the law recognised the rights of the embryo, but it cancelled any right to be born; it allows women to access to the techniques only when there are not "other" available methods that can solve the problem of sterility and infertility. Only married, not homosexual

and with those who think that prostitution has to be a free individual choice and that the persons concerned have to be protected in what they do" (Sexyshock).

Important issues about body find in the feminist movement different expressions, sometimes very original too: *"At the moment I am examining the metamorphosis in some body practices (like the tattoo) and in dance. I have the feeling that there is a dynamic aspect of the concept of metamorphosis, a sort of vital process that has been inside our culture for ages (think of Ovidio) and that is recently coming out in the mass culture (think of advertising and of video clips), in alternative philosophy areas (Braidotti) and in the literature and cultural critics (Warner)"* (Rosella).

Again, there are still urgent issues like *"violence against women (and violence, generally speaking, that gets into social relationships)"* (Sara) and *"actions meant to stress the principle of women autodetermination towards our own body, in order to guarantee respect and safety of it"* (Priscilla).

The environmental emergence

Another shared topic is the current production and consumer system. The proposals presented are the following: *"I [also] work in the Fair Trade Association, as I believe that the way we consume today, in terms of knowledge and choice, is one of the most political and subversive action we can do, it guides us towards the autodetermination of needs and towards autonomy"* (Sara). Some of the here described principles are translated in communitarian practices by some of the

women interviewed: *"the things I am mostly involved in are those related to the development or, better, to the involution and the decrease of economy. More specifically, I am interested in the communitarian ecology, and more generally I am interested in ecology, economics, intra- and inter-generational equity, critique on consumerisms, importance of the use of acceptable technologies"* (Sabrina).

Others pay more attention to the risk of essentialism: *"Ecofeminism does not convince me, as well as historical feminism doesn't. I think it is not completely reasonable to pretend that women's qualities are good a priori. As well as I do not agree on the idealization of the role of women in the "traditional" societies. Abu Ghraib[18] is not the only case that teaches us that women can be just as nasty as men"* (Daniela).

Crisis of representativity and active citizenship

Another very important area is the relationship with migrants. Some of the women interviewed cooperate directly with associations concerned with migrants, some others have personal relationships with migrant.

We observed in the interviews that what is central is the importance of *"talking of our own stories and mutually recognizing differences and similarities of the different ways of being women, against the universal and ethnocentric feminism"* (Assalti). At the same time groups are at work to

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couples are entitled to access the cares. In the law it has been further specified that the health cares related to the access to these techniques will not be included in the minimum service of the National Health System. Finally, on the 12th of June, the long debated article 4 of the law is approved by the Camera, it forbids the access to heterolog techniques.

On **July the 6th** collectives, groups, individuals and associations of people concerned took part in a demonstration in Rome.

The Law was finally approved in **2004** (Law N. 40/2004).

On **January 2005**, the call for a referendum to revoke the Law has been accepted.

[18] Abu Ghraib is the prison where some pictures of torture of Iraqi by North American soldier, including some female ones, were taken. A large debate in and outside of the feminists movement have been developed in relation to that.

build political relationship with migrant men and women, through *"projects that favour the exchange"* (Priscilla) and to observe and think of the common unpredictable ground we shared, though they are still aware of the importance of differences, particularly the difference in the rights to citizenship: *"the rights of non-citizenship of migrant men and women affect the spheres of social and cultural reproductions, and do not allow to recognize migrants as citizens and persons"* (Sara).

Avoiding neo-colonialist attitudes and the hypocrisy of *"radical-chic goodness and the politically correct relativism"* (Assalti), the crisis of representativity and the project of building an active citizenship represent a common ground to build a participative democracy on. This is made of the awareness of differences and a relationship with powers and institutions. *"The great challenge is the creation of an unarmed Europe, more welcoming and respectful of the differences. We would like this challenge to involve also the other feminist groups"* (Library).

Some of the women are planning possible campaigns *"for effective democracy of the decision processes, and the meaning of being a woman should become a symbol of a democracy stemming from the bottom, a symbol of respect and of the way relationships with others are built — particularly with migrants, sex workers and intellectual workers"* (Laura), and *"actions and processes that will favour a greater representation of women in institutions and in all the spheres of work and knowledge"* (Priscilla).

Conclusions

Actually, it seems impossible to draw conclusions. We intended to give a description of the complex fresco painting of the Italian feminisms. We might have only partly succeeded in our objective, but there is no doubt that the material collected in our inquiry is definitely very precious and can be read in different ways. As far as we are concerned the inquiry allows us to demonstrate that it is possible to create strategic alliances and synergies between the different feminist groups, starting from the differences, the similarities and the common interests. As regards our project as Sconvegno, i.e. we continue to work on our read-line on the ambivalences of precarity/flexibility going on with our political self-inquiry as a group, but also sharing projects and contaminating methods and concepts with many other subjectivity at national and transactional level.

As Sconvegno we go on reflecting and discussing politically about the topic of 'Women and work', and we want to inquire the ambivalences of flexibility both in our work and in our life. Aware of the difficult conditions of the labour market at present time, we want to discover the possibility for a real and concrete transformation of the status quo. For this political analysis, we are using as methodology the self-inquiry, trying not to ignore the complexity with the attitude to question, and we are creating new spaces of dialogue and interaction both at national and transactional level.

Sveva Magaraggia, PhD, student in Sociology at the University of Milan-Bicocca, has been active for many years in the Italian feminist movement. Principal topics of her research are sexuality and the ambivalences of the concept of citizenship.

Chiara Martucci is PhD. student in political theory at the University of Milan. Principal focal points of her research are feminist political theory and new forms of inclusion and exclusion.

Francesca Pozzi is social reseracher, and has been active for many years in the Italian feminist movement and in the no-global movement.

Contesting Femininity: Women In The Political Transition In Venezuela

Isabel Rodríguez Mora

Abstract

In Venezuela, the arrival to power of president Hugo Chavez has promoted a political transition in which the notion of citizenship is being disputed in a variety of topics. Women and their political entitlements have become one of the issues around which Venezuelan democracy is being re-defined. The article discusses the way in which femininity appears as political theme integral to women's political activism in Venezuela. The issue of femininity provides an opportunity for the reassertion of class and gender positions that are at the centre of the political confrontation in the country.

Keywords: *Femininity, citizenship, political polarization, power.*

Introduction

Since the arrival to power of Hugo Chávez, the transition towards a more participatory democracy in Venezuela has been accompanied by an increased appropriation of the public spaces by different sectors of the Venezuelan society, in which the notion of citizenship is being contested on a variety of subjects. This article presents a discussion of how the increased public participation of women in support of and against the political changes promoted under the Bolivarian government[1] has provoked a confrontation in which the notion of citizenship is being fought on the issue of women and their political entitlements. This confrontation has been the opportunity for the assertion of new political identities that destabilise women's traditional location in the divide public/private.

I analyse the subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990) that discourses of "chavistas[2]" and the opposition put forward regarding the issue of women's activism. These discourses locate women and their political participation not only in a universe of meaning, but "in a complex of apparatuses, practices, machinations, and assemblages" (Rose, 1998, p. 10) which presuppose and prescribe specific relations with themselves and with others. In this sense, it is important to highlight how these discourses can only be understood within the present social and political polarisation in Venezuela and in the material and structural conditions that contribute to the perpetuation of the social dynamic of exclusion/inclusion.

For this reason, discourses are to be analysed following the etymological sense of discourse,

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[1] The government of Hugo Chávez has adopted the political and military doctrine founded by Simón Bolivar as model and inspiration and source of legitimisation for the reconstruction of the Venezuelan State and society. This has included changes such as renaming the country as "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and the promotion of international policies based on the ideal of Latin-American unit against the notion of Pan Americanism.

[2] The term refers to the followers of Chávez.

as the action of running from here to there, as the errands within which meanings are employed and generated through relationships between those who are positioned by them. Following Barthes (1982), words will not be understood in a rhetorical sense, but rather in a gymnastic or choreographic sense, paying particular attention to the way in which the process of signification participates and is informed by the terrain upon which it is situated, specifically the social polarisation dominant in Venezuela. The character of this choreographic process demands taking into account the other, whose participation is fundamental. Within a dialogical process, the relationship with the other – and the recognition of its distinctiveness – allows for the emergence of social complexity and ambivalence. This encounter with the other – as Dussel (1988) has pointed out – is what defines the nature of human relations. In the Venezuelan case, the discourses and practices that support polarisation aim not at the vindication of alterity, but at the fixation of social divisions through a construction of an image of the other dismissed as social actor and repudiated as counterpart in dialogue and entitlements.

The difficulty of constructing a critical account of discourses embedded in a political and social situation as complex as the Venezuelan demands starting this article with several caveats. The first concerns the impossibility of understanding the present political situation in Venezuela as mobilised solely by forces that can be divided into "chavistas" and opposition and, furthermore, of approaching those as unified and stable categories. In this respect, I use those labels to identify the discourse of conflicting positions rather than imply their internal coherence or unity. The spectrum of "chavismo" and opposition would deserve a separate analysis and is beyond the scope of this work.

Secondly, the issues involved in the social and political polarisation in Venezuela – including the international tensions and interests that underlie the confrontation – seem to invite an analysis guided by some form of "balance" that would result in falsely apportioning similar blame to the parts in the name of a pretended neutrality of judgment. To this is added the risk of ignoring the potential for oppression that – in the Venezuelan case – is carried by the position of exclusion. In this respect, framing the analysis on the polarisation and, particularly, on its relation with Chávez's initiatives of democratisation and participation aimed at the excluded population must also incorporate an account of authoritarian tendencies that operate in the opposite direction, such as the militarization of civil society and the systematic promotion of exclusion of Chávez's political opponents.

A final caveat has to do with the absences in this article. While discussing the notions of citizenship that circulate around women's participation in Venezuela, I have focused on the category of women and have left outside the issue of masculinity, the invisible and deproblematised other that supports and sustains the categories of femininity in dispute. As it will be shown, at the core of the confrontation between different positions is women's challenge to the separation public/private and the destabilisation – in the process – of the qualities considered typical of women vis-à-vis the realm of masculinity. Indeed, one of the discursive strategies to dismiss women's political participation is denying their femininity and accusing them of being men.

I begin by introducing the changes in political participation that have taken place under the Bolivarian government. Later, I discuss the opposition's efforts to dismiss the political participation of women of "chavismo" by constructing their participation as a parade of

bodies and conclude by analysing the efforts of "chavismo" to contest these positionings. As it will be shown, in the confrontation, the assertion of femininity appears as a political theme integral to women's activism in Venezuela.

The Bolivarian Process: The public irruption of the poor

In Venezuela, the arrival to power of Hugo Chávez in 1998 started a new political era characterized by a significant political and social polarization. Until then, a political agreement – known as the "Punto Fijo" Pact – consecrated the alternation of power and established periodical elections as the basis for democracy. In practice, this resulted in a sort of bipartisan domination by AD and COPEI (the main political parties until the end of the '80s) which concentrated the capacity to organize and mobilize the Venezuelan population with a minimum of conflict (Virtuoso, 2000).

However, by the end of the '90s, the radical contraction of the oil revenue and the collapse of the traditional model of political leadership represented by AD and COPEI had configured in Venezuela a political world of pronounced anti-politics. The desprestige of the dominant political parties (and of politics) was accompanied by the emergence of movements or single-issue parties restricted to local affairs. Those were the years of the dispassion for the social and the retreat towards the private.

In this political and institutional context, the use of the oil revenue to assuage social conflict without altering the overall social structures that organized inequality contributed to the deproblematisation of issues such as poverty and exclusion. The latter was reproduced, thus, not through the direct denial of people's entitlement to participation, but from its integration within a political agenda that prioritised 'democratic peace' at the expense of social justice.

With the arrival of Chávez and the installation of the Bolivarian project, fundamental changes have taken place in the political institutions in Venezuela and in the discourses and practices concerning democracy and participation. Chávez's political project has been supported in the popular exercise of direct forms of political participation, which have been legally enshrined within the Bolivarian Constitution. For instance, Article 62 of the Bolivarian Constitution establishes that "all citizen have the right to participate freely in public affairs, directly or through elected representatives" (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 2000). Article 70 identifies means of political participation as elections, referenda, popular consultations, revocation of mandate and the legislative initiatives. In the area of public management, the establishment of "technical water boards" constitutes an instance of community participation and involvement over the management of water, a particularly conflictive issue amongst poor urban communities. The referendum of August 2004 – and the political mobilisation against and in favour of its realisation – in which the government's opposition failed to gather the votes required to revoke the mandate of president Chávez, constitutes another novel form of direct political participation made possible by the changes promoted under the Bolivarian process. At the same time, Chávez has constructed alliances with the poor, mobilised now by their class position rather than included in multi-classist partisan alliances such as the ones represented by AD and COPEI.

The irruption of the poor as interlocutors in the political scene – unprecedented in Venezuelan contemporary history – has contributed to affirm new forms of political

citizenship in the country and has questioned the legitimacy of social exclusion. The radical discourse in which these political and institutional changes have been embedded, together with their construction as threats to the dwindling middle class have resulted in a significant social polarisation. In this way, the popular hopes for a more participatory democracy have been accompanied by concerns about the authoritarian tendencies of Chávez, who has declared himself to be the "central column of the process of changes" (na, 2000). His leadership has been described as affectively charged and founded on the mobilization of passions (Lozada, 1999, p. 100) and this link of love seems to be central to the process of changes in the country.

For the middle and upper classes in Venezuela, the political participation of "chavistas" has bestowed new visibility to poverty and the poor, a sector of the society whose invisibility had been invested with a central role in the maintenance of social stability. Despite their overwhelming social significance, they had been excluded from the public life in Venezuela, while the middle and upper class established themselves as its sole warrantors. At the same time, the discourses and practices that perpetuated the separation had a material counterpart in the division of the city (and society at large) into 'barrios' and 'urbanizaciones' (planned urbanised areas of middle and upper class dwellers), which implied a restriction to the collective entitlement to public life for people from the barrios.

The irruption of "chavistas"[3] into the public has de facto broken with the practices of separation (Jodelet, 2001) that excluded the poor. This challenge to the organisation of the public has been actively contested by those 'included' and frequently constructed as a security threat that echoes authoritarian discourses on crime[4]. For instance, when "chavistas" held a demonstration in a public square on the East of the Caracas (opposition territory), neighbours displayed posters warning about the significance of such action: "Today they invaded the square, tomorrow it will be your house" (Hernández Montoya, 2004).

The public emergence of the poor as political actors has challenged the legitimacy of a social exclusion that denied people access to assets and resources critical to their well-being and that had poverty and marginalization amongst its expressions. It has affirmed a form of citizenship in defiance of the established political order in Venezuela, particularly as within the Bolivarian discourse people's exclusion is constructed as an experience of suffering and oppression understandable only as part of a relationship that has wealth and inclusion as its counterpart. This relational character of the dynamic exclusion-inclusion and how – as Jodelet (2001, p. 53) points out – it "induces a specific organisation of interpersonal or inter-group relationships of a material or symbolic form" is particularly visible in the topological distance and the spatial distribution that divides cities between 'barrios' and 'urbanizaciones' (urbanised areas of middle and upper class dwellers), a division which restricts not only the access to well being, but the collective entitlement to public life for people from the 'barrios' (Rodriguez-Mora, 1996).

The centrality of poverty and exclusion in the political agenda has substantively modified the

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[3] As a significant sector of the poor organised.

[4] In Venezuela, an authoritarian discourse on crime established an identity between criminality and poverty and set forth a proposal in which the control of crime consisted of the segregation of the poor in the 'barrios', as a defence of the city (which excluded those). This discourse not only ignores the fact that inhabitants of the barrios are the main victims of crime, but also denies them the condition of agents in the city and participants in the democracy (Rodriguez-Mora, 1996).

terms of the political debate in Venezuela and, in this respect, independently of the government inclusion strategy, its efforts have "already (…) modified the political consciousness both of followers and opponents" (López Maya, 2004, p. 138).

In the context of the process described above, the substance of citizenship (Bacchi & Beasley, 2002) in Venezuela –that is, the core attributes that identify people's entitlement to membership, rights and participation in the political community and in the public life of the country at large – is being contested on different issues and different terrains. In this confrontation, the middle class has positioned itself as the "civil society" – the embodiment of civility, possessors of rationality and rightful agents of citizenship – while positioning "chavistas" as "the rabble" – mobs and hordes that act instinctively, lacking programme and organisation. This 'othering' (Fine, 1998) of "chavistas" identifies them as the dark-skin inhabitants of the poor areas in the West of the city. According to Britto García (2004), "[r]acial hatred and aversion to the democratic majority are fused thus in an indissoluble alloy".

Changes promoted by the Bolivarian process have disarticulated some aspects of the traditional positioning of poor women in the Venezuelan society –promoting a new sense of citizenship and entitlement to public life. A discourse on gender equality has been institutionally sanctioned and gender differences have been recognised in the Constitution approved in 1999. For instance, throughout the new constitution feminine and masculine genders are both employed in the use of nouns; housework is recognised as "an economic activity that creates added value and produces wealth and social welfare" (Art. 88); and housewives are accorded the right to social security. Institutional frameworks for the promotion of women's autonomy and participation in the context of the

Bolivarian process have been provided under the Women's Bank and the National Institute for Women, while gender equality has been included amongst the general aim of achieving social justice.

These changes, together with the increased political participation of women, has turned womanhood into one of the issues upon which the notion of citizenship and its entitlements is being fought: what political spaces, rights and attributes are accorded to women in the Venezuelan society. In what follows, I will analyse how activist women of "chavismo" are positioned in the political confrontation by reference to the notion of femininity, how this positioning is contested by "chavistas" and how – in taking agency for political change – the women involved are reconstituting themselves as political subjects from different positions and with contradictory consequences.

Dismissing women: Political participation or the parade of bodies

Following the increased social mobilisation in Venezuela, women have become specific surfaces and subjects of a political debate in which they have been produced as political subjects of different sorts. A discourse on femininity, founded on the traditional separation between the public and the private, has been at the core of this confrontation. Within this discourse, femininity is constructed as embedding a position of subordination and passivity, which is to be played out by women as a condition to be successfully included in the dominant order.

In the context of the social confrontation, the "othering" of women focuses on their bodies, which are to display the signs of deservingness and belonging – in a classed ideal of femininity – or be proscribed behind the boundaries of exclusion. The strategy of separation is operated through the construction of a series

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of oppositions that function to deny the political entitlement of "chavistas" – through the dismissal of their femininity – while asserting at the same time the feminine qualities of the middle and upper class women. This discourse turns women's political activism into a parade of bodies. However, while – within this confrontation – wealthier women are inconspicuously situated in the private and, as the standards, are removed from the debate, poor women's bodies are constructed as surfaces accessible to public examination and their political activism is presented as what makes them accessible to the public gaze. Although in both cases women's bodies remain as spaces for women's regulation, this difference functions as a warning on the risks for women who go public (it is worth noting here that in Spanish "public woman" is a reference to prostitute) and the rewards for those remaining in the private.

This discourse on femininity asserts the world of politics as the world of men and women's political participation as conducive to a process of defeminization, by which they lose their condition as desirable (for men) and nurturing (for families). Femininity is constructed here as a form of social refinement that implies the acceptance of women's position of subordination and relegation to the private.

In this respect, the political activism of women "chavistas" is assessed as a transgression both of the class and gender sites that intersect the positions of poor women in Venezuela. A case that will illustrate these points is the opposition's discourse on Lina Ron.

Lina Ron: The anatomisation of women's activism

Lina Ron is a woman of the poorest sectors of Venezuela and the most famous of street activists of "chavismo". Founder of her own

political party, Unión Popular Venezolana [Venezuelan Popular Union], she has expressed a deep aversion to the rich people in Venezuela and openly favours the use of violence to defend the interests of the "Bolivarian Revolution". She became the object of media attention following some of her actions, such as setting fire to the US flag in Bolivar Square in Caracas after 11 September 2001 or declaring herself as commander of the popular militias (Ríos, nd). She has described her role as being "the ugly face of the process" (na, 2002b), as embodying the radical defence of the interests of the poor and the faithful allegiance to Hugo Chávez.

Her significance seems to derive not from her impact on the political process in Venezuela, but for her emblematic place as a theme for the opposition in their dismissal of the political participation of "chavistas", and of women within it. Lina Ron has been turned into the opportunity for the reassertion of gender/class divisions that organise the political entitlements in the Venezuelan society and, particularly, for efforts to restore social boundaries regarding domesticity and the private that have been (imperfectly) fractured by women's participation under "chavismo".

For instance, after she headed a protest in front of the headquarters of *El Nacional* (a Venezuelan national newspaper) on 7 January 2002 a (woman) journalist of another newspaper, *El Universal*, wrote a comment on the protest which reconstructed Ron's self-description as "the ugly face of the process":

> There was nobody to tell her "no, Miss Lina, it is not that bad…You are not ugly, you only have bad luck with hairdressers". And they don't say it, because Lina's look does not obey to a loss of mind of her Party' stylists, or to a confusion in the label of her hair dye. Lina Ron is golden haired because she has

decided it: Mae West of the oppressed, Jean Harlow of the West of Caracas, Lina Ron has the guts that the governor of Caracas lacks (…) She stands up with her lycra and her fierce photogenics to say "yes, I did it, mine is the ungrateful part and I will keep on doing it" (…) Here are two examples to follow: First, being coherent with one's ideas (…) and second, going around the world with a hairstyle and a dye that agrees with the deepest intentions of the one concerned. Finally, the hairdressing of Lina Ron, that explosion of silver that pours from her head, we have seen it, likewise, in the social pages of the same newspapers she hates *(Socorro, 2002)*.

On another occasion, during a hunger strike that Ron sustained in protest for a court case against her, a journalist commented on her condition, denying that her hospitalisation was related with malnourishment:

> The leader, Lina Ron, was admitted to hospital under the diagnosis of 'moderated dehydration', although until now she has been treated for varicose veins in the anus, painful complaint known as haemorrhoids *(La Rotta Moran, 2002)*.

In a similar way, in the context of an interview about the Venezuelan political situation a journalist (Salas, 2003) raises the issue of her hair colour:

> – Why do you dye your hair blond?
> – I dye my hair, of course, although I was born blond. But I am not going to give you the opportunity to search me to see if it is true.

This discourse elaborates on Lina Ron's position in the intersection between poverty, womanhood and political activism – which she embodies – in order to dismiss her as a political actor by affirming her lack of femininity.

Initially, Lina Ron is dismissed due to her poverty: the reference to the lycra and the hairstyle functions to construct a subordinate class position. Her hair colour is ridiculed as a sign of social aspiration and as an effort towards inclusion via the exaltation of a femininity to which she is denied access. This denial is simultaneously of the social inclusion and of the femininity endorsed within the world of the included.

In this discourse Lina Ron (and other women like her) is positioned as a (futile) competitor for aesthetic and social standards that only the wealthy can achieve. The discourse functions to restore the specifically gendered class sites that Lina Ron has transgressed, that is, the entitlements of womanhood within the domains of the poor. For instance, labelling her – within the first article mentioned above – "muchacha" (Socorro, 2002) (as domestic workers are usually referred to in Venezuela) and "Colombian" (Socorro, 2002) (as many "muchachas") and mocking her social status as "Lady Ron" (Párraga, 2002) functions to reassert the superior position of the middle class – usual employers of "muchachas" – while dismissing her as a political agent and equal interlocutor through the assertion of her subservient position vis-à-vis that of the (women) employer. This 'othering' from the middle and upper-class women has its most pristine expression in Lina Ron's qualification as "the only man of chavismo" (na, 2004).

While the discourse dismisses women of "chavismo" as political actors, upper and middle-class women are presented as incidental occupiers of the public space and doing so in the defence of the private sphere. This differentiation was reflected by the media reports of the demonstrations that took place in 2002 to celebrate International Women's Day. In articles with headings such as "The War of Women", "Venezuelan women in two fronts" (na, 2002a) or "Venezuela: Chávez divides

women" (Zambrano, 8/3/2002) the opposition's rally, from the East to the West of Caracas, was described as made of middle-class women, well-to-do adolescents and 'fashion ladies' and their slogan "Women for Freedom" was expanded upon by one of the speakers who highlighted women's patience to procreate, support and marriage and raise children as skills that would be employed to oust Chávez from government. The Bolivarian women's rally – in opposite geographic direction – was presented in the media as supporting "social justice and peace" and particularly advocating changes such as a law on responsible parenthood, the introduction of DNA testing to force parental support payment and salary and welfare provision for housework.

In these references, women of the opposition and women of "chavismo" are diversely positioned in the divide public/private. Women of the opposition are presented in public in defence of the private – family, marriage and children – as standing in for their families, in the role of custodians of a private world constituted by families and headed by men. Women of "chavismo" are presented as turning those into issues of public concern; as subjects with their own projects and notably as autonomous (or in conflict) with men, rather than subordinated to them. It is in the context of this fundamental difference that the discourse on femininity focused on the body is constructed by the opposition.

Within this discourse, poor women's bodies are treated as public objects; as unclaimed bodies (not attached to family or men). These become available for dissection, and judged as evidence of poor women's incompetence in producing themselves as sources of desire. Wealthier women's bodies – on the contrary – are either silenced (concealed from the public gaze, deproblematised and thus turned into the norm) or praised for their compliance with

fashion and valued for their aesthetic qualities and desirability.

This discourse on women's political participation as a parade of bodies, echoes what Smith (1993) has identified as Rousseau's design of gender, which is at the same time a design for women's presentation of self. According to it, women are to be educated to be women for men, while men are to be educated to be their own man.

In this respect, this discourse differentiates women of the opposition and those of "chavismo" according to their mastering of "the artful work (…) in producing on their bodies the local expression of the text" (Smith, 1993, p. 171), that is, of an appearance that expresses a doctrine of femininity founded on the subordination to men. Focusing on the feminine body – as desirable and nurturing – allows this discourse to reassert the division public/private and, within it, to position women in the private as guardians of the family unit. At the same time, it functions to reproduce practices of separation with women of "chavismo", as their bodies are signified as the impossibility of realising a femininity on sale at cosmetic counters and consecrated at beauty contests. This classed discourse on femininity dismisses poor women's (futile) display of the commodities that support inclusion (thus the mocking of Lina Ron's blond dye) as well as reinstating the exclusion and denying the legitimacy of the desire.

In social terms, this discourse on femininity functions as a "practical guide to conduct" (Smith, 1993) that organises the social exclusion integral to the organisation of the Venezuelan society. Words, images and actions support a patriarchal organisation of relations in which poverty and autonomy compound to produce the immorality of women who are for themselves. At the same time, it reasserts the

patriarchal values in which men's identity is considered as complete in itself, while women's is constructed as dependent on men's[5].

This classed and gendered discourse on participation reflects and reinforces the social polarisation in Venezuela. Appealing to the notion of femininity to deny poor women's entitlement to citizenship – that is, a space and voice in the public life of the country – functions on two levels. Initially, it reinstates the overall position of subordination of women and their displacement to the private sphere and later – by focusing on the body and its achievements within the patriarchal order – it turns poor women's political participation into a ritual of subordination that has as its counterpart a public act of appropriation (Scott, 1997) of the sign of deservingness – or lack thereof – by wealthier women. This is, it seems clear, a confrontation between subordinates in society, although the level and nature of subordination is different for the two positions that are analysed. Although women's participation takes place within the agenda established by the confrontation between the opposition and "chavistas", women's activism becomes the opportunity to reinstate the habits, rights and entitlements that have regulated gendered and classed relations of exclusion/inclusion in Venezuela.

In this context, the political category 'woman' appears as "fragmented into many different positioned and interpellated women, with varying political interests" (Burman, 1999, p. 163). As Burman has discussed, such diversity challenges the abstraction of 'women' and highlights the diverse intersections of gender with subject-positions organised around issues such as 'race' and class (Burman, 1999). In the Venezuelan context, this fragmentation of the category 'woman' is embedded in a materiality that is structurally diverse and within which the discourse on femininity operates in different ways.

Women of "chavismo": The assertion of passionate politics

From "chavismo", women's political participation is constructed as an extension of their private roles in the family to the public world, as an amplification of their affective and nurturing roles as mothers to the communities and the country, which are constructed as extension of their families. From this position, women speak and act as extended mothers or lovers, mobilised by some sort of unconditional love that would be specifically feminine and highly dependent on the attachment to the masculine leader. The place of affection as an axis for political participation is discursively grounded on the reference to the relationship between Simón Bolívar and Manuela Sáenz[6], whereby women of "chavismo" would be taking part in a relation of "requited love" with the Bolivarian process and, specifically, with the figure of Hugo Chávez.

This discourse on passionate politics (imperfectly) contests the opposition's dismissal by framing women's participation within the aim for gender equality and by asserting a femininity based on love toward the

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[5] Ramphele (1997) has discussed this issue regarding political widowhood in South Africa.
[6] The Ecuadorian Manuela Saénz was actively involved in the struggle for South American independence from the Spanish colonial power. She was also lover and supporter of Simón Bolívar and accompanied him during the main campaigns in the struggle for independence. On one occasion, in 1828, she saved Bolívar's life by helping him escape an assassination attempt. Interest in her participation in the political events surrounding the independence of South American nations have been overshadowed by accounts of her relationship with Bolívar.

family and, by extension, towards the community and the country. The goal of gender equality reproduces women's subordination and social hierarchies by implying the higher value attached to masculinity and assuming the neutrality of differences between women and men (Hollway, 1998). Although this positioning challenges the traditional divide public/private, the efforts to effectively contest the opposition's discourse on femininity are hindered by the unitarian identities provided by the Bolivarian project and its patriarchal values. The femininity of women of the opposition is dismissed as supported upon unnatural beauty, occasionally leading to their 'denunciation' as men.

"Bolivarianas", a set of interviews with women leaders and militants of "chavismo" published in 2004 (Saiz, 2004), provides clues regarding the constructions of women's identities within the Bolivarian project as well as their resources to contest the discourse of the opposition on the issue of women's activism and femininity. In what follows, I support my analysis on extracts from the text of this book.

**From housework
to unconditional love**

The discourse of women of "chavismo" locates domestic skills at the basis of a continuum that goes from the care of the family to the care of the community and the country, which are constructed as extensions of the first. Within this discourse, the responsibility for the maintenance of the household and its members remains within individual women and women's specific contribution to public life is to be found in the unconditional love that is vested in the process of participation.

For instance, the president of the Women's Bank, Nora Castañeda locates political participation as an activity alongside the responsibilities of housework and paid work:

We can even say that there is not only a double shift, but a triple shift [for women]. That of women in their homes, the one at work to bring money to the family and (…) the one to transform their communities, an essentially political one (p. 32).

This acknowledgment and acceptance of women's position regarding housework and the reproduction of the private is accompanied by calls to "revolutionarise" it (p. 34) and to "transform the internal relationships in the family to make them solidary" (p. 77). The project for pensioning housework is mentioned as providing a material foundation that such aims lack in the present. Housework is constructed as a specifically feminine duty, which women not only choose, but also choose to do well. In this respect, Lina Ron positions herself as enjoying her chores:

There are times at which I don't have a home life, for security reasons. But I cook and iron because I like it. I do nothing by force (p. 51).

Later, she specifies the domestic prescription for women:

[Women] must (…) know how to combine spices, how to make enough food (…) that it can't be either salty or bland. As the coffee, it can't be either too sweet or too dark (…) I iron and I sew very nice things, I make quilts, blankets, children's clothes…I knit (…) I make everything (p. 52).

The generation of the desire and skills for the domestic are not questioned, and this understanding of women's agency seems to disregard the social forces that constitute them and the places they occupy in a patriarchal society.

Women's political participation is constructed as extension of this vocation and skills for the

domestic towards the social, which is presented as some form of extended family. According to the director of a community TV channel, indigenous roots are to be found in this "more collective vision" of the family (p. 39).

These references echo the traditional displacement of women to 'base work', which confines women to tasks of maintenance and care of political organisations and their members and constitutes a particularly insidious form of marginalization by which political participation is turned into "another extension of the housework" (Espina & Rakowski, 2002), denying women access to positions of leadership and decision-making.

Within this discourse on the exaltation of love and domesticity, the revolution is constructed as a particularly feminine accomplishment, as a process to which women have given birth. The defence of the revolution – in the face of threats such as the coup d'état of April 2000 – appears as expression of some form of "unconditional love" (p. 40), which is identified as a motherly emotion. This "link of love" (p. 82) is recognised as the axis around which women's political mobilisation is organised as part of the Bolivarian process:

> Mothers do not calculate the force to defend their children (…) This feminine defence of the revolution broke with the dominant logic and activated the force of this process. The spark of bravery and unconditional feminine love set on fire the heart of the whole of the people (p. 39).

This link amongst "chavistas" is presented as recreating the relationship between Simón Bolívar and Manuela Sáenz, who was his lover and supporter during the war of Independence. In social terms, the Bolivarian process is affectively constructed as "a sort of collective love for life" (p. 41), which is considered to be

–in a political history marked by a succession of betrayals – exceptional for being a "requited love" (p. 41).

In this discourse on passionate politics, President Chávez appears as central figure whose existence and actions provide sense to the Bolivarian project as well as a location for his followers. The affective attachment – which is subjected to the existence and superiority of the leader – appears as what grants women of "chavismo" a voice and a possibility to act. In the discourse, the essential place of Chávez identifies him as the incarnation of the project: as "ideas made man" (p. 48), "almost a godsend" (p. 102) or "the only leader" (p. 137).

To the extent that the success of the Bolivarian project is constructed in this discourse as deriving from the unconditional acquiescence to Chávez, obedience and compliance to the leader are prioritised as political attributes of his followers. In this respect, the relationship between Chávez and his followers appears as reproducing positions of subordination characteristic of the patriarchal organization of society. For example, when discussing the emergence of her own leadership, Lina Ron refers – besides to her "innate qualities" – to the importance of knowing how to obey:

> [N]obody learns to order if they don't obey first. And I am a disciplined soldier of whatever the President of the Republic says (p. 50).

The intense dependence of the process on the leader has as its counterpart the dismissal of any possibility of developing a political project without Chávez and, sometimes, even of any personal existence independent of him: "Lina Ron doesn't want life if he [Chávez] is not alive, life is worthless without him" (p. 49).

In this way, while the Bolivarian doctrine lacks alternative positions from which to challenge

the political dismissal of activist women from the discourse on femininity put forward by the opposition, the construction of women's participation as founded on the unconditional love for Chávez and the process, seems to promote the extension of domesticity to the social, the submission to the leader and the confinement to positions of subordination.

Within the Bolivarian discourse, the voices afforded to women construct their participation and achievements as local expressions of the will of the leader. In this respect, the notion of gender equality seems to express the incorporation of women into the Bolivarian project on equal terms to men, rather than the realisation of specific identities, demands and projects. Accounts of the changes as a presentised Bolivarian past – originally frustrated with the death of Bolívar and the demise of his project, now reconstructed by Chávez – constitute concrete obstacles for women's appropriation of their emancipatory and creative practices, despite the material and institutional conditions that facilitate the process of changes.

In this sense, the development of a critical position for women seems to require the identification of alternative sources from which to 'read' their experiences (Willig, 1999) as to generate other identities distinct from the ones provided by the Bolivarian narrative. These identities should acknowledge women's contribution to a process of change in a context that allows for the "interplay of different motifs, each retaining its separate identity and sustaining the resulting melody through, and thanks to, that identity" (Bauman, 1995, p. 284). In practice, this would entail deviating from the historical identities put forward by Bolivarianism to generate emancipatory references capable of providing autonomous places for women and their projects.

Challenging women of the opposition: From the body to the heart

Women of "chavismo" are positioned – amongst other things – against women of the opposition, whose political participation is dismissed through accusations of expressing unnatural womanhood and being supported on the display of fabricated beauty. By comparison, women of "chavismo" are presented as embodying natural and authentic feminine qualities, which seem to be associated with their affective commitment via the collective link of love. This discourse, however, does not impugn the aesthetic standards embodied by women of the opposition, but the inequitable means by which such standards have been achieved.

For instance, in the introduction to the book "Bolivarianas", women of the opposition are referred to as symbols of "the worst of the feminine gender (…) the most detestable" (p. 10), as:

> They lend themselves to the manipulation of a stereotyped image of woman for the benefit of economic power (…) They distil venom, behind their plastic surgeries and their faces of plastic girls. Complicits and participants of the fascist conspiracy. Admirers of Margaret Thatcher and Condoleezza Rice, contemporary exponents of the lowest of the feminine condition. Women who act against human values, expressing the most backward of forces of history. That is why, beyond the feminine protagonism, there is an unbridgeable gap between the Bolivarian and the squalid women. That is the gap between the Fatherland and the colony; between the privilege and the social justice; between oppression and liberation; between shame and dignity (pp. 9-10).

The theme of opposition women's beauty as being 'plastic' – superficially attractive yet unoriginal and artificial – is recurrent in the texts of "Bolivarianas", and is presented as being in contrast with the authenticity of "chavistas":

> In the big media, the only value highlighted about Venezuelan women was its 'beauty', creating a whole imaginary and industry whereby women were a permanent piece for export and for contests, as malleable as allowed by plastic surgery, and whose only goal was to be 'miss Venezuela', miss world, miss universe, etc. (…) Paradoxically, this condition as an object was announced as a revindication of the feminine. But in the midst of the revolutionary hurricane, this sad paper given by the big media to the Venezuela women was shattered by the real and true woman of our land (p. 43).

In this respect, the discourse of "chavistas" – and its displacement of femininity from the body to the social extension of love – appears as an unsuccessful contestation of the opposition's discourse. On the one hand, it leaves unchallenged a fundamental feature of the doctrinal organization of femininity, that is, the suppression of the active presence of women as subjects and agents vis-à-vis men (Smith, 1993). On the other, it reproduces positions of subordination (to the Bolivarian project, Bolívar, Chávez), which contain women's demand for producing themselves as desirable for men; and such demands are not theorized, leaving thus unchallenged men's hegemony. Some texts of "Bolivarianas" present women's comment on the generation (and frustration) of such demands. For instance, Lina Ron mentions her failure to comply with her partner's demands to satisfy with the aesthetic specifications for beauty in Venezuela, for which she 'excuses' herself due to her lack of time:

> My partner complains a lot that I don't look cute and nice. But, how can I look cute and nice. If I did, I wouldn't have time to take care of anything (p. 58).

While Ron fails to identify the operation of patriarchal power in her partner's and her own discourse, the contradictions in her position leaves her with a broken subjectivity (Esté, 2004) that debates itself between placing the blame on the demands she cannot satisfy or blaming herself for not being capable of displaying the appropriate signs of femininity. The unavailability – within the Bolivarian project – of alternative discourses within which to give sense to these contradictions seems to prevent the generation of effective forms of resistance.

Concluding remarks

In Venezuela, the assertion of femininity appears as a political theme integral to women's activism. It constitutes one of the ways in which women are produced as political subjects and – particularly – as participants in the dynamic of social and political polarization prevailing in the country. While the Bolivarian process seems to have facilitated the significant political involvement of women – for and against the changes – the doctrines of femininity, which predominantly position women as subordinates in the patriarchal order, have remained unchallenged. The power of the discourse on femininity functions here by giving women a voice, rather than by silencing them (Clegg, 1998).

Amongst the opposition, the appeal to a discourse on femininity focused on the body to dismiss the political participation of women of "chavismo" converges with the variety of other "practices of separation" (Jodelet, 2001) through which poor people in Venezuela have been socially, economically and geographically excluded. This exclusion is maintained not only through discursive means but also through

forms of materiality and spatial distances that affirm social distances (Bourdieu, 1999).

In this context, the issue of women's agency remains a difficult one, due to the "many layers of interconnectedness, negotiated meanings and social spaces" (Ramphele, 1997, p. 115) that women occupy. The possibility of restoring agency seems to demand the recognition of how women –including their desires and self-demands – are constituted in the midst of a variety of material and subjective confluences and the possibility of performing the available positions in particular ways (Burman, 1996; Hollway, 1984). This understanding could provide the basis for the theorization and documentation of "the field of action and modes of resistance possible within prevailing social arrangements" (Burman, Kottler, Levett, & Parker, 1997, p. 2).

The dispute of femininity could be placed amongst what Scott (1997) has called "infrapolitics" – an unobtrusive realm of political struggle – and its invisibility to mainstream analysis and debate seems to indicate the significant stability of the notion of masculinity, which is at the base of it. Despite this, the contradictions generated by the simultaneous demands placed on women by their political participation and their compliance with a male-defined femininity seem to open the potentiality of renegotiating gender relations in the Venezuelan society.

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Isabel Rodriguez Mora is a Venezuelan social psychologist living in London, who has worked as lecturer in under-graduate and post-graduate courses in Venezuela as well as in the management and evaluation of emergency interventions. Her interests include: psychosocial interventions in emergencies; social exclusion and Psychology; and the evaluation of social projects. She has carried out research and published articles and chapters of books on Human Rights, political participation and psychosocial interventions in emergencies. She finished her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2003. Email: isabel.rodriguez-mora@tesco.net

Family resistances: Women, war and the family in the African Great Lakes

Ingrid Palmary

Abstract

Recent attention to the activities of women in times of war has tended to represent them as 'special victims' of what is essentially a male act through the depoliticisation of the family and women's domestic roles. There has, however, been a growing interrogation of the complex roles that women play in wartime and the support and resistance that they show to armed forces. This paper contributes to this by challenging the depoliticisation of the family and argues that control over sexual relationships is central to the construction of identity over which wars are fought. Based on interviews with refugee women living in Johannesburg, South Africa who have been forcibly displaced from the African Great Lakes region, I aim to show that women's resistance to their position within the family exposes the myth of 'pure 'racial" identity and is, in several cases, the source of their persecution. In spite of this, a failure to recognise the intimate relationship between the state and the family has perpetuated romanticised notions of women as politically inactive and equally has seen outrage when women are violent or politically active. I argue that the structuring of services on a construction of 'innocent women' provides both the space for women to contribute to the depoliticisation of the family but also renders some women more 'deserving' than others.

Keywords: *family, state, women, conflict, discourse*

Locating the research

This paper aims to conceptualise the link between gender and armed conflict and how women have been positioned within discourses on war, as well as to begin a (neglected) process of unpacking their resistance to and support of war. In doing this, I will explore the ways in which the politicisation of the family is central to challenging malestream conceptualisations on war that retain a mythical division between public and private; a critique already central to much feminist analysis. However, more than this, I will consider how the management of the family is central to the reproduction of the myth of a 'pure' 'racial' identity. This flags a need to better understand women's positioning within the family, the ways in which it is contested, defended and negotiated, and how this might work to support or challenge wartime practice.

In doing so I draw on research and interventions undertaken with forcibly displaced women[1] from the African Great Lakes who are living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Most of the women were from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda although some

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[1] Most of the women I interviewed were asylum seekers although this term is used here to refer to all the women displaced regardless of their status under South African immigration law.

were from Uganda, Congo-Brazzaville and Burundi. The participation of these women reflects the ways in which the conflict in this region has been at the intersection of ethnic, 'racial' and national identities that have been mobilised under colonisation. I, therefore, interviewed women who identified themselves as fleeing that conflict rather than interviewing them on the basis of national identity (as has typically been the case in studies on the Rwandan genocide, in particular) so as not to reify one aspect of the conflict over others. This reflects an attempt to address what Mamdani (2002) identifies as a major failing of 'area studies' namely that it conflates state boundaries with boundaries of knowledge, turning political areas into epistemological ones. This is particularly relevant given that the research took place within post-apartheid South Africa, which would have been impossible prior to the collapse of the apartheid state and the increasing integration of South Africa into regional political processes[2]. Thus to view the conflict in Rwanda or the DRC as outside of regional political processes and associated development practices would be to further naturalise current socio-political arrangements in Africa as they have emerged in the post-colonial era.

The research was conducted in part through my position as a researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), an NGO based in Johannesburg, where I have worked for approximately five years. It was also conducted in part for a PhD programme. This dual purpose presented a number of contradictions in the theoretical assumptions from which I work, the interventions deemed necessary and the political imperatives of a project like this.

Although there have been many such contradictions, for this paper it is perhaps relevant that throughout this project I have experienced a (artificial) dichotomy between 'academics' and 'action'. On the one hand this has driven an anti-intellectualism in the NGO sector that has impoverished our ability to critically reflect on our 'practice' and allowed emerging debates on the role and function of international aid to be silenced when it emerges through academic institutions. In contrast, however, the imperative to theorise ones work in academia – which is often interpreted to mean drawing on work in philosophical traditions from European, (usually men's) writing has presented an opening for critiquing how analysis from other spheres (such as NGOs, African academia) can challenge the boundaries of what constitutes good knowledge and research. Thus in reading these transcripts I have been constantly trying to manage two audiences who will develop different critiques of the work and will be resistant to different representations of refugee women that I am constructing. Similarly, my desire for research that can drive 'activism' which, on further reflection, I realised I defined as lobbying for changes in the State treatment of refugees, at times, contrasted with the women's focus on meeting basic needs regardless of whether this required an engagement with the State or not. Thus my positioning as a South African with a concern for emerging forms of South African democracy framed a particular notion of what counted as 'action' within the theory – action dichotomy already described.

In this paper I am drawing on the 40 in-depth interviews that I conducted with forcibly displaced women, which focused on what had

[2] Although African migration has taken place throughout the apartheid era, the end of apartheid has seen changes in the nature and pattern of this migration. For more on Francophone African migrations see Bollion and Morris (2001).

happened to them during the conflict, their resulting displacement and how they interpreted their experiences[3]. I originally met the women through a shelter for refugee mothers and their children where the CSVR had worked and run support groups. I attended some of these support groups to introduce the idea of the research to the women and became particularly close to one woman who in turn helped me to frame the research questions and invite other people to be part of it. I drew heavily on the people who acted as interpreters for me and their local contextual knowledge and advice. Although I was originally concerned with focussing on (South African) State service delivery, I soon abandoned this line of questioning as it was clear that the local reception office was hardly functioning at all and was the site of extreme abuses such as people being beaten, large scale corruption and a refusal to process applications for asylum. My difficulty in exploring these questions highlighted for me another double bind in my dual role as NGO worker and PhD student, namely, that a careful academic analysis – particularly in qualitative research – privileges the subtle, with a focus on language, and makes a simple expose of abuse seem 'unacademic'. It is not surprising that the widespread abuses tend not to be the emphasis of my academic work but rather have been put into an NGO report (focussing on trauma in times of political trsition). Since this project ended, ongoing advocacy groups have taken place and emerging conversations in these kinds of forums continue to inform my reading of the interview texts.

Contextualising memory and identity

Here I am working from the perspective that 'memory', rather than being contained within the individual, is rooted in an 'array of different cultural-historical discourses within which this term is used to describe and carry out certain practices. As a consequence the topic, and concept of memory must be seen as a cultural-historical phenomenon' (Brockmeier, 2002, p. 7). The narratives of the women I interviewed therefore are read, at least in part, as an engagement with, and negotiation of, dominant discourses of displacement, gender and war in the context of NGO service delivery to refugees. They also reflect a negotiation of the increasing body of knowledge being generated (from academia, the development sector and the media in particular) following the Rwandan genocide and the ongoing activities of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda as well as continuing violence in the North Eastern DRC and Burundi. My representation of these narratives is equally functional and is driven in part by my dissatisfaction with the current representations of refugee women in the NGO sector and academia. In addition it is an attempt to unpack the complexities and problems of a development discourse that pervades contemporary studies of conflict in Africa (see Burman, 1998). Thus, this paper is itself a negotiation of my own analysis and theirs in a way that offers potential reasons for their self-presentation and reflects my concern for understanding the agency and activism of women in armed conflict. Taking this perspective offers an opportunity to problematise taken-for-granted subject positions and their associated signifiers especially woman, refugee, victim and aid beneficiary.

Conflicts in Africa have often been fought along the lines of colonially constructed national and 'racial' differences, which reflect theories of difference that informed colonial governance and the social restructuring that

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[3] In addition to these interviews, two workshops were held. These were part of ongoing workshops being held at the CSVR with refugee women in order to educate women on the rights of refugees under South

took place as part of the colonising project. Therefore, in Rwanda, it is no coincidence that early classifications of Hutu and Tutsi reflected the belief in different 'races' and identified the Tutsis as a distinct group based on their apparently more 'European' physical features and ancestry[4]. Although such theories have fallen into disrepute of late, current reorganisations of identity equally reflect colonial legacies as we see in the ongoing conflict between Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC, especially in the Ituri region (see Human Rights Watch, 2003). It is unsurprising that at the time of writing a major conflict in the region is over the national identity of the Banyamulenge – a term used to refer to those Tutsi living in the Mulenge hills in the North East of the (DR) Congo but also, increasingly a generic terms for all Kinyarwanda speaking Congolese. Although beyond the scope of this paper, this perhaps reflects restatement of a colonial legacy worked out at the negotiating tables of European powers at the Berlin conference in 1885. Thus, there has, in recent times, been an awareness of the extent to which less problematised (but no less problematic) nationalisms reflect an ongoing consequence of colonial influence in Africa and contain both differences and similarities to the increasingly unpopular assertion of theories of 'race' that have been dominant prior to the post-colonial era. This highlights the problems of what

Spivak (1993) calls single-issue politics where ethnicity, nationalism or gender have been addressed as separate issues without due reflection on their functions as mutually sustaining systems of inequality and exclusion.

However, these kinds of recognitions do little to help comprehend the seemingly incomprehensible violence that is taking place in the Great Lakes region and indeed the violence that 20th Century Africa has seen. Answering the question 'why' has been a preoccupation of many and I am unable to delve into it here (for two very different perspectives on this see Mandani, 2002 and Freeman, 1998). However, the awareness of identity as shifting, continually negotiated and contested does offer us a lens with which to analyse how people are able to negotiate their own roles in such violence (see Shotter 1993 and Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine, 1984). Analysis of the role of gender relations in the construction of the identities about which wars are fought and the implications that this might have for our understanding of women's positioning within armed conflict is arguably the most neglected area of writing in this context. This paper is an attempt to explore and challenge the ways in which gender has been 'added-on' to the analysis of armed conflict in the region that focuses on its national and 'racial' basis in a way that presumes gender to be outside of this analysis. In this way, the family as a site of political resistance is silenced[5].

African and international law. I took the opportunity to invite the women I interviewed to these workshops in order to provide feedback on the research findings as well as to discuss future collaboration between the organisation and these women with respect to key issues raised in the interviews (in particular these were their ability to access basic services in South Africa).

[4] It is for this reason that Mamdani (2002) argues convincingly that we need to see the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi as a 'racial' one rather than an ethnic one. He argues that the genocide can only be understood as being based on the claim that the Tutsi were settlers – a 'race' apart – rather than neighbours of another ethnicity. He argues that notions of African 'tribalism' and ethnic conflict rely on a 'silence of history' that obscures the colonial legacy.

[5] It is worth noting at the outset that by writing about identity in the context of war I do not mean to imply that war is fought over 'racial', ethnic or national identities in some kind of contextually detached way. Indeed these kinds of analysis have often only served to reinforce racisms that represent African people as 'tribal' and innately violent. Rather, these identities, constructed through historical – political processes

Women and war: challenging the victim/perpetrator dichotomy

This reification of some identities over others has been challenged (although often implicitly) in recent analysis of gender and nationalism, which has resulted in a consideration of the ways that women and their role in the family have held a central place in the construction of national identity. This analysis has largely been based on notions of women as caregivers, nurturers and symbols of a cultural identity (Yuval-Davis, 1990). Through their roles as caregivers, educators of children and keepers of familial relations women are expected to transmit dominant social norms, customs and values. This emphasises their social roles as mothers and carers and results in restrictions and control, often violent, over these roles. Constructions of women as outside of the conflict, and as passive in the face of it, have been central to achieving the belief that it is women who keep 'normal (conflict-free) life' going in times of war (Martin, 1997). The central position that images of domesticity have in this discourse of 'normal life' renders gendered family relationships apolitical whilst simultaneously positioning the family as the legitimating force for war. Thus, constructions of femininity as outside of the public, political realm of war have been mobilised to justify war in the name of protecting the (innocent) 'womenandchildren' (Yuval-Davis, 1990-check). However, the legitimation of war in the name of women and children relies on a significant writing out of women's complex and varied engagement with war and their support of, and resistance to, a range of identities and resources over which conflicts are fought – a

tension that Cockburn refers to as the present – absence of women in representations of armed conflict (1998). This has been challenged by feminist writing. For example, Cock and Nathan (1989) note how, in the South African war, 'white' women actively contributed to the militarization of South African society through support organisations and the provision of material and ideological support for the soldiers in the South African Defence Force. In addition, they were active in commando units in rural areas and were trained in the 'civil defence programme' – a process that required both a restructuring and expansion of constructed notions of politically disengaged femininity. Elsewhere I have argued that it is the notion of women as 'pure' victims of war whose concern is only for their domestic duties that is used to advocate for services for refugee women showing the extent to which some versions of the women's movement have drawn on and reinforced these beliefs (Palmary, 2004). The often unquestioned provision of services to children and mothers renders invisible a group of women (teenagers / young adults) by both drawing on and reproducing the slide of womanhood into motherhood where assistance to the 'womenandchildren' is an unquestioned good precisely because of their presumed detachment from the conflict. Unpicking this practice provides us with a method for considering the assumptions that are made about victims, perpetrators and political agents in times of war. In this way, the belief that women are the true victims of wars that are fought by men has been perpetuated by aid organisations (see UNHCR, 2003) in order to lobby for assistance to women who have been displaced by war. It is,

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are mobilised to support the economic and political interests. It is no coincidence that the areas of the DRC that have seen the most violence in recent times are those that are rich in minerals (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Similarly in this research, many of the women stated that those in privileged positions were targeted. Thus, the material interests that the constructions of difference inform are central to any understanding of violence in the region.

therefore, unsurprising that challenging this position is difficult and often seen to be detrimental to the women's movement. My concern here is for how the 'true victim' is constructed as one that is without political agency.

The construction of the political naive 'true victim' has had a range of consequences for women. For example, there has been a reluctance to consider the role of women in the armed forces, particularly on the African continent where women (and children) have been active in armies and militia groups. Women have been involved in the conflict zones of Angola, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, and Ethiopia amongst others (Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998). Of course this does not reflect a simple degendering of the armed forces in Africa but rather points to the need for an analysis of women's varied engagement with armed forces and the ways that sexisms operate through and within these forces. Similarly, women who have not conformed to the maternal and politically disengaged image presented in nationalist discourses have often been met with horror. An example is the case of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, former Rwandan Minister of Family and Women's Development in the Interim Government headed by Jean Kambanda, who has been accused of six counts of genocide. Her case is currently before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and has attracted attention because she is accused of rape as a crime against humanity as well as crimes of genocide. In response to women who took part in the Rwandan genocide, Africa Rights (1995: 1) wrote in their book entitled 'not so innocent: when women become killers' "taking advantage of the blanket protective cover of their 'innocence' women have returned by the thousands to the regions of Rwanda, neighbouring Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania. Leaving their husbands, fathers and brothers in the camps, many of them return to reclaim

their property, at the same time providing information for their men folk on their reconnaissance visits…..Some of this money returns to the camps, and a percentage is no doubt used to hold the refugees as hostages and to destabilise Rwanda. Some of these women are killers. Others are themselves guilty of nothing, just as not every male refugee is a killer. But the ease with which the label of 'innocence' is exploited makes it easier to use them as a front for men and women who are killers". In this paper I want to argue that the dichotomy, which sees women as helpless victims or especially barbaric and manipulative of their (supposedly blanket protective and innocent) social position, obscures the extent to which gender and nationalism are inseparable aspects of this conflict and how the mobilisation of local gendered relationships provides the justification for ongoing physical and structural violence (including withholding aid) against women who transgress the dominant construction of family boundaries.

Engendering 'race' / 'racialising' gender: A counter narrative on women and war

The brief discussion above indicates a need to move away from a debate over women's active/ passive status and how this is represented to consider the ways in which systems of racism and sexisms work to sustain and, at times, challenge one another. Gender is a central means by which we transmit 'race' and nationalism across generations and patriarchal family relationships are central to sustaining any attempt to assert identities. Little attention has been paid to the processes of carving out separate social groups and how women might be implicated in this. Therefore, drawing on and expanding the feminist contributions as discussed above I want to attend to the ways in which post-colonial identities are constructed via gender relations. This extract from a Rwandan

woman discussing her own mixed 'race' relationship and how this positioned her during the Rwandan genocide provides a useful introduction to this discussion.

> L: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> Interpreter: Ja, those people who had exiled you know who were in exile by then and when they came back they came back as armies you know
> Ingrid: Mmm
> Interpreter: And they used to ask her, 'you are a Tutsi; your husband is a Hutu. Obviously he protected you and he killed other people' you know. And their kids what are they?' You know meaning that they may be the offspring of a Tutsi. You see so it's …
> Ingrid: Mmm
> L: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> Interpreter: Ja, I didn't like to see our children growing up in a country which you know what they tell them that you're so and so your mother is Tutsi, your father's a Hutu so therefore you are like this and she did not like that
> Ingrid: Mmm
> Interpreter: To let her children grow up in such an environment and that's why she decided to make it – you know – to leave the country.

Here the positioning of the children within a mixed marriage is taken to be a central basis for their flight. The idea that a marriage across 'racial' divisions undermines ones group allegiances provides a very obvious illustration of the ways that gendered relationships are implicated in the transmission of 'race' across generations. Any attempt to assert a pure 'racial' difference requires a complex management of sexual relationships and, as such, the identity of children from mixed relationships was, in

many cases, an overarching theme of women's narratives that resurfaced in conversations about women's persecution repeatedly.

In spite of the doubt expressed in this extract about the identity of mixed 'race' children, an analysis of the mechanisms for the management of complex identities in ways that retain the belief in absolute difference between social groups is useful for challenging the often-unquestioned transmission of 'race' and nationality through gendered family relationships. For example, most accounts identify Rwandan society as patrilinial (see Mamdani 2001), that is, the children take the ethnic and national identity of the father. The much-hated Rwandan identities cards[6] stated the 'racial' identity of the adult person carrying them with space on the opposite page for the names of all children. This would, bureaucratically, work to ensure that the system of 'racial' difference could be sustained with children taking the 'racial' identity of their fathers. The subversion of some possible identities to others – in this case the mother's 'racial' identity to the father's 'racial' identity – is central to the national project. This requires a reconsideration of how we see the family in times of conflict. Clearly, for this process of intergenerational identity transmission to seem natural and 'true' we have to take these social norms to be a biological fact rather than a political and social pact. In many of the narratives women told this was indeed the case. For example, in the extract below this Congolese, Tutsi woman described how she had tried to explain to her daughter that although she was a Tutsi, her daughter was a Hutu because of her father's Hutu identity:

> "She doesn't understand. I said [to her] you know you're a Hutu and I'm a Tutsi. She said

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[6] This was often a topic of discussion as were the roadblocks set up by militias to check identity cards in order to find and kill Tutsis.

'No mum! I can't believe it, no. The Hutu's kill'…".

Patrilinial practices such as these serve a central function in ensuring that people belong clearly to one group or another thereby reinforcing the notion that there are two distinct groups: Hutus and Tutsis to which every person belongs without ambiguity. Her daughter's resistance to her positioning within this system of 'regulating 'race' through gender' already suggests that the generational transmission of identity is far from politically neutral and the re-construction of the meanings of these identities is a site of contest. It is clear that these social divisions have material and moral implications ('the Hutus kill') for the subject positions and socio-economic opportunities available to us.

However, the harassment, which the woman in extract 1 faces, suggests that this transmission of identity is far from uncontested given that it requires such extensive monitoring and regulation. Thus, although it is generally documented that Rwanda and Congo (DRC) are patrilinial, this is more fluid and open to negotiation than documented history would have us believe, suggesting that attention to how these identities are managed and negotiated, particularly in the context of an emerging historical narrative on the Rwandan genocide, is one that deserves attention. The first extract highlights the doubt that is present in this patrilinial tradition where she states: 'and their kids? What are they?' Far from being 'natural', apolitical and uncontested, for many women challenging their positioning within these patriarchally transmitted national and 'racial' identities were the source of their persecution and sometimes their resistance. Thus an analysis of the regulation of symbolic and embodied women in times of conflict needs to also account for the ways in which 'normal' family relationships have been taken to be natural, beyond critique and unchangeable and how this may work to silence and render invisible women's resistance to these gendered family practices as well as the extent to which these are, equally, resistances to the war in general.

Of course, one of the most useful contributions of feminist writers and activists has been to challenge the very notion of the political by showing that activities that take place within the private sphere, such as women's resistance to taking primary responsibility for child-care are themselves political. Waylen (1996) for example, notes that 'women use their socially prescribed roles to act politically' and argues that women's challenges to the ways in which their bodies and sexuality are controlled should be recognised as political acts. These represent important challenges to the exclusion of women's experiences. Not only is the personal political, but also the political is personal precisely because it rests on the construction of gender as outside of the political, natural and unquestioned. It is, of course, important to acknowledge that women have often used informal structures in order to organise politically and that they have often mobilised according to traditionally defined feminine roles. For example, in Rwanda after the genocide, one of the main victims groups to emerge has been the Association of Widows of the Genocide (AVEGA) thus drawing on their gendered roles to mobilise and draw attention to the large numbers of men who were killed and the consequences of this for women in the aftermath of war. In addition, however, we need to recognise that the existence of formal political structures is maintained through the (re)creation of the public/private dichotomy. It has been argued by some feminist writers that by being integrated into the 'male' political realm, women's groups risk being co-opted into structures of power (for example Afshar 1996).

However, by developing an alternative discourse of women's politics that operates outside of mainstream politics, the traditional notions of women in national discourses as separate from formal (read real) politics and as operating only in the private sphere, are reinforced. These are debates that have saturated discussions on women and political transition but have still relied, to some extent, on the assumption that gender and 'race' are different, separate issues to be considered independently or to be added onto one another as multiple oppressions rather than analyse how gender relationships are manipulated to create our current 'racialised' social order.

There is, therefore, a need to consider how the family is implicated in conflict in a way that refuses this public/private dichotomy and how the very idea of separate national, ethnic or 'racial' groups rests on particular gendered family structures. In light of this, it is not surprising that the violence of the control that was exerted over these women's marital and sexual relationships was perhaps the most common narrative they told. Indeed one of the discourses most commonly reported tells how killing of a wife (and children) of a different 'racial' group is emphasised as the ultimate act of national duty. One woman described this popularised discourse as follows:

> That's where from '59 a Hutu is the enemy of the Tutsi. That's how they taught me – as a Hutu they are enemies. You see like in '94 if you – like my husband was Hutu. He could kill me with all my children because they've got that blood of the Tutsi. Then as a case I give you a good example. I first start with my wife, kill [her]. Then my wife if the children are lying with your wife [kill] all. I'll show you that this blood, I don't need it again (15).

The emphasis placed here on killing ones wife and children (although the latter is more

incidental) highlights, not only the centrality of the regulation of sexual relationships, but also the particular symbolic role that the woman-as-wife plays in the assertion of a group identity. It is clear that within this reported discourse the position of women is highly contested particularly because the possibility of automatically taking the 'racial' identity of her husband is less easily available to them than their children. Although the children are the same identity of the father, the wife is not making the wife an outsider in the nationalist family. Again this extract indicates that, far from being natural and uncontested, the system of patrilinial transmission of identity is one that requires continual management and negotiation and can be taken up or resisted at different moment. The violent control over sexual relationships was frequently reported and a refusal to recognise the 'truth' of the identities over which the war was being fought was a central reason for persecution and eventual displacement of the women I spoke to.

Resisting politics or a politics of resistance?

This kind of analysis was, however, extremely far removed from the ways in which women presented their engagements in the war. Given the popular distinctions drawn between 'race' and gender this is perhaps not surprising, however, an analysis of the imperatives to depoliticise their actions given the slide between agency and guilt described above is worthwhile. In addition, the discourse of public/private divisions provides the discursive space for women to discuss their actions in a way that distances them from political agency and retains the mythical 'innocent victim'. Rather than argue that this innocence is untrue, I would contend that it, at least in part, stems from a service delivery framework that draws heavily on the romantic trope of women as carers and nurturers. The following extract

illustrates the discomfort this woman had about speaking knowledgeably about the conflict and relating it to her family experiences.

> Ingrid: Mmm. Then what were the things that were happening generally in Kigali when she left, what was the conflict about and what was going on at that time?
> Interpreter: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> R: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> Interpreter: Ja, she says she did not, she had no interest in politics. But uh what she heard or what she saw was that uh the problems that were prevailing were political
> Ingrid: Mmm
> Interpreter: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> R: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> Interpreter: Ja, she says that uh the way she saw it was political due to the fact that there were two ethnic groups which were fighting for power and um there was a war and there were people who were hunted….

Later she goes on to say

> Ingrid: So what if if she has a view [on] it what are some of the origins of this hatred for Tutsis
> Interpreter: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> R: Speaks in Kinyarwanda
> Interpreter: Mmm it uh it looks like first of all she emphasised again that she was not involved in the politics and she did not like it but the way she saw things was that there were people who wanted you know to have a say in the in the political sphere
> Ingrid: Mmm
> Interpreter: And then maybe they were denied that …

What is initially striking about this extract is the level of distance created here between her and what was going on in Rwanda at the time of the genocide. Her statement that 'it was political' after having emphasised that she had no interest in politics creates the impression of someone who is outside of this, simply observing, and entirely passive in relation to political decision-making and how it may affect her life. It is only because of an assumption that there is a shared narrative about a separation of politics and 'everyday life' that she is able to say that 'the way she saw it, it was political' to imply, and later explicitly state, that this was a part of life in Rwanda that she had no association with. This is intriguing given earlier discussions with me, which highlighted how what was happening in the country at the time implicated women in significant, gendered ways through nationalist discourses that regulate the family to produce a 'pure' racial identity. Unlike several other interviewees, she does not locate herself in the conflict through a statement of her 'race' or nationality and how this led to her persecution but rather speaks of the conflict as if she was in no way situated in what was happening.

Implicit thus far is an emerging narrative of victimhood that sees any political agency as diminishing claims to victim status. This emerging understanding of victimhood is central to a self-presentation that fits within international and local representations of refugee women. Women's insistence that they do not know about politics can be read within a broader refugee discourse that emphasises women as passive in the face of conflict and the 'true' victims of what is essentially a male act. This is an expectation that is likely to have arisen in the context of these interviews given my position within the NGO service delivery sector. Of course, even in the arena of 'Politics' women's representation in Africa has been increasing markedly with SADC summit declaration on Gender and Development committing member states to achieve at least 30 per cent representation by 2005 (for more illustrations see Geisler 2004). Indeed, Rwanda has been exemplary and leads the world with a female representation of 48.8% of the National

Assembly of Rwanda following the 2003 election. Thus it would seem contradictory that these women emphasised only the extent to which women were excluded from politics. Of course this does not exclude the possibility that these women in formal political structures are exceptions and do not represent the actions of the majority of women. But by defining as politics only those activities that take place within formal structures of governance, women are able to distance themselves from these actions. In this way, they are further distanced from being accountable for such actions (or for not having prevented them) which further renders the position of 'pure victim' entitled to international and local assistance sustainable. This sets up formal political avenues as the only ways of being political and occludes women's organising, activism and resistance outside of formal politics (Geisler 2004).

Concluding comments

An analysis of this kind that politicises the family is one that challenges women's self – presentation as outside of the conflict. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is one that has faced some resistance. It is an analysis that stands in stark contrast, for example, to the way that gender has been conceptualised within the asylum legislation and the international literature on women and war, which has seen gender inequality as something separate from the reasons for conflict on the continent. Even in the women's movement there has been a tendency to argue for woman specific violations to be recognised rather than to consider how the very basis for the conflict is gendered and how the persecution of women is a central part. This has been extremely helpful in acknowledging the violations that women suffer during war, particularly the extent of sexual violence. However, in addition to this acknowledgement of women's gendered victimisation, there is a need to unpack the

varied and complex roles women play in conflict.

Only where the idea that 'race', nationalism and gender are separate is upheld is it possible to consider the resistance women showed within the family as a private or cultural act of resistance and irrelevant to the conflict. It allows for a gap in the analysis of how gendered and nationalist identities are mutually affirming and how women's resistance to the family expose the lie of national identity. In a context such as South Africa where the emphasis from the National Department of Home Affairs has been on limiting the number of asylum seekers in the country, those not fitting very rigid definitions of political persecution are most likely to have their claims rejected (see Spijkerboer, 2001; Crawley, 2000). Women can claim protection as 'special victims' which would leave the public/private dichotomy described above – and their position on the private end of this dichotomy - unchallenged but not because there is any recognition that the family is a central site of political conflict. Thus, although the notion of women as 'pure' victims of war, embedded in their domestic roles and oblivious to armed conflict has been used to mobilise sympathy for women, this works against women who do not position themselves in this way in a context where dominant discourses render these women most deserving of aid. It fails to adequately implicate the family in armed conflict and consider how the family has been a central legitimising force for State violence whether within or across national boundaries.

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Ingrid Palmary is a senior researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, South Africa and a PhD candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her main areas of research and writing are on women and violence, continuities and changes in patterns of racism and sexism in South Africa and women's role in times of political transition. In addition she is engaged in advocating for changes in police action against foreigners in South Africa and in training and lobbying with departments responsible for ensuring the rights of forcibly displaced people in South Africa.

On Conflict, Gender and Nationalism in Cypriot society:
Beliefs and Contradictions

Vassiliki Katrivanou

Abstract

This article explores the connection of the national conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and gender relations in Cyprus and researches the question of how present are the women in the decision making centers and if there is a women's way of dealing with conflict. It's based on interviews and mixed group meetings between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot women during the period of the referendum on the Annan Plan in April 2004. It also portrays how the national conflict reproduces and mirrors itself on all level of the social and political life of each community not only between them; how nationalism intersects with racism, sexism and classism.

Keywords: conflict resolution, social psychology, gender studies

> *They say that people should love their homeland.*
> *My father says this too oftentimes.*
> *My homeland has been split into two.*
> *Which of the two parts should I love?*
> Neshe Yashin

First of all, I would like to thank the people of Cyprus and especially the women for welcoming me and for being so open and supportive to the work I did. I am also grateful to the land of Cyprus, a particular combination of Mediterranean and Middle East, which inspired me and reconnected me with this part of the world and a deep part in me.

Neshe Yeshim asks in her poem which of the two parts of her homeland should she love. The Cypriot land nurtures everyone on it and receives everyone equally. Some indigenous people would say that one can claim the land, but no one owns the spirit. I fell in love with the land of Cyprus, and the humanity and warmth of the people. This love helped me connect and deepen my relationships in the midst of everyday tension and conflicts.

I went to Cyprus for the first time around the period of the referendum on the Annan Plan[1] in April 2004. I wanted to conduct a study on the intersection between nationalism and gender relations and find out whether there is a women's way of dealing with conflict and a "masculine" or "feminine" way of doing politics. As a woman and an activist I am interested in the women's

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[1] The Annan Plan is the unification plan, drafted by the General Secretary of the United Nations,

experiences and voices in Cyprus, a deeply patriarchal society, and their struggle to be seen and become more present in centers of decision-making. At the same time I am interested in how nationalism affects gender relations; "How categories of self-versus other are used to construct power relationships along a variety of parallel and intersecting axes, the ways in which sovereignty implies relations of domination and subordination at the level of the state and also within households and communities"(Ranchod-Nilson & Tetreault, 2000)

 I am also inspired and touched by the bi-communal rapprochement[2] in Cyprus, and the Cypriots'[3] efforts to live together in a unified island. The nationalistic violence and war has been an excruciating experience for the whole of Cyprus. Nationalism has been reinforced and perpetuated by the political leaderships of both sides- (by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots), and the "mother lands" of Turkey and Greece, and by foreign powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain. Bi-communal efforts have been made to create personal, social and political relationships between the two communities, to work towards the unification of the island and prevent a permanent division. The Cypriot conflict reproduces itself at all levels of the social and political reality in the division between: Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, between Yes and No voters on the Annan plan, and between women and men, poor and rich. This creates strong polarities, dichotomies and power struggles. But within each of these polarities, there is no one solidified reality or truth. There are also contradictions and diversity which, when addressed, can deepen the dialogue and the process of rapprochement. In this article I will also try to elaborate and illustrate some of these.

A brief history of modern Cyprus

After being under the control of the Ottoman Empire, Cyprus came under British occupation from 1878-1960. The British colonial rulers maintained the administrative separation into Greek – speaking Christians and Turkish-speaking Muslims they had inherited from the Ottomans thus allowing for the survival of corporatist forms of social organization amidst their modernizing reforms (Kitromilides, 1977). Through the Legislative Council (1880-1931)

Kofi Annan for the creation of a Bi-communal, Bi-zonal Federal Republic. It was based on previous plans and on the proposals of the committees from both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots and the result of four and a half years of negotiations. Sixty four per cent of the Turkish Cypriots voted for the plan, whereas seventy six per cent of the Greek Cypriots voted against it.

[2] Bi-communal Rapprochement refers to the efforts of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot Civil Society to come together, create common projects, and try to process the Cyprus Problem and create conditions in civil society to render a future settlement sustainable. Before the opening of the check points in April 2003, the meetings were taking place in the Buffer Zone of Nicosia, abroad in cities such as London and in Washington D.C, and also in the last mixed village of Pyla. Many of these efforts were sponsored by the United Nations, the EU, the USA or were undertaken as independent initiatives. The nationalists from both sides have considered the bi-communal rapprochement as a traitorous undertaking. It was also criticized as serving the United States interests in the area. Since the opening of the checkpoints, people have been meeting freely, continuing their common efforts and activities for a unified island.

[3] 78% of the population is Greek Cypriots, 18% are Turkish Cypriots and 4 % are Maronites, Armenians and Latins and others (www.countryreports.org, 2005). In the context of the constitution of 1960 Maronites, Armenians and Latins were asked to which community they wanted to belong. For historical reasons they chose to be part of the Greek Cypriot community.

ethnicity became politicized with the blessings of the British who had an interest in preventing the formation of a united anti-colonial movement (Pollis, 1993). With the Zurich Constitution of 1960, there was an agreement reached between Greece and Turkey in the context of NATO and under United States mediation, which provided for an independent bi-communal state, guaranteed by the two motherlands. Britain retained two military bases on the island. The nationalist leaderships of the two communities however were not interested in cooperation and saw the Zurich Constitution not as a new beginning, but as a frustration of their national struggles.

While Greek Cypriots wanted the subordination of Turkish Cypriots and *Enosis* (Union) with Greece, Turkish Cypriots were in favor of *Taksim* (Partition). Ethnic violence, carried out mainly by paramilitary groups with close ties to the official political leadership, erupted again in 1963-4 and in 1967-8 and as a result of this, Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the state in six enclaves.

In 1974, Archbishop Makarios, the president of Cyprus, was overthrown in a coup organized by a Greek Junta. This was followed immediately by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Greek Cypriots fled to the south as the Turkish troops advanced. Turkish Cypriots left a few months later, escorted in United Nations convoys to the northern part of the country, which was under the control of the Turkish army. Since 1974, the Greek Cypriot society in the south, under the legal state of the Republic of Cyprus, achieved considerable economic growth. In the north, the illegal status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), proclaimed in 1983 and recognized only by Turkey, prevented this. Cross-border contact was forbidden until April 2003, when the Turkish Cypriot government allowed the opening of passages through which controlled movement could take place.

On 24th April 2004, the population of Cyprus on both sides of the green line, the North and the South[4], was called to decide on separate referenda on the final unification plan, drafted by the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and the creation of a bi-communal, bi-zonal Federal Republic. Sixty four per cent of Turkish Cypriots voted for the plan, whereas seventy six per cent of the Greek Cypriots voted against it. The island joined the European Union divided on 1[st]May, 2004 (Ioannou, 2004).

Why I went to Cyprus

I went to Cyprus around the period of the referendum, in order to observe this significant historical moment in the lives of the Greek and Turkish communities, and to conduct a research for my master thesis on the intersection of nationalism and gender relations. I am a Greek

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[4] People involved in the bi-communal rapprochement call the Republic of Cyprus "South" and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) "North". In order to keep the dialogue open, they avoid trigger words such as "occupied and free territories". Many Greek Cypriots consider Cyprus to be a single state, part of which is occupied and they refer to the North as the pseudo-state of Denktash. Some Turkish Cypriots refer to the North as the Independent State of the North .

woman, currently studying in the United States. I grew up with my father's stories about the bravery of the Greeks against the Turks, and the process of the rapprochement of two communities and the nationalistic politics around it has long interested me at an intellectual level and at an existential level as well. As a child I had recurring dreams that I was part of the Greek army, fighting against the Turkish army. In adulthood, studying post-Jungian psychology (Process Oriented Psychology), I became fascinated by the depth psychology concept of projective identification, and began to explore the idea that whatever I projected onto the Turks was also a part of me that I had marginalized, or split off from my everyday identity. A few months before going to Cyprus I dreamed that I was making love with a Turk and in the end that I became him. This was a breaking through to "my personal process of rapprochement". In addition, as a Greek woman, I had experienced sexism and patriarchy as depressing and crazy-making forces, which I had been fighting for much of my life. Both in mainstream Greek culture, and in the leftist groups that I became part of as a young adult, awareness of gender issues was and still is marginalized.

I went to Cyprus to explore more about what it might mean to be a Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot in the context of the issue of Cypriot reunification, and to understand more deeply its complexities and contradictions, as well as my own. I was strongly opposed to nationalism, and yet I was interested in hearing and understanding the feelings and viewpoints of others whose perspectives were apparently so different from mine. As a woman and as a social activist, I felt very touched by the Cypriot women's struggle to be seen and heard. They struggle, in a deeply patriarchic and sexist society, to create a feminist approach to the Cypriot conflict and strive to take their place in centers of decision-making and at negotiating tables. While I felt completely supportive of, and personally involved in, their struggle, I was also interested in the limitation of labeling a political approach, strategy or behavior as feminine or masculine. I wanted to explore how such labeling might reinforce dichotomies and stereotypes, and support an internalized form of gender-based oppression, rather than serving as a tool of empowerment. I believe that a feminist approach doesn't mean feminization but it should question relations of power, gender and politics and their intersections.

Sexism and gender politics in Cyprus and their intersection with nationalism and racism

From my first moments on the island, I was struck by the absence of women in formal political panel discussions and the mass media in Cyprus. There are many women activists, but they are not found in centres of decision-making or at negotiating tables. In my research, I wanted to find out whether women were involved in decision-making processes in any way, and in what way. If they were not involved, I wanted to find if there was a women's way of doing politics, outside the mainstream political process.

I conducted sixteen interviews with Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, Greek and Turkish women. Most of these women were involved in the bi-communal process as activists, politicians or sympathizers and a few stood outside or against it. Most of them were educated middle

class women living in big cities and very few lived in rural areas. I also organized two bi-communal women's discussion groups. The first discussion was conducted before the referendum in the South and the second after the referendum in the North. Finally, I've interviewed some men from both communities on issues of nationalism and of gender relations. Being Greek, my access to the Turkish Cypriots was limited, due to our differences in language and ethnicity. Also in the midst of a very polarized atmosphere charged by intense nationalism, my aversion to extreme nationalism made me reluctant to interview people who I considered had nationalistic points of view at first. My process of connecting to them was a slow and interesting one.

Women's talk

During the interviews and group discussions, it immediately became obvious that the Cypriot problem dominates every social and political conversation, leaving no space for discussion of other hot topics, such as gender issues, racism towards foreign workers, trafficking and prostitution. This approach to dialogue on the Cyprus problem is influenced by nationalistic and militaristic attitudes, which view warriors as the ultimate symbols of patriotism and bravery. The political status quo has remained the same for the last three decades, fearful of any criticism or opposition that might disturb or challenge it.

In Cyprus, nationalism has set up a dichotomy between Greeks and Turks. This dichotomy marginalizes all other ethnicities and cultures. In the South there are 80,000 foreign immigrant workers, half of them illegal. This dichotomization reinforces the stereotype of the "other" and creates a monoculture that leaves no room for diversity. The dominant discourses are racialized and racist, so the "other" is invested with racial/racist terms. For example Turkish Cypriots are seen as "barbarian, lazy, primitive, unproductive, don't know how to speak properly," by the Greek Cypriots. Greek Cypriots are seen as "barbarian, pigs and dirty, not trustworthy, merchants, inhospitable" by the Turkish Cypriots. This racism is itself self - reinforcing and expands in both communities towards the immigrants and the settlers from Turkey. At the same time, within each community, a person is either "with us" or "against us". Some have attributed the lack of many intellectuals on the island to the fact that critical thinking might be considered unpatriotic, and as reinforcing "enemy" status. A person can easily be seen as a traitor in the South if he or she votes Yes for the Annan Plan. K, a Greek Cypriot, who voted "Yes" in the referendum, said: "It's a horrible experience to feel so divided against three quarters of your people, I feel much more united with the Turkish Cypriots".

This division is also a psychological process, as illustrated by feelings and experiences expressed by some of the women who took part in the group discussions. "The first time I crossed the border to the South, I had this feeling of putting down roots. The feeling that this is my land and the feeling of becoming whole. Somebody took something very special from me in 1974" (Y: Turkish Cypriot). "I come from the North. I have been living on half an island, without talking about the trauma, pretending that this island is complete"(D: Turkish Cypriot). "The division is internalized – is so part of life, of education, people don't think beyond it. It's not just a physical green line and barbed wire, it is in here (pointing to herself)" (M: Greek Cypriot).

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This nationalistic and racist division, which has a great impact on all aspects of the social and political life, not only affects relations between the South and the North, but also contributes to the gendering process within each community. It reinforces gender role stereotype and marginalizes women from the mainstream political discourses and practices. The dichotomy of self versus other reinforces roles of domination and subordination on the social and political realm and also in the households. Heterosexual marriage is the only legitimate option for a woman, within a patriarchal hierarchy, in which homosexual relations were illegal until 1999 (the change was made in order adapt to the legislation of the European Community). Single women have lower social status.

In that context, women are encouraged to be social activists but are not part of the decision-making centers. At the same time, there are gendered representations of symbols intrinsic to projects of national constructions. Women are considered as biological and social reproducers of the nation and are glorified as such. Their bodies are claimed for the nation and they often become battlegrounds and prey of attackers of nationalistic conflicts. In the poetics of nationalism there is a prevalent image of the glorified mother or sexualized images of seduction and rape: ruined women and ravaged landscapes. (Ranchod-Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). For example, in the Cypriot village of Tochni, there was a massive rape of Turkish Cypriot women by the Greek army during the war in 1974. When these women were received in "protected camps", they were raped again, this time by the Turkish army.

In the group discussions women commented:

> All discussions in the media are represented only by men – their way of looking at the Annan Plan. I think we have really been absent (M: Greek Cypriot).

> Beyond Yes and No there's a lack of women representation. You see all grey-suited men on TV discussing our future. There is no woman in the negotiating process. The President can say that there is no woman with criteria to be the Commissioner of the European Union. That pisses me. It really annoys me that women don't come out or aren't united enough, don't feel safe to speak out in this community. (M: Greek Cypriot).

Women from HAD (Hands Across the Divide), an activist women association, spoke of the need for a multicultural society where all women, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, Armenian, Maronite, Latin and foreign workers, can have equal access to resources. They spoke for the need of a gender balance in the Annan Plan, because patriarchy is predominant. They also stood for a feminist approach that would challenge the traditional power structure of class, race, and gender, and would struggle for a democratic, non -violent society. Other women (mostly Turkish Cypriots from the North) said that before any other struggle and discussion, a solution to the Cyprus problem must be found. Among the women there was a prevailing belief that peace is a women's issue. This is a very gendered/feminized representation of women ; women make and care for peace, men make war. The slogan "Women vote for Yes" marginalized the other side, which votes for No, in the discussion. Also, the majority believed that women's style in politics is more relational and dialogical, which disallowed diversity by obscuring other styles and approaches that women might have. Women who were one-sided and fiery were accused by other women as militant and masculine.

This attitude reinforced stereotypes and internalized the oppression among the women. Here is an interesting piece from the discussion that portrays it:

> S (Greek Cypriot): …It's an other men's talking again referring to some women who spoke with a strongly righteous attitude. Last time, we managed to speak as women, we've lost it today!
> Z (Turkish Cypriot): I am against that people can be blamed: 'watch out! You have a mannish style of speaking'. I am a woman and I have no doubt about it! Physically, consciously and spiritually, everywhere, I am a woman. …It's not good to be judged like that…At the last discussion, when I've said: 'no woman has the right to say No to the Annan Plan', they said: ' Ok, you are a man, this is a man's way!'.
> S: You've said it to me though [that no woman has the right to vote No] and I am a woman as well! I've said No, so it's just the same thing, the opposite of what you say!
> Z: Of course you can say: they deserve it, bloody Turkish Cypriot…

In this dialogue one can observe not only the complexity and contradictive way of the accusation "of not being a woman" is used as a put down, and against any diverse style, but also how the division easily changes levels and connects to the nationalistic conflict.

Men's talk

The sexist environment in Cyprus was so strong that after a while, I began to feel the need to leave the country and find my women's support group in the United States, where I could find some self-reference and recover my self-esteem. One side effect of sexism is that it makes women internalize men's judgments about the inferiority and otherness of women in the process of their identity formation (Ranchod-Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). It was a powerful experience to be in an environment, which did not allow discussion on gender issues and women's rights, and to witness how women have to struggle for the space to come together and to be involved in decision-making processes. Some of this atmosphere is illustrated in men's responses to my questions and in comments I've heard men make about women. For example, in response to the question "Why are women not in decision making positions?" a man who held otherwise progressive views answered: "Women are not so interested and educated in politics. They don't stay long in the meetings."(T: Greek Cypriot) Another told me that women are powerful in bed, or that the main issue is to change the capitalistic system, (S: Turkish Cypriot), or that women have become sexually freer these days (P: Greek Cypriot). In an interview with some male friends of a Turkish Cypriot female politician, "Z", I was told: "Z is not a typical woman. She's more man then we are. She is very straightforward. Her ideas are little too extreme. She is an extremist." That kind of attitude makes women very insecure about themselves, making them questioning their "normality". On many occasions, men in both the North and South of Cyprus told me: "You are interested in women's issue. That means you hate men. That means you are a feminist. That means you are a lesbian."

On nationalism and more

While I was in Cyprus, I also had the chance to witness how, in a nationalistic political structure, fear of the enemy operates at a mythological level, and can be exploited by the

political leadership. This is especially true in the South, where there is a lot of pain and other raw feelings about the Turkish invasion in 1974. The fear of another Turkish invasion was played on by President Papadopoulos and the media, without really addressing the Prime Minister of Turkey's shift in policy, which centered on Turkey's desire to enter the EU, and no longer gave priority to maintaining or legalizing the partition of Cyprus.

I also observed the anti-imperialistic slogans of the leadership in the South, which called for self-determination and sovereignty, and encouraged the people to say a big No to foreign powers such as the United States and Great Britain who were pushing for a Yes vote for the Annan plan. These slogans incorporated hidden nationalistic tendencies and the wish to keep the power and the status quo as it was.

Having observed this, I also found that the situation was more complex than it might seem. There was a part of the Greek Cypriot population that wanted a solution but voted against the referendum, believing that the Annan plan would create a divided island, since the two communities would live in separate states. This part considered the plan to be racist, because it divided people according to their nationality, language and religion. Although this was a legitimate viewpoint, nevertheless, because of the previous history of national conflict and war, and the oppression and discrimination of the Turkish Cypriots by the Greek Cypriot majority, there was also an essential need to acknowledge Turkish Cypriots as a distinct political entity and not just as a minority. Many Greek Cypriots believe that since the majority rules in a democracy, it is unacceptable that one Turkish Cypriot vote is equal to five Greek Cypriot votes, if according to the Annan plan there will be two "constituent" states with a central federal government.

While in Cyprus, I had the chance to become friends with women and men with nationalistic points of view and understand more about their need for security and for identity. I realized that the demand by the majority of Greek Cypriots for all their properties in the North to be given back to them was not just about the value of the land. It was also about their connection with their ancestors and their land – about personal and collective memory and history. One woman, who was standing forcefully for the "No" vote and her Greek identity, told me that her family came from Turkey with the exchange of population in 1922. Growing up in Greece, she was called a "Turk sperm" by other kids and had to fight for being recognized as Greek. She was coming from a place of struggle for a national identity, and from being accused and discriminated against because of lacking this identity. Here it is important to note that 'identity' is constructed around discourses of history, memory, belonging, roots, etc; these connections are not necessarily natural, but they are used to legitimize particular positions and they are connected to and evocative of strong feelings.

I also interviewed Turkish Cypriot supporters of the Denktash dictatorship who spoke with me in an old Greek Cypriot dialect and told me all that they suffered because of Greeks and Greek Cypriots and also how much they hate Greeks. Yet all of this was done in a very relating way, almost lovingly. They offered me, a Greek, one coffee after another and would not let me go easily. They needed their stories to be heard and understood.

On the other hand, I encountered Greek Cypriot activists who were working hard for the rapprochement of the two communities, but still demanded their houses back when they were visiting the North. None of the people in any of the blocks had a solidified, predictable behavior. Rather, their attitudes and behavior were full of contradictions.

Both sides told me how "the others" were barbarian by nature, and yet they all had friends from the other side and lived together in the past in a very cooperative way. I interviewed some villagers in Pafos, an area that mostly voted "No" to the Annan plan. When I tried to interview the women about why they voted that way, they told me to ask their husbands, and would not make any comment on this themselves. When I interviewed the men, they said that the President had told them to vote that way, and that he knew what was best for the national interest. They saw themselves merely as uneducated peasants. If the President told them to vote "Yes," they would vote so.

Finally, the settler issue is another major, complex issue in Cyprus. Since 1974, a significant number of Turks has settled in the North. The majority of Greek Cypriots see settlers as part of the war crime and the Turkish strategy to Turkify Cyprus. The settlers are not "our Turks" but Turkey's Turks" (Ioannou). As such, not only can they not be trusted, but also their very existence is unacceptable. Few Greek Cypriot groups run the risk of being seen as traitors and unpatriotic, by daring to say for the settlers that have been on the island since 1974, "These people have been around for 30 years. They have created families and a life on the island. We cannot uproot them again." The majority of the settlers are poorer Turks coming from Anatolia or other rural areas. They also have a complicated relationship with Turkish Cypriots. They are considered agents of Turkey, cooperating with the dictatorship of Denktash. There is a fear amongst Turkish Cypriots that they will be taken over by the settlers since the Turkish Cypriot population has been shrinking due to emigration to other countries. At the same time Turkish Cypriots consider the settlers to be second-class citizens, uneducated and poor (even though some of them occupy official positions). So there is a lot of racism and class-ism in Turkish Cypriot society. At the same time, Turkish Cypriot socialists suggest coalition with the settlers since they are the luben proletariat and working-class.

Conclusion

From my experiences in Cyprus, I came to believe that the conflict there has a holographic nature, meaning that its features are mirrored in all aspects of the socio-political life between the two communities and within each of them. In Cyprus the division and the nationalism on the island create dichotomies of gender, race, and class that are interrelated and enhance one another. No single war or "–ism" can be resolved without addressing all of these. Nationalism intersects with gender relations by reinforcing the dichotomy of self versus other and constructing power relationships of domination and subordination at the level of the state and also within households and communities (Ranchod-Nilson &Tetreault, 2000).

In response to my research question about whether there is a women's way of dealing with conflict and doing politics, I found that, generally speaking, the women were engaged in much more dialogue and related to each other much more than men. At the same time, there were also women who were not so engaged in dialogue and relationship, and who were put down for that by other women, by men and sometimes by themselves. I believe that the concept that there is a feminine and a masculine way perpetuates this division and the stereotypes around it, marginalizes diversity, and can be a disempowering concept for women.

I have long had a gut reaction against nationalism. During the period of the referendum, when the discussion was extremely polarized and voting for Yes or No became an issue of life and death, at first I could hardly bear to interview people whom I considered to be nationalists. Yet when I finally connected more with them, I had to acknowledge their existential struggle for identity and their unprocessed hurt and fear of another war (Greek Cypriots), and their fear of further violence and discrimination (Turkish Cypriots). These fears and hurt have been systematically exploited by the political leaderships of both sides in the context of nationalistic propaganda. My personal interactions with people with nationalistic views changed my animosity towards them. Feeling more curious and connected with their side, I was able to listen more and try to understand the deeper issues behind their irritating slogans and acknowledge their concerns. I also have to notice that in some ways I have a very similar attitude to an extreme nationalist in my own righteousness and militant way of standing for my beliefs.

In a conflictual situation, polarities construct blocks of truth. This process is very important because it supports an identity on a psychological and political level which helps people stand for what they believe and create from that point. At the same time these blocks of alignment can create slogans, labels and stereotypes that are relatively meaningless, and that marginalize any diversity. From my experience in Cyprus, all the different "blocks" were full of contradictions. Nothing was clear-cut. These contradictions, which lay on the margins of people's awareness, brought forth new information and revealed the complexities of the issue. The new information came from the marginalized groups, and also from the contradictions within each block, from the margin to the center. Somehow these contradictions made my research more interesting to me.

Once the borders opened and the communication and the relationship between the two communities is happening on the grass root level, there is no way back. Even though the main political structures did not change, the process of rapprochement is developing. Creating space for more dialogue and addressing the contradictions and complexities of the issues would not endanger this process, but instead deepen it and make it more sustainable.

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I was born in Athens, Greece in 1967. I studied law, which later I quit in order to follow what was closer to my heart. During that time of my studies, my main focus was politics and social activism. I was trained in systemic psychotherapy and group dynamics for ten years in the Athenian Institute of Anthropos (A.K.M.A.). I worked with youth, teachers and parents in different educational contexts in Greece and in the USA, where I've tried to support the people to follow them selves and explore their creativity with different media as theater, video and radio. Since 1998, I live in Portland Oregon where I study Process Oriented Psychology (Diploma and Masters Program), which is an innovative approach to individual and collective change and combines psychology, spirituality, social activism and creative expression into a single paradigm. Meanwhile I completed my BA in International Studies and I am also completing a Masters in Conflict Resolution In Portland State University. My passion is group work; how to create spaces with democratic processes, where people can share and process with awareness their ideas, feelings, dreams, and also experiences from different states of consciousness. I facilitated community meetings dealing with issues of conflict, diversity and democracy Currently I am writing my thesis on Gender Relations and Nationalism between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus and making a documentary on it. Email: vassilikikat@hotmail.com. Address: 3210 SE Pine, Portland OR, 97214, USA

All contributors were encouraged to share thoughts on other contributions they chose to look at. An 'Interrelating Note' can be a word, a sentence, a statement, a thought or a paragraph stating how a contribution they read, relates to, inspires, resonates with their own work. All the 'Notes' we received during the process appear in this journal in a fairly random order... yet they continue beyond the journal.

...reading Isabel Rodríguez Mora's 'Contesting Femininity':

This paper raised some intriguing questions for feminist work on women in politics around the world. They are ones that I don't want to try to answer but rather I want to articulate them as central concerns for a feminist project that works across a range of geographical, social and economic boundaries. At a broad level I was struck, when reading this paper, by the need for feminists to understand how and why nation states are gendered. What are the gendered tropes that are drawn on, challenged and reinforced in their invention and construction and by whom? For example, this paper articulated briefly emotion as a feminine quality that has been drawn into the malestream political realm without it necessarily creating the space for women to follow it. Is this simply the restatement of the feminised country (the motherland in need of defence by her 'sons') or does it reflect a more worrying co-option of feminine tropes in ways that pay lip service to women's political participation whilst marginalizing forms of participation that contradict these tropes? And so the question raised is how are the gendered nations in which we all participate changing, eternally shifting and, within this, what feminism(s) are able to emerge? The paper reminded me of South African examples illustrated in the work of Mama (1995) and others that shows how, in spite of South Africa's admirable representation of women in politics, the space created for women's involvement in political action is shaped by, and indeed reinforces, their prescribed roles in the private sphere. The rise of 'mothering politics' – whereby women engage in politics only in defence of their families is a key example. Thus, this kind of politics can work to create a limited space for female political participation that doesn't challenge (and worse probably reinforces) the existing gendered social order. Within this debate, I was struck in this paper by the analysis of poorer women's aspirations to middle-classness. In the South African context, sexism undoubtedly works differently for different women. For example in the workplace, black African women bear the burden of unemployment with the vast majority being either unemployed or underemployed. White women on the other hand have a greater degree of financial wealth but primarily because they are married to men who earn well, that is, they are most likely to be housewives or part-time workers (South African Census of 2001). Within this scenario, what then are the dangers of a women's movement aspiring to middle class images of women as mothers and homemakers? How might it further reinforce the idea of women's place being the home (in spite of this being an option for only wealthy – by marriage – predominantly white women in South Africa)? Although these are questions that are common in both Venezuela and South Africa, they undoubtedly raise different issues. In the South African

context I am forced to ask: what are the racisms that are supported by setting this image of femininity up as the ideal? It is at this point that I am reminded of the need to balance the attention to similarities and differences across contexts. This paper was wonderful because it detailed so many of my own concerns. But the risk is an unproblematic alliance that doesn't account for local manifestations of women's political activity. The problems of how to organise at the moments where a connection is felt (as I felt when reading this paper) and to resist the "ferocious standardising benevolence of most US and Western European human-scientific radicalism" (Spivak, 1993: 90) remain key.

…by Ingrid Palmary

…reading Vassiliki Katrivanou's 'On Conflict, Gender and Nationalism In Cypriot Society':

Perhaps outer conflict meets inner conflict in all dualities. I was immediately stuck by the way Vassiliki weaves her own experience into her exploration of the national conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. I found a parallel to my own approach of expressing the complex social realities which underly the Creative Youth Workshop Project in Thrace, Greece. Acknowledging our own engagement and the ways in which we too are part of our exploration of 'the other' becomes a valuable tool for insight and social action. We are not separate from the world. In both Cyprus and Thrace in Greece, two communities – each with its own legitimately constructed psychosocial view – striving for a new definition of unity. Creation of common ground on which both may stand, visibly, as partners. Is it possible to conceive of our differences as a uniting rather than dividing force? How to be supportive of a process of empowerment involving both 'sides'? How to resist dictating one's own proposals of solution, no matter how well-intended? Vassiliki's article stresses the need for space for dialogue. Although one may see the Cypriot situation as overt conflict, in opposition to the Thracian situation, I see space for dialogue as crucial in both. Vassiliki speaks of rapprochement and the need to bring marginalized diversities to the forefront of awareness so that one may connect to all 'sides'. I found these concepts very relevant to my own work with youth groups and youth workers as I explore which psychosocial skills are involved in such spaces of dialogue.

…by Anni Vassiliou

…reading Ingrid Palmary's 'Family Resistances':

This is a subtle and fascinating analysis of accounts of refugee women from The Great Lakes region of Africa. Ingrid makes a compelling argument around the de-politicisation of the family in dominant representations of political violence in the region. Her analysis of the insistence within hegemonic discourses on a separation of the public and the private, and its consequent implications for women's activist possibilities, seems to resonate with several papers in this collection.

…by Jane Callaghan

Chop-Change

Fast Forward
To pressure cooker
Cockiness

Born free
In a microwave
A figure on a leash
Of another micro-economics scheme
Domesticated
By the silverscreen
A dog
With a god complex

Swallowed a placebo
Drank half emptiness
Shooted-up
Powdered wet dreams

They raised their asses to the camera and farted in the west
The stench still lingers
In our southern palates

As we drink black naked beauty
With our café laite
While stroking our weave
In the name of independence

We're definitely stuck
Between the s's
Of assimilation

A banana is an exotic fruit in Africa
When chasing
Coconut dreams

I've learned to make do with plenty
Worshippers of the scarce rarities
Might as well
Take the backseat burner

They say on this one-day
A camouflaged chameleon
Crowned in plastic thorns
Claimed the thrown of a lion

They play games with hyenas
On their playstations
Bombed-out
Bombarded
In blasphemy

My girl-child fear and I
Have since had a one on one
On issues of faith and power
Joined the procession
To our god mother courageous

These days
I pen this revolution with an anxiety
Of a timid bastard child
Of political correctness
With my tail on fire
Before the hunters
Of the funky and hip
Fit my soul into a hipster
Auction the Word
For plastic smiles and *De klerk's*
Chop-Change
De klerk's – Two Rand coin which was introduced in 1994 changing the money
from a bill to a coin nicknamed after the last South African president under
apartheid FW De klerk.

Bandile Gumbi was born in 1978. She holds a BA Soc Sci from the University of Natal. She has been a poet since 2000 that as performed in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, mainly at poetry clubs and art exhibitions. She is a founding member of Third Eye Vision an artist administrated interdisciplinary arts non-profit organisation based in Durban. Bandile has collaborated with visual artists and taken part in art interdisciplinary workshops and exhibitions as an exhibiting and performing poet in Durban through 3rd Eye Vision initiatives and in Cape Town through Thupelo Workshops organized by Greatmore Studios. Her poetry has appears in magazines and journals in South Africa. Agenda a feminist Journal has published her prose and short fiction. She has self-published her first Poetry book titled "Pangs of Initiation". She has worked for the Centre for Creative Arts, University of Natal as a festival assistant and Awesome Africa Music Festival as a production assistant. She is part of the threesome organizing music gigs under the theme "Waiting For The Music".

Images of Women and Drugs

Ilana Mountian

Abstract

This paper discusses the social imaginary of women and drugs through the analysis of visual images. Utilising visual images as a primary source provides an access to elements that are often under-researched, as they facilitate an approach in which subjectivity is taken as relevant (Rose, 2001). For this analysis I draw on discourse analysis (Parker 1997), philosophy (Foucault, 1991) and Lacanian Psychoanalysis. These provide the background for deconstructing and critically destabilising the imaginary position of women in discourse, bringing new insights into the theme.

The signifier 'drugs' is often embedded in a moralistic framework that prevents 'alternative' discourses. Within this context, gender configures in particular ways, in which women are often greatly stigmatised. Key aspects are explored here: the analysis of the understanding of women as primary victims of drugs or as perpetuating drug use (intersecting with their symbolic position in relation to nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997); how the gaze operates in relation to women and drugs, focusing on the (in)visibility of women and drugs (Ettorre, 1989); how the imaginary of women as the 'other' provides discursive locations such as the 'mother' and the 'fallen woman'; and finally how, paradoxically, drug use could be seen as a site for women's empowerment. The analysis of the imaginary of women and drugs is a key element for understanding discourses and interventions (policies) on drugs (Campbell, 2000).

Keywords: *social imaginary, discourse, gender, drugs*

Introduction

This article discusses drugs and gender from a critical perspective, by identifying aspects of the social imaginary of women and drugs (i.e. that operate according to the women's position in discourse, for example, as mother or as 'fallen woman), and locating them within power structures, it draws attention to the lack of research and treatment that takes gender (as well as race, social class and age) into account.

For this analysis I utilise discourse analysis (Parker 1997), philosophy (Foucault, 1991), Lacanian Psychoanalysis and feminist research. The notion of social imaginary employed here derives from Lacan's (1991) imaginary dimension and Castoriadis' (1991) notion of social imaginary (signification). The focus on the social imaginary, in this case of drug users and gender, enables an approach in which images, fantasies, (mis)recognition and illusions are taken as relevant to the constitution of subjectivity. These elements both constitute and are constituted by society.

The focus on the social imaginary also meets aspects of discourse analytic theories, since discourse also concerns the reading of images, and texts. However, the focus on discourse makes explicit a political position when it highlights power relationships in discourse. Hence, in this case, I focus on how power operates in discourses about women and their image constructed around drug use.

In order to access these elements, I will refer to visual images as a primary source. Rose (2001) argues that images are not only a product of the social context, rather they are also productive, having their own effects. Visuality produces specific images of social difference (i.e. gender, class, race). Although I do not explicitly apply a visual methodology such as semiotics, I use a discursive analysis of these images in order to illustrate aspects of the social imaginary of dominant western discourses produced and reproduced around drugs and gender.

Both 'drugs' and 'gender' are read here as shifting signifiers, that is, these terms are not approached from an essentialist standpoint, but rather seen as socially constructed. Indeed, the relationship between the signifier (acoustic image) and the signified (concept) is said to be arbitrary. Hence, there is no extra-linguistic reason why the signifier *should* designate certain things. As Lacan puts it: "no signification can be sustained other than by reference to another signification" (quoted in Macey, 1994, p.xxiii). In this way, there are no definitive structures or stopping points, but chains of association, or deferred meaning.

I focus therefore, on the object drug as a conflicting signifier, an object structured according to power relations, producing specific bodies of discourse. In fact, it is possible to state the various layers of interpretation intersecting discourses around drugs (i.e. medical, legal, religious).

In the same way gender is understood as performative, as an acquired process and not a biological concept that is pre-given or innate (Butler, 1993). In this sense, the emergence of gender is an outcome of this process of construction. Thus, I will focus on aspects

concerning social roles and expectations towards women, and not on essentialist or prescriptive accounts. As Allen (1986, p.104) points out,

> "It is important to understand that these central problems (which are concerned, amongst other things, with issues of dependency, neediness, anger, the body, control and guilt) are not conceived simply as problems to which women are prone, but as problems to which they are prone as women".

In this article, although I explicitly mention some psychoactive substances (i.e. tranquilisers, tobacco), the term drugs refers to every substance, legal or illegal, for recreational or medicinal use. In fact, according to the medical classification, drugs are "every exogenous substance that once in contact with the organism provokes functional alterations and/or structural (alterations) in any sector of the organic economy[1]" (Roig and Thomaz, 1999).

Discourses on drugs and addiction are often embedded in a moralistic and/or medical framework. Addiction as a mental illness produces specific effects (such as stigmatisation, and medicalisation, among others); and adding to this, within the discursive space of the illegality of drugs, drug users are often stigmatised. This highly stigmatised arena produces some effects such as the impossibility of forming pressure groups, even for providing information about drugs.

Juxtaposing discourses on drugs with gender I highlight three main aspects: Firstly, how the notion of the 'other' and discourses on 'madness' and 'dependency' operate in relation to gender. Secondly, how the imaginary position of women in relation to 'nation' functions in drug

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[1] Translation from Portuguese by the researcher.

taking. Thirdly, how the (sexualised) 'gaze' operates in relation to women's drug use. Although these three aspects are inter-related, I separate them into three sections in order to facilitate the reading. Moreover, these aspects are socially and culturally specific and should not be read as unique, true or universal categories.

The 'Other'

Reflecting on power in discourse and on polarisations produced within the discourse dynamics surrounding women and drugs, I draw on some categories outlined by Burman (1999b) in relation to three bipolar dimensions of hierarchical relationship between children and adults: innocence vs. experience; dependency vs. autonomy; spontaneity vs. reflectiveness. It seems that it is possible to transpose these antagonistic categories to the imaginary of women, or at least to what are in a sense considered to be as 'good', 'expected' or 'common' qualities in the feminine (i.e. innocence, dependency, spontaneity). Notwithstanding, these characteristics appear to be contradictory in discourse, since although these are qualities conferred to the female, women are also often expected to be 'in control'. This is a central aspect in relation to discourses of women and drugs, as I will further highlight in this section.

Here I analyse how discourses on drug users as 'infantile', 'immature', 'weak'; 'dependent' and 'out of control' intersect with gender, where these characteristics are seen as female. These aspects ('infantile', 'immature', 'weak', 'dependent', 'out of control') are often pushed to the position of the 'other' in discourse. Indeed, "women" are commonly portrayed and constituted as the 'other' in social and psychological spaces (Burman, 2000; Nieves, 1994).

Discourses on drug use evoke ideas that are opposed to self-control, such as dependency,

moral weakness and immaturity. The drug user is seen as 'infantile', dependent (as the classification of drug dependency itself), and not able to postpone pleasure. As Young (1971) highlights "the undersocialised drugtaker is seen in Freudian terms to have a weak superego, an inadequate ego – of a man – lack of proper masculine identification" (p.53).

This notion of dependency becomes particularly problematic when it is juxtaposed with gender, since women are socialised into dependency, whereby "in the traditional discursive construction of heterosexuality, 'man' is positioned as powerful, and 'woman' as passive and beholden to man" (Ussher, 1998, p.151). Control therefore plays a key role here, for, as Ettorre (1989) argues although the social expectation for women is to behave in the traditional way, that is, as dependent, yet there is "an interesting incompatibility between the social expectation for women to be dependent and the need for all women to be 'in control'" (p.105). In this way, at the same time that there is this imaginary of uncontrollability and emotional spontaneity of women, it is also expected that women should be in control, i.e. of their passions, desires, household.

'Madness' for women is seen somehow as a 'natural' category, connected with sexual realms. Traditionally, 'madness' and 'vulnerability' were attributed to the female biology, as western 'medicine' portrayed women as close to nature, contradiction, unpredictability, amorality and madness. Their brain was said to be driven by instincts (both sexual and maternal). This contrasts with men, for whom madness tends to be regarded as a consequence of deviance from social roles attributed to them (Engel, 1997). These ideas are reflected in women's traditional social roles related to the domestic sphere (children, marriage, and motherhood as women's destiny).

Thus, emotionality and incapability to cope with social responsibilities are correspondingly addressed to women. This argument can be seen for example in the advertisements for tranquillisers where, as Littlewood (1994) notes, women are portrayed as suffering from "diffuse emotional symptoms" while men experience "discrete episodes of anxiety" (p.84). These 'male' symptoms are related to specific circumstances of pressure at work or with a physical disease, contrary to women whose symptoms are related to nature.

Further, madness is problematic in relation to women as "the apparently ungendered profile of madness – passivity, emotionality, irrationality, dependency, lack of initiative, and need for support – is also a profile of a 'normal' woman" (Hockey, 1993, p.254). That is, women are socialised into categories that are *per se* regarded as mental illness. However, women "who display independence or an aggressive resistance to their social roles also risk receiving a psychiatric label" (Hockey, 1993, p.254). In this way, 'madness' is seen to replace 'badness' in discourse, as aggressive behaviour is seen as incompatible with the imaginary of the fragile woman. Aggression is therefore seen as more compatible with male characteristics than with female ones. Of course, this imaginary is socially specific and varies across class and race.

Discourses on madness and aggression are central elements to the understanding of the imaginary of women drug users, where addiction figures as incompatible with their social roles, as a rejection of their sex-role stereotype. In this context, the social imaginary of women and drugs circulates around sex-role stereotypes, in which they are typically seen as bad mothers, or bad women (i.e. prostitutes, lesbians). As Campbell (2000) points out "Women's drug use is showed up in popular culture as a symptom of other feminised forms of female deviance, such as prostitution or lesbianism" (p.154), in which deviance is referred as sexual deviance.

Hence deviance is commonly connected with sexual deviance, on the one hand of the 'fallen women', who are regarded as hyper-sexual, 'not behaving as girls' or 'not behaving as proper girls', where words such as "tramp", "lush" and "whore", with "rampant sexuality" figure (Finkelstein, 1996, p.33). On the other hand of the 'bad mothers', who are "seen as potentially 'sexless', uncaring for their children or irresponsible wives, not considering the needs of their husbands" (Ettorre, p.105). Indeed, the only drug use that fits the stereotype of the 'proper lady' is medicinal use, for example the use of tranquilisers, as I will further explicate in the section on "the gaze".

Analysing these two images: the 'mother' and 'fallen woman', psychoanalysis brings some insights. In having a marginal position in discourse, the feminine represents what is symbolised or not, what can be controlled, what can be subverted (Frosh 1995). Moi (1985:167) argues that within western culture women are neither inside or outside, neither known nor unknown, this gives rise to the creation of two basic discursive formations: women as the dark and chaotic (Lilith or the whore of Babylon), or to be venerated as being pure and close to nature (Virgins and Mothers of God). "Whichever tendency dominates, 'woman' here is a product of imagination, literally the imaginary; a fantasy that holds masculinity in place" (in Frosh, 1995, p.293). Indeed, this is suggestive in the analysis of women and drugs. That is, the imaginary of women oscillates between these two positions, the pure and venerated (mother) or as the 'fallen woman' (prostitute), or lesbian, as will be apparent in the relation with drug use that I further develop in section 4.

In this section I highlighted two main arguments: first, how the imaginary of the drug user is connected to that of the female (e.g. 'dependent', 'weak', 'mad', 'out of control'), and how the imaginary of women as the 'other' is commonly connected with the sexual sphere, in which they figure as 'fallen women' when taking drugs, while this sphere of the medicinal use of drugs (i.e. tranquilisers) is accepted when this fits with the imaginary of the 'proper lady (e.g. motherhood).

Women and Nation

The social imaginary of women and drugs draws on a discourse in which the notion of nation plays a fundamental role. The imaginary position of women in relation to nation is typically seen as the representative of the social order, the 'keepers' of society's morality, in the traditional social roles of mothers and carers.

Yuval-Davis (1997) suggests that women "reproduce nations, biologically, culturally and symbolically" (p.2). However, this is a paradoxical position, because although women are essentially part of nation, they are not included in the political arena, since the private sphere is not considered politically relevant (McClintock, 1995). So, at the same time that women are located outside the public/political realms, they are seen as representatives of reproduction and cultural moralities, they reproduce, maintain and symbolise the 'motherland'. This role of representation functions at the individual and collective levels (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

The place of women as moral agents is also derived from the (feminised) body politic, "to ensure a strong imperial race" (McDonald,

1994, p.22). It is interesting to highlight the position of women as cultural reproducers of nation, especially old women, who accorded to this position, are the ones who should dictate appropriate behaviour. Thus according to this symbolic position, *drugs represent a special threat to nation, family and women themselves* (in the same way that homosexuality, prostitution, and obscenity do (Warner, 1996). That is, using drugs they threaten their own lives, the lives of their families (especially children), and the nation, as they would (re)produce an unruly society.

It is interesting to note how in the U.K. and U.S. during 1920s and 1950s women were conceived of as the primary victims of drugs, where, in this context, a connection between women's drug use and moral degradation was highlighted. This imaginary is also related to the fear of intermarriage (Kohn 1992, Campbell 2000), which presents another threat to nation (reflecting among other things a biological notion of nation).

Indeed, Campbell (2000) points out the role of fear of race mixing in the U.S. Here whereby drug policies were developed to protect white women, and thereby enhanced the dangerousness accorded to black men. This is also due to the idea that white women were less resistant both to the pleasure and the deteriorations generated by drugs. "A delicate female having light blue eyes and flaxen hair, possesses, according to my observation the maximum susceptibility" (H. Kane, Physician in Campbell, 2000, p.68).

This position of the female victimisation (and moral degradation) is seen in the following image of exploitation movies[2] of the 1930s and 1950s in the U.S.:

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[2] Exploitation movies focused on sensational themes, such as: drug abuse, prostitution and venereal disease, among others. These films are regarded as being responsible for the survival of independent movie theatres across U.S.

Fig. 1: *Marihuana* (1934)[3]

'Degradation', 'vice', 'sin' and 'debauchery' compound the highly stigmatised context, in which women would be seen either as entrapped, victimised; or as a threat evoking the idea of 'bad women' or 'fallen women' (also suggested by the way she is dressed). Furthermore, in this image it is possible to highlight a sort of racialized discourse with the image of the devil, evoking the idea of fear of intermarriage.

It is also relevant to note that although in this image the text says: Marijuana – "A vicious racket with its arms around your children", the picture does not show a child but portrays a blonde woman, evoking the imaginary of women as close to children, infantile and dependent (also fostering the imaginary of drug users as dependent and infantile).

Moreover, the evocation of children in anti-drug campaigns is still prevalent. For example in Britain in December 2003, there was a poster of anti-tobacco campaign, depicting only a childish scrawl saying: 'when you smoke, I do'. It is interesting to note the utilisation of children in these campaigns, in which although the importance of not smoking in front of children is highlighted, at the same time, an image of smokers as immoral and inconsiderate is promoted, particularly for harming the health of children. Children "are the so-called innocent victims of tobacco smoke, as if those who do smoke are morally blameworthy" (Gostin, 1997, p.348). Furthermore, there is a gender aspect in relation to drug policies, in which custody plays an important role in relation to the mother drug user as I will discuss in later sections.

The following images (Fig.2 and 3) of the U.S. exploitation movies (1930–1950) are indicative of the victim position accorded women, connecting it with madness and moral degradation.

These images instigate a number of readings regarding the position of women in relation to drugs. In these images women are primarily seen as victims of drugs. This is also supported by the explicitly written text "youthful marihuana victim", and the appearance of men seducing them to use drugs.

This is particularly salient in the images of the movie *Marihuana* (1934), in which women appear as being injected by men or having their reefer lit by them. Further, the vampire style of Reefer Madness produces a dehumanised image of drug users, similar to the evil in figure 2. This could be thought of as a racialized slant in the discursive context of women as victims of drugs.

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[3] Image accessed at http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue08/features/exploitation/ in May/2003

Fig. 2: *Marihuana* (1934)[4]:

Fig. 3: *Reefer Madness* (1938)[5]:
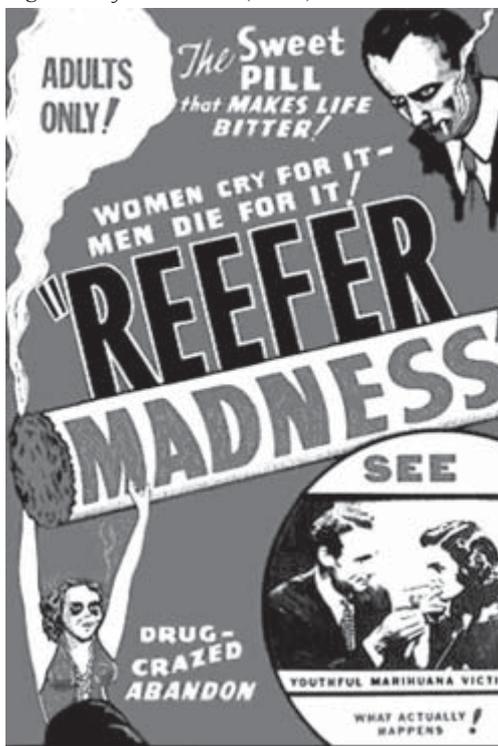
[4] Images retrieved from
http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue08/features/
exploitation/ in May/2003
[5] Images retrieved from
http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue08/features/
exploitation/ in May/2003

Moreover, while in these images women are seen as potential victims, they also appear as 'prostitutes' or as 'sexually available'. This whole scene is compounded by a moralistic overtone, in which drugs appear as "the sweet pill that makes life bitter" (*Reefer Madness*, 1938). Thus first seduced they would end up in a circle of vice. This narrative is reinforced by the text that appears in these images such as: "Devil's Harvest" – "The Smoke of Hell" (*Marihuana*, 1934). Or in the next image from the same movie: "weird orgies, wild parties, unleashed passion" accompanied by the words "misery", "shame, horror, despair", "weed with roots in hell". The images of *Reefer Madness* also emphasise: "drug crazed abandon", "Marihuana – a puff, a party, a tragedy", "wild-mad thrills", supporting the idea of moral degradation (out of control, madness) by women on drugs.

It is interesting to note how the anti-drugs messages of these exploitation movies seem to work in rather ambiguous ways. On the one hand, they picture women as primary victims of drugs drawing on the idea of moral degradation: "a good girl until she lights a reefer". And on the other hand, these images can be seen as used to attract audience, as they depict women of seductive appearance. Here the male gaze is highlighted, in which women are occupying the position of the 'other' (victims, children like, prostitutes). I further explore this in the next section.

Gaze

Traditionally women's acceptable social roles were mainly related to reproduction and caring for children and husband. Thus women have been portrayed according to two antagonistic images, that is, the mother and the prostitute. Indeed, the dynamics of women's drug taking explicitly or implicitly circulate around sexual realms, in which the (culturally masculine) gaze in relation to women is (hetero) sexually oriented.

Foucault's (1991) notion of the normative gaze refers to a surveillance that enables it to qualify, classify and punish. Such practices establish over individuals a "visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (p.184). Taking a gender perspective, the social boundaries for women are clearer than for men, and transgressing these boundaries makes women more visible. This is a central aspect in the analysis of the dynamics of the visible and the invisible drug taking.

The invisibility of drug use refers primarily to the solitary domestic use of drugs. For example the use of alcohol, or tranquilisers in the private sphere. Here the invisible woman (e.g. on tranquilisers) is seen as dependent, as a passive victim of drugs. This contrasts with the visibility of women who take drugs overtly, outside the private sphere, where they are seen as 'polluted women', regarded as a rejection of femininity (Ettorre, 1989), evoking the sexualised discourse of 'prostitution', 'sexual availability' or 'lesbianism' (aggressiveness).

Within this space of moral symbolisation, it is expected of women to be in control, thus pleasure can be seen as a transgressing category for women. Drug taking, in this sense, constitutes a double transgression, that is, self-indulgence and the added immorality that is related to drug use.

Moreover, it is important to point out that exactly because of this limited space for indulgence, women on drugs can also be seen as occupying an empowering position. For example, in Britain during 1920s important changes were occurring in society, when women were appearing in public without the company of men, and started smoking in public. Smoking here can be seen as a challenge to the public image of women, in which "a 'public woman' was a prostitute" (Kohn, 1992, p.52).

Significantly, in contemporary adverts for cigarettes, the images propagated are those of women as free, daring, choosing, having power, and modern, challenging social stereotypes. Indeed this was explored by tobacco companies, whose advertisements drew on themes such as power, freedom and choice. Smoking can be seen as a rejection of stereotypical images of women, in which "they can be as rebellious, daring and anti-establishment as boys" (Jacobson, 1981, p.41).

Here I analyse some images of contemporary cigarette campaigns (1990s). These were retrieved from http://tobaccofreekids.org/adgallery/ (2002). I also indicate which country these ads appeared in. The following analysis draws on these elements of power and transgression, and how at the same time these images accord to traditional discourses of women. It is important to highlight that this approach to the images has to be read as one possibility of analysis, so while it does not exhaust the analysis, it indicates some aspects that these images could evoke.

In the following images I highlight the notions of power and transgression related to smoking, by the implicit idea of power gained by the entrance into the man's world. It is important to note that although power is underlined, women still appear under a sexualised gaze.

Although she has gained power in this context, the sexual component is emphasised in this image. While her leather trousers emphasise her sexuality, simultaneously 'wearing the trousers' is being portrayed (underlining her independence). The sexual connotation is also enforced by the non appearance of the faces, and also by leaving it to the audience to imagine where they are looking at. Further, paraphrasing Lucky Strike, this could also point to two directions: getting the ball in, and his luck to have her.
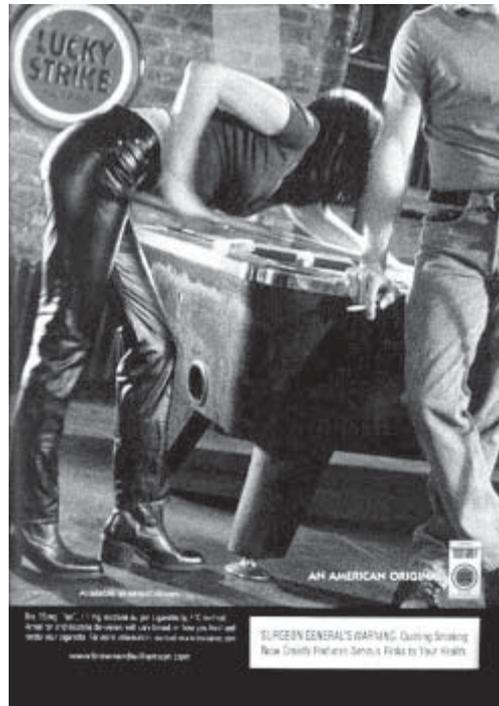
Fig. 4: United States

Fig. 5: South Africa

89
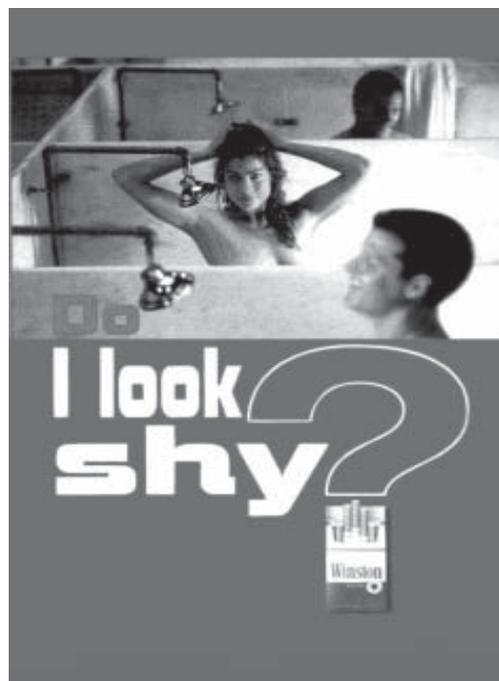
In this advert it is also possible to see the woman smoker (although it is him who is smoking) entering a space that is typically reserved for men: 'snooker' (and smoking). Somehow, smoking allows her to have the necessary strength. In the following image, this entrance into the men's world is explicit:

In this advert she is portrayed inside a space that is exclusively for men: 'men's locker room'. By smoking she gains entrance into men's world, playing with the same rules. Moreover, it is interesting to note the utilisation of shyness, bringing in the idea of defying the space reserved for women.

However, although power and defiance when smoking is portrayed, this image also explores a highly sexualised sphere: two men in the shower with a woman. Furthermore the woman is looking at the camera, which can be seen as provocative, but at the same time it signals her non participation in the male's dialogue.

The idea of women's emancipation is stressed in the following images highlighting choice and freedom.

In this campaign of Virginia Slims, the slogan used is: "I have the capacity (I am able to) to decide on everything *without saying a word*. Virginia Slims: "search for your truth". The power obtained by smoking is emphasised as a sort of liberation, in which she has the capacity to decide on everything.

It is interesting to note the paradoxical message delivered by this advert. Although she decides on everything she does not need to deliver the message. However, by not speaking out she remains speechless, reproducing the stereotypical social position of women. And along the same lines, why is there a need to stress "I have the *capacity* to decide"?

It is important to ask what the referencing of this image is. This advert appeared in the publication *Latina*, perhaps bringing the idea of western models of freedom, of modernity, without losing their traditions. This campaign targets women, to whom she may appear as an inspirational model, whereby although she smokes (modern, active, etc.) she can still be feminine.

Fig.6: United States (Publication Latina)
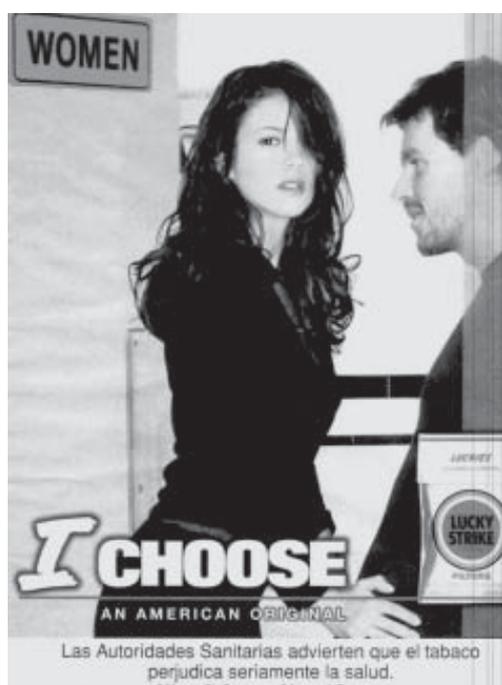
Fig. 7: Spain
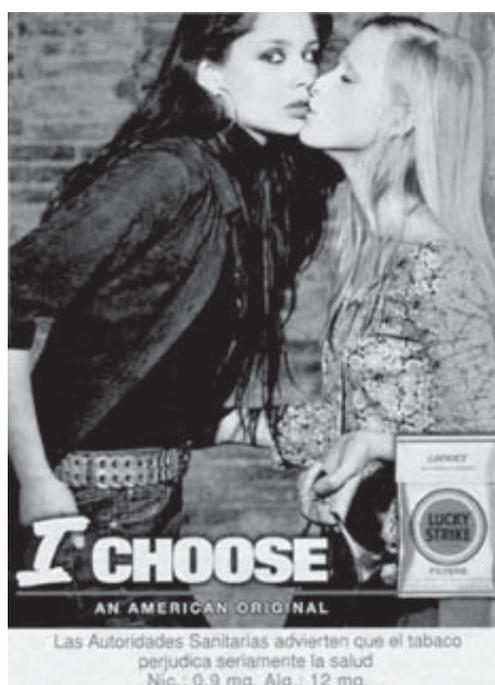
Fig. 8: Spain

In the following campaign, "I choose" is an overt message of Lucky Strike cigarette campaigns. It introduces the idea of power in terms of the individual as the active agent (despite the discursive tension between lucky strike and choice). Here power of choice appears in two aspects, first the choice to smoke cigarettes (a notion that is usually the dispute in anti-tobacco campaigns that state that smokers are addicted, so not free); and second, the active role of choosing in other contexts of daily life, such as sexual partners. Hence, it is interesting to note how sex and gender appear in these images:

Here choice is related to power, as the woman appears as sexually dominant in the picture. This is also supported by the sign 'women' in the background (they are in a ladies toilet). Further, it is interesting to note the utilisation of the English language in this campaign that was broadcasted in Spain, perhaps emphasising the idea of western liberation as connected with consumer choice.

Moreover, the sexual encounter that this image portrays seems to refer to an uncontrollable passion, evoking past ideas about drugs and loose sexual control.

In the following image, choice is related to sexual orientation:

In these campaigns freedom of choice (power) is emphasised in relation to sexuality. However, although power to chose is emphasised in relation to sexual orientation, this image seems to evoke ambiguous readings. In this picture the sexual encounter appears as passionless. She is looking at the camera, perhaps interested to see who is looking at her (the public), which could also be interpreted as part of the male gaze/fantasy.

Furthermore, as previously pointed out, pleasure is regarded as transgressive for women, thus sex and drugs becomes highly stigmatised. Indeed the imaginary of women and drugs play

on the idea of deviance by evoking discourses of prostitution or lesbianism, as utilised in this image.

In the analysis of these images it was possible to see antagonistic discourses on women and drugs, i.e. cigarettes. Although smoking is portrayed as liberating and as challenging of stereotypical women's roles, they are often constructed from a specific perspective where women appear under a sexualised gaze.

Drug Policy

In this article I pointed out the dynamics of the normative gaze and the position of the 'other' in relation to women and drugs. This aspect is of major importance since it gives insights into the differences in the social imaginary of drug taking between genders (e.g. stigmatisation). These stereotypical images are still prevalent in social intervention.

> "Medical and psychological literature presented a picture of drug use in which drug users just happened to be male and women hardly figured. When they did, they appeared as sicker, more deviant, more psychologically disturbed than their male peers: as weak and pathetic creatures. Women's drug use figured as a 'deviation' from 'normal' femininity due to mental or physical deficiencies, or disease" (Henderson, 1999, p.37).

Hence, because of this particular imaginary position of women, drug treatment for women is very much related to how their use of drugs affects others, i.e. childbirth, child rearing and sexual encounters. In fact HIV transmission has impacted in the services for women drug users, leading to a growth of policy-led research. As Campbell (2000, p.25) argues drug use is constructed as a "form of violence that women commit against themselves and those closest

to them". Indeed, women's health or illness is very much connected to the idea of harming others, hence prostitution, pregnancy and child care are crucial aspects. Hence stereotypical images of women drug users were revitalised in the media (for example crack-mothers), and punitive actions were taken.

> "While in the past women addicts who were pregnant or mothering were constructed as poor mothers who violated feminine norms by dominating their households, in the latter decades of the century women who biologically 'reproduced' addiction played stunningly demonised roles" (Campbell, 2000, p.139).

The idea behind this is that women drug users cannot control themselves, therefore, they cannot educate their children, and thus will – given women's roles in relation to nation – contribute to producing an unruly society.

During the 1980s and 1990s policy makers drew on the idea of the 'vulnerable child' or the 'foetus' positioning women either as victims or as 'victimisers', and according to this decided on either punitive or treatment drug policies. In this way, one arrived at two perspectives in drug policy: either the expansion of health and social apparatus or the punitive approach. Here a key discourse identified was the 'decline of maternal instinct' as the source of policy problem (Campbell, 2000). In this context, there is a call for public surveillance, in which each citizen acquires the moral obligation of preventing mothers or future mothers of taking drugs. One of the effects of this call is that this can be used to deny women's autonomy over their bodies and lives.

Moreover, it is she who damages her foetus by smoking and drinking (or other uses of drugs), and this provokes an individualistic approach, in which society, including the father, are

excluded from sharing responsibilities, as if the woman was raising her child in a social vacuum. Indeed the social isolation of women drug users increases during pregnancy, bringing different sets of problems (Klee, 2002). One of the consequences of this social stigma is that it can operate as further social sanction, preventing women (and men) from seeking out help leading to a dynamic of *invisibility*.

Another key aspect structuring the realms of gender and drugs is domestic violence against women and drug use (e.g. alcohol). women are a common target. Here it is important to consider, as McDonald (1994) notes, that behaviour is learnt. Hence, drunken behaviour is learnt. In this sense, physical abuse as a consequence of alcohol consumption is socially and culturally located.

It is important to note that drug policy is driven by a 'law and order' agenda, and this also appears to have a public/private split in that drug policies are chiefly concerned with criminality and violence on the streets rather than in the domestic sphere. So violence against women in the home which may be linked to substance misuse is frequently overlooked. Drug policies and provisions need to be able to connect better with issues of domestic violence.

Indeed it is fundamental to drug policies that they become women-oriented (Ettorre, 1989, Raine 2001) and draw on a perspective that includes women as '"social actors' rather than passive subject of power" (Henderson, 1999, p.42). These aspects related to women should also be further expanded further to attend to the intersectional character of women's positions, thus encompassing current gaps in policy and provision around race, ethnic minority status, age, sexuality (homosexuality) and class.

Conclusion

In this article I drew attention to the social imaginary of women and drugs, which makes explicit stereotypical positions of women in discourse. I started by analysing key ideas surrounding drug use and how these operate in relation to gender. Indeed, 'dependency', weakness', 'uncontrollability', and 'madness', that compound discourses around drug users, are also seen as female characteristics. These characteristics are situated in discourse in the position of the 'other', a position that 'women' often occupy. From this, I explored the sexualised context that this 'other' occupies, in which she is seen as 'mother' or deviant of this role as 'prostitute' or 'lesbian'.

This limited scope of discourses, is also connected to the position of women in the nation. The analysis of the social imaginary of women and drugs at this point, highlighted that as reproducers of society's morality, drug use is seen as a special threat (for women, their children and nation). Thus, women were portrayed either as primary victims of drug use, or perpetrators.

This imaginary position is clarified by the notion of the gaze. Here this (sexualised) gaze was analysed in terms of the visibility and invisibility of women and drugs, where either they would take drugs at home, remaining invisible; or they will be hyper visible when taking drugs (including alcohol) in public. Furthermore, because of this limited space for indulgence, taking drugs could also function as a form of challenge social norms (public woman x woman in public). In the analysis of contemporary cigarette campaigns, I highlighted how this space of empowerment has been portrayed, where I pointed out contradictions and antagonistic discourses that surround stereotypical social roles.

Finally, the analysis of the social imaginary of women is fundamental to be considered, where women should be included as social agents when planning drug policies.

I would like to thank Erica Burman, Kath Watson and the Feminist Research and Reading Group (Manchester Metropolitan University) for their important suggestions.

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Ilana Mountian is a research fellow in the Discourse Unit, Manchester Metropolitan University.

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For information about Discourse Unit activities and postgraduate research contact: Erica Burman or Ian Parker, Discourse Unit, Department of Psychology and Speech Pathology, The Manchester Metropolitan University, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 OJA, UK. Email: E.Burman@mmu.ac.uk or I.A.Parker@mmu.ac.uk

Sonic Cyborgs? Engendering dissonance and resistance in popular music

Nancy Böttner

Abstract

The following article is an attempt to map critical action of women within the sphere of Western popular music. Although women still have limited scope in performing and producing music, they engage popular culture to provide a platform for feminist issues or subvert dominant gender relations. Drawing upon the music, lyrics and imagery of Peaches and the theoretical resources of a Foucauldian understanding of power, I discuss the practices and tools of resistance which are seized by the Canadian woman who performs 'Peaches'. These modes can be seen as practices of sonic cyborgs: subversive re-citation, illegitimate fusions and mimetic practices all account for the challenge of gender relations and sexualities which are constructed as fixed categories. In the process of seizing the productive aspects of power Peaches performs a powerful 'agent' position with a pleasurable engagement for gender and sexual equalities. These moves of resistance are an important subject of critical research.

Keywords: *popular music, women, resistance, cyborg, Peaches, performativity*

Feminism and activism sound like a perfect couple. They are intertwined in their investment in social change, struggling over the forms and norms of agency, exploring spaces of resistance and attending to a critical reading of discourses which mould social relations. Central to this intersection is the conceptualisation of power. In the following article I engage with a Foucauldian understanding of power, where power is seen as producing effects which include both the materialisation and the resistance to discourses and technologies that shape our daily lives and actions (Foucault, 1977). Thus, we are positioned by discourses, but we equally perform subject positions. Being "embedded within structure, the textual features of that enrolment may permit glimpses of instability or alternative positionings." (Burman, 1996:12). The following article raises issues I understand as important for a meaningful relation between feminism and critical action grappling with the spaces women occupy as agents, as subjects of this double movement, trying to analyse or grasp the modes of this instability.

Drawing upon a feminist and psychological education I would like to pick on an area I am equally engaged with – women as performers and producers of music in popular culture. This proves to be a pleasurable and highly political adventure. More than just a product, music is a tool of understanding the world, it is "a play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded and distorted" (Attali, 1985: 4). Hence, Music is not only an important field of commonly shared cultural references, but also a battle ground where power relations are actively articulated and contested. It has the potential to shape and distort the very meanings from which it is generated. It takes part in the histories of resistance.

Women in popular music – the same old song?

Women still play a minor part in actively creating and producing the themes of the 'big orchestra' of popular culture – often they are relegated to the positions of consumer, the 'fan', or to performing beauty (Frith, 1981; Reynolds & Press, 1996). Even the so-called 'independent' music scene, aiming at more heterogenic productions, is still dominated by male, white and heterosexist practices (Büsser et al., 2000). This is a scene that re-samples the same power relations it aims to challenge – it is a men's club and women have regulated and limited scope.

However, there are spaces of resistance and re-articulations and an increasing body of knowledge and academic research engaged with the politics of popular culture, e.g. the field of Cultural Studies (Grossberg, 1992). This research and critical reflection indicates that far from being just entertainment, popular music and culture represent one platform or area of critical activism. In my article I will attend to critical practices that engage issues of gender relations and sexuality, leaving other cultural categories (such as race, age, geography) unreflected. Inspiring and useful discussions of such issues can be found in Cultural Studies texts (e.g. Gilroy, 1992).

In terms of critical actions we can trace multiple forms of engaging with the complex of popular music. One way is to use the 'platform' popular music provides to put forward certain political agendas. Because popular music has the potential to reach a massive audience, it is through music, performance and lyrics that many political messages are articulated, e.g. on AIDS campaigns or feminist issues. Thus, women promote a feminist agenda in naming and challenging inequalities and injustice in popular music. Networks of female musicians and organisers open up 'the stage', providing and creating platforms for such issues. Local and international cooperations or movements arise, e.g. The Lady Fest movement consisting of locally organised festivals for female artists, or Riot Grrrls, an US-american subculture from the early 90's, which connected the energy and rebellion of Punk with specific female and feminist issues.

Yet, there are also other forms of interventions which challenge gender relations and subvert current Western understandings of identity issues. I would call them practices of 'sonic cyborgs', referring to Haraway's concept of cyborg feminism (Haraway, 1991). They take on the performativity of discourses (Butler, 1994, 1999) and challenge the dominant cultural categories to create spaces of change and resistance. Such understandings of activism have been theorised in the last decades of feminist writing. They are concerned with the politics, the effects, the differences that women create through/in popular music. Because "the most important effects of popular music involve economic, bodily, libidinal, emotional, and political effects" (Herman et al., 1998: 7) it proves to be a valid and interesting field of both feminist activism and critical research. The tools of pop music and of the 'rebellion on stage' parallel the language that interrogates interventions in critical psychology and feminism – noise, resistances, repetitions, re-sampling, dissonances, distortion. I would like to discuss some of these tools/practices that are seized to transgress or diffuse the unequal power constellations that assemble popular culture and the wider world of which it forms a part, and in which we are living.

The Sample

Peaches.
Peaches is the Canadian musician Merrill Nisker, aged 37. Now living in Berlin she has thus far released two albums on the Berlin indie Label Kitty-Yo ("Teaches of Peaches", 2002; "Fatherfucker" 2004). Although backed by musicians, dancers and other friends in her live show, she appears to be a one-woman project of growing popularity in the western popular music scene. I assume she is just at the edge of more mainstream celebrity stardom – now being associated with famous Westerners like Madonna, Iggy Pop, Pink, Karl Lagerfeld etc. Though it is impossible to map the construct 'Peaches' here, I will provide the following coordinates:

The Music. Rough and straight, quite monotonous electronic beats, catchy but raw and repeating electronic bass lines, a rocking electric guitar. Her voices: rock gesture, screaming but mostly kind of recitative, singing and rapping. All recorded very roughly, noisy, focused on voice and beat. She is one of the main figures of the so called "Elektropunk/Elektroclash", merging (post)punk attitude and 80's electronic music.

The Content/ Lyrics. Is mainly about sex and sexuality. Sex is a common theme in most popular music, but mainly set up in different ways. She puts it in a very explicit, aggressive and repetitive way (the chorus "fuck the pain away" on "Teaches of Peaches" is actually repeated 24 times!). Gender roles, androgyny and (bi)sexuality are all re-negotiated alongside each other. The following are extracts from two songs, which I will draw upon later:

AA XXX

(...)
Consider my suspicion
Let's see if my intuition
Has any volition
'Cause I am on a mission
For the omission, the competition
And the definition of my position
It's bitching
(...)
 I am hexed I am vexed
I am in the doubles text
Some people say that I put my self-perspective
I am in the cervix

Only double A
Thinking triple X (repeat 4x)
(...)
(extract from the Album "Teaches of Peaches", 2002)

<u>Shake yer dix</u>

All right, all you men, you boys, you guys
Are you with peaches?
Then gimme some of this!

Shake your dicks, shake your dicks
Shake your dicks, shake your dicks

OK, how about you girls, you women, you ladies
Are you with peaches?
All right then, lets try this, are you ready?

Shake your tits, shake your tits
Shake your tits, shake your tits(...)

Boys like the lips swinging in their face
Lying back and staking their own space
We're gonna kick it now and take your place
Come on and give us a taste

I am not the only one with body to kill
I like to see just how you swing that thrill
Come on baby, baby, use that thing
You make my panties go ping
(...)
You gotta shake your dicks and your tits
I'll be me and you be you
Shake your dicks and shake your tits
And let me be you too
(...)
(extract from the Album "Fatherfucker", 2004)

Front cover of "Fatherfucker",
Kitty-Yo, 2003

The imagery. A woman with a huge black beard, like Abraham Lincoln or a werewolf, unshaved armpits and crotches. A woman in short pink pants and bra, rocking a guitar, sweating, screaming, bruised legs, bleeding, often wearing a big pink dildo in her live show. Supported by her rhythm machine, musicians, dancers/strippers. The video for "Set it off" shows her body hair growing everywhere longer and longer. The fonts of "fatherfucker" mime a Heavy Metal / Hard Rock style.

Why her?

To say it in advance, I like her music and all the rest of it, but this is not the reason why I discuss her now. Rather it is because Peaches is highly disputable and puts herself in a position

to be disputed. I picked her because she is about to become famous and the media/press I have reviewed always seem obliged to deal with the question of gender and power when it comes to her work.

> "Deconstructive feminism questions stereotypes and gender relations in elevated/elaborated theoretical constructions. Peaches (...) is doing this with more simple methods. She is always aiming at what the speakers of a dominated, patriarchal discourse do not want to see or hear her do. And she just provokes the right addressee. " (my translation, Weber, 2003, http://www.jungle-world.com/seiten/2003/41/1807.php)

Many reviewers and commentators describe her and her agenda as 'empowerment' – more specifically 'self-empowerment'. As Weber continues: "The concept of Peaches is self-empowerment. [...] It is not important what she is doing but how she is doing it" (my translation, Weber, 2003). Empowerment is an ambivalent and ambiguous term, oscillating between the hidden power imbalances of the notion of 'empowering someone else' (Parker, 1999) and the individualistic notion that lurks behind self-empowerment, where an understanding of power is put forth that neglects its social and relational aspects. It is tempting to assume Peaches is a one-woman-show. Surely she accounts more for individual than collective forms of activism. But this understanding neglects the complex relations from which popular music emerges. Peaches 'is' equally the small alternative label and its distribution structure, the DJ's playing the songs, the friends backing her show and the listeners, the audience that is part of the process of articulating cultural meaning (for detailed discussion of articulation see Grossberg, 1992). Does Peaches with her 'simple methods' realise a "capacity to influence the conditions and terms of everyday life of a community or society"? (Bhavnani, 1990: 145). In what follows I would like to question the kinds of critical practice that Peaches employs and how they constitute subversion, challenge and resistance to dominant gender relations.

The Noise of subversive repetitions

I would like to draw on three different elements. First, her cover: the female face (aimed to look like a woman's face, even wearing make up) wears a beard/has a beard. Second, the strap-on, the dildo she wears in her live show. And third, the lyrics in her repetitive style: Reading and especially listening to "Shake yer dix" reminds me of and refers to the hetero-sexist rhymes of current Western mainstream pop music.
All three examples perform gender and sexuality in such a way as to open up and destabilise our reading of categories which tend to be constructed as fixed. According to Reynold & Press, female musicians employed such provisional identities as weapons, to turn "stereotypes against the society" (Reynolds & Press, 1996:234). This is a critical cyborg practice, "not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marks them as others" (Haraway, 1991:175). Peaches e.g. seizes the sexist 'macho' attitude of many Western rap rhymes and reverses them: "You gotta shake your dicks and your tits. I'll be me and you be you. Shake your dicks and shake your tits. And let me be you too."

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It is an act of *subversive re-citation*, a form of decontextualising signification, as Preciado (2003) named it in her theorising of the dildo. Peaches is *wearing* a beard or a dildo. She does not claim or pretend to have one. She *uses* them. It is an act of *citing* common cultural (and naturalised) references (such as a beard, a penis or rhymes of harassment) and deploying them in other contexts, in another relational setting. By this kind of displacement, meaning is opened up for disputation, it is reshuffled, creating a moment of uprooting. It is a process that involves/articulates the reader and speaker of the text as well as the discourses that produce the text, but also the reader and speaker –

> "an act that proposes questions without giving us the tools to read off the answers [...] that challenge our practice of reading, make us uncertain about how to read, or make us think that we have to renegotiate the way in which we read" (Butler, 1994: 38).

In terms of Peaches this insecurity is reflected in the media's comments about her (in reports, interviews etc.), and in every person's trying to make sense of her. There is a whole series of commentators who express their confusion. So a large number of discussions around sex, gender relations and feminist issues are engendered (see reference list of my internet research). "Music is tamed noise, a structural code that defines and maps positions of power and difference that are located in the aural landscape of sound. Noise, or sound that falls outside a dominant musical code, transgresses the dominant ordering of difference." (Herman et al, 1998: 18–19). Within popular music Peaches is 'noise' in its best political sense.

Illegitimate fusions

At the same time, Peaches' music itself appears to be as noisy as the performance/imagery is: rough recordings, digital and analogue noises stress the direction of the whole project. Using a rhythm machine/work station (MC 505) that generates sounds and beats mainly digitally, she is inscribed in the sphere of electronic pop/dance music. This music scene (electro) employs powerful new machines and technologies, such as computers, as instruments. In the last 30 years the high tech industry complex engages with digital technologies and scientific engineering to develop an enormous amount of new instruments. But, similarly to other areas of music production, electro is dominated by male producers/users and the absence of women is explained through recourse to the all too familiar dichotomies: Competence and interest in soft/hardware technology or computer science are mainly ascribed to men, whereas women are understood as engaging with her body (that is the voice and dancing performances), more traditional instruments (piano and violin) or are as generally absent from the playground 'electronics' (Braunesreuther & Maida, 2000). Peaches picked on this absence:

> "I guess what inspired me to do my current project, Peaches, was what was not out there... electronic music with personality, and a lack of women doing electronics. (...) Electronics are there to make things easier and free you up in my opinion." (http://www.pinknoises.com/peaches.shtml)

Leaving the user manual untouched, taking the electronic machinery, using guitar, her voice and her energy to perform music and gender issues, she clashes all of them together. This opens up space for new alliances:

> "There is an interesting aesthetic element to it: electro is captivated by the idea of machines as clean, perfect things, next to which the human body – particularly sex – seems messy and organic, maybe even scary or disgusting. Sweaty, sticky, hairy: this is the world of Peaches ". (http://www.pitchforkmedia.com/record-reviews/p/peaches/teaches-of-peaches.shtml, Abebe, 2002)

I would go even further in this critical reflection: it is more than an aesthetic element that is subverted, these are in fact political elements that perform subversive actions. It is an articulation of binaries: the messy and organic, sweaty, bleeding, sexed elements – ascribed to the sphere of the human 'natural' body – are articulated with the clean, artificial, digital technology. Here boundaries get blurred. It is another destabilising practice, challenging these binaries.

> "All technologies have always been political systems that assure the reproduction of socio-economic structures (...) but (they) equally represent a space of resistance" (Preciado, 2003:126, my translation).

This is cyborg politics; to generate *illegitimate fusions*, to subvert the "modes of reproduction of Western identity, of nature and culture, [...] of body and mind" (Haraway, 1991:176) and to challenge the materialisation of these power relations. A werewolf communicating and performing sex and pleasure through a sweating, rocking drum machine. Dancing the borders of human, animal and machine.

Politics of pleasure: message and mimesis

In order to analyse the effects of Peaches performance, it is necessary to understand lyrics and music as an ongoing communication with the audience – in this process the cultural meaning of any 'pop-cultural' action is articulated (Grossberg, 1992). In the articulation of Peaches we hear a powerful speaker. She talks the position of the agent, – "'Cause I am on a mission for the omission, the competition and the definition of my position". She is/performs the perpetrator. She engages with the subject position that backs up the productive aspect of power, almost essentializing it. Expanding the !DIY – U can do it! messages of punk and Riot Grrrls (Reynolds & Press, 1996) she refuses to take on a one-dimensional female victim position – a position that has been entertained by much feminist research in the past (Elam, 1994). But the endless repetition of her message, stripped down to a few lines, puts a highly ironic edge to it. It is 'sorcery', it is irony, it is both – "I am in the doubles text". Thus, she is/mimes the agent. In this boundless exaggeration we can still foresee the limits of the show – she is *putting on* a beard, she strategically constitutes such a powerful subject position as natural, even though this is not the whole story. This can be read as a contradiction – and we find many in her work. To her it is pleasure, and this pleasure is politically effective. As a woman on stage and an increasingly famous media person, she provides a powerful reference to other women. Thus, she enacts the actually most provocative and effective position by slipping into the Agent, the transgressor. This position seems to be encoded as male, but she is destabilising this order by these *mimetic practices*. I refer to mimesis as

> "imitation or (...) expression, and as a mutual pervasion of both movements it is a term for the acquirement of and the influence upon bodily experienced reality" (Pfahl & Traue, 2000:82).

She acquires/realises the 'agent – position', the beard, the electronics, the male, the rock star and she influences it in the same move. Hence, mimetic practices seize the productive aspects of power relations and subject positions which Foucault (1977) engages in his theorisation of power. They perform the aspect of the double movement, the doubled subject positions that include and materialise modes of resistance and de-subjectification.

Referring to the quote at the beginning – the importance of *how* she engages her music and lyrics – I understand the deferral and occupation of the agent position as one of the most valuable messages of her work. She encodes this position as positive and pleasurable.
This strategic move advances an upfront agenda. In her interviews she promotes the equal encounter of bodies, whatever genders or sexualities have been materialised and constructed. She aims to teach to "celebrate your own body" and asks: "Do you bear this celebration if it is really open and equal?". She challenges the power imbalances of gender and sexual relations which are performed in popular music: "Why is it always 'Shake your tits'? Why does nobody say 'Shake your dicks?' [...] After all I say this now. And I say both." (both quotes: Stevers, 2003: 53–54, my translation). Thus she promotes a commitment for more equal gender relations and the contestation of fixed constructs and roles.
Despite the obvious parallels to feminist issues, she refuses to take on a feminist 'identity'. Intentionally or not – she engages and is engaged by a feminist agenda, but the interviews tell different, contradictory stories about her commitment to *feminism*. Clearly it appears not important to her – being named a feminist or not. In her music and performance she decides to focus on issues that are all relevant to an emancipatory project, although avoiding a clear grounding in feminism. The effects of this diffusion are multiple, many different people listen to her, discuss her or get confused.

> "Many different peer groups love your music: e.g. horny hetero-boys, tough dykes and pop-enthusiastic feminists. How do you make sense of this?
>
> Peaches: I am very happy about this, because this is exactly what I wanted: to reach as many people as possible. Not only sophisticated electro fans. But also the people who usually switch off when they read a heading like: 'Peaches – intellectual electronic feminist artist', or 'Peaches – the new rock'. I like to open up the audience this way, instead of being squeezed in a category that excludes others" (http://www.plastikmaedchen.net/stories/204/, my translation)

Is this her overall agenda, to open up categories and practices? At least this can be seen as one effect of the practices of resistance I described and briefly analysed above. Gender relations and power imbalances get disputed and shifted. And this opens up social change.

Open up

Peaches is a subversive intervention. It is a construct that is aimed to undermine current understandings of gender relations, sex and sexuality. The main interference is to open up categories that are represented as fixed or natural, to enact a re-shifting of the order of dominant power relations. Here she is on the same track as feminist researchers that employ

poststructuralist conceptualisations to articulate different understandings of identity and critical action (e.g. Butler 1994, Bhavnani & Haraway, 1994). I have tried to explore what can be seen as the moves, the practices that provoke this challenge. They can be transferred to other areas of critical activism, especially if critical action is situated in and draws upon media and new communication technologies. Mimetic practices, subversive re-citations and unexpected fusions do rely on forms of communication at the intersection of physical, bodily and technological articulations. These are some of the tools of the 'sonic cyborgs' for promoting a critical agenda, for employing the multiplicity and fluidity of subject positions and identity.

As the critical reader of my article may comment – I have neither explored the limits of her 'critical practices' nor have I discussed the danger of falling into the same oppressive power relations I understand her to challenge. They are important and would be the next step of an analysis. However, I deliberately sided with the productive effects of these critical practices, productive effects that I would appreciate as positive and supportive to a feminist agenda. These practices account for the change of unequal power relations, for a more mutual and concerned way of living. There is a danger of understanding critical reading and criticality merely as tracing and analysing the process of oppression and subjection. Critical research can get trapped by focusing on the subjectifying aspects and effects of power, as is evident in the pitfalls of feminist conceptualising of women 'as objects or victims'! I remember myself being overwhelmed and paralysed by understanding the way I occupy powerful positions – realising how 'I myself' exclude and produce O/others, trying to engage a language that avoids this, trying to speak a language of the ultimate political correctness. The impossibility of this was an important lesson. We equally have to pay attention to the 'lines of escape', the practices of de-subjectification and resistance, the productive aspects of power. What are the tools that can be seized, what do they effect, and how do they relate and process? More importantly though, what are the normative directions for them? These questions are highly relevant to feminist activism and the body of research/knowledge that it engages. Not all subject positions are equally mobile, "but non-the-less is a critical engagement [one] that opens up possibilities […], making another world imaginable, and maybe just barely possible." (Bhavnani & Haraway, 1994:34). The 'teaches' of Peaches exemplify just some of the multiple ways of resistance and critical action. There are many more – and the pleasure is ours/us.

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Nancy Böttner, Diploma in Social Work (HTWK Leipzig, Germany) and MSc in Psychology and Counselling (MMU Manchester, UK). I was born in the GDR in 1976 and now live in Leipzig (Germany) and work part time as a counsellor in a social agency for people with addiction problems. I am part of several music projects (singing, playing guitar and synths), a local musician collective and equally engage for the Lady Fest Leipzig. Contact email: soluna7@gmx.de.

Exploring new ways of insubmission in social representation

Feminist Lesbians Group (Grup Lesbianes Feministes)

Abstract And Bio

The Feminist Lesbians Group self-representation is that of a political action group with an anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalistic approach, positioned purposely on the fringe and working on activist research based on analysis from lesbianism and feminism. In fighting against the invisibility that lesbians, feminists and women overall are still suffering, the GLF (Feminist Lesbians Group) wants to actively participate in processes of social representation, undoing and denouncing control mechanisms and inventing new practices that put in question the dominant social and gender establishment. Currently, our political action is built around the following question: how does capitalism and the patriarchal system "produce" ourselves as individuals / subjects (related to sexual, social and affection relations, related to leisure, related to social transformation). From that positioning, we have been developing a series of actions occupying the public space and interacting with people in the streets in different ways. E.g., we have created actions to raise a critical conscience in front of the dominant ghettification represented by the Gaixample area (Pink posters with the warning "you are entering a controlled area"), but also in front of the appropriation of the social movement messaging that political institutions perform. These actions (that will be described further in this text) try to scenify the lines of thought mentioned above and to generate visibility for reading reality from an alternative open-minded perspective.

Keywords: *Feminism, lesbianism, antipatriarcal resistence, activism, new social rights.*

Having the opportunity to collaborate to a monograph about feminisms and activisms we are really happy to share with you some of our political statements in order to contribute to the debate on new forms of activism and on the impact and role of lesbian activism inside feminism.

The Barcelona Feminist Lesbians Group self-representation is that of a political action group with an anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalistic approach. We intentionally position ourselves on the fringe and do work on activist research, based on analysis crossing over from lesbianism and feminism. By fighting against the invisibility that lesbians, feminists and women overall are still suffering, the Feminist Lesbians Group wants to participate actively in processes of

social representation, in the undoing and denouncing of control mechanisms and seeks to propose new practices that put in question the dominant social and gender establishment.

"Who we are and what we want!"

The *Grup de Lesbianes Feministes* de Barcelona (GLF) – Feminist Lesbians Group – was constituted in 1986 by lesbians who were involved in the feminist movement but lacked their own and specific political space for debate and action. It is a political action group and as such was a pioneer lesbian group in Catalonia and even in Spain, where lesbians are scarcely visible and appear almost exclusively in mixed organisations with gay-male political priorities that are far from aimed at a feminist perspective. From the start our characteristic aim has been the conjunction of a very engaged feminism and lesbianism with a political activist approach. This particularity makes it different from mainstream feminist and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi- and Transsexual) groups in Spain. This dual adscription has also marked our evolution, resulting in a series of materials and actions that were first pursuing mostly issues of visibility for lesbians from a feminist anti-patriarchal perspective and more recently, also aiming to team up with other social activists for a change in all conditions that make life precarious. So this is a critical analysis of how civil rights, caring duties and personal relations are structured, a debate that affects the social model as a whole. At present we promote an exchange of knowledge with social activists that support a new conception of social relationships for everyone (beyond sex-gender labels), and who are trying to spread this broader and critical feminist perspective inside the LGBT movement. We will give a more detailed account of this perspective later on.

Currently the Feminist Lesbians Group political action is built around the question: how do capitalism and the patriarchal system "produce" ourselves as individuals / subjects? (i.e. related to sexual, social and affection relations, related to leisure, related to social transformation etc.). This question does not refer to the patriarchal order in an abstract way, but is addressed in order to analyse different aspects of daily life that are shaped under hetero-patriarchal guidelines (personal relations balance, authority/power assignation, public space distribution in cities, etc.) and to elaborate on valid propositions to change these conditions or at least to counterbalance their impact on the individual and collective choice for a life model.

Firstly, we criticize the regulation of identities and desire, that is strengthened by the recent commercialisation and institutionalisation of "the lesbian fact". The gay community clearly appears to be a new target for politicians and merchants. Lesbians are an emergently significant group for them, so they try to appeal to women in particular and thereby make lesbian women visible in a very problematic way. In an anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalistic fight, we as feminist lesbians don't want to be represented socially by gay-business owners, who are holders of what we call the *pink money* interests (where "pink" refers to "gay") and that picture gays/lesbians as a purely commercial and trendy niche market. We do not even claim any right over a theoretical "pink-share" that governments of all kinds may use to (dis)integrate our vindications. Because our main preoccupation is to unveil and disable the different ways in which identities and emergent sexual relations are controlled and classified. We are concerned about all strategies addressed to control anyone's life.

Secondly, we do not want to adjust to the heterosexist rule, and thus we propose a daily and microscopic subversion into social relations of power via new practices in (emotional?) affective and sexual relationships. Our group put in question how the equality of rights seems to be interpreted currently. For example, we propose a critical view in the debate about homosexual marriage. This is the main political claim made by the LGBT: is marriage such a desirable institution, is it one that fits in with the kind of relations we want to establish? Does it cover our needs for gender transformation, for change in social relations? We question marriage because it is an institution that reinforces the dominant social gender relations – e.g. the duties to care for kids and the elderly are still mainly women's competence according to the unspoken, accepted rules of marriage; and besides that, we think that marriage cannot be presented as the all-in-one generator of rights. In our opinion, it is not a solution for the lack of rights gays and lesbians suffer but merely a structure imported from heterosexist societies, where it is already going through a crisis. For that reason we advocate for a system in which individuals are granted different rights depending on their situation and not necessarily limited or resulting from couple relationships. Marriage as a "pre-set rights/duties package" that legitimates a full network of existing structures and institutions that reinforce the capitalistic and patriarchal social pattern, perpetuating the dominant social, economical and gender relationships. Instead we envision "gender" and "sex" as evolving concepts, agents for a social transformation that grows from the ground level upwards. Thus, we do not want to be "normalised" lesbians who fit in with some pre-approved stereotypes that neo-liberal governments accept for us to be tolerable. Together with other social movements, we stand against any structure, any pattern that leads to a precarisation of our lives using many forms of violence; the challenge is to transform personal relations, not to make them uniform.

Third and finally, in a society like ours, where culture and identities become new items for a commercial exchange, we do NOT want to be produced as consumer-market subjects. Moreover, we are concerned about the existing restrictions to spot, promote or create spaces to generate contra-hegemonic practices from gays, lesbians, bi and transgender. To turn the rules of the hetero-patriarchal social order upside down, there is a need to set up spaces where alternative relations flow and a need to increase participation in institutions and in the public space. Particularly, the public space should be vindicated as political space for collective creativity based on new forms of social, sexual and affective relations. By speaking against life models imposed by pressure groups that present a wonderland for gays, lesbians and transsexual men and women, we want to liberate ourselves on the streets, transforming them at the same time.

Our Practices

From this position, we have developed a series of actions occupying the public space and interacting with people in the streets in different ways. Achievements have neither been easy not fast in many cases. Since 1999, the GLF campaigned for "A street for the lesbian women", denouncing that many streets in Barcelona are dedicated to famous writers, doctors, scientists, philosophers, mainly men; not a single one is dedicated to a lesbian and thus our contribution to history becomes

invisible and thereby our lives symbolically cease to exist in the public space. Lobbying techniques ranged from actions in the street (sticking names of famous lesbians to the street signs) to exhibitions and publishing of materials; this continued every year until 2004, when Barcelona had finally named a street after Sapho, a major Greek poet.

Regarding the debate about homosexual marriage, it is good to know that, for the first time in Spain, in 1998 the Catalan government passed a law regulating *de facto* (non-married) stable couples, which includes same-sex couples and gives them the same rights as married people although it employees rules differently from the ones applicable for heterosexual couples. The internal debate started, and the GLF approached issues that make the women perspective visible beyond legally recognized couple relations, which are traditionally presented as a first step to creating a family. So we published a brochure titled *De fet, les parelles*[1] – criticizing civil marriage, and in 2001 a brochure about auto-insemination (*I ara volem ser mares!?*[2] – And now we want to become mothers !?) was published to raise conscience about the fact that lesbians are women and therefore can create a family on their own surpassing most of the barriers society imposes (limited access to artificial insemination and ineffective access to adoption for lesbians are the rule in Spain). In 2002, the GLF participated in the European Social Forum that took place in Florence, Italy, with a critical view on the gay-business power (documented as "Pink without Frontiers"[3]) and afterwards published "Beyond marriage"[4], a divulgative brochure on theories that explore marriage pros and cons and started campaigning "For the abolition of Civil Marriage", a solution to clean up the patriarchal setting represented by marriage. The abolition of civil marriage would open the way to a landscape in which personal relations are based on mutual consent and contracts that reflect a new balance in terms of individual powers and rights, shaping models that fit each individual situation.

From that date, the abolition of civil marriage and the questioning of "gay marriage" was the basis of a complete line of actions from the GLF, including disruptive contributions like the proposal to declare February 14th as International Day for the Abolition of Marriage in the Women Assembly to be held in London for the European Social Forum. This date was suggested to substitute the commercial invention around St Valentine's Day (known in Spain as "The Lover's Day"). Other activist groups in Barcelona have joined in supporting these lines of thought from different gay, lesbian and transgender perspectives and against the claims made by mainstream LGBT groups who are closer to the dominant political circles. Those joint activities included performing the liberation of a bride by a "GayMatrix" commando in *Parc de la Ciutadella*, a park where the Catalan Parliament (the representation of the people's will, in a democracy) is located.

More recently, the organisation of the Forum of Cultures in Barcelona gave pave to new and reinforced alliances with other alternative feminist groups not related to the GLTB movement.

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[1] That is a linguistic Catalan joke. It means "In fact, couples" joking with the *couple of fact* legislation.
[2] You can find it at http://www.lesbifem.org/textos/mares.html
[3] http://www.lesbifem.org/textos/RSF/RSF_ENG.html
[4] http://www.lesbifem.org/textos/matrimoni/matrimoni_ENG.html

The Forum was presented to the world as a big event promoting Diversity, Sustainability and Peace through a series of high-level conferences, parties, concerts and other cultural events during several months (from May to September 2004), which was based in the always-fashionable and cross-cultural city of Barcelona. The reality was that participants were sourced from a pool of internationally established and well known people in order to profile the event, rather than from the independent associations that work on diversity issues. For example a Women Forum was organized neglecting the main women organizations in Barcelona, but looking for support from abroad. The reality the Barcelona citizens experienced was a general disinformation about the cost and real benefits the Forum will produce. Besides, whereas the Forum location was build in one of the most deprived areas of Barcelona city and temporarily generated employment, all long-term investments were for building a Congress Hall that enlarged Barcelona's capacity to host international events: an architectural island of luxury and efficiency right in front of the existing poverty. In short, the insights were that the event was shaped according to marketing needs to pay for one of the biggest real estate and territory operations in Barcelona's recent history. Social transformation acted as cover-up on the surface, wrapped with an obvious appropriation of Social Forums language but respecting none of the alternative movements' values. Local social movements were not considered at any point in the planning; entrance fees were extremely high and there was ample evidence that tourists rather than locals were the target of the event, which enraged a good part of the citizens. This was totally contradictory to using "culture dialogue" and "forum" as key words and many groups – including the GLF- reacted against the Forum of Cultures producing critical issues and websites. Some of these materials are still available online, visiting http://barcelona.indymedia.org/?lang=en_US or www.fotut2004.org.

The Forum used Diversity and Sustainability as mottos, and even included a Women's Forum in the program inviting well-known women artists, pacifists or politicians. Yet the Forum limited the topics and neglected a debate on female work precarisation, capitalism using female labour to absorb social care costs for free, or violence against women. The Feminist Lesbians Group networked with different women groups in order to produce a feminist-angled manifesto critical to a Forum of Cultures in which the so-called "Women's Forum" was featured as highlight while none of the relevant local women's associations had been invited . Our small network of women groups produced several visibility items underlining experiences and contacts from women that referred to different perspectives (anti-militarists, Catalan nationalists, lesbian feminists, etc), all acting from a common feminist background. Postcards, posters, online distribution of documents, and actions in the streets were organised to unveil the faked dialogue of cultures. Special effort was made to interact with people on the streets and to give them a space to express what they really thought of this imposed Forum.

One highlight of these actions was a *Forum-matón feminista* (this can be translated as "Feminist Forum-shot") that imitated photo booths: People, mostly women, who were shopping in their neighbourhood market were asked for their opinion about the Forum. Confronted with different sentences, they could choose one or propose a new sentence which they would then hold up while we could take a picture of them announcing to the world what they really thought about the

Forum. Among the most popular sentences were: "Dialogues take place in the market", "I am mother of two and have neither spare money nor time to attend the Forum", "Grandmothers can resist all", "Lesbians are not represented in the Forum", "Difference is not a circus", "The Forum markets our identities". During that action an old woman wrote this as a personal sentence[5]: "It's too hot to go to the Forum". Images from this action can be seen online, visiting http://www.lesbifem.org/forummaton/index.htm

In recent years, the Feminist Lesbians Group plans its actions according to an activist research perspective in which interaction with people and bilateral exchange goes along with internal and theoretical discussion. Along these lines, the occupation of the public space, the claim for our right to disagree and the proposition of new models has also been a central feature in our actions, which thus have not been limited to a fight inside the LGBT arena. Nevertheless, apart from building bridges to feminist groups outside lesbian circles and to other LGBT groups, the GLF has engaged in raising a critical conscience in the face of the dominant ghettification. We believe that ghettos represent at lack of integration of a cultural or social group, which is tolerated only in a restricted and clearly identified area that has distinctly marked borders. In Barcelona the area known as *Gaixample*, the main gay area located in the very centre, plays this role (as the neighbourhood of *Chueca* does in Madrid). At this point in history most gay businesses are concentrated in these areas, yet why shouldn't the rest of the city be a safe place for gays and lesbians too, and why shouldn't any bar or discotheque should welcome them?! Our fight for LGBT visibility outside the ghetto and against the commercialisation of our identities was the basis for a new and complex action.

It was planned to generate visibility of the contradictions that result from an area that is portrayed as a "safe space" but in which some bars and discos ban those lesbians and gays from entering who do not fit in with the social stereotype of a gay person, yet welcome heterosexual girls that escort their glamorous gay friends (gym-addicted, fashionably dressed, and ready to spend a week's money in over-rated drinks). The purpose of the action was not to deny the right to socialize in that area, but to point out why people would restrict themselves to this area and why they conformed with the rules imposed. We interpret this as a mechanism of the pink business which operates by exclusion and control over the territory. The action plan consisted of two main parts: firstly, marking the perimeter of the *Gaixample* to make visible the wicked signification of an area where people are allowed to out rule heterosexism but only by complying to the pink-money rules. Secondly, and in order to find an excuse to interact with them, conducting an informal survey among gay people by moving into the area at peak hour, and to listen to their representation of the *Gaixample*.

In order to delimitate the area we hung pink posters showing a radioactivity symbol and a warning "YOU ARE ENTERING A CONTROLLED AREA: GAIXAMPLE" in different places along the streets that form the perimeter, drawing an imaginary circle. The radioactivity symbol refers to the danger and pollution as metaphorical concepts linked to the lives of gays and lesbians in transit

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[5] Reproduced with her permission.

within the city boundaries. On the bottom left-hand side of the poster some questions address those people passing by:

"Are you dressed in fashion?
Do you know the "in" places?
Do you have glamour?
Do you have a credit card?
If affirmative, you can visit our bars and
pick up your personal card as "normalised gay/lesbian"

At some point it seems that we were following the route of someone who was hanging posters that advertised one of the trendiest gay discos along the same streets. Hence sometimes our pink posters covered those showing a half-naked six-pack boy (un)dressed in red underwear, with his trousers down and decorated with euro bills down there. On those streets, where we hit first, we discovered later on that the undressed boy -in-red posters were covering our pink ones.

Later on, around midnight, we placed a table in front of one of the most popular bars in the gay area and close to other important ones. We displayed some gay magazines and "normalised gay" and "normalised lesbian" cards, shaped in credit card format. The pink background featured a radioactivity symbol on one side and a rainbow-police symbol on the other. We had done some brainstorming to produce questions intended to check on stereotypes and that provided us with an excuse to open a dialogue with people going out for a drink in the *Gaixample*. Questions range from asking if they go out as gays only in this area or if they also behave the same in other spots of the city, to checking some personal choices like mobile phones, transportation habits, couple relationship rules (open or closed relations), etc. Some of the stereotypes are confirmed by most people approached (the dress code auto-imposed to seem trendy enough, the need to have a last generation mobile to feel reassured, the special care on haircuts and physical appearance, …) but a significant part of them also state that they do perform the role and behave and dress differently when they do not go out.

The women team from the Group opened a dialogue and explained that the action tries to raise a debate on our confinement to limited and controlled parts of the city, framing a specific public space that we didn't choose. When people were given the card, with the notice "this is the first card that is useless and says so", they smiled and requested to have one even though they could see that it is for being a "normalised gay". They got the idea of our action and saw the contradictions of this monitored freedom the *Gaixample* provides; they even seemed sympathetic to us. In contrast to that, during the time we spend conducting the action, different bodyguards from some of the gay bars located nearby came over repeatedly to ask if we were staying much longer. They stated that our occupying the public space (the street) must be illegal and we were warned that the police will be there every minute, as they had called them to come and check on our weird behaviour. We stayed firm, answering that we'll be happy to talk to the police and explained that we are neither interfering or causing trouble nor selling things, but in fact were conducting a survey for activist research. We spent some hours chatting with people but we could feel the control in the street mixed with the openness of ordinary people playing their gay role.

Conclusion

To turn the rules of the hetero-patriarchal social order upside down, we think there is a need to increase participation in institutions and in the public space. Particularly, the public space should be vindicated as a political space, open to everyone. Introducing sex and gender issues as social transformation factors is our main assignment, in which we hope to engage other social movements fighting for a new conception of citizen rights. Our experience with actions in the street has clearly been enriching and it has been a way to interact with people and to have first-hand feedback on our messages. In general, ordinary people have rarely reacted agressively when confronted personally with our actions, whereas we received clearly aggressive responses from social control mechanisms. Even though activism in the street is sometimes striking and tough work, it gives us a broader perspective on the social ground we want to transform in order to develop new forms of relationships.

The actions described above only try to sample some of our lines of thought. Their main purpose, in all cases, would be to encourage debate and to establish new points of reference not only among activists but also among the general population. A debate that enables all of us ordinary people to see reality from an alternative open-minded perspective.

and if your right eye should offend against you, then pluck it out

It did offend. It held
a snapshot of her in her new black top;
the row of deliberate
holes down the back. How I touched
the tip of my finger to her spine.

So it had to be plucked.
The muscles gripped
in a long hot blink; the nerve unravelled,
a ragged cord. Everywhere it seemed,
the slick gel that smelt
of nothing; the metal sting of the air
where nothing was.

And worse. I'd think of her,
the crisp curl of her rising between my thighs.
I was wet as light all over.
Alone, just the dull cat watching
on an empty afternoon.
I'd say her name
because there had to be a sound
to go with this – the cold shame
of my own right hand, and my bad mind
with the wrong face in it,
her face, blazing.

It wasn't like you'd expect.
It was meat. It was
yellow and greasy. Blisters of fat.
I was technical, rhythmic,
right down to the bone.

And so on. The criminal skin
which rippled like a blown field
when she was around – all gone.
Exposed,
the nerves were a squabble
of first violins.

And the feet that walked to her door,
the ears like two stuck records
repeating her words.
All were removed.
A sharp surface wore a clump of hair
that had been brushed for her;
a tooth that had shone in a smile for her.
The spongy lungs. My tongue
was surprisingly long when uprooted.

Soon nothing remained
but a stained ridge of flint
in the form of a fibia; the wicked flower
of a heart.

Undressed of its flesh and helpless,
in a bloody mess of its making.
No words, no sight, no nothing,
just its bucking and its shuddering,
its mindless repeating,
no matter what, it kept on loving
and hurting and hating and beating.

Clare Shaw
(For biography, see article by Clare Shaw.)

...reading Nancy Böttner's 'Sonic Cyborgs?':

Peaches in a way reminds me of the 'different kinds of adult'. Just as the different kinds of adult' folds multiple positionings into the figure of Peaches. Voicing herself she is equally equivocal. She is a monster, banging against the walls of powerful orderings. The hope that Peaches represents is that of success for ways of the cyborgs of the world.

...by Tine Jensen

...reading Ilana Mountian's 'Images of Women and Drugs' + Faidra Papadimitriou's 'The role of the role':

Reading these two articles brought a sense of movement: from stereotypes to a patchwork of difference. Somehow a freeing experience and I could breathe easier. Strange, for they both deal with such 'heavy' issues. Rather than shy away from dealing with heaviness, the authors seemed to me to be willing to experience it and let it move them. Moving through it, they helped me become 'heavily' aware of how stereotypes can imprison our experience. In my own work in the Creative Youth Workshop in Thrace, Greece the same quality of 'heaviness' has often been my experience when encountering stereotypical definitions which abound around us and permeate our perceptions within. Breaking them down, really attending to them and bringing them to awareness has often resulted in a colourful patchwork quilt of differences – truly soothing. Now if I could only find a way to convince the Benaki Museum in Athens to exhibit it...!

...by Anni Vassiliou

...reading Ingrid Palmary's 'Family resistances':

I was very intrigued by this article as the narratives of the refugee women illuminated how, even though this was not a legal context, being asked about one's memories will always implicitly bring up questions of truth, guilt and accountability. Hence answering means to account for and construct one's own agentic role within this memory. Additionally the dynamic Ingrid delineates informs my own work around child witnesses with a striking similarity: Children's position in court is so ambiguous, because children are seen as innocent and dependent and thus in need of protection, yet this conceptualisation collides with the assumption that somebody who can speak the truth in a responsible and reliable manner is in control of life and is a conscious agent of their narrative. Hence in the same way women seemingly have to be conceptualised as passive victims who are inhabiting an a-political sphere to make them eligible for help and protection, children are stuck in their role as passive victims. This parallel inspires me to pay even more attention to the concrete context of the narrative construction of personal agency and how this collides with questions of truth and guilt in the testimony of children."

...by Johanna Motzkau

…reading Isabel Rodriguez Mora + Grup de Lesbianes Feministes+ The Sconvegno Group + Precarias a la Deriva:

What drew me to read the above articles in succession (in a long lazy afternoon-come-evening) was foremost a thirst to 'travel' to more unknown to me parts of the social world – and travel I did through the eyes and varied rich accounts. My journey felt like I was stepping on stones in a river, precariously finding my balance, only to land in the river until I could get a new foothold – a mind-opening experience as I brought bits and pieces back in the forms of words I jotted down as notes: citizenship, agency, power, femininity, masculinity transforming social ground, a new conception for social relationships for everyone (beyond sex-gender labels), a laboratory where emotions and experiences become a reading key to interpret the world, a magic that makes each of us individual and collective at the same time, cre-attivo: crea(c)tive, virtual space as a tool, web, a space to cre-act, the logics of power and r-e(xi)stence (existence + resistance), synergies, putting life the sustainability of life in the centre ...to be continued.

As I absorbed my notes, what follows (is it a poem?) seemed to be asking to come forth. I offer it in return, then. I am very thankful to all authors, and I must especially thank my Italian neighbours for making me aware of *creattivo* – I have never before made the link of crea(c)tive. Just to prove how powerful language can be, in my mind this made a huge difference, as the path to activism suddenly took on new meaning (urging me to see the Creative Youth Workshop project in my corner of the social world in new light).

forca creattiva
wind of change, the feminine faces of Maestro, Gregale, Sirocco and Livo
whirling dancing erupting disrupting agents of chaos
resisting, *re-e(xi)sting*
a myriad of silk fragile threads relate
synergies
dialogued in *political space/time that our presence creates*
weaving strong supportive *webs*
not to take power over but to empower under
one thing leads to another as process unfolds
unpredictably
catalysts for recycling old and tired patterns
rotting compost becomes fertile *common ground*
new seeds will bud

…by Anni Vassiliou

…reading Clare Shaw's 'Women at the Margins':

Shaw explores the political, historical, gendered and personal/experiential dimensions of the BPD. This article has parallels with mine because it exposes how psychiatric diagnosis operates in relation to gender.

…by Ilana Mountian

The role of the role: women as Prisoners or prisoners as Women?

Faidra Papadimitriou, ARSIS

Abstract

It is argued that when one enters a women Prison, (s)he is as much likely to meet Prisoners as to meet Women. It is a question of perspective and expectations .The experience of a team of volunteers intervening in a Greek institution for female prisoners suggests that going in to meet women, or even better, simply human beings allows more space for pleasant surprises. Preconceptions, whatever, their direction, do not advance expression, communication and self-development.

Keywords: *women, prison, open community, role, identifications, stereotypes, diversity, volunteers.*

What follows is the experience that I, as a volunteer in ARSIS, have had the chance to gain by participating in a Creativity Workshop addressed to women detained in the prison of Korydallos in Athens.

ARSIS[1] has been working in penitentiary centers since its foundation, in 1992. Its main goal[2] is to provide opportunities for training, communication, support and creative expression through innovative methodological paths. Amongst other things, ARSIS takes the initiative and the responsibility to gather, "host", train and support a number of people who volunteer to "intervene" in Greek detention centers. Involving volunteers and, more generally, creating a space for "voluntary-ness" in a place like a prison re-negotiates both symbolically and practically the significance of the prison-wall. The Prison's gate opens, once a week, allowing us (volunteers) in, and, at some point, it will open to allow them (detainees) out; thus, the distance from the open community lessens.

The bridges with the open community have to be built on what is common inside and outside prison. ARSIS' work is based on the assumption that some rights, such as the right to learn, to create and to communicate are not supposed to be taken away from a person, even while

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[1] ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth) is a Greek non governmental organization working mainly for the social support of disadvantaged young people, the prevention of youth marginalization and the defense of youth rights. It was founded in 1992 and has now well established branches in Athens, Thessaloniki and Volos, while developing activities at many other greek cities.

[2] Besides the implementation of educational programs and creative activities, ARSIS also works in the direction of political positioning and pressure for the improvement of the legislation and the practices concerning life in prison and the development of policies and mechanisms for prevention and/or alternative penal and re-integration measures, based on its experience and its constant communication with organizations and agencies all over Europe.

incarcerated. Along these lines, the focus of our workshop being on such mutual rights-needs allows the empowerment of those aspects of the women's personalities which are usually overwhelmed by the label and the condition of the "prisoner".

As it will be illustrated in greater detail below, our experience in there does not and, it is believed, should not concern, the women as Prisoners, but the prisoners as Women.
The point is that this paper, as a communication of the contact with female detainees, for a number of reasons could neither confirm, nor falsify any of the well documented "specialties" of women as prisoners.

Of course, such an approach is not to deny the importance of the – more or less – founded attitudes, whatever their actual correspondence to policies, which claim a different status for female prisoners. To give only one example, important for our purpose here, the opening of the prison – even if not without everyday struggles against the prison routine and bureaucracy – to an NGO goes probably in tandem with such attitudes. It is widely assumed that women inmates pose far less risk than men in regard to institutional conduct and security issues; they are less likely than men to riot or to assault one another. Crossing the borders of the Adult Male Prison of Korydallos, situated exactly opposite, seems in practice a much more complicated procedure. However, it will be shown why attitudes about the difference of female detainees compared to male detainees are beyond the scope of our work, and thus, beyond the scope of this paper.

Women as prisoners

Impossible

First of all, any conclusive statement about the character, the views and the special needs of women as prisoners would be to a great extent unsound. Purporting to identify how women's physical and psychological needs, their experiences of imprisonment differ essentially to men's would raise serious questions concerning at least the legitimacy of the "observer" and the representative-ness of the "observed".
The fact that the invitation of ARSIS has been open to volunteers in similar terms inside and outside prison undermines seriously the accuracy of any sort of evaluation.

Participation to our workshop, particularly for inmates, is absolutely free. There are no specific, prison – inspired or structured, pre-selection criteria. Women detainees every Tuesday, from 15.00 to 17.00, are free to pass by or not, stay or not, come back or not to our meetings, which moreover are not attended by the prison stuff. Such an open "call" – "to whom it may concern" – minimizes most of the difficulties of working in an environment like a prison. Letting inmates choose if they feel like participating allows the group to dismiss coercion and to resort to self-ascribed discipline in order to follow the rules. Nevertheless, when the participants' personal sense of taste and commitment are the fundamental criteria for participation, there is little reason to believe that these participants constitute a typical sample of women inmates.

Arguably, participation for volunteers from the open community is much more demanding. Consistency, punctuality, endurance, the will to work under practically and emotionally challenging conditions are only few out of a long list of the requirements for the weekly organization of the workshop. Any kind of specialization either on prisoners, or in women issues is not included in this list. Once we feel like spending some of our energy in this plan, "creativity" in the title of our workshop allows the adaptation to and interaction with the in concreto resources and needs of the participants, yet leaving little space for generalizations and conclusions about them.

Undesirable

To claim that we have identified in what exactly the special status of women prisoners consists would not only be invalid, but also undesirable. It is suggested that presumptions, even when conveying a positive meaning, also have "side-effects". Thus, perceptions about the lesser degree of risk posed by women, related to ideas about their qualitatively and quantitatively different involvement to crime accounts not only for a more flexible prison regime, that allows us in – as already mentioned, but also leads to their 'invisibility' as a problem of our correctional system, that makes a gender – sensible prison system look useless, or at least not urgent. Hence, the under-representation of women in the criminal statistics, which sounds good, leads to their confinement to one of the few detention centres for women around the country, far from their home place, limiting or actually prohibiting visits, which is bad. The lack of separate juvenile institutions for girls, which is unacceptable, is simply a result of the tiny proportion they make up in the overall numbers, which of course is welcomed.

The "coin" of preconceptions about women prisoners is not acceptable, not only because it has two sides, but more importantly because it can end up corresponding to mere stereotypes, which is one of the things that we are trying dismiss with our presence in the prison. A form of deprivation that typically has more importance for female than male inmates is the loss of ties with family members and especially children. Without meaning to minimise the importance of the ways imprisonment severs mother(and father-)-child relationships and the complexity of the problem, we have to resist the tendency to conflate womanhood and motherhood. Attention to gender in developing good prison practice is not synonymous with attention to the needs of children of incarcerated women.

The argument that imprisonment is perceived as particularly problematic for women, because of the social expectation that women are more important as carers for their children and families may seem natural, or even as inevitable as the mother-child relationship. The point is that this is not the only social expectation that can be accorded to incarcerated women or women in trouble with the law. Imprisonment may not have proved quite efficient in tackling criminality, but it ends up blocking a great deal of positive features, relationships and roles of human beings – male or female – motherhood being just the most striking, and, thus, the most easily understood, example. In other words imprisonment does not only, and arguably temporally, prohibits somebody to be a law-breaker, but in the same time it distracts one seriously, and in longer term, from working, having friends, ties and stakes in society.

Prisoners as women

I think that what spontaneously emanates from our meetings calls for an approach based on diversity and difference, women's "multiple realities" and "fractured identities". This sounds like a practical necessity if one takes into consideration that participants' age varies from 19 to 81 (!) and, even if most of them are Greek, many of whom belong to the Roma community, there are also "representatives" from other countries, mostly Albania, Bulgaria and Russia.

For the last two years, moments of expression and communication arise around (... and not about) different kinds of fabric: a trainer helps volunteers and detainees with sewing and creating patchworks. Participants are gathered and work either individually, with small pieces of cloth, or in small groups, cooperating in creating larger pieces. Conversations about various matters, concerning life in and out of prison are developed through the course of each meeting, mostly in a casual manner.

In fact, quite different, or even conflicting, themes arise during our workshops. Entering the prison to meet Women, we encounter all sorts of them: mothers or simply daughters, the ones who like talking about their children and others who do not, more generally talkative or silent, in good or bad mood, with different ways to express whatever their mood is... and this description could go really far. Having refused to classify and evaluate attitudes, situations and needs above I would not do it now.

The only assertive comment that should be made, arguably equally valid for men inmates, is that the fear related to criminal offences, serious enough to warrant imprisonment, does not necessarily accompany the contact with the offenders themselves. One realises that (s)he has probably already met these women before their incarceration, has a lot of chances of meeting them again by its end, and tries to find out what is good or bad with them and cope with it. Concentrated on pencils, papers, pictures, cloths and other "creativity materials", we do not forget, but we try to get as much as possible out of the prison context. It is at this point that several identities arise and are there to be developed outweighing the one of prisoner.

Our patchworks illustrate my case. The work of the workshop is often presented in exhibitions and bazaars, with remarkable success and feature today in the art-shop of the new Benaki museum in Athens. The "prisoner" becomes a predominantly latent characteristic of these women. They are now also a bit of partners, a bit of artists, a bit of business – women. Some of the money from the sales is used to cover the expenses of the workshop, while the biggest part of the earnings is given to the creators of the pieces sold. Meaningless hours of boredom and distress can become moments of fulfillment, as leftovers of cloth turn into pieces with utility and style.

My name is **Faidra Papadimitriou**. I was born in 1978 in Athens (Greece) and have lived the biggest part of my life here. I studied Law at the University of Athens, but also spent a year at Rouen, in France as an ERASMUS-SOCRATES student. In 2003-4 I took a MSc in Criminal Justice Policy at London's School of Economics. Today, back in Athens, I work as a lawyer. Email: pap_faidra@hotmail.com. Sina 42, 106 72, Athens, Greece.

ASYLUM

IN THE SERVICE OF A REVOLUTION IN MENTAL HEALTH

Asylum, the magazine for democratic psychiatry, has for over a decade provided a unique forum for democratic debate. It has covered the issues and competing forms of knowledge that underpin the practices of psychiatry and mental health at the end of the 20th century, with a special emphasis on the political and social dimensions of life. It has served as an antidote to the oppressive certainties promoted by biological psychiatry and professional discourse.

Having published continuously as a quarterly magazine, without external support and relying totally on the loyalty of its readers, Asylum is now in its fourteenth volume. It began as a simple ward magazine in a Sheffield hospital, inspired initially by the political promise of the Italian reform movement Psychiatria Democratica. Like the Italian movement before it, it attracted creative contributions from artists, scientists and political activists on an international scale. At the beginning of the 21st century, the magazine is poised to participate in the realisation of those political promises so much left by the wayside, particularly by the conventional media.

Joining with movements like the Hearing Voices Network, Psychology Politics Resistance, Critical Psychiatry Network and others, Asylum is committed to producing a high quality magazine with a corresponding development of its website, combined with strategies for direct social intervention. For Asylum to survive in its radical form and to be used as a tool for social change, it needs an immediate and considerable expansion of its circulation and a broadening of its influence.

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www.asylumonline.net

Woman at the margins: me, Borderline Personality Disorder and Women at the Margins

Clare Shaw

Abstract

In this article, I look at the work and philosophy of Women at the Margins – a Leeds-based radical mental health campaigning group which has a particular focus on the psychiatric diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I also describe some of my own experiences as a woman with a BPD diagnosis. Whilst I draw heavily on the large body of critical theory around women and mental health – feminist and social constructionist in particular, I place great value on speaking from personal experience, both as a source of knowledge and as a form of activism. I use both theory and experience to outline and examine the Women at the Margins critical approach to BPD, especially the concern that the diagnosis serves to distract attention from the prevalence and consequences of the sexual abuse of women and girls. Finally, I discuss a current dilemma facing the group – whether to engage or disengage with the growing number of services being constructed around the diagnosis.

Keywords: *mental health, women, Borderline Personality Disorder, feminist theory, reflexivity*

Introduction

Who are the 'Women at the Margins'? In one sense, 'Women at the Margins' describes a committed group of women service users/survivors and workers based in Leeds, who meet regularly to raise awareness and campaign around the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)[1]. We hosted a national one-day conference in March 2004, and have edited a special edition of Asylum magazine[2] (14:3) on the issue. Wider than this, 'Women at the Margins' also describes all women with the diagnosis of BPD; who, by virtue of this diagnosis, have been marginalised within mental health services; those women who – frequently already marginalised by experiences of violence, abuse, poverty and other kinds of oppression – are then pushed further to the fringes of society by this diagnosis. I am a member of Women at the Margins and I have the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder.

Survivor movements

For as long as psychiatry has been around, so has collective and individual resistance to its dominance. From the early days of the Friends

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[1] Borderline Personality Disorder is a commonly-used psychiatric diagnosis, defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (1997).

[2] Asylum – the Magazine for Democratic Psychiatry, is a collectively-run, not-for-profit magazine which functions as a forum for debate and communication between individuals and groups subs@asylumonline.net

of Insane Persons and the Alleged Lunatic Friend Society, which worked to ensure humane treatment within the new asylums, and to repeal the easy committal laws, survivors and our allies have come together in collective movements. Some have reformist aims – opposing forced medication, for example, or campaigning for single-sex wards. Others have challenged the most central assumptions of the mental health system – the existence of mental illness and disorder, for example – sometimes calling for no less than the dissolution of the current psychiatric system of theory and practice.

Women at the Margin takes a challenging attitude towards psychiatry's use of the BPD diagnosis, and questions whether such an entity as 'personality disorder' really exists. As such, it is allied to a wider social movement of opposition to the privileging of psychiatric diagnosis as a response to, and explanation of, mental distress. This approach reflects the influence of the anti-psychiatry movement (see Szasz, 1972; Laing, 1967) which framed both madness and its treatment as social processes: an approach which, however, failed to pay much attention to social inequalities such as those structured around gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Identity politics – such as the Women's Health Movement (see www.ourbodiesourselves.org) – have therefore been crucial in identifying the impact of social inequality on the social processes of health and its treatment.

Within the radical survivor movement, organizations like the Hearing Voices Network (www.hearing voices.org.uk) argue for the validity of individual, social, spiritual and political explanations of distress, contesting the validity of diagnoses such as schizophrenia. This approach differs from reformist approaches such as that adopted by Rethink (www.rethink.org.uk) which work largely

within a psychiatric framework to support 'people with severe mental illness'. In this way, Women at the Margins is distinct from BPD-focused groups such as Borderliner UK (www.borderline.co.uk) – a user-led, internet-based group which has a strong focus on diagnosis, referring to people with the diagnosis as 'BPs', and which, whilst recognizing social context as a possible contributing causal factor, believes in genetic predisposition to BPD.

A Very Small Slice of my History or How I came to be given the Diagnosis

I remember the first room. It had two sections to it: a bed, a sort of screen. It was largely a kind of washed out green and you reached it through several dark corridors. I can still see the lamp-post outside the window; how I pictured myself hanging from it. The Cranberries had their second album out. I listened to it until the tape wore out.

A waiting room. The on-duty psychiatrist with his tie and his clipboard. "Do you ever hear voices inside your head?"
"No". Ticks box.
"Have you ever been raped or sexually abused?".
"Yes". Tick box.
"Does this bother you?"
"No". Tick box.

A Very Particular Story

Can be there any other group of people with as many stories written about them as the psychiatric inpatient population? Fifteen minute observations. The pale glimpse of a head through the always-open door. The tap of the steps in the corridor. Case notes. Care plans. Meetings. Reviews. Tribunals. Staff hand-over. Diagnosis. Prognosis.

"Clare is an isolated young women of twenty two. She has been an inpatient for sixteen weeks. She has

a generalised anxiety disorder, clinical depression, bulimia nervosa, suspected borderline personality disorder, and an inability to express herself leading to a tendency to self injure".

Psychiatry writes a very powerful story and gives it the name of 'Truth'. Like the BMA (British Medical Association) say: "The work and approach of the medical profession are based on scientific method, defining 'science' in the strictest sense of the word" (BMA, 1986:61). Thus psychiatry can sleep soundly on the assumption that "diagnosis simply involves the accurate naming of an objective disease process" (Bracken and Thomas, 2000). At the root of this is the belief that there exists one true version of reality, to which the mental health professional, using the correct scientifically verified procedures, has privileged access; and against which the version told by the patient can be tested – and is invariably found wanting.

Speaking from experience ……

Perhaps the greatest challenge to these epistemological assumptions has come from progressive social movements composed of exactly those people whose versions of reality has been written out of mainstream accounts. "Objectivity is the term that men have given to their own subjectivity", wrote Stanley and Wise (1993:59), reflecting the challenge that feminism has presented to a largely white/able-bodied/middle-class/heterosexual/male canon; a challenge evident in the value that second-wave feminism has accorded to women's experiences as a source of knowledge.

Within second wave feminism, the personal was recognised as political, as women began to understand their difficulties as located within a patriarchal social context – rather than within their selves. Sam Warner – one of the speakers at our first national conference, explains how

"we have used our experiences as, women and service users for example, to challenge traditional understandings about us that discredit our knowledge and restrict our lives. We have used our experience to dispute the idea that women are essentially flawed. Rather, we have drawn attention to the social context and the abusive relationships that give rise to women's distress and our attempts to cope" (2004: 30).

As one of the most written-about groups, psychiatric patients are also one of the most marginalized in terms of the construction of knowledge. There are fewer more effective ways of devaluing someone's account of reality than by calling it 'mad'. And many of the things we might give accounts of – abuse, violence, the effects of psychiatric oppression, are not welcomed onto the mainstream agenda. "I was brought up to believe volumes of very strange ideas, one being that no-one was interested in anything I had to say, ever" (Bressington, 2004:14).

Yet, for as long as psychiatry has existed, people have been telling their stories – as individuals and as members of an increasingly radical and vibrant survivor movement (e.g. Warner 2004). "People in a position of powerlessness – women, black people, working class people – have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via autobiography, via the assertion of a 'personal' voice, which speaks beyond itself. In making a claim to a political voice, the autobiographer is often also in the process of contesting, explicitly or implicitly, what the authority of the 'educated' account has to offer" (Swindells, 1995:7). Autobiography acts as the meeting place between the personal and the political, society and the individual; showing how social processes and structures are located within people's experiences of life (Stanley, 1993); both an illustration and a basis for theory (Plummer 1983).

Certainly, we draw from, and add to, the body of existing theory that exists around the issues of gender, mental distress, sexual abuse and BPD. Yet speaking from experience is possibly the most vital and valued source of knowledge within Women at the Margins. Experiences of living with the diagnosis; surviving psychiatric oppression; working within mental health services; surviving sexual abuse; living with disability; racism, homophobia, sexism; being alive …. Experience is the basis upon which we chose to come together as a campaigning group; and the ground upon which we construct our critique of the BPD diagnosis. Throughout this article I'm drawing from my own experiences, and from the experiences of women who published their accounts in the WAM edition of Asylum (2004). These experiential accounts will be interfaced with theoretical accounts, including those offered by psychiatry. The gap between experience and psychiatric theory is a major concern of Women at the Margins, as is the greater 'truth' status accorded to the latter.

Experience as a source of knowledge is not without its problems, however. A major one being that not everyone who has survived psychiatry is writing this article. My white skin, my able body, my post-graduate education and my middle-class confidence will all play a role in explaining why I have the opportunity to speak about my experiences from platforms such as this. Within the survivor movement, individuals and groups continue to be marginalized. Nevertheless, Warner (2004:31) speaks from the hope that "making links between personal experience and political enterprise opens up the landscape of recovery because it makes individual misery a fully social issue. It is no longer about individually disordered personalities, for example, but about the social relationships, both past and present that shape who we are and what we do."

One way of looking at it:

It's like having your insides scraped out with a blunt instrument. It's like drowning. It's like the whole sky has fallen on you and all you can do is count the bricks in that tall red wall and the branches above you and grip the weeds in your hand because the rabbit needs feeding even though you're going to die and you can see that photograph of yourself aged one, you can see the front porch and the house behind it all sucked in on itself and now you don't care what words you scream because no-one can hear you anyway.

And you're so fucking grateful he didn't kill you, you could kiss him.

And another:

For a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder, 5 of the following symptoms must be present (DSM IV, 1997):

- unstable and impulsive
- intense interpersonal relationships, verging between idealisation and devaluation
- affective instability and reactivity of mood
- inappropriate intense anger
- frantic efforts to avoid abandonment
- identity disturbance; unstable self-image
- suicidal and self mutilating behaviours
- chronic feelings of emptiness
- transient stress-related paranoid ideas

A Short History of BPD

"When I heard that phrase [Borderline Personality Disorder] I just thought 'What an absolutely stupid name'" (Shaw, 2004:19)

The diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder is one of ten Personality Disorders (PDs) currently classified by the psychiatric classification system (DSM IV). The term

'borderline' was first used by analyst Adolf Stern in 1938 (Wirth-Cauchon, 2000) to describe patients who he believed were more disturbed than 'neurotic' patients but who, he believed, were not 'psychotic'. However, it was not until 1980 that BPD was first introduced as a diagnosable personality disorder in America. Now BPD is by far the most common PD diagnosis and increasingly common as a diagnosis in psychiatry (see Johnstone, 2001).

Yet the diagnosis of BPD is – like schizophrenia and other diagnoses (Boyle 1990) – a contested label. Kutchins and Kirk (1999) argue that BPD is a politically – and financially – motivated product of the growth industry of Personality Disorders, within which therapists and drug companies profit from the increasing pathologisation of feelings and behaviours. Others argue that, in practice, BPD is little more than a catch-all label applied to 'difficult' and 'non-compliant' patients: "Personality Disorder appears to be an enduring pejorative judgment, rather than a clinical diagnosis" (Lewis and Appleby, 1988:8). What is indisputable is that BPD is a highly stigmatised diagnosis, with significant negative consequences both inside and outside of mental health services. "As they were dragged out, my eldest son was screaming for his comfort cushion. But I was already handcuffed and couldn't do a thing about these people taking my lovely children. I was sectioned and once again silent without a voice – the label had followed me in every walk of life" (Hurt, 2004:23)

Models of treatment associated with this diagnosis are very limited. In the minds of many who work within and use mental health services, the diagnosis of BPD carries an assumption of 'intreatability'. People with this diagnosis have often been excluded from services, whilst within services, they are marginalized by descriptions such as 'manipulative' and 'attention-seeking'.

Treatments that are offered include:
• medication, sometimes prescribed to help with sleep, anxiety or depression
• Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT); which focuses on teaching people with a BPD diagnosis 'coping skills' in order to be able to 'regulate' their 'extreme' emotions. Renamed 'Diabolical Behavioural /Doing Bollocks Therapy by survivor activist Louise Pembroke).

In another room …

The institutional green of the old college. Phillip, the cognitive behavioural therapist – whose specialisms include gender and sexual abuse – is wearing a cartoon-print tie. He welcomes us to the first of our five-session anxiety-management group. He's not interested in the past. The past is past. He is only interested in the present. I learn the fight-or-flight model for the fifth time.

Pathologising women

What is also indisputable is that, on the basis of diagnostic prevalence alone – 75% of those diagnosed with BPD are women (DSM IV, 1997: 652) – BPD is a gendered diagnosis. However, the gendering of BPD goes beyond statistics.

Feminists have argued for years that there is close relationship between women's distress, and the unequal power held by men and women in this society (e.g. Chesler, 1972; Ussher, 1991, Johnstone, 2000). The diagnosis of BPD can be examined in the context of this inequality; in terms of:

• social causation, according to which the fact that more women are diagnosed with BPD much more frequently then men is explained by looking at how women have to cope with life in a society in which they are systematically less likely than men to have access to money, power and other resources; and are more likely to experience rape and sexual abuse.

• social constructionism, according to which the preponderance of women in this diagnostic category is explained by looking critically at how BPD was developed as a diagnostic category, and how it is used as a diagnosis.

The construction of the diagnosis of BPD

Feminists have argued that psychiatry – far from being an objective 'science' – is constructed around concepts and expectations which are fundamentally gendered. This will profoundly affect how a patient's behaviour is evaluated and responded to. Chesler (1972), for example, coined the term 'double-bind' to describe how women are judged as being wrong if they conform to, and wrong if they fail to conform to, expectations of passivity. In the case of BPD, the diagnosis can be applied to women who fail to live up to their gender role because they express anger and aggression. On the other hand, the diagnosis is also given to women who conform 'too strongly', by internalising anger, and expressing this through self-focussed behaviour such as self-injury.

According to a social constructionist model, BPD has been constructed as a deviation from the concepts of rationality and individuality. The diagnosis focuses solely on the individual, and by doing so, removes that person from their social, political, economic and relational context. Problems are located within the individual woman – rather than understood according to the inevitably gendered social context of women in distress. Likewise, psychiatry's pre-occupation with 'rationality' means that the act of diagnosing BPD depends upon a psychiatrist judging whether emotions are appropriate or healthy, with reference to the 'rational' norm. Feelings like anger and fear of abandonment can – and frequently are – judged to be inappropriate, instead of being understandable given the context of a person's history of being violated or abandoned.

"One of the suggested 'symptoms' of BPD is inappropriate anger. I believe that fighting back is an appropriate response" (Suzi, 2004:11)

How does that feel?

"To say that someone's personality is disordered or faulty is to place a judgement on someone's whole sense of 'being'" (Walker, 2004:21)

Of course, in many ways it is a relief to be diagnosed. At last, someone recognises that there is something very wrong. At last you have an explanation. Now you understand. There is something wrong with you. Like you always knew. Something rotten at the very core of you. At last you have it irrefutably confirmed that you are wrong and always have been wrong. And it makes such sense. Why it hurts so much. Why you never fit in. Why you aren't accepted. Why you can't possibility let any one know what goes on inside your mind. Why nothing goes right because you make it go wrong. Why you'll never be good enough to have children. Why you'll never fit in, have a job. Why no-one should be expected to be close to you. Why you can only ever pretend to be normal. Why you have nothing else to blame but yourself.

Social causation of distress

The high prevalence of histories of abandonment, abuse and violation amongst people diagnosed with BPD is a key factor in a social causationist approach to the diagnosis. As the 'Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream' (Department of Health, 2002) document acknowledges, many women with a diagnosis of BPD have a history of trauma. At least 70% have been sexually abused as children (e.g. Castillo 2000; Michenbaum, 1994).

For many of us in Women at the Margins, sexual abuse is a live personal issue, and the experience of sexual abuse is central to our

'social causation' approach. I'm currently working with Gillian Proctor – another WAM member – on a series of papers which examine the relationship between BPD and the sexual abuse of women and girls. All of our work suggests to us the existence of a 'hidden agenda': psychiatry's attempt to hide and deny the extent and impact of the abuse of women and girls.

One way of looking at it

In the police station, I'm finally allowed to go to the toilet. When I wipe myself, it's like touching someone else. It's like touching a wound or a bomb or a dead person. The toilet cubicle is made of scrubbed steel and the floor is tiled. Everything echoes. I put my head to the door. There's a one-inch gap between my mouth and the metal sheet. For the first time since it happened, I'm alone.

Another room. A bed covered in plastic. The surgeon tells me to take down my pants. He notes the abrasions on my elbows. The bites marks on my chest. Swabs me. Tells me apologetically, "We have to do this because some little girls tell lies". I'm eleven years old.

The medicalisation of childhood sexual abuse

"The history of societal responses to childhood sexual abuse is a history of denial and distortion." (Shaw and Proctor, in press). Masson (1985) describes Freud's role within this history. Freud took a particular interest in women with the diagnosis of hysteria, and tried to understand their experiences through the process of analysis, during which many women disclosed experiences of sexual abuse as children. Freud chose to present these as memories of fantasies, rather than memories of actual experiences. The result was that the extent and impact of childhood sexual abuse was again obscured for nearly a century.

When childhood sexual abuse began, tentatively, to re-enter the public consciousness

in the 1970s and 1980s, it met with a similar response in the form of the concept of 'false memory syndrome': a term which was constructed by the founders of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation in the USA in 1992 to refer to "memories of sexual abuse they believe are not real and which have been planted by a therapist or which have been 'borrowed' by the person hearing accounts of sexual abuse" (Follini, 1995: 12). This 'syndrome' quickly gained a lot of media attention, graphically illustrating the backlash against any recognition of the extent and the impact of the sexual abuse of women and children (e.g. Hill, 2004). As Herman (1997) points out, there is a close similarity between i) the strategies of distortion and denial which characterize Freud's theory and ii) the 'false memory syndrome': strategies which were in both cases sanctioned and encouraged by the political climate of the time.

Telling the "Truth?"

It is suggested that you have False Memory Syndrome. It is suggested that you are 'dark and evil'. It is suggested that you have ECT. It is suggested that you have a thyroid deficiency. It is suggested that you are lying. It is suggested that you are mad.

The False Memory Syndrome Agenda

BPD reinforces the 'false memory syndrome' agenda by distracting from how psychological distress is often rooted in the experience of childhood sexual abuse. "I had flashbacks, terrifying anxiety symptoms and felt so dirty that I could barely walk down the street" (Suzi, 2004:11). Johnstone (2000), Wilkins and Warner (2000; 2001) and Warner and Wilkins (2003) describe how the 'symptoms' which define BPD are better understood as adaptive reactions to early relational traumas. They suggest that it is much more helpful to understand women's behaviour as an attempt

to ensure that "some measure of mastery, control and alliance with others, in the face of trauma, helplessness and inner vulnerability" (Wilkins and Warner, 2001:295) than as the result of personality disorder.

> "For me, concentrating on the physical pain and action of self-harm helped give me a break by immediately providing a different focus .. We all survive in different ways and if self-harm didn't serve a function women wouldn't do it" (Walker, 2004:21).

The DSM IV definition given above shows how BPD has been constructed with no reference to trauma. As a result, the diagnosis of BPD encourages services to focus on the individual and her behaviour, removed from the context of her distress. Although staff may have observed that many women with BPD diagnoses are survivors of sexual abuse, no significant and systematic link is made between those experiences and the diagnostic criteria of BPD. As a nurse consultant describes in Warner and Wilkins (2003:173): "it's then that this person is like this for some reason that we don't know".

The survivor's means of survival, interpretation, and resistance are presented as symptoms of 'disorder', obscuring the experiences context which produced the distress in the first place. Why is this woman distressed and self injuring? Because she has BPD. Why does she have BPD? Because she is distressed and self injuring. "Instead of recognizing the devastation caused by rape and child sexual abuse, honouring and supporting a women's survival, she is described as in need of treatment or perhaps 'untreatable'" (Hill 2004:16) – and so "the battered, wounded women who have survived some of the worst treatment that mankind could hand them, on their knees and in despair, or still standing and fighting a rearguard, are consigned to the disordered mayhem of sub categories and anger management" (Bressington, 2004: 15)

Thus, the rapid rise in the diagnostic prevalence of BPD represents a shift from a limited recognition of the extent and impact of sexual violence, to a widespread acceptance of a medical model of mental distress which conceals sexual abuse by focussing on, categorising, blaming and 'treating' the survivors.

> "I cannot understand how the vast majority of perpetrators of sexual violence walk free in this society, whilst the people who struggle to cope with its after effects are told they have 'disordered personalities'" (Suzi, 2004:12).

The consequences extend far beyond services. A pathologising focus on individual survivors prevents an understanding of sexual abuse as being closely related to inequalities of power, particularly between men and women. Statistics which show that 1 in 4 women have experienced rape or attempted rape (Painter, 1991), and that 1 in 2 girls have been subjected to some form of unwanted sexual experience before they are eighteen (Kelly, Regan and Burton, 1991) suggest that male sexual violence against women does not represent a deviation from the norm. "Feminist practice begins from the recognition that most women are survivors of sexual violence, that all women are potential targets for abusive men, and that coping with the threat and reality of men's violence is an everyday reality for women" (Kelly, 1988/9: 15-16). The central position that potential and/or actual sexual violence, abuse and harassment occupies within our culture, is effectively obscured by the psychiatric labelling of survivors. The consequences of this cannot be overstated. Social change begins with awareness: labels such as BPD play an important role in ensuring that wider society is not generally aware that mental health services are filled with people who are struggling with the violence, abuse and inequality that characterise our society.

"At this point someone will sagely 'Tut' and remark of me "She's quite angry still" and you bet your life I am, wouldn't you be?" (Bressington, 2004:15)

Resisting exclusion / resisting inclusion?

As I described above, BPD has historically functioned as a diagnosis of exclusion. This was acknowledged and addressed by the Department of Health paper, 'Personality Disorder: No longer a diagnosis of exclusion' (NIMHE, 2003) which suggests that mental health services need to be created and extended to offer help to people who have a diagnosis of PD. In 2003-4, £6.4 million of government money was distributed to 11 non-forensic pilot projects nationally to create new services specifically for people given the diagnosis of PD. In 2006 this money will be redistributed to Primary Care Trusts for the purpose of establishing and continuing PD services nationwide. The 11 pilot projects vary in the services that they offer. However, all of the projects stipulate that people must have a diagnosis of PD in order to be able to access the service.

It seems, therefore, that the exclusion of people with a diagnosis of BPD is to be addressed by the creation of services which respond specifically to PD diagnoses. In order to access such support, distressed people will need to attract and accept a diagnosis of personality disorder. As PD-specific services become an increasing presence within mainstream mental health services, so we might expect personality disorder diagnoses – including BPD – to increase in prevalence. As the argument I have outlined above implies, this may have some profoundly negative consequences for those subjected to the diagnosis, and for society as a whole.

This presents Women at the Margins and other mental health activists with a series of difficult

decisions, mirroring the reformist/revolution debate which has marked the survivor movement for as long as it has existed. Do we work within the label – providing 'BPD' training, for example, that encourages staff to view 'women with BPD' as women who are struggling hard to cope with the effects of childhood sexual abuse and other trauma? Or do we confine our activism to work which opposes the very existence of the diagnosis of BPD; based upon the argument that any label which focuses on the individual and describes her attempts to cope with distress as a 'disorder' is inherently reactionary? Do we isolate ourselves from the burgeoning industry in Personality Disorder services, and in doing so lose the opportunity to influence them towards a social model of distress? Or do we chose to engage with services constructed around the very diagnosis to whose existence we object? Do we follow the lead of reformist mental health organisations such as Rethink (severe mental illness), campaigning for a movement out of the margins and into the mainstream? Or do we take the route chosen by radical organisations like Mad Pride and the Liverpool Mad Women, reclaiming our marginalisation as a site of liberation, subversion and radical action, where we can resist the roles, labels and expectations of mainstream society?

Parallel debates can also be found within the wider feminist movement – in particular, the question of whether it is possible to challenge an oppressor using the oppressor's language; or conversely, whether an oppressed group's perspectives and experiences can be expressed in terms dictated by the oppressor. The approach taken by French feminists Cixous and Irigaray suggests that this is not possible, because language defines the limits of thought and its expression, and as such, would serve to re-inscribe hierarchical relationships: 'language does not merely name male superiority: it produces it" (Belsey and Moore, 1989:4). As

such, working within the parameters of BPD diagnosis would confirm the power of psychiatrists to define experience and distress; and would add to the silencing and disempowerment of women whose experiences and feelings are subjected to this diagnosis.

This approach advocates the creation of an alternative form of expression – Cixous' 'ecriture feminine'/ Irigaray's 'womanspeak' which would be "irrational, non-linear and incomprehensible" to men, whose language is "rational, linear, comprehensible" (Belsey and Moore, 1989:14). This non-rational, women's language would not just give women a voice; it would subvert the linguistic order – and consequently the social order. The implication for Women at the Margins would be to refuse to engage with the diagnosis of BPD; and instead, to insist on our own, self-defined ways of expressing our lives and experiences. This would not only give us a means of expression which is denied by the diagnosis; it would also subvert the psychiatric system of thought and practice which produced such a diagnosis.

However, this approach can be subjected to a number of criticisms, not the least of which is that the use of an alternative language excludes not just the partriarchal oppressor, but many of the oppressed – women who are – like me – baffled and intimidated by Cixous' and Irigaray's work. Similarly, a refusal to engage with the increasing number of services and initiatives which are defined by the BPD diagnosis could be understood as a decision to remain isolated within our own ideological purism, missing the opportunity to engage with the majority of services and crucially, the women who have little choice but to use them.

Parallel dilemmas within the survivor movement and wider suggest that neither approach is exclusive of the other. The Liverpool Mad Women – a Liverpool-based group which campaigned from around issues of women's mental health, which I was part of from its inception in 1999 to its hibernation in 2003 – had a radical, anti-psychiatry philosophy, yet was open to all women. Women working within the mental health system worked to give us access to Ashworth High Secure hospital. As a result we were able to meet with and tell women patients in this setting about our group: our social model approach; recognizing the suffering involved in experiencing mental distress; acknowledging the added suffering that is caused when mental health services offer unhelpful responses and negative theoretical frameworks for our distress; and also reclaiming the label of 'Mad Woman' as a positive identity which allowed us great freedom in challenging mainstream expectations. Similarly, the Hearing Voices Network offer training within mainstream services, drawing from their radical philosophy to affect staff attitudes and offer alternative approaches to hearing voices.

It remains crucial that we insist on describing our experiences, not in terms of a diagnosis, but in our own words, on our own terms – an approach which, as I began by saying, is central to Women at the Margins. Yet it also seems necessary – if at times uncomfortable – that we also engage with the growing industry in Personality Disorder, constantly suggesting to staff, carers, funders and service users/ survivors the possibility of another way of understanding and responding to distress; and in doing so, trying to break the strangle-hold of the diagnostic approach. Ultimately, like activists everywhere, spreading that life-changing, world-changing message – "It doesn't have to be like this".

Conclusion

"Two weeks before my Section expired, with freedom in my sights I was beaten up and raped while 'in the care of services'. Many

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other women have had similar experiences. Anyway free at last (Beaten Punched Dripping) I walked, and kept walking for years, right to where I am now." (Bressington, 2004:15)

Experience is the foundation of Women at the Margins: whether that it is the experience of the survivor, the worker, or anyone else who has encountered the diagnosis of BPD. All are united by a critical approach to this diagnosis and the impact that it has on women's lives as damage and dysfunction are located "not within the system that produces it but within the individual who experiences it" (Penfold and Walker, 1983:31) and a status quo of endemic sexual violence against women and girls is protected and reinforced (Armstrong, 1991; Breggin, 1993; Masson, 1985).

As Linnet (2004) points out, language within mental health is more than 'just' semantics. Words like 'disorder' 'have the power to prevent further thought' and can in themselves 'deform thought and practice' – they position the diagnosed as 'other' in her distress; they tell her that her very being is 'disordered'; they maintain the assumption that containment is the appropriate response to her distress; they obstruct recognition of the role of context, and they push our voices, opinions and experiences to the margins of society: " labelling us mad silences our voices … the rantings of the mad woman are irrelevant, her anger impotent" (Ussher, 1991:7). Despite this, women have never stopped ranting. More than ever (Warner, 2004), mad women, mad men and our allies are speaking out about our experiences of the mental health system and using these experiences as a basis for action; and as the grounds for developing, challenging and confirming theory.

In groups like Women at the Margins there is little distinction between theory and action.

Reflecting a social constructionist approach, we believe that language and theory have a symbiotic relationship with social systems and social change (e.g. Burr, 1995). Consequently, some of our most important activism takes place at the level of theory. I believe that our significant action to date has been to deny the existence of 'Borderline Personality Disorder'/ 'Bullshit Psychiatric Diagnosis' (Asylum 2004). All other actions – including the writing of this article; the national conference; the magazine; the booklet currently in press; and some of our creative ideas for direct action – are about communicating this denial; putting it into practice.

There are many proud moments in my life. My first multi-pitch climb. My name in print. The first Mad Women cabaret. The sweet air of a new day knowing that I made my own way back from hell. Up there with the best of them is the Women at the Margins National Conference 2004. A sublime moment at dinnertime when 120 kindred spirits sat down to eat. That unbeatable feeling – We did it. And we'll keep on doing it until we don't need to do it anymore.

Challenging BPD is a complex business, raising difficult theoretical and practical questions at all parts of the process. Yet however complex the process is, I'm glad to be a part. Like my good friend Carol says, "I can tell you that the truth is the power I live on and it rocks. I am a Bodacious Party Diva" (Bressington, 2004:15).

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I was born and raised in Burnley and left at eighteen to study politics in Liverpool. It was during my time as a student that I came into contact with mental health services, and for the next few years, spent a lot of time in hospital. The expereinces i had as a psychiatric patient motivated me to become heavily involved in the survivor/user movement, and I was a founder member of STEPS – a self-help group for women who self-injure – and Mad Women – a radical campaigning group for women with an interest in women's mental health. I developed my interests via an MA in Applied Women's Studies, which gave me the opportunity to focus on issues such as women and self-injury and the psychiatric response to the sexual abuse of women and girls. I went on to move to Yorkshire, which I love, and to begin a PhD from a feminist perspective on Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I'm currently on an extended break, studying on an MA in Creative Writing and devoting some time to my other passion, poetry. I recently had a poem included in "Out of Fashion", a Faber and Faber anthology edited by Carol Ann Duffy! I have published articles and chapters, and deliver training and workshops around issues such as self injury, BPD and gender issues within the secure system. I'm an active member of Women at the Margins, a Leeds-based campaigning group.

Contradiction

She is afraid to be herself
She doesn't know, who that is?

She sees a part of her pass her by
On her way to her missions
She drives by her while she catches a glimpse of her
On her car window.

She exchanges smiles
With her, when their paths cross on the street

She is never a part of her
When she needs her confirmation

She was the platform shoes
That gave her elevation
The slopes that defined her strides
She is mingled with her mixmatching clothes

Her name ceased to be her
She is anyone you wish her to be

She is edible if you wish to eat her up
Bitter when you wish to spit her out

She has no inner strength
No wisdom to lean on
She used to speak in quiet tones
And her voice will vibrate

Her silences were once audible

She speaks no infinite truths
But the complexities of her own
Her body is a billboard
For all your consumerist desires
She doesn't service any particular taste

Yet she can tell this much:

This revolution
Is about singing your own praises
For history to remember you
For the present has a memory the size of an ant's lifespan
It is about linking yourself to your past
If you want glory in this life time
Heroes are made these days not born

Be articulate about struggle
Give a damn or die a zero
Apathy is a mental disorder

She doesn't ask for worship
No claim to lead you to your self
She doesn't want your heart
At the palm of her hand
No aim to bruise your ego
She doesn't pick-up pieces
And you can keep your perfection.

Bandile Gumbi

Becoming a psychologist: professionalism, feminism, activism

Jane Callaghan

Abstract

In this article, I explore the ways in which discourses of 'professionalisation' and the psychological construction of 'femininity' operate to constrain and block activism amongst South African women psychology students. I use resources from discursive, postcolonial and feminist theory, to analyse extracts from a series of interviews with students about their professional training in psychology. I unpack students' talk about professionalisation and depoliticisation. I explore the construct of the 'caring psychologist' as a possible alternative to the construct of the 'professional psychologist', articulating both its potential as a base for resistance to professionalisation, and its limitations as a subject position embedded within constraining discourses of femininity. The article forms part of a larger project, that questions the appropriateness of professionalisation and western models of psychology in the South African context.

Keywords: *psychology, feminism, activism, ethic of care, femininity, South Africa*

The need to produce a more 'relevant' psychology for a South African context is an idea that has long been rehearsed in the talk of applied and academic psychologists in this country. However the reality of the *practice* of applied psychology in South Africa is that it is overwhelmingly individualist in its form, that it draws largely on western models, and that it serves predominantly the needs of middle class (and typically white) South Africans. Although there are pockets of radicalised practice, and of training in more socially appropriate strategies for intervention (for example, several training programmes in South Africa include a community psychology component, or have a separate course for community psychologists), nonetheless the typical model for psychological work in post-apartheid South Africa remains private practice. To understand the intractability of 'mainstream' psychological practice in South Africa, we need to interrogate students' induction into the profession through their education and training. I am not implying that selection and training practices are the only factors involved in the reproduction of conservative forms of psychology. Rather, my argument is that training in psychology involves the construction of professional identity, positioning students to reproduce 'traditional' ways of doing psychology. To understand the practice of psychology we need to understand how students become positioned as 'professional psychologists'.

South African psychology has historically been characterised by tensions between 'conservative' and 'progressive' forces within the discipline. In the 80s and 90s, the question of the 'relevance' of psychology to the South African context was raised again and again. These questions were typically framed in terms psychology's contribution to the liberation struggle, the importance of providing appropriate mental health services to sectors of the population who were previously denied such services, and of developing psychologies that could theorise the South African context.

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In applied psychology this often translated (and continues to translate) into various 'community based interventions'. Within the context of political struggle for liberation from apartheid, gender was neglected. Women's activism was reframed and redirected away from concerns about gender oppression, and towards the broader struggle. Recently writers like Shefer (2001) and De la Rey (1999) have suggested that South African psychology must start to make sense of and work with South African women's lives. Despite these calls, such accounts remain unusual and under-resourced.

In this article, I draw on a series of interviews conducted over a three year period (2001–2003) with women in professional psychological training at South African universities. I approached this research from an assumption that, in order to change the way in which psychology is taught and practiced, it is necessary to look very closely at the way in which the training of psychologists takes place. As a lecturer at an historically disadvantaged university (1996–1999) and as a masters student myself (1993–1995) I was acutely aware of the experience of masters training as an uncomfortable, often painful or even brutalising experience for students undergoing professional training. What was clear to me, both as trainee and as trainer, was that psychological training did not straightforwardly 'empower' students with professional status and expert knowledge. This project emerges as an attempt to respond to the sense of loss of self and loss of power, articulated in my own story and in the training stories told to me by students I have worked with in the past. That this experience of pain and loss was more prevalent in accounts of women students, and particularly of black women students, did not seem accidental. I wanted to explore whether student accounts of the training process might yield useful insights into the ways in which professional identities are negotiated in South Africa, and the ways in which particular (often conservative) forms of being a psychologist are reproduced. This is not a straightforward story of disempowerment: rather it is an exploration of the way in which taking up the authority of 'psychologist' authorises particular ways of speaking, and distances us from other subject positions.

Clinical, counselling, educational and industrial psychology students from four South African Universities (three historically white and one historically black) were interviewed. The analysis of this material draws on resources from discursive practice (e.g. Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker, 1997), informed by feminist and postcolonial theory (e.g. Mama 1995). My analysis is guided by the approach to discourse analysis suggested by Parker (1994; 1992). This method is informed by a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and power, which facilitates an exploration of the ways in which 'individual' identities are produced within a web of discursive practices. I seek to explicate some of the ways in which power is performed within training institutions, and the ways in which the identity of 'The Professional Psychologist' is constructed. A politically informed discourse analysis (Burman, 1991) is well positioned to allow this kind of analysis, through its attention to the ways in which power relationships are constructed within language. This kind of research has the potential to deconstruct the dichotomous representation of 'theory' and 'practice' (one form of which might be 'activism') as it operates both as commentary on and intervention into social and psychological practice.

The idea that psychology does not merely describe the experience of 'being an individual' but that it is actively involved in the production and normalisation of 'the individual subject' (Rose, 1999; Henriques et al., 1998) is not a

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new one. As psychologists we are actively engaged in the production of psychology's object – the universal, acontextual, apolitical individual. But as psychologists, we are unable to escape our own constructions. As the producers of psychological knowledge, we also constitute ourselves as human subjects, as the depoliticised, rational knower of psychology.

While this presents a problem for psychologists in general, I suggest it presents a *particular* problem for women psychologists, and for women in the process of becoming psychologists. Psychological accounts tend to presume that women will be the *objects* of psychology, the known, not the knower. In its portrayal of women as its object, psychology has not been flattering: damaged, neurotic, irrational, women are psychology's patients (e.g. Mama, 1995; Tavris, 1993; Weisstein, 1968). For women to manoeuvre themselves from the position of psychology's patient to psychologist is a massive identity project. It requires that students accept the identity of knower, the subject of psychology, with its concomitant qualities of power, knowledge, status, whilst remaining the known, the object, the damaged, the passive recipient of its scientific knowledge. In becoming psychologists, women students are dually exposed to the psychological gaze: as the gendered *other* and as the *psychologist in training*. They must negotiate a tension between their new position as the knowing subject of psychology, and their developing knowledge of their gendered position in psychology as the 'other'.

In this article, I explore the ways in which discourses of 'professionalisation' and the psychological construction of 'femininity' operate to constrain and block activism amongst South African women psychology students. Feminist activism in psychology is understood here to mean the maintenance of a connection between psychology and politics,

and a commitment to revealing and interrupting the operation of power in psychology (Bolak Baratav, 2002), and in the relationship between psychology and the context within which it is practised.

Gender in South African psychology

Gender politics in South Africa has tended to take a backseat to the politics of race and class. Historically, in the face of the overtly oppressive apartheid regime, struggle politics focused on uniting the South African left under an anti-apartheid banner. Gender politics were viewed as potentially divisive, and consequently rendered as secondary to liberation from apartheid (Kottler, 1996; Kottler and Levett, 1997; Bennet, 2002).

> G: Maybe it's my own sense of the South African scenario, but other issues are considered more dominant, and are more on the agenda, than issues around gender. Issues around race are certainly receiving a lot more attention, and it's almost like gender, it's like a second class citizen. Erm, and so to actually raise issues around that, erm, to find a voice and a space for it is… ((laughs)) It's just not a reality really. And also, where do you find the space to kind of voice that stuff?

In this extract, G clearly echoes a concern expressed by other South African feminists that gender has been forgotten in South African society. This positions women in South Africa as disenfranchised – not involved in decision making, lacking in political power. Women in South African psychology confront three intersecting forms of exclusion: the broader privileging of racial analysis and activism over gender; the way in which women are either pathologised or absent in psychological theory; and the lack of representation for women in psychological organisations. The absence of a

section in PsySSA for a consideration of gender demonstrates this quite clearly. Their lack of representation in professional structures and their non-representation / pathologised representation in psychological theory renders women voiceless within psychological theory and practice. Women are spoken for. They are not speakers.

Few of the women I interviewed identified as feminist. Self-identification as feminist has become increasingly problematised for women globally, many younger women seeing the battles of feminism as having been won already. In South Africa, this is further complicated by the tensions already noted inherent in the prioritising of race politics over gender and class. Students suggested that psychological theories had little to say to the experience of being a South African woman. They noted that gender issues, and particularly theorisation of women's experiences, were simply not covered in their syllabus at masters level:

> JC: OK. Hm. Do you think that the psychological theory you've been exposed to at university has addressed your experiences as a woman.
> X: Um. I haven't really been taught much about gender issues, so I don't know.
> JC: I suppose I'm thinking generally about theory, like cognitive behavioural theory, psychoanalytic theory… those kinds of ideas.
> X: Not at all. Now that I think about it, they never touch on issues concerned with women

Students seem surprised at the degree to which gender is simply absent from psychological accounts. It seemed that they had almost not noticed that in producing 'universal' accounts of human experience, gender is effectively written out of much psychological theorisation. The idea of universal human experience written into psychology, and the tendency to view

gender merely as an independent variable, is so pervasive that students seem largely inured to its operation. Student accounts suggest some awareness that psychology training practices construct women as what Phoenix (1987) in a different context, has described as 'pathologised presence, normalised absence'. Women are absent from general theories of human behaviour and experience, but are present as the 'abnormal' or 'problematic' focus of the psychological gaze. These representations of women in psychological theory and practice position trainees in very complex ways. The theoretical frame that sets them up as 'expert' also undermines them as 'sick' or positions them as 'ungendered'. Again this sets up a strong pressure to dissociate from gendered positions as 'woman' and to identify as the objective professional.

Students note that, alongside these representations and absences, there is little attempt to understand women's distress as socially constituted. G clearly articulates the way in which the broad sweep of diagnostic and therapeutic psychological theory excludes a *social* and gendered analysis.

> G: as a woman – not even as a woman in **psychology**, but as a **woman**, erm, things like sexual harassment … I mean, how does psychology make sense of that? Because certainly in my training, they might give you broad theories, it might be useful to understand my own experience of it, but in a very broad way they're not specific to women.
> JC: Right.
> J: Ja.
> G: If that makes sense. Any sort of stuff, it's like ignored. And certainly my experience of psychology, and of masters is that gender is **not an issue.**
> …
> G: I mean, it's funny, because at one level, they **do** talk about it, but at another level, it

doesn't speak to your experience, because it talks about roles and stereotypes and blah blah blah blah blah, but … It's almost like, hello, you've actually got no clue

The theoretical resources offered in the masters training process are, for G and many other students, unable to account for relatively ordinary (and non-pathological) problematic and unproblematic events in South African women's lives.

In students' accounts, the re-inscription of gender into psychological theory and practice is represented in terms of a politics of 'voice' (see the first extract from G in this section). In a context where gender is relegated to the position of 'second class citizen' it is difficult to 'give voice' to concerns about gender, and to speak as a woman psychologist. As Burns (2000) points out, conceptualising activism in terms of finding a 'voice' presumes that women's voices will be different from the voices of men, and also that there is somehow a single, authentic women's voice. Wilkinson (1996) argues that this can impose a 'false homogeneity' on the diverse and multiple positions from which women might speak. Certainly the voices of women in this series of interviews around professional training are multiple, blurred, and positioned in complex ways in relation to discourses of psychology and of professionalisation. The authority *to speak* in psychology comes with the acquisition of the status of either professional or academic psychologist. To challenge prevailing practices in psychology is to erode the very platform from which you have acquired the right to speak in the first place. But the voice that is authorised by psychological training is constrained, culturally masculine, politically neutral. Giving voice to women in psychology will not necessarily guarantee that women will speak as activists, or resist hegemonic constructions of women (Capdevila, 2000).

Professionalisation and depoliticisation

As I have already suggested, to understand the continuing conservatism of the organisation and practice of psychology in South Africa, we need to understand how training processes depoliticise students, and discourage activism. I argue here that discourses of professionalisation operate overtly to trivialise or marginalise political, critical and community oriented work, and more subtly to construct a professional identity that is apolitical, raceless, classless and de-gendered.

Students rarely identify as feminist or activist in their accounts of their training. Only one white woman, G and an 'Indian' woman, P, described themselves as politically minded, as feminist, and as interested in social issues. While it is clear that several other students were invested in the development of a politically and socially relevant psychology, they were loath to describe such activity as political. I suggest that students dis-identify with activist subject positions because of the explicit and implicit censure of such identities in the discourse of professionalisation that is characteristic of psychological practice.

G suggests that psychology training programmes 'select out' people who have strong political (or other) views.

> G: But there are certainly certain assumptions that people make about what makes a good therapist. Um, and seemingly having strong religious beliefs ((laughs)) is not one of them.
> I: What else ( )
> G: I'd say having a strong anything. Strong beliefs, opinions, call it what the hell you like positions, strong positions on anything. Hello?
> I: So the professional is like a bland, neutral figure?
> G: Ja, ja!. Not quite a tabula rasa, although

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they'd probably like to present it as that, as a <u>neutral position</u>. Because, you know, that's how it gets presented. But if you had strong <u>anything</u> …

G: Ja, hello? Got to <u>go!</u> ((laughs)) I mean, it <u>really</u> does. I know certainly, ja. Even strong <u>political</u> ja, opinion. There are probably <u>some</u> psychologists who might you know. But then ((speaks with some irony)) they're just <u>community psychologists</u>, of <u>course</u> they're gonna <u>be</u> like that. That kind of way of talking about it. They're not <u>clinical</u>, they're not dyed in the wool, you know?

Student accounts of professional training are structured around the dichotomous representation of the positions of 'professional' and 'non-professional' within psychological discourses. The 'good therapist' – the professional psychologist – in this extract is an apolitical being, lacking in strong feelings and convictions. In describing trainees as 'not quite a tabula rasa' G suggests that they are open (though not entirely so) to the moulding influence of training institutions. This marks student identities out as objects of psychological work – to be shaped by the training process to the needs of the profession. The 'not quite' suggests that good therapists have just enough individuality to enable them to lay claim to the position of 'individual', but she is clear that strong convictions would be too great an obstacle for the psychological training programme to overcome. Thus professional training does 'not quite' produce homogenous drones, but plasticity of character, and lack of strong political and religious conviction, mark out the ideal candidate to become 'the good therapist'. Real psychologists ('clinical' psychologists) embody the identity of professional psychologist – they are 'dyed in the wool', being a psychologist defines their identity. Having strong views on political matters is seen as 'unprofessional' and inappropriate. Strong views get in the way of

the shaping and development of the professional personality. The construction of the 'good therapist' as professional, neutral and detached implies an opposite construction, a bad therapist or inappropriate therapist – the non-professional, who is too personal, too political. This polarisation of professional and non-professional within psychology relegates gendered and politicised subject positions to the domain of the personal (the non-professional), thus militating against a substantive engagement with the construct of the professional psychologist *as* activist.

In several interviews students mention that 'community' projects offer some space for a more critical voice. However, community psychology has become a peripheralised space to which political and social issues in psychology have been consigned, enabling 'mainstream' psychology to continue relatively unaffected by challenges to produce a more relevant and equitable psychological practice for South Africa (Callaghan, 2005). Community psychology in South Africa is often shorthand for psychological intervention with black people and poor people. G suggests that students with political and social convictions are marked out as 'community psychologists' rather than 'real psychologists', and that such convictions land you in a professional ghetto. Critical psychology – a potential theoretical enclave for engagement with social and political issues – is expunged from applied psychology training.

> P: No, but just to answer that last question, I don't think psychology is allowing for that kind of change. The way we are being taught now, we're basically taught by the book and to practice it like everybody else does, and er, when do you break out of that pattern and do things differently? Because that's what's needed, is to do things differently. And it's not letting you do that. It's just

churning out a kind of psychologist that's out there already, and I'm afraid that's what I'm going to become too.

….

P: For me, it's because the course is not allowing you to be critical, and not encouraging you to be critical. They make you become just one of the others.

(Laughter)

NM: By the time you criticise them, they wonder why I'm here if I'm criticising them. But most of the things you find out now, you didn't know before. It's not what you expected.

The power to authorise what is and is not appropriate practice for the applied psychologist is ascribed here to 'the course' and to 'psychology'. Students position themselves as passive in relation to the forces of 'psychology': they are unable to take up critical approaches which they are neither taught to use, nor encouraged to explore, in their applied work. Rather than describing a community of psychology practitioners, working with diverse methods and theoretical perspectives, student talk refers to an anonymous, amorphous body – 'psychology' – a machine that constrains them, and disables their potential for critical practice. The machine 'churns them out' as the manufactured, mass produced, homogenised psychologist.

N's comment introduces another feature to this depoliticising influence – the idea of dissension being actively quashed by the agents of psychology. Again, these forces for conformity are described as 'they' – neutral, asexual, impersonal. The use of the impersonal pronoun indicates again the operation of a homogenised force of 'psychology', rather than the actions of particular individuals (e.g. lecturers, supervisors). Students are thus subject to a 'double homogenisation'[1] – the production of

'The Professional Psychologists', and the active suppression of any dissenting voices. Students constitute their identities as 'professional psychologists' in a context where they suggest that critique is actively discouraged, and that the driving institutional force is to transform students into 'them' – depoliticised, acontextual, disengaged psychologists. Interestingly, student politics is often represented in student accounts as something that is either 'trivial' or 'not for them'. This separation of student politics from their student activity is puzzling, since the protests were around issues like fees, difficulties in halls of residence (including in one case the alleged occurrence of several sexual assaults on women in halls by members of a gang), problems with the administration, etc. – issues that appear to be relevant to all students. This may be related to the fact that, in several institutions, while undergraduate programmes are halted when student protests are happening, postgraduate programmes tend to continue as if nothing were happening. However, the construction of student politics as 'not for them' seems to echo the conservative stance taken up by so many psychologists (e.g. Biesheuwel, 1987) that it is not the place of the psychologist to take up a politicised stance. As a profession, politics is often represented as 'not for us'.

Their discursive positioning as this impersonal, depoliticised subject de-genders and de-radicalises student practice as psychologists, militating against the emergence of an activist psychology. The discourse of professionalism offers a potent pressure to students to distance themselves from their positions as women, as racialised, as politicised beings, through an implicit threat that such identities are somehow 'unprofessional'. To acquire the authority to speak as the objective, neutral and homogenised professional subject requires dis-identification

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[1] Thanks to Alexandra Zavos, who suggested this term.

with these 'other' positions. So, for example, speaking as a 'woman psychologist' is rendered unacceptable through these discursive processes.

However, the construct of the homogenous professional is *itself* paradoxical: it explicitly contradicts the accepted wisdom within psychological discourses of what a professional psychologist *is*. As the expert knower in human relations, the professional psychologist 'should' be an objective 'individual', embodying qualities of rational *agency*. In contrast, student accounts suggest that the production of this expert knower decontextualises the individual professional psychologist, in effect producing them as more of the same, the 'collective individual' (Stronach et al, 2002; Callaghan, 2005). Moulding students into the good therapist undermines their capacity to be rational agents.

This paradox does reveal a fissure in student accounts. The language used by students to describe their production as psychologists – for example, of being 'churned out' by 'psychology' – is an expression of the depersonalising and oppressive face of this kind of mass production of a particular, conformist identity. However, there is also a hint of resistance, of heels being dug in, a suggestion that this depoliticised, degendered production is not what they desire. These resistances are most explicitly articulated when students describe the psychologists responsible for their training, and their relationships with other people. For example:

> P: What I find is I used to <u>talk</u> to my friends a <u>lot more</u> before I started doing – especially masters. Because er, it depersonalizes you a little bit, it says don't er engage your friends in discussions about psychology, and about their problems. Try not to talk to your friends, rather refer them to a psychologist where they can get professional help. (.) I don't know if I <u>like</u> that too much, because,

er, it's like changing the way I behave, with my friends.

…Because a lot of people <u>change</u> with psychology. Erm, oh, I don't know if they're that type of people <u>anyway</u>, but we look at the kind of psychologists that we <u>have</u> out here now. <u>None</u> of them come across as warm, caring empathic people, that even the <u>theory</u> tells us we're supposed to be. They're really <u>hard</u> people, that (..) you almost can't get <u>through to</u>. And, they're supposed to <u>understand</u> you, even in your internship, you would <u>expect</u> that empathic relationship, they would <u>know</u> what you're going through, you know, they can <u>put themselves</u> in your shoes. But there's <u>such</u> a distance, erm, and er, I <u>wonder</u> how these people would be with their patients as <u>well.</u> It's almost like the distance is too much, you can't <u>connect</u> with your client, with your patient.

N: But I don't think it's <u>only</u> around that, focusing on our working relationship only. Our social lives, for example, at times we, because of that professional reserve, you don't know whether, if I go to a disco and I see a client, what do I do? What do I do? … For <u>me</u>, I'd really like to be where people are – even if it's only going to the <u>beach</u> and all that. I <u>enjoy</u> that. And I don't want to <u>allow</u> the profession to be limiting <u>where</u> I'm going or <u>what</u> I do. (….)

Flagging up the importance of friendship and social life, students juxtapose 'woman-in-relationship' against the subject position of professional psychologist. Professional training is represented here through the use of the impersonal pronoun 'it': an impersonal, amorphous force, both transforming and threatening. While becoming a professional psychologist may bestow status and authority on the trainee, there is the suggestion that the idealised Professional Psychologist is *too detached*. The juxtaposition of the caricature of

professional reserve and ordinary human relationships ratifies a need for a more connected, socially oriented way of being a psychologist. The construct of the caring psychologist reintroduces a *personal* space within psychological practice. In highlighting other qualities that the 'professional psychologist' should embody, students articulate an alternate 'feminine' position (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) – one of connection, warmth, empathy. Students mobilise resources from *within* psychological discourses to resist professionalisation: they use constructs like empathy and care to claim space for a more connected and socially oriented way of doing psychology.

The discourse of professionalism in psychology masks the essentially conservative nature of the profession as it is currently practiced, and militates against the development of feminist or activist psychologies. The construct reproduces a dichotomy of personal and professional. Students are required to embody professionalism, and to keep their personal/political selves separate from their professional role. This enables the continued articulation of other affiliations and positionings alongside the identification of psychologist, but prevents them from seriously challenging the identity of The Professional itself (Callaghan, 2005). The introduction of the 'caring psychologist' into their talk about becoming a psychologist re-centres the personal, the interpersonal, and represents a *potential* space for the articulation of an activist and political orientation within applied psychology. I am not arguing that the introduction of an ethic of care into student discourse is a radical move – in fact, an uncritical adoption of this orientation would be potentially extremely retrogressive. Rather I am suggesting that the identity of 'caring psychologist' offers the possibility for a re-enlivening of the idea of connectedness, sociality, and activism into the work of psychology.

The feminisation of psychology

Reflecting a growing global trend, women psychology trainees substantially outnumber men in postgraduate psychology programmes. This shift in the gender make-up of trainees has provoked considerable anxiety both locally and internationally, as a potential threat to the scientific and professional status of the discipline. Some psychology departments in South Africa reserve, or are considering reserving, a place on the masters programme for male candidates. Despite their numerical preponderance in training programmes, women form only a minority of full time employed or self employed psychologists. Men continue to predominate in senior academic and professional positions in psychology (Richter and Griesl, 1999; Wilson et al, 1999). The discipline of psychology remains largely masculinist in its method and its content: thirty years of feminist engagement with psychology has resulted in almost no evidence of feminist thought in psychology's textbooks and curricula. Textbooks written for a South African context typically have a feminist section, but a gendered analysis is not a sustained feature of these texts (e.g. Seedat et al, 2001; Hook et al, 2004).

Students make sense of the growing numbers of women in the profession with reference to the dominant construction of women as naturalised or socialised carers. Developing further the construction of the 'caring psychologist', they suggest that this renders women more suited to the profession.

> A: But I feel that women have the sensitivity and almost the conniving ways about them to kind of go into the psyche of other people, and understand why they're getting hassled about these sort of labyrinth of the mind issues. And the men who've been in psychology, and the clients, or rather who are in psychology, the clients I've had who've

been to them have had an unsuccessful treatment.
((Interruption))
Well, I've had clients who've been for a debriefing with a male therapist, another one, marital therapy. <u>Neither</u> of them were <u>successful therapies</u>. And I <u>don't</u> just say that, because I know clients, they always come to the next psychologist and they say to you it didn't <u>work</u>. But in this case, it <u>didn't</u> work. I don't think the males had the <u>care</u> and the sensitivity to really <u>grasp</u> what was going <u>on</u>. I think in both cases, both males were in the profession for, for <u>financial</u>, for <u>financial</u> reasons, as much as anything else, and so it's a case of another client, do it and out, another client, do it and out. Whereas I think the <u>female</u> psychologists who are in the profession handle, they don't make as much <u>money</u>, most of them, males will go to work quickly and make more money, but the females are in it to <u>do a good job</u>. And luckily a lot of them have husbands earning salaries.

In describing women as more suited to the profession, A exploits the concept of sex difference, using it to validate women's position in the profession. She uses a kind of ethic of care discourse (Gilligan, 1982), locating women as more naturally suited to emotional work, to caring. However, this extract also quite implicitly highlights the double bind in which the ethic of care places women in psychology. While their apparently caring nature makes them more able to 'do a good job' than men, it also renders them unsuited to 'professional' status. Men may well be just in it 'for the money', but they are also not bound by their 'caring nature' to the realms of the emotional, the irrational. Emotionality and irrationality are concepts that render women as the objects of the psychological gaze, not as psychology's objective expert knowers.

This reading of women as 'natural carers', uniquely suited to being 'caring psychologists'

serves several functions. It positions women within the discipline in a way that will not disrupt dominant psychological representations of either women, or of the profession. While the 'real work' of professional psychology remains explicitly masculinised, space is made for women within the profession to do caring work that is constructed as being in line with their role in western middle class culture as nurturers. G outlines the tensions such positionings create for women psychologists:

> certainly in terms of <u>gender</u> erm I mean the sense that I, that I <u>had</u> is that often the role of therapist is that expectation, certainly of the qualities that they want therapists to have – these are for <u>women.</u> And gneee!! ((Angry hand gesture)) ((laughs)) I don't know if that makes any sense? Sort of ideas of the role of psychologists, that women have, that women are this this and that… So for me, that sets up a <u>tension</u>, for myself in terms of my being a woman. Because sometimes I <u>don't</u> want to listen, I don't want to – whatever it is, and I'm <u>not</u> just all those things, I'm a lot of other things as well. And in terms of being a '<u>good</u>' therapist, those kinds of qualities are <u>expected</u>. And so at some level it reinforces some of those gender things, or expectations

The construction of psychologist as emotional labourer intersects with discourses of middle class femininity in particularly problematic ways. The qualities of the 'good therapist' replicate representations of women as passive, receptive, listening. As a good woman therapist, G is manoeuvred into a very restricted position through the dual location of therapist and woman, in which she is *required* to reproduce gendered ways of being. The talk around feminisation of the profession locates women as more emotionally engaged and sensitive – both more able to relate to clients, and less able to make objective decisions about them. In terms of the discourse of professionalism – which requires professionals to be assertive, detached and rational agents – this

association of women psychologists with emotionality, passivity and dependence strips women of authority and power in relation to the profession.

A's suggestion that psychology is a good job for a woman who is dependent on a husband's income (and the associated assumption that she remains responsible for domestic and childcare related concerns) sustains this construct of women naturally adapted, as wives and mothers, to be emotional labourers. Psychology is represented as a part time option, a good career to pursue while engaging in the more 'traditional' pursuits of middle class womanhood. This representation enables the role of women within psychology to be dismissed:

> G: One of the things that I got during my training is that this is what women want. They don't want something that will inter-fere, they want to be able to raise kids, and do all these other things. And people tend to think that means they don't take it seriously as a career option. I don't know.

This location as emotional labourers and part time workers positions women to be dismissed as professionals, and as contributors to the wider projects of professional psychology. They are seen as working away at their own small space, while the larger issues that face psychologists in South Africa remain the enclave of men.

Writing about the 'ethic of care' in conceptualisations of women in psychology, Segal (1999) says:

> "Feminist rhetoric has been widely accepted (if still the butt of satire) especially insofar as it applauds a gentle type of care-based ethic, the affirmation of a benevolent 'femininity', open and sensitive to the needs

and vulnerabilities of others. … The continuing dissemination of just such a 'feminist' into 'feminizing' personal ethos can offer a feminism without an oppositional culture or politics, one which has encouraged some feminists to replace what they now describe as their former 'hardened' language of politics, with a 'cosier' language of feelings. … The cosier version of feminism can easily slide into, or at least be used in the service of, a wider culture of blandness and denial: one which collapses political into the personal, the collective into the individual." (227)

In constituting aspects of psychology (specifically the therapeutic encounter) as suitable for women, students reproduce within the profession the dichotomy of the personal and the political that has been the focus of feminist enquiry and activism for so long, and yet appears so intractable in contemporary society. It creates a role for women within psychology in the 'cosier' aspects of the profession, leaving the construction of women by the profession relatively untouched by their presence in it.

What is in operation here is a cooption of the construct of 'caring psychologist' which the students propose as an antidote to the detached professional psychologist. 'Caring' has been re-read as traditionally feminine, nurturing. The way to appropriately be a woman in psychology is extremely circumscribed. Women in psychology have two possible subject positions – professional psychologist, or the feminine carer. The way in which this version of the ethics of care reproduces middle class, white womanhood is also problematic for other women in psychology. While the carer psychologist offers some scope for resistance to the detachment of the professional psychologist, it remains a very constrained position, which could also effectively block

a theorisation of *other* ways of doing and being a woman psychologist, particularly being a black or working class woman in psychology. The 'cottage industry' description of married, middle class women in psychology operates in exclusionary ways to block identification as black women psychologists.

Students suggested that attempts to resist aspects of their training were dismissed by the training institutions as evidence of their inability to 'cope' (Callaghan, 2005) or as evidence of their passive aggressive tendencies. The latter, in particular, is a defence mechanism typically ascribed to women (e.g., Schinka, John A.; Hughes, Patrick H.; Coletti, Shirley D.; Hamilton, Nancy L.; Renard, Carol G.; Urmann, Catherine F.; Neri, Robert L. (1999) Changes in Personality Characteristics in Women Treated in a Therapeutic Community).

Reframing women's resistances, and their expressions of disquiet as problems they experience in their training programmes in this way locates the source of trainee difficulties firmly within the individual trainee. This pathologising discourse also implicitly locates the difficulties with the *gender* of the trainee, flagging up their position as a woman entering the discipline, and shifting them from the position of professional-in-waiting to the gendered object of the psychological gaze. The extract below, from P, shows quite clearly how women's professionalism, and 'lack' of it, is explicitly gendered:

> P: <u>Arrogant</u>. I was labelled passive aggressive as well. But, you know, there were things, you know, it's more than, it's more than just a professional evaluation. It's about <u>relating to **people**</u>. And supervisors are supposed, because they are in a position of <u>power</u>, erm you know, tend to <u>look down on you</u>, you know, and <u>not</u> treat you like a full person.

Because that's how I felt. <u>That</u> was what was frustrating me, nothing else. That I wasn't being treated like how I <u>should be</u>, and how I treat other people, erm, and er, it frustrated me, because I couldn't do <u>anything</u> about it, because they are people who can determine <u>my</u> future and I had to just go along with it so maybe I <u>was</u> passive aggressive. And erm what did I do? I had to just play along with them. Be <u>nice</u>, you know, be <u>false</u>. You know? Smile [
SM: [smile
P: at their silly <u>jokes</u>. Complement them on their stupid clothing, which I didn't even <u>like</u>. ((laughter)) I was told, this is the <u>only</u> way to get through your internship. And the thing is, it <u>worked.</u>
NM: It <u>does</u> work.
P: It works.
SM: And when you look at it, the training's good, but when it comes to <u>that</u>, that's where they lose it
P: The <u>personality</u> thing
SM: Ja, the personality thing. It's just, it's just out.
P: It's also this woman-woman thing. Because, U ((male intern)) and I are together, U and I. We would spend lots of time together, we interacted all the time, we were like inseparable for our first six months. And U would <u>also</u> not interact with them on a <u>social level</u>, but it was <u>fine</u>, because he was male, but because I was <u>female</u>, erm, it was a problem. And I couldn't <u>understand</u> that, you know, because I generally have a tendency to spend more time with <u>males</u>, than I do with females, that's just, I think something about me that's <u>always</u> been the case. And er, also because I didn't want to interact with them, because I wanted to keep that, that kind of that professional distance, that they <u>were</u> my supervisors, and I didn't want to mix the two. But for <u>them</u> it was not <u>on</u>, you know. I had major problems with that, until I adjusted <u>myself</u>.
JC: Hm, hm.

P: But the <u>sad thing</u> there was, it <u>wasn't</u> a professional thing [
JC: [I was going to say that ...
P: [It wasn't that I wasn't doing my <u>work</u>...

P narrates her performance of middle class femininity, in the hospital setting: she describes it as a kind of masquerade that 'worked': it is both fictional and functional. She articulates how the relational aspect of being a psychologist is constituted in gendered terms. A discourse of middle class femininity is deployed in regulatory ways to pressure her towards a particular performance of woman psychologist. P, S and N are all black women (S and N are 'African', P is 'Indian'). While P tells the story here, S and N operate as a chorus, echoing, amplifying certain aspects of her story – clearly it resonates for them too.

As I've noted elsewhere (Callaghan, 2005), an important aspect of these kinds of narratives around professionalisation and of the policing of forms of femininity within professional discourses is that they are presented *as performances* (Butler, 1990). Apter (1991), in her discussion of femininity as masquerade, suggests that femininity is a disguise, that enables women to position themselves quite powerfully within institutions, without being identified as threats. P suggests that she makes a conscious choice to 'be nice, you know, be <u>false</u>'. While she performs middle class feminine psychologist for her trainers, she is seizing a powerful position as deceiver, subversive. She plays the game, complies with the demand that she fit in, but within her account lies a sense of powerful subversive potential. In narrating this as performance, P resists the positioning of herself as the object of the regulatory gaze of her training institution, positioning herself as a subject who can negotiate different ways of being a woman psychologist. Woman psychologist then is an identification that can be taken on, and discarded.

Possibilities for activism?

Kitzinger and Perkins (1993) suggested that the tendency in psychology to individualise and pathologise women's experience was so endemic and so problematic as to render the position of 'feminist psychologist' impossible. Certainly, exploring student accounts of professional training seems to suggest that there is no easy way forward for the production of feminist and activist forms of psychological practice in South Africa.

In this article, I have explored the ways in which discourses of professionalisation, and of femininity intersect to discourage the feminist and activist engagement with psychology in South Africa. The construct of the detached professional explicitly severs the connection between psychology and politics, by marginalising personal and political identities and practices. Feminism offers tools for exploring the deeply politicised nature of the personal, it offers a theoretical orientation that explicitly resists individualist conceptions of the self, and a connection between theory and practice, between knowledge and action. Through training practices, we need to facilitate the exploration of the personal-political nexus, particularly as it manifests in psychological practice with women, with the dispossessed, where discomfort with traditional mainstream psychological practice is often at its height. The feminised construct of the 'caring psychologist' offers an alternative identity for women in the profession, providing some scope for the development of a connected, socially engaged professional identity. This identity has become conflated with very traditional, middle class femininities which undermine the revolutionary potential that the construct of the 'caring psychologist' offers, locating women psychologists within a 'hearth and home' frame. However the feminised version of the caring psychologist

is far from seamless. The discursive cracks that open around it offer some foothold from which a theorisation and practice of a more *social* and *political* form of caring within psychology could emerge.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Erica Burman, Rebecca Lawthom, Jude Clark, and Alexandra Zavos, for their insightful and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this article. I'd also like to thank the women who allowed me to interview them, and gave so generously of their time and energy to this project.

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Jane Callaghan is a South African trained psychologist and academic. She currently lives in the UK, and is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of Psychology at University College Northampton. E-mail: jane.callaghan@northampton.ac.uk

It Takes Two: Glimpses of the
Creative Youth Workshop Project of Thrace

Anni Vassiliou, Tina Ligdopoulou

Abstract

This article explores issues and themes arising within the context of the field of youth work. The youth-worker role entails a certain midwife skill. That of enabling the formless to take form, or one form to manifest itself so as to become recognised and thus identified with. Of encouraging voices towards expression. In this journey, the 'invisible' formative process of an end-result is just as important as its 'visible' outcome. Why, when, who and how become just as pertinent considerations as what. In a social setting, the act of creating space for synergy and co-existence of differing actors builds a web in which each is empowered.

Keywords: *youth work, weaving, interview, co-construction of meaning, non-linear patterns*

The Creative Youth Workshop

The Creative Youth Workshop (CYW) Project is a joint multicultural effort developed in Thrace, North-eastern Greece, to address psychosocial skills involved in building community which seeks out and utilises difference. It was housed within the Support Centres of the 'Project on the Education of Muslim Children 2002–2004'[1] in the cities of Xanthi and Komotini[2]. It created a space, which, as a notion, refers simultaneously to a physical and human socialisation space. A workshop of materials and tools which encourage a young person towards creative enquiry of oneself and the social context within which one is growing, as well as creative expression through various expressive projects. The youth were encouraged to participate actively in all the life-phases of a project. The underlying aim was to provide a context for

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[1] This Project belongs to measures for promoting equal opportunities, especially for those threatened with social exclusion, funded jointly by the European Union (European Social Fund) and national resources (by 75 % and 25% respectively). The Project, tendered by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, Managing Authority of the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training II (O.P."Education"II) in the context of Measure 1.1 "Improvement of conditions for entry into the educational system for special categories of people" (Action 1.1.1 "Programmes for the integration of students with cultural and linguistic particularities and differences into the educational system"), and supervised by the Ministry's Special Secretariat for the Education for Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education, is implemented (final beneficiary) by the University of Athens/ Special Account for Research Funds, under the scientific and organisational responsibility of Professors of the University of Athens A. Fragoudaki and T. Dragonas.

[2] Xanthi and Komotini are the two large cities in the region of Thrace where the Project Support Centres are situated. They also form a social point of reference for the surrounding mountain and valley village communities.

training in skills useful for becoming aware of needs and interests, developing initiative and creative participation in a group process, and more broadly that experiential learning which enhances psychosocial growth as one moves from childhood through adolescence into adult life.

Introduction

The metaphor of weaving was present throughout the following interview and the way(s) we worked together. It surfaced while we sought words to complement each other's sentence and hence thoughts. Or perhaps our way of seeing, relating, experiencing – articulated through the metaphor of weaving – gave rise to a type of communication, which in turn fuelled our sentences with the 'right' (in a particular space and time) words. In a sense, the roles of the 'interviewee' and the 'interviewer' – at least as they are usually perceived – constitute only one kind of reality. Another way to look at this interview would be as a process of jointly creating meaning, which in turn creates us as its subjects. Story-telling has a similar quality: characters, events, symbols are woven into something unique that 'fails' to develop linearly.

Working in non-linear patterns, weaving ourselves within unfolding processes, was, in its own distinctive way, a kind of break from mainstream, patriarchal values. The ways we chose to arrive at things was just as important as the accomplishment of the aims of the various youth projects. In a sense, if one can refer to the activist's / feminist's role in a symbolic manner, the ideas we carried within the Project and the way we chose to do so acted upon social 'realities' as we attempted to give space to a joint dreaming process. One might call this a 'utopia' or rather a 'fairy-tale'. Still, fairy-tales play a very decisive role in our lives. Just think of all the stories you have encountered in your life thus far. Once upon a time, then…

Tina Ligdopoulou: I/we constructed this interview in July 2004 as I was preparing an article for METRO magazine. Rethinking the interview, I/we realised that it would be interesting to try enriching it with our reflections in the form of references. Not following the usual linear patterns, but still using some structure which would allow readers to understand, we expected references to play a role similar to emerging associations of casual interaction, thus rendering the discursive character of 'interview' visible. References offer the possibility of different pathways. Thoughts do not follow linear, but rather abstract patterns. Associations do not always make sense in the expected way of understanding mainstream realities. They have their own logic and are nevertheless important as alternative possibilities laid over. They remind me of different doors being there. Choosing one and ignoring another is what makes me who I am. Who I am are little choices made in a specific time or space.

Anni Vassiliou: It has been a challenging experience to attempt to dialogue the CYW Project of Thrace with Tina, while contributing to a project of joint effort – this journal. In a way, what has resulted is all about relating through and across various different roles. It's impossible to tell who has opened paths for whom. Tina and I have walked a part of the Project's life-path together. As this Project's manager, and a member of a larger team of collaborators involved

in the larger Project of Thrace, I have felt the weight of responsibility on my shoulders. I am expressing far more than my own self. I have tried to honour all parts, the youth worker team, the young and their personal creative exploration, the Project as a whole. Although I take full responsibility for what I have expressed, I do not feel ownership. The words are mine, but what they represent belongs to a field of interwoven relations, what they convey is up to each reader. May our meetings be creative.

The Interview

T.L.: I wanted to ask you a bit about the CYW. What was your dream in the beginning?
A.V.: The basic seed of my dream was to be able – within a course of time – to give space to creative expression, not just regarding the youth but also adults, the youth workers[3] who would be working with the youth groups. That is, I believed that there are more possibilities open at this moment in the social space of Thrace than what is manifest. Than what is – how should I say? More potential than…
T.L.: What is seen. What is apparent.
A.V.: Yes. And my dream was to help a multicultural group of people who come from different regions on the map of Thrace to cook something together. Multicultural in many ways, not only ethnicity, but also multiple realities (in relation to different life experiences, differences of age, gender, life situations, whether one is single, married, has children or not), education and training (whether through formal institutions or life experiences and society itself). Also, I dreamt that if I encouraged this, if I put myself into a process with a group of people, it would create a psychosocial space by itself which would attract young people. My basic dream was to give space for beginnings to happen, open pathways which would be filled out by people in Thrace, whether adults or youth, as they engaged themselves in the Action, adding their own energy. Each one participating from their own point of view and within the boundaries of their own role[4]. In the beginning, within the larger Project, this sub-project was referred to as 'Creative Youth Activities'. So, the goal was to provide creative activities for youth, and gradually, what we call Creative Youth Workshop was born.
T.L.: What did you hope to find in Nestos[5]?

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[3] **A.V.:** A multicultural team of youth workers, with varied professional and personal backgrounds, was formed to run the Creative Youth Workshops: Seçil Ahmet Oglou (Social Worker), Orhan Boz (Social Worker), Panayotis Panayotides (Sports Youth Worker), Makis Spyridopoulos (AthleticsTrainer), Dilek Habip (Sociologist), Ömür Hasan (Sociologist), Sevim Ibram (Social Designer), Babis Kouyouroukis (Social Worker), Mina Macheropoulou (Sociologist). I co-ordinated and supervised the project.
[4] **T.L.:** I noticed the multiplicity of roles between Anni and me. As we conversed, I was aware that she is a friend and also an interviewee, a co-ordinator of the CYW, my intermediary with Thrace and its sociocultural background. I was there asking questions, keeping notes, holding a tape-recorder in my hands and simultaneously working for the particular project as a trainer of the youth workers in story-telling. Although one may be reminded of the necessity for clear-cut roles, I enjoyed this shifting into differing roles and positions without failing to notice as well the complexity it brought within, in terms of power.
[5] **A.V.:** Nestos is a river which flows from the mountains of Bulgaria, through Greece, to the Aegean Sea. It forms the western geophysical border of Thrace. What is being referred to here, is the Nestos Project which involved a week-long camping trip during August 2003.

A.V.: Nestos in a way was like a micrograph, a mirror of the whole Project. It was an attempt to creatively combine a mixture of expressive tools[6] with the notion of coexisting with one another. With all the common ground one can discover, wherever coexisting is facilitated… and to learn what to do whenever it isn't, wherever one experiences difficulty. I consider Nestos as a very complete example of the Project, although I cannot say that it's representative in nature, because the projects which were realised in Xanthi and Komotini took on many different forms, depending on the youth groups and their needs[7].

T.L.: What did the river symbolise?

A.V.: The River was very important, and when I originally dreamed about the possibility of the Nestos camp project, I visited the setting by myself. It's one of the ways I've discovered in order to be certain of my ideas. I go through the process myself first. And when I'm there, images arise. So, the river –especially Nestos… [pause[8]] which has a continuous, quiet flow isn't frightening. It's a calm river by nature, and if you look at it from the outside very often you don't grasp how powerful it can be on the inside. How strong the current can be. It was a very good mirroring of… how can I express this now? [pause] Of a kind of journeying. Of a meeting of nine young people and eight adults who would embark on a journey and never be able to step into the same river twice. Who would be called upon continuously to scan and follow a certain flow, as if in a canoe, trying to chart a course in a river. To deal with the difficult moments, to develop skills and to reach their goal which would be to complete the course, knowing or learning in the process to give importance and value both to journeying and arriving. And to be able to take this experience and integrate it as they can and wish, each with their own rhythm and in their own life. So, I chose a river because we would be camping

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[6] **A.V.**: The camping phase of the project was structured around various interrelated workshops, designed to encourage the young participants to develop and practise various skills through activity, as individuals and members of a multicultural group. Activities included canoeing, sound & image processing, storytelling, first-aid, art & crafts, exploring nature paths and cooking.

T.L.: During the camp in Nestos I worked as a story-teller. One thing I have noticed was the tremendous potential of story-telling as a tool for empowerment. From November 2003 to March 2004 I worked as I trainer in story-telling addressing the youth workers of both Xanthi and Komotini. Through this process I hoped to open-up story-telling as a medium for reworking emotions, images of the self, stereotypes and simultaneously provide some basic skills in story-telling and story-building.

[7] **A.V.**: The Workshops' young population represents Thracian society in a many-faceted way. Their members live in the cities but also in the many surrounding mountain and valley villages. Thus, the opportunity to respond to many and differing youth needs arose. Also, there was a live give and take between groups. Each project built upon previous ones, each youth group inherited and passed on themes. The two Workshops became communicating vessels which allowed for many varying forms to define the Project.

[8] **T.L.**: I chose to transcribe pauses whenever I noticed long silences exceeding 5 seconds. Transcription troubled me for several reasons. While I was sure I had closely attended the whole process, I felt shocked during proof-reading to discover that I had missed entire words or phrases. Furthermore, transcription serves as a filter of an unfolding process – in this case the interview – intertwined with immense power and hence responsibility. Also, as I tried to transcribe our voices into text, important features are missing: intonation, movement, body language, hesitations. The interview's context and its essence, its sounds and surrounding images, are not transferable to a piece of paper, although of great importance. Finally, although translating from Greek into accurate (?), comprehensible (?) English was a joint effort, it has not been an easy task in many ways, since I also wanted to preserve the "texture" of expression in Greek that builds realities which may be distinctive on a discursive and hence cultural level.

at a spot from which the river passes and there's a very strong sense that the water comes from somewhere and it's going somewhere.

T.L.: What importance does the River, as a symbol and what you have just described have when it comes to building a kind of togetherness in human relationships?

A.V.: It's of great importance. I always have the feeling – when I'm relating to someone – that it's very useful to keep in mind that the moment we're meeting is important and unique, but that it's a time-space meeting point. That each one of us is coming from somewhere, like the small side-streams of a river[9]. We've made different journeys, which are each valuable, which differ. We've passed different points and we originate from different sources, we meet, we travel a part of the course together – we co-travel – and then our paths separate again. That's also how I think of the concept of a project. A project is a whole cycle, but the young person who comes to this project has a life before the project and a life after the project. I often use the notion of a river as a metaphor.

T.L.: What you're describing totally subverts basic notions of our own culture – let's say the notion of achievement[10]. Or a whole series of other notions where you have one starting point and one end point – the finish line – and if you arrive you have completed the cycle and you have received your laurels, you wear them and that's that.

A.V.: Yes. Let me give you an example. At the Nestos camp, an obvious and stated goal for all of us was to be able to take a group river trip on the sixth day. If we reached this point and were successful, obviously a part of us would consider that we'd achieved our goal. There were moments when it was very important for us to keep sight of the goal and we needed to train ourselves with direct respect to the goal. There were young people who'd never been in a canoe or the river before. So they needed to become familiarised with both. But there were also times when the goal could have become repressive to what we were experiencing and we needed to re-evaluate the goal with respect to our whole experience in order to give space to that which we needed in the moment. I believe [pause] that achievement is very important and it has a lot to teach you. Especially skills which are useful for us in today's world, like patience and perseverance in organising yourself to be able to go the distance. However, a trap I see today is walking toward the goal as if we're wearing…

T.L.: *Blinders[11].*

A.V.: …confining us to our goal. Because on the way we meet interesting things. There's usefulness in becoming side tracked. Some of the things we meet along the way will attract us; we may linger a bit to get to know them better. We meet difficulties, which have the

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[9] **T.L.:** This interview is very much related to my own background as a white woman in my thirties, within an heterosexual relationship, with an academic background and a lot of practical fieldwork in the environmental and social sector, an activist some times, an atheist, of Greek nationality, but still with ancestors coming from Bayern and Panama, Alexandria and Asia Minor, and diverse places in Greece, who travelled the seas or from one place to another as migrants or refugees. Among others they are the small side-streams composing this river called my life.

[10] **T.L.:** Achievement as a notion has been difficult to escape either in fieldwork (in Thrace) or during this interview. I noticed my urge to lead the discussion towards a desired (?) end, my fear of letting things take their own course, lacking trust some times in a process, unfolding in its own way.

[11] **T.L.:** Metaphors, such as 'weaving' or 'the river', played an important role as they commented indirectly on feelings, ideas and ways of perceiving our multiple realities.

potential to become our teachers, to teach us things. We meet small side-streams of experiences – islets – which, when we accept to step into them, add this notion of journeying towards the goal[12]. We reach our goal all the same, only I don't know anymore which is… I think it's wrong to ask which is more important, that we achieved our goal or how we achieved it? That is, I think it becomes a whole experience, which involves your spirit and your mind. You can transfer this knowledge. It's applicable to other things in your life. While if, for example, you remain attached to an attitude of, "I'll reach my goal and complete it", your whole experience is caged within this.

T.L.: You confine yourself within what you perceive as obvious.

A.V.: That's it. Yes.

T.L.: I have the feeling that the CYWs are one of the few spaces where there's actually work going on with mixed (multicultural) groups. I refer to groups because there are the youth workers and also the youth groups. What made this feasible? In a Project which works with – on the whole – more homogenous groups.

A.V.: That's not exactly true you know. The target group of this Project may be the Muslim minority of Thrace, and especially youth and the educational system, but that's only what is obvious. In my experience and view, the Project – in all its respects – deals with coexistence. And with the whole population of Thrace. Even where the goal is to develop more suitable educational materials and methodology so that minority youth are ensured equal opportunities within the educational system, the people involved identify with being part of the majority. Even though on the one hand the target may be the minority youth, the classroom is mixed. The Support Centres of the Project are an endeavour made possible by a mixed group of people. So, in my experience in Thrace, I've always been swimming in the notion of coexistence, of synergy – whether this facilitated things or made them more difficult. Now the question you asked was with respect to the CYWs…

T.L.: The Workshops practised this more overtly and made coexistence clearer. Because, as a matter of fact, it's true that there's a Project for the Education of the Muslim Minority, which may at first seem like it has the education of the Muslim youth as its goal. But it trains, for instance, the majority who work with these groups of people within an educational role. Which means that it works with both communities. Nonetheless, the CYWs were among the few spaces, for example, where Turks and Pomacks and Greeks had a specific role. For example, the youth workers. They weren't simply recipients.

A.V.: Yes.

T.L.: They regulated. And in a much more direct way. Because I have the feeling that it's one thing to be part of a majority who listens to the needs of both majority and minority groups and tries to be just – whatever just means for each one of us – and another thing to be building all this together in the here and now.

A.V.: That's it. First of all, I have no doubt that this is due to the weaver. That's something I'm responsible for. I made a conscious choice in negotiation with those responsible for the Project – and in a continuous inner re-evaluation as to whether I'd made the right choice or not – not

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[12] **A.V.:** Being aware of journeying entails accepting distractions from the goal at hand as a useful psychosocial process. Allowing for room to explore the nature of the distraction is often what makes reaching a goal a unique experience.

to import knowledge and expertise and not to import people who would create youth projects.
T.L.: To bring in ten youth workers from Athens or Thessalonica who would come and live here and do all the work.

A.V.: Perhaps we would've had more spectacular results. However, what I've learned around goals has to do with this belief that the seed already exists. Even though I don't know who it is – there are people this moment within Thrace who have the training and are motivated and willing, and there has to be a space created somewhere for this synergy, this coexistence.

T.L.: It may possibly even exist in people's dreaming[13] and may not express itself. But on some level, somewhere, it exists.

A.V.: Exactly. So during the first six months I did a lot of searching. I personally acquainted myself with the place and its people, and allowed myself to be lead from person to person. I looked for youth workers by acquiring a compass as to where these people are through personal contacts. And it's very interesting to remember where each of us was in 2002, just before we met each other. So, my bottom line was that the seed exists and my role will be to do whatever possible – in terms of both professional and human skill – to cultivate the ground. And to bring about those conditions that would allow the seed to sprout[14]. The fact that I was so determined made the youth workers just as determined to create a space that we would give form to as co-creators with the young people. That attracted not only Muslim minority youth but also young of other cultural communities, such as the Greek Orthodox community[15]. Because this isn't only an issue for a young person from a certain social space. For example, a young person would come by the Support Centres and make use of the computers and free Internet, and would see that something is going on that's called Creative Youth Workshop. Out of curiosity, they'd come in and stay for a meeting or two. They'd bring along two or three friends. Especially while the space was being formed, the young themselves had to engage in activity for something to be done. This process was by itself very attractive[16]. So, the young people who came to the space began the mixed groups that have been created in Xanthi. And we've gradually built around that. While in Komotini, where the Minority youth

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[13] **T.L.:** Working in Thrace, I often had the sense that it was not me who expressed herself, but rather a voice expressing a whole field stretching far beyond me or even the usual boundaries of the CYW.

[14] **A.V.:** I have found myself drawing from valuable knowledge and insights gleaned during my 15-year experience of organic gardening. Notions such as composting, becoming aware of the micro-climate, tending to needs of the soil, accepting natural wildlife cycles as part of the garden, weeding only when necessary all have become useful metaphors as I participate in joint human endeavours in the social field. It has been very interesting to notice this transfer of experiential knowledge from the literal field of my garden to the field of human relations.

[15] **A.V.:** The Workshops became spaces for discussions and communication, not always easy in terms of handling feelings. Especially where the groups were multicultural, the resulting gain is great. The young cooperate to produce common work which seeks out and utilises difference. In the process of doing so, they learn to give true value to the individual as a group member, discovering those skills necessary for living together in cooperation with great sensitivity.

[16] **A.V.:** The youth exhibited great interest in whatever might be *handmade*. They responded to the invitation to shape a space of their own with great enthusiasm, desire and skill. They practised boundarying, taking care of and sharing their space and all expressed within it. The sense of crafting something new, from the beginning, with our hands, constructing our own story, stating our viewpoint in expressed form, relieve and, at the same time, motivate youth.

had a great need to claim a space of their own, to feel it and make it their own, their was no belief that said, "There must also be majority youth members in the groups". At the same time, however, there was nothing telling them, "Now you here are only Minority youth". Many differences were explored and discovered.

T.L.: But perhaps this space was also needed.

A.V.: Of course. What is true for me today is that when I'm in the CYW I forget the terms 'minority', 'majority'. Quite often. I have to make an effort to remember them. And I do remember them many times, because I need to keep in mind from which viewpoint the young person who participates is coming from, but of one reality[17]. Of one Thrace[18]. The fact that I live in Chalkidiki – 150 kilometres away, physically – and also in a different social reality than that of Thrace was a challenge. I made a lot of effort and accepted being a stranger. One of the first things I heard was, "Look, you don't understand what Thrace means. Because you're not from here and whatever you say, whatever you've experienced, I cannot relate what Thrace is." And they were right. There was also a lot of suspicion. That you're here today and gone tomorrow. Thrace became a part of my life gradually and with steps I made as I went and came. I went and came. I went and came. And I dipped in and out. Well, today we joke and say that Thrace extends to include Chalkidiki.

T.L.: I was just thinking – hearing you speak – that in many Projects, both environmental and social, there's this "uh-oh! Here's this stranger now…" There's always a complaint from the side that's coming from the outside. "Look how unwelcoming they are." There's an expectation that "I come to bring you the light and you don't want it?" and I'm thinking that it's extremely difficult to accept to step into that role.

A.V.: Yes. And it's one of the richest moments when you in fact do. What you've just said is a crucial turning point. Because I have the right as a Greek[19], to include Thrace as a part of my reality. I bring experience, I bring tools, I bring my whole self inside. It's very painful to feel this isn't being accepted. However, when I opened this issue up in the group I accepted that on the other side there were reasons holding the boundary closed to me. That's where our

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[17] **A.V.:** Experience of reality differs according to whether one is coming from a minority experience or a majority experience. It has been enriching to be able to conceive of the social reality of Thrace
as neither one nor the other, but both simultaneously. Being aware of distinct experiences is essential to understanding one another. However, there is a trap in keeping strictly to distinctive categories of experience based on only one difference. Namely, that one is in danger of reaffirming this difference at the cost of acknowledging other differences and similarities, thus constricting human relations to one type of minority/majority (e.g. based on ethnicity) instead of broadening them to include a variety of factors that contribute to identity.

[18] A.V.: What makes speaking of 'one Thrace' possible, when in truth Thracian society is multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual? In human experience, multiple realities have often torn a sense of unity apart, resulting in social conflict detrimental to all realities involved. As my CYW experience has taught me, perhaps a useful skill to be practised is one of inclusion in place of seclusion. For it is in our fear of reaching out to embrace a different reality, that we forget what unity truly is: a dynamic, co-operative relationship of multiple differing realities.

[19] **T.L.:** Being (?) and identifying as a Greek has been a source of internal conflict. Conflicts, in fact, may be the cornerstone of any kind of available identity. That is to what extent can my identity become or be a source of empowerment? To what extent can the same identity operate as a barrier? And is there a way between the two?

common attempt began. On their part, to open up space voluntarily for me to come into, and on my part, to make made conscious steps to come into that space. And it was for a long time – and still is – a dance we do around each other.

T.L.: Does this always remain under negotiation?

A.V.: Yes.

T.L.: Well, the river itself may transport, may bridge, but it's also a boundary, isn't it?

A.V.: Yes. I consider the fact that we lived at Nestos – right at the geophysical frontier of Thrace – to be a metaphor for what we were experiencing. The river was the boundary and we too pushed our boundaries. Where is the limit of our possibility? Can we canoe? Can both boys and girls carve wooden objects and also weave bracelets? Can we eat food we've never tasted before? So the boundaries there were something fluid. And that's where there was a notion of flow.

T.L.: In our everyday discourse – at least in the culture we live in – we use the river in different ways. One of these is that "you can't go against the current of a river". Sometimes, however, it's necessary. And I'm wondering how can one do this? And at the same time protect oneself?

A.V.: My answer is that the secret – easy to be said, difficult to achieve – has to do with your attitude. The more you have a feeling of struggle, a polemic, the more you provoke antagonistic situations around you. The more you tire yourself. And the more you move further away from understanding the current. Because in order to go against the current you have to manoeuvre in such a way so as to… You have to study the current, set a goal and use your strength to 'row' just enough. Not more. Because the flow is continuous. If you exert excessive strength for a couple of minutes it's not at all certain that you'll have the necessary strength needed in the third moment. So it has to do with a stance, a certain attitude. Firstly, to believe that it's possible, as the salmon does obviously. If she didn't believe it, she'd never achieve it. That it's a different challenge than flowing with the current, that it can be done and that it requires specific skills which are learned along the way, as you keep trying. That's why to me the expression "fighting against the current" can be a trap sometimes. Because it entails the phrase 'fight' inside it, which I think isn't the most useful.

T.L.: What word would you substitute?

A.V.: [pause] I'd use the phrase "manoeuvring in relation to the resistance of the flow".

T.L.: Were there times in the Project when you felt that you had to do something similar? Or when you felt the group doing it?

A.V.: [pause] There were moments of doubt internally, within the group. Moments when although there was a huge "yes, we want to do this", there was also a very big doubt that it's feasible. I experienced this as resistance, as an opposing current in which I had to manoeuvre. I didn't want to be the one to say it was feasible. Because…

T.L.: Who, if not the youth workers, would make it feasible?

A.V.: Yes. I had no feeling of omnipotence. And it was many times necessary for us to explore internal attitudes more closely around what may be feasible and what not. For instance, attitudes in relation to whether people coming from very different life experiences, in Thrace, would ever be able to meet, whereas outside ourselves all we experience are separate activities. Separate small businesses, separate coffee shops. We each have our own space with our own ways. Separately.

T.L.: I'm thinking that the difficulty may be that we can't perceive our own way [in doing things within ourselves] and [hence] we look for our space outside ourselves[20].

A.V.: I didn't feel resistance from the social space around me. To the contrary, even from the voices which doubted whether the CYW was feasible or useful, there was something that was silently declaring, "Yes, that sounds good", but in words was overtly saying "No, no, no, that's never going to work". Even where I felt verbal resistance, there was encouragement and respect that this deserves to be attempted. So, I didn't feel external resistance as much as I experienced it within the group. The great challenge was there, because each one needed to take responsibility for one's own resistance[21], and how to encourage that? Without becoming intervening, without forcing anyone who isn't ready, who doesn't want it?

T.L.: That is, I think, one of the most difficult issues in projects with a social goal, especially when we're working with different groups who are minorities. For me there's not one way to conceive of minorities. There are many. A majority can be a minority in the way it perceives itself. And very often it seems extremely difficult[22]. What would you say this Project has taught you?

A.V.: [pause] To begin with, I know that because I'm still very much in the Project and it has not completed its cycle, I don't exactly know yet what I've gained. I always need a period of time where I sit on what has taken place and listen to what I've experienced and at some point something I call gain is left within me. However, [pause] I think I already recognise some things. Firstly there's a gain in experience in youth work projects. It was perhaps the first time I co-ordinated a huge project in such a wholesome way. In terms of how long it lasted, its social goals, its social environment. So many things I've learned and have become resources are related to my role. The way I trained and supervised, the way I supported and the way I opened paths. A big part is in that. A huge gain is related to human relationships. And it has to do with what I referred to before, that I feel Thrace extends to include me and vice versa. The inner notion I have around Greek reality has broadened and that's a huge gain which I

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[20] **T.L.:** I have the feeling that boundaries between the inside and outside are not that clear. Sometimes we take on world issues and confront them within ourselves, other times we take personal issues into the world trying to pursue them as deeply as possible. I'm thinking of the DNA metaphor: our cells carry the whole information of our bodies, while our bodies are comprised of cells. Still, projecting this kind of hologrammatic self takes a lot of awareness and identifying solely either with the 'inside' or the 'outside' freezes us into positions which aren't helpful for us or the others.

[21] **A.V.:** Contrary to what one may expect, resistance, hesitation and reluctance were a very balancing force as we moved ahead with the Project. As we made space for the voice that says, "NO" to express itself, we grounded ourselves and allowed valuable multiple social realities to inform our assessment of how to proceed in forming the CYW. Honouring and holding onto both a "yes" and a "no" attitude simultaneously, encouraged us to respect and follow the inherent rhythm appropriate to each member of the youth worker team and our wider social environment. Rather than fight or exclude it, we learned to listen to resistance and came to value its voice as we walked a path of being the social change we dreamed of seeing around us – a coexistence which values and seeks out difference.

[22] **T.L.:** For instance, how could I be reflexive enough as to be able to acknowledge both situations – majority/ minority – within myself? As I delve into the notions of gender in order to gain a better understanding of my identity, as I work on different experiences placing me into a minority due to my gender, as I comprehend my gendered social position and its implications in the world, is it possible that I myself become an oppressor, recreating a taxonomy system of humans, based on cultural or biological characteristics, which may not be enough for describing human experience as a whole and in fact may have been (or still be) the bedrock for the recreation of a whole series of stereotypes.

owe to the specific people with whom I relate. In some way something was quieted within me. The more colourful I felt the Greek landscape, the more I felt, "Yes, that feels right". It's closer to what I inwardly feel as Greece. So there's the huge gain of personal relationships. Of the possibility to see multilingual roots of words I use everyday[23]. Of the possibility to coexist as a Greek woman in a conversation where three or four languages are spoken simultaneously. I consider all these big parts of what I've gained. Also, a big gain lies in what I've learned around how one dreams of something, how one designs, what skills one needs along the way and how gradually something is actually built. In the sense that your role changes. That was and still is for me a great school and I'm very grateful for the opportunity that was given me.

T.L.: To be able to dream without identifying absolutely with your dream might be what allows you also to let go of it. So that others can receive it and contribute to it[24].

A.V.: Yes, I felt that it wasn't so much a dream of my own as that I conceived of something that was in the air.

T.L.: That it's a dream we all share...

A.V.: Yes. It's in this sense that I was saying earlier that I felt great support. From the atmosphere, from the Town Square, from the cafés I hung out at in Xanthi and Komotini. That's how I felt.

T.L.: That, essentially, is an indirect answer – as I understand it – for something final I wanted to ask you about. What would give duration to a Project such as this? That is to say – if we are, in the end, expressing a common dream, that is, for me, an answer.

A.V.: That's what I also believe. And the hope there is in things. I think the project may die. That is, just like a plant completes its cycle, sheds its fruit, the seeds fall, someone perhaps becomes a keeper of some seeds. And often – I believe this – things need to die in order to give their evolution the possibility to be born. I don't believe that the CYW is something that doesn't evolve, or that its present form will necessarily be the one it needs next year. I believe it's something organic. In this sense, I wouldn't want myself, or the youth workers, or the youth to be there for the next ten years. That's not my hope necessarily. My belief is that the river flows wherever a way is opened on the one hand, and on the other hand, where the river itself opens ways through its flow. I've seen this flow on many levels and it's a deep belief that this flow cannot be stopped. It may go underground for a while, a lot may happen. But whatever does happen will be right for the time, the space and the people who will take the seed into their hands.

Did they live happily ever after? If construction of meaning and knowledge truly arises

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[23] **A.V.:** Acknowledging multilingual roots of words in the Greek language – such as Slavic, Turkish or Latin – offers me a continuous awareness of the richness of my social setting as a crossroads, as a meeting point of coexistence and dialogue. As I delve into the multicultural meaning of words, so too I deepen my connection to notions that colour and widen my choices for expression. Language is a living system. Different regions of Greece have different ways to express themselves, and as I learn to listen deeply, words become vehicles which transport me towards an appreciation of the various different social roots of the land.

[24] **T.L.:** Perhaps a conscious way of recognising ourselves as part of a field, not exactly as separate entities. This follows similar paths to reference n.13.

out of a web of interwoven relating, then you too, through the act of reading, have become an actor in this story. There is no ending, happy or otherwise. Just an on-going process of reflection, exploring issues and opening pathways.

Anni Vassiliou, Psychologist-Youth Worker
email: anni@otenet.gr
The way I describe who I am depends, each time, on the way I conceive of the part of the river I'm journeying, what lay behind and what I expect lies ahead. However, true to its nature, the river never ceases to surprise me, contradicting my expectations and challenging me. From my current perspective, transiting the fourth decade of my life path, I can look back on many life – shifts: from formal education to an ever-changing personal synthesis of an on-going process of inquisitive learning drawing on multiple sources, from a city-based life to a land-based life of organic gardening, from solo flight to a life of partnership and co-creation. During all this time, I've remained a youth-worker. I've experienced, been taught by and taught youth work in many different settings. In the moment, within the realm of socio-cultural youth work, it is the cross-roads of cultural and the artistic expression, innovative technologies and education in its wide sense which motivates and energises my exploration.

Tina Ligdopoulou, Social Scientist-Youth Worker
iritha@freemail.gr

"Who am I?" I was wondering aloud, speaking half to my self and half to Anni. I have studied social sciences, but then again I tend to use storytelling and art more than a social scientist normally does. Quite often (but not always) I work as a youth worker and I do tend to incorporate more elements of social sciences, than one would usually do. Still, I am certainly not an artist, nor a story teller – in its traditional sense anyway.
"What about 'social artist'?", a voice mumbled – it could have been Anni's, it could have been mine; hard to tell... "You're mad!" I said (that was certainly me), "you want half a dozen academics behind our heels, as we will be trying to suggest this is not another strand, just an identity game, a personal invention of the self [my self?], nothing more, nothing less, nothing official. Just who I feel like some times. When I am not this or that..." I hesitated. Then Anni spoke: "I liked this term – social artist – we'll find a way to claim it, let us sleep on it." And so we did. I suppose. Or perhaps all this was nothing but a dream and we are now slowly making our way into the realm of 'reality'. And at this particular moment, half awake – but not quite – I cannot come up with anything closer that would be as wide and playful to fit in my shifting selves. Because 'social' goes for consciousness, and 'art' for living.

When faith and good will is not enough: Researcher positions in interactive research with school children

Tine Jensen

Abstract

When doing interactive research with school children, one runs the risk of doing them a disservice in the name of empowerment. Needless to say, in privileged Western societies, few people have as little say in the planning of their own time and lives as school children. Through an account of the problems I faced in the learning environment, called 5D, I will discuss issues of adult responsibility, mutuality in interactive research, and empowerment in school. Especially I will address the issue of the 'different kind of adult' researcher position that has gained a foothold within childhood anthropology. I will discuss the multiplicity of this concept within interactive research in relation to both school children and adult professionals within interactive research. Although not explicitly feminist, this article is decidedly activist, although off the streets. Also I apply a range of analytical moves that stem from feminist research.

Keywords: *Interactive research, childhood anthropology, methodology, school, children, different kind of adult, Activeworlds, 5D, Fifth Dimension*

Taking activism off the streets and into institutions involves specific challenges, especially when one is taking it "to school". Thus, sometimes, in the effort of doing something in somebody else's best interest, one might actually end up doing them a disservice. This point is largely underexposed within interactive research[1]. When doing interactive research with children, this dilemma becomes even more obvious, which I will further discuss. Especially when working with the underprivileged or powerless, sometimes the effect of the effort can be counter-productive to the aim of empowering the people that one is involved with. Thus, in spite of our good intentions, sometimes activism is troublesome. However, in records of interactive research, the disservices rendered are often handled in footnotes, or, at worst, they are completely ignored (in which case we have no record of them). However, these problems are at the core of this article. Through a range of narratives about my research and some of the challenges I encountered, I wish to discuss how activism has to be dealt with in specific ways, when one is activating people who are dependent on particular power relations, such as for instance those operating in a school context.

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[1] Some might call this interventional type of research Participatory Action Research, Practice Research or the like. However, I have chosen to apply the term "interactive research". The inspiration for this label comes from Petersen and Gunnarson (2004) who propose this label for action-based research on poststructuralist grounds. I apply the term 'interactive' to imply a mutual relationship between researchers and the people with whom the research is conducted. Thus, although my research is conducted with and around computers, in this particular context the term 'interactive' does not refer to computers. For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Jensen (2005b).

I conducted my research in a research team in the years 2000–2001 at an inner city municipal school in Copenhagen, Denmark. In our project[2] we sought to trouble power relations in word and action, among other things by applying a position, which I have termed 'different kinds of adult'[3]. Later I shall return to discussing this concept in detail through a range of narratives. Needless to say, in privileged Western societies, few people have as little say in the planning of their own time and lives as school children. Rarely school offers children opportunities to structure, plan and control the content of their activities without at least some adult intervention. Though our project had not come about without (the research team's) adult intervention, we wanted to create an activity that was as open as possible with regards to content and structure. This gave rise to some problems along the lines of the issues I have sketched out above. I will address the issues through an account of how these problems developed and how I addressed them in my research with children using computers at a school, after and during school hours.

We can't hear our own thoughts

The problem of the disservices rendered in interactive research may be summed up in an episode that happened one day when we were gathering after the computer activity.

As the research team and children were gathering for an after-session discussion, the children were running back and forth, yelling and playing in the assembly room getting ready to sit down. Suddenly the door flew open and the janitor poked his head in yelling that we must be quiet, because the principal could not hear himself think downstairs. Then, as abruptly, as he had opened the door, he slammed it shut, and researchers and children alike were stunned by this sudden intrusion. Whether the janitor saw the five adult researchers in the room, and chose to ignore us, or whether he did not notice us is unclear – in any case, in the heat of the moment, we were not recognised as addressable adults, or he would probably have done so. Rather, his tone and wording implied a collective message to children in need of disciplining. Later, in my field notes, I noted, that maybe we had taken our attempts to get close to the children too far – we had become too alien to the adults at school to be recognisable amongst them. Furthermore, upon reflection, did we actually put the children in disfavour by allowing them to roam the halls and rooms?

The question, however, is how did this happen? When we first addressed the school with our project proposal we were taken in by the principal who was very enthusiastic about the idea to build a project for the 4th to 6th grades, since there were only few after school activities

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[2] My research has been funded by a PhD grant from Roskilde University, Dept. of Psychology and Philosophy/Science Studies. Furthermore, my research was enrolled in a large project financed by The Fifth Frame Program of the European Commission: School of Tomorrow with the title: "5D – Local Learning Communities in a Global World", 2001–2004. The goal of the EU-project was to develop digital and social artefacts that would enable the transfer of 5D principles to school settings in Europe. I was part of a research team, 5D-Copenhagen that was linked up with the EU-project. The Copenhagen group, consisting of one lecturer, three doctoral students and two graduate students, was collaborating with other 5D-*sites* (project activities located at institutions) in Ronneby and Barcelona (see also. Jensen 2005a, Jensen 2005b).

[3] Although this article only deals sporadically with gender issues, the analytical and methodological approach draws heavily on feminist strategies of for instance *troubling and voice* (Lather & Smithies 1995) which is a strategy that tries to open for new knowledge by questioning the unquestionable, thus pointing to ruling language. Also the concepts of *Other* and *positions and positioning* which have been explored by many feminist authors are applied(e.g. Davies and Harré 1991, Søndergaard 1996, Staunæs 2003).

targeting this age group. Over the spring and summer of 2000 we had several meetings with the principal, as well as the systems' administrator and other staff. We explained to them, that The Fifth Dimension (5D) was an alternative approach between learning and play, where we used computers to go on the Internet and build virtual worlds[4]. They were thrilled by the idea of using a 3D virtual environment, called Activeworlds[5], which was our main software in the project. When we were preparing the project, we went into a few target classes, and the teachers of these classes knew us. Furthermore, we promoted the activity at morning assemblies leading up to the project start. Thus, we were no strangers to the staff.

The explanation has to be found somewhere else: Maybe the answer is to be found in the "different kinds of adult" researcher position? As may have been obvious, gaining access to the school itself was not difficult – the front door opened smoothly. But it was another thing was to gain access to the children's' learning potential. For that purpose we applied a methodological approach, called "different kind of adult".

Different kind of adult

Doing interactive research with children is basically not very different from doing it with adults. Within interactive research, one of the main concerns is that the researcher allies herself with the people that she is interacting with in order to build meaningful and expansive communities. Thus, in order to be able to empower children, one must have access to their interests and lives. When doing research with children, issues of access are not solved at the front door. Rather, adults entering institutions face the challenge of gaining the trust of the children and crossing the boundaries of adult-child worlds of meaning.

Inspired by the methodological concept of 'participant observation' within ethnography, many childhood researchers have attempted to get a foot in the door with children, to move as freely as possible among them. Equally many are the accounts of the difficulties with managing this particular researcher role in relation to children. Through the last 15 years of childhood anthropology runs a stream of reflecting on the adult researcher position in relation to children (especially in institutions) and taking on adult positions that do not position the researcher as either parent or educator, in an attempt to avoid the reproduction of adult hegemonic beliefs and thoughts. In Mandell's groundbreaking research, which lead to her concept of the 'least adult role' (1991), she tried an inconspicuous approach, where she attempted at being as

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[4] 5D is a system of tools for learning and play originally developed by professor Michael Cole of the University of California San Diego and colleagues over a twenty-year period. The name 5D is derived from the Soviet philosopher, Illyenko's conception that – apart from the four dimensions of space and time – humans inhabit a fifth dimension of meaning that is shared through language, tools and other artefacts. Soviet psychologist Vygotsky developed a psychological model for human activity based on this principle, which has been incorporated into 5D, among other inspirational sources. 5D takes on many forms dependent on local conditions and may vary both in theoretical orientation and otherwise. For further information, see www.5d.org.

[5] www.activeworlds.com/edu. 3D virtual environments are online communities that are tied together by a graphic interface. Users move around different worlds with *avatars* that represent them in the virtual world. Users can engage in written chat and build houses and other structures, as well as search the Internet. Activeworlds very much resembles a game-interface, but the avatars cannot interact other than by written chat or gestures. Avatars can take on many different shapes, such as males and females, birds, aliens and even transports.

childlike as possible. However, this stance has been criticised by Mayall (2000) for under-exposing the power of adults in relation to children. This has lead to deliberations by Christensen and James that resulted in the concept of the 'different kind of adult' (2000), an adult that is not-adult-not-child, but behaves as a naïve participant in the setting at hand, as a visitor from another planet. Also Danish work, such as the practice research of Hviid (2001) and Kousholt (2005), experiments with the adult position in order to get access to the meanings of children. Thus, the different kind of adult researcher positions herself as Other, a marginal newcomer who is explicitly alien to both child and professional practices, and attempts at observing and entering the children's games and other practices as someone that is aware and open about her otherness.

Furthermore, the different kind of adult resists attempts of enrolment by the professionals[6] in the professional practices, such as disciplining, monitoring, instruction and nurturing. Rather, she positions herself in alignment with the children. However, both children and – often more so – professionals within the institutions tend to be suspicious towards this researcher position, because it challenges set and largely unquestionable relations between adults and children. The 'different kind of adult' researcher asks questions, observes and participates in children's activities, but tries to stay clear of professional tasks. Thus, the 'different kind of adult' in some respects resembles a professional by mere size, but does not act in accord with professional standards at the institution at hand, be it day care, school or other. Researchers tend to end up in a doubly suspicious position, where they run the risk of

both professionals and children viewing them as "lazy" or "irresponsible". In 5D we were aware of this problem, and during the first site-activity we kept largely to ourselves in relation to the teachers at the school, and this may be one of the reasons why we were not recognised as professional adults by the janitor.

Different kinds of adult – more than one and less than many

However, the different kind of adult position has mainly been applied in observational studies, and, to my knowledge, never before in interactive research. Thus, the different kind of adult position was challenged by another position as 'responsible project managers', that did not allow us to maintain the 'not-adult' part of the not-adult-not-child position all the time. The dual position of responsible project managers and newcomer not-adult-not-child put us in positions where we constantly had to make decisions on what would be the most appropriate course of action. Thus, the different kind of adult turned into *'different kinds of adult'*, where multiple uncertainties were folded into the singular, embodied researcher. So the researcher became not a 'different kind of adult', that is, an unquestioned singularity different in kind from other kinds of adult. Rather, a troubling relation between multiplicity and difference emerged; a mode that was "more than one, and less than many" (Law 1999, p. 12). 'The adult' researcher was becoming different in kinds; a state of multiple positioning and decentring within the singular, locally situated body. Multiplicity then turned into a key point for using positioning and positions actively in relation to a specific area – in this case computers and children in and out of school. Hence, the term *'different kinds of*

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[6] I apply Latour's phrase 'enrollment' here to describe a strategy of aligning the interests of to support one's own interests. Enrolment is a multiple power strategy where a range moves can be applied to make others work for one's goals, see e.g. Latour (1989).

adult' will be applied in the following. However, this multiple position placed us in certain dilemmas, for instance in relation to bullying, where we had to make constant choices about how to act on it. Had we been mere educators, our stance on such points would have been clear from the onset. And, although bullying is never acceptable, we were not in a position to simply forbid it in the same way that other professionals would, since we were trying to tap into the meanings of, among other things, bullying. Thus, rather than setting our adult authority in front, we would rather discuss the reasons for conflicts with the children in conflict. This may seem like a laissez-faire attitude, but it was crucial in order to keep a more or less symmetrical approach.

Different kinds of adult in the 5D

5D is a locally anchored trans national community of learners with more than 30 5D-sites in ten countries. 5D researchers share an interest in learning and the development of local communities, as well as university research and learning through interaction. 5D rests on principles of inter-institutional, inter-generational learning, as well as local sustainability (Cole & Nicolopoulou 1993; Cole 1996; Nilsson & Sutter 2002; Crespo & Lalueza 2003; Nilsson 2003; Nilsson & Nocon 2005; Vasques 2003, Nilsson & Nocon 2005). The stated aim of 5D is to create a 'field laboratory' for under graduate students[7] and researchers, a meaningful play-and-learning activity for children, and a resource for the development of local communities through collaboration between universities and local partners, for instance a library, a boys' and girls'

club or, in our case, a municipal school. Thus, the activist aim of 5D is strong, since the idea is to develop local communities through collaboration with university partners.

The pedagogical core elements of 5D are rooted in Activity Theory, an approach within psychology that stresses the cultural embedding of human beings and their active potential to relate to the world. Peer instruction is a core element, which is rooted in Soviet psychologist Vygotsky's principles of the Zone of Proximal development. Furthermore, Activity Theory has a keen eye on ways in which artefacts[8] carry knowledge and culture, and 5D is largely made up of and distributed through specific artefacts that are designed to create and mediate knowledge. For instance children learn with computer games, cameras, colours, storytelling, making collages and so forth – learning is achieved in a community by interacting with artefacts as well as by producing them.

There is also an additional range of structuring artefacts specifically designed for and associated with 5D: These include, among others: The *frame story*, which establishes a narrative context that draws on local myth or fairy tales. The frame story is designed to conceptualise 5D as a "parallel universe", where different rules for (among other things) child/adult relations apply. Another artefact is *the constitution*[9], which further establishes 5D as a world of its own. It sets up basic rules of conduct, while simultaneously sustaining and reaffirming 5D as a community. *The maze* is a physical structure of approximately one by one metres that guides individual learning

[7] The under-graduate student element is strong at most sites, where students are recruited through course work that has 5D field work as an obligatory element (though this was not the case at our site).
[8] In a 5D context, artefacts are cultural objects created by humans, as opposed to natural objects. Tools, houses, infrastructure, art, words, concepts and so forth are all objects that carry culture and meaning.
[9] Each site has a 'constitution' which functions as a contract between all participants at the site. The constitution can vary from one 5D-site to another, and is locally devised and renegotiated.

trajectories of the learners. In the maze, different rooms contain different tasks that the learner can solve, such as playing a game, making a drawing, writing a story and so forth. Each learner has a "cruddy creature" that represents her, and which she moves from room to room in the maze to represent which task she is currently doing. *The Journey log* is a record of progress.

Finally, the 5D world has a Wizard who is a distant, fictitious, mediating character who 'rules' the 5D universe and can be contacted by the children via email, letters or other mediating sources. The *Wizard* is an ambiguous entity in age, gender, location and so forth. By constituting the wizard as a multiple and absent ruler, the aim is to disperse immediate power relations between adults and children from the interaction at the site, because, in principle, all conflicts (both child-child and child-adult) should be referred to the wizard to mediate[10]. Usually, communication with the wizard is asynchronous, although at the Copenhagen-site the wizard was online together with the children[11]. The wizard receives solutions to tasks and gives feedback, as well as mediating conflicts. Thus, authority is dispersed from the immediate relation between learners and researchers at the site.

All of the above mentioned artefacts might seem like strange and unnecessary ornamentation to something that is simply children playing with computers. However, the purpose of all this is to create an environment that operates with its own rules, alternative distributions of power and its own boundaries – a utopian community, one might say. Thus,

local adaptability of the 5D design is a core element, since in every context power relations and utopias are different.

In the Copenhagen group we rearranged and translated most of the artefacts in order to see how much could be put into digital form. One of the aims of the European project was to translate these artefacts into a digital format suitable for Internet use. However, the Copenhagen research group also had another agenda. We wanted to establish an environment that was open to change, where planning was an intrinsic part of the local practice, that did not have one telos, but was emergent in its form. The reversing of the relation between form and content, goal and process was a means for us, we thought, to find out more about the relation between them. Thus, there was no grand scheme and no curriculum – no prepared activities and no apparent tasks. What we had was the 3D-virtual world, and what could be put into it. Thus, the world was practically empty when the children arrived. Only scattered platforms in an endless, pale yellow void marked a starting point. The task of the children was to rebuild the world. Two colleagues would write a frame story that was evolving from one week to another with the online Wizard as the main protagonist and carrier of the story. The wizard would engage in dialogue with the children within the virtual world and bring up issues that had been analysed by the research team from the previous week based on our observations and discussions with the children. These issues could be bullying, feeling different or as an outsider, making joint decisions, having parties and so on. Thus, in the virtual world, there were two tasks: Rebuilding the world, and chatting with the wizard and with each other.

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[10] One might argue that since the wizard is in fact one of the adults at the site, this dispersion of power is illusory, and might even be a mockery. However, the wizard does *divert and delay* conflict, which is crucial at many sites, where most of the adults are under-graduate students under supervision of one or a few researchers.

[11] "Asynchronous" means that a question is not followed by an immediate answer. Usually, an adult site worker checks the letters or e-mails sent to the wizard and returns an answer before the next site activity.
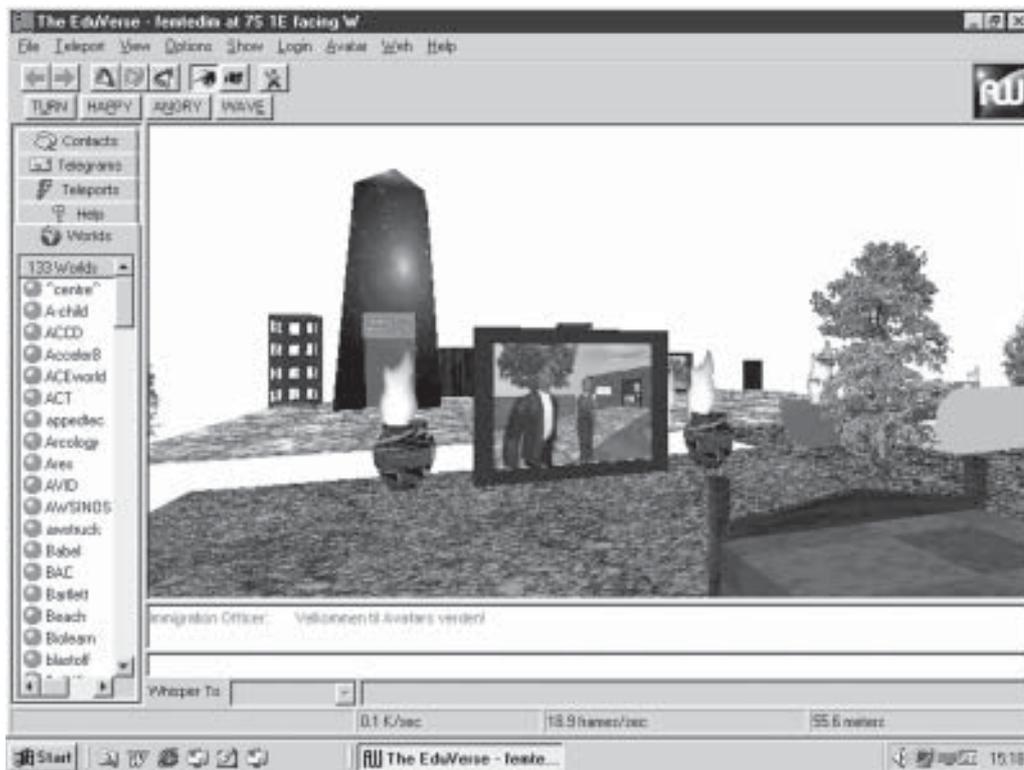
Figure 1: The Activeworlds interface

Unsettling through equivocality

Becoming different kinds of adult is not always easy for a researcher, since, both for the participating children, the teachers around them, and the researchers themselves, the different kinds of adult position poses more questions than it answers. In the research team we had many discussions prior to the project and also during its implementation about how to handle conflicts, provocations, trust and so forth.

Also teachers seemed confused about what kinds of adults we were, although they mostly left us to our own devices. However, occasionally a teacher would enter the computer room to get printouts or the like. They would often make snippy remarks about

the noise level. To us, the noise level was an indicator of how good a time the children were having, and that they were engaged in meaningful activity, but to the teachers it seemed to be an indicator of lacking discipline and structure, which could not go unnoticed. They were not entirely mistaken, since we were not in the business of managing structure and discipline.

The different kinds of adult position also seemed to provoke or at least confuse the children. It should be noted that, although 5D was an entirely voluntary afternoon activity, it did take place on school premises, and although it was not school, we had promoted it as a play-and-learning activity, so already in the enrolment we had applied a certain amount of equivocality[12] already during the presentation

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[12] In my doctoral thesis I apply the term 'equivocality' as an analytical term to work with issues of multiplicity and voice (Jensen 2005).

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of the project and thus unsettled the boundaries of school and play. The activity and the different kinds of adult positions seemed to call for questioning of the nature of activity and the roles of the adults. The challenging of researchers is not uncommon in research with children, such as for instance childhood anthropology. Thus Vasques, working at 5D site in San Diego reports of challenges to her authority. Furthermore, both Mandell (1991) Hviid (2001) report being invited to go places and do things that were not allowed for children, as does Kousholt (2005) and many more.

In our relation with the children, the invitations and questions took on a slightly different form. In a session during the first month of the 5D project, a child asked permission to go to the toilet, and I told him, that he did not have to ask for our permission, since he was at 5D voluntarily, and could leave any time he wanted. After an hour, or so, he returned and announced in a provocative voice that he had been at home to go to the toilet. I asked him why, and he answered that he did not like the toilet at school, because it was dirty. I replied 'OK', and there was no more of that. From then on, he started to come and go as he pleased. I take this incident to be an indicator of confusion about the setting. The site was placed on school premises, and we had framed 5D as a place of 'play and learning'. I suggest that his action – not as much going to his house, because he did not like the toilets at school, which was probably true – but first asking for permission and then declaring *why* he had been gone for so long, and the fact *that* he had gone to his house – can be seen as a probing of the frames of this activity, since school children are not usually allowed to leave school premises during learning activities. Thus, I am inclined to view his actions along the lines of questioning, "What is this setting? Is it school or club? Am I really participating voluntarily? Do you care?"

In a situation like this, the different kinds of adult must think quickly; she must be able to assess the situation, and react accordingly. Although the incident may seem banal, it opened a different way of approaching this child, instituting and reaffirming that his attendance was, in fact voluntary. To us, voluntary attendance was a crucial part of meeting the children not as pupils but as equals. Through an egalitarian approach we tried to open for symmetrical relations between children and adults in a planned setting – thus not disciplining but trying to build mutual understanding.

Different kinds of adult – in school

As I mentioned above, one has to be close to the people one wishes to empower as a researcher, but in relation to children this is not enough. In school, children are not free to do what they want when they wish (except during designated 'breaks') and the adults surrounding them are major and mighty factors in children's lives. Throughout our first year it was easy to forget this, since we were keeping more or less to ourselves with our afternoon activity. But of course we were not operating in a void. As I have already mentioned above, the teachers frequently commented on the children's behaviour. Occasionally, we were also addressed directly in attempts to enrol us as professionals.

All the above-cited childhood researchers report attempts by the staff to enrol the researcher as a member of staff, calling on them to help out with practical matters, assigning tasks to the researcher and expecting the researcher to discipline the children. Often, the most difficult part of maintaining the 'different kinds of adult' position is in relation to the professionals. In our case, that problem was minimal during the first year of after school activity. However, one of the researchers was

casually addressed one day in the staffroom while she was getting coffee. A teacher asked her to take action towards one of the children in 5D who, according to the teacher, had a very bad attitude in class. This rendered my colleague rather confused, since we did not find him more or less disciplined or well mannered than the other children. The research team discussed the issue at length and decided not to do anything about it. Since we were not members of staff, and we did not have access to take part in the daily goings-on at school, we felt neither obliged nor qualified to take any action. However, this incidence illustrates our position at the school. We were adults, and thus to be regarded as professional(s), and a certain kind at that: the kind of professionals whose job it is to monitor children's behaviour in order to correct it. Although we were in deed professionals, and although we did observe, it was not to educate or discipline, but to create learning possibilities for the children and to gain access to a part of their world. It may seem as though there is no difference, but the difference is huge: In one case, a certain, specific outcome or behaviour is sought after, and the activity is structured to achieve this goal. In the other, learning emerges out of the activity and community while doing something together.

As mentioned above, in the case of interactive research with children it is not always possible to maintain a completely not-adult position, which makes the different kinds of adult position a multiple and complex one: At one point the principal called us to a meeting to discuss a letter he had received from a concerned parent. The parent was anxious about what was going on in the computer room after school hours, and also about what was going on in 5D. She was worried that the children were chatting with paedophiles and that they were exposed to inappropriate content on the Internet. The research team did

not consider this an issue within 5D since most of the children were working in the closed universe of Activeworlds, where the only other users were teachers and other school children.

However, the principal asked us if we could talk to the children about Internet behaviour, and, although we were aware of the attempt to enrol us, we were aware that some of the children did go on the Internet to seek out fan-sites, game- and satire-sites and so on (they also played computer games, worked with text editing or picture manipulation and so forth apart from activities in Activeworlds). When the research team discussed the concerns of the parent, we decided that, although our own activities were not risky for the children, we would use this as an opportunity to discuss issues of Internet conduct, chatting with strangers and how to search the web. Thus, in this case we did not let ourselves be enrolled in restricting the children's activities, but we used the letter as an onset for learning more about the Internet. So in this case, although we were enrolled as adults, we decided to let ourselves be enrolled, because the enlistment was related to something we did actually have an opinion on. The different kinds of adult position is thus not a neutral or detached one.

In conclusion the different kinds of adult must always consider carefully which issues are relevant to deal with, and which are not in order to keep a symmetrical relation between children and adults.

Taking the different kinds of adult to school

The different kinds of adult position became increasingly difficult to handle when later the site went 'to school'. In 2001 after one year of after school activity the funding for the EU project came in, and the Copenhagen research team started collaborating more intensely with

the other sites in Ronneby, Sweden and Barcelona, Spain. One of the goals of the EU project was to work towards the reintegration of 5D principles inside school hours, and thus we decided to move the project into school[13].

We did not have much trouble recruiting a class for the second project, when we addressed the teachers of the upcoming fourth grade, just before the summer vacation. They were quite eager to participate, and during the course of the summer we had a couple of meetings with them. To further complicate the matter, we worked with our Swedish partner-site. Thus, the Danish 4th grade class was collaborating with a Swedish 4th grade class. During the after school activity the children abandoned Activeworlds, once they decided that they had finished building their houses, and we wanted to create a design that would keep them interested in collaborating, through principles of 'necessity' and 'consequence'[14]. Thus, we designed a sort of game still using the Activeworlds interface where groups of children would work together to help bring lost cyber creatures back to life. Their world had been attacked by a virus, which had practically destroyed them and their houses. The creatures would be helped, if the children rebuilt their houses, and linked to web pages, thus restoring their health and memories.

We had no predefined subject matter content in the project, such as e.g. history, math, or language. Some English language skills were needed for identifying objects to build, since the graphic files were all named in English (e.g. tree.rwx[15]). Thus, form, process and computer skills were at the centre of the activity. The children would add content, as the project went along based on their interests. However, our attempts to work with form were met by a demand for content already during the planning stages. The teachers wanted to build a Viking village (related to history), or a place with rooms, where the children could access specific content. They referred to the parents and the school board, and said that, at least, there had to be some learning goals for the activity. We ended up stating goals that were related to the software, and not to content: Knowledge of design, knowledge of the Internet, collaboration, reflection etc. The teachers and parents bought into the idea, but ended up not seeing the point.

Once the project started, the teachers proclaimed that they could not devote any more time to the project. They had already spent too much time in meetings, and now they did not have any more time to spare. Consequently, this was our project, and it was out of their hands. One of the teachers

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[13] Originally, Cole and partners were working inside a school context with collaborative learning activities to benefit children with reading disabilities. However, strict US curricular demands made it impossible to work inside classrooms, as teachers were resisting collaboration because they could not justify collaborative and non-measurable activities towards the educational board and parents, who all demanded measurable results. They ended up concluding that meaningful collaborative learning was impossible in school and took 5D outside of school (Cole 1996). In consequence, taking 5D "back to school" was not only a challenge to the school, but also to the whole idea of 5D. For more detail see Jensen (2005).

[14] 'Necessity' and 'consequence' were analytical terms, that we applied in the design phase, inspired by computer games and by our previous work in the after-school project, where children often complained that, although the interface looked like a game, they could not "knock each other over" or die etc. In computer games, the story is always carried by necessity, a quest to do something or points given for specific action. Likewise, consequence is an issue in computer games, some actions are rewarded and others are punished. As I have already pointed out, in the programming of Activeworlds, there are no such intrinsic necessities and consequences, and thus we had to build them into the frame narrative.

[15] rwx is the file format of the files used in Activeworlds.

addressed us one day, and told us, that he could not see that we were teaching the children anything of value. The children were frustrated and confused about what was going on, and they could not see the point, he said. Maybe he was right?

During sessions, I would be seated between two children. One of them would constantly ask for advice: "What should I do now?" "Should I right- or left-click now?" Furthermore, she would ask me what to write in the chat and how to spell it. Many other girls were hesitant towards building in the world, but would wait to be addressed by an adult. The boys, on the other hand, would go at it with enthusiasm, trying to add games to the world and using the software to tease each other (for instance by adding objects to each other's houses). At first, I was discouraged by this behaviour, which on the surface seemed sadly stereotypical. However, closer analysis showed that, although gendered in outcome, these positions were more multiple than was first visible. My initial concerns for the girl's apparent dependency and need for guidance may be seen as an attempt at becoming a 'good school student', looking for the correct answer and asking when in doubt. The boys, who were more acquainted with computer games, rapidly decided that the activity was play. Both strategies were equally problematic. School and play were not merging.

The children were posing different questions and not getting any answers. The girl on one side of me was asking whether this was school (is there a right answer, and if so will you help me obtain it?). The boy to my other side was asking whether this was play (can I use this software, as I would a computer game?). The children found the software intriguing, but they could not see the point of the activity. Once the activity was taken 'to school', we were troubling too many things at once. Davies

(1999a, 1999b) states that in order to trouble hegemonic discourse, one must master it. She therefore advocates mastering the educational system and acquiring the hegemonic language and strategies for the sake of empowerment. Following this line of arguing into academia Søndergaard (1996) argues for 'cultural recognisability': troubling is good and necessary, but too much troubling may lead to loss of credibility. By troubling too many things at once, and by posing as 'different kinds of adult' we lost credibility with the teachers. We did not succeed in empowering the children. Rather we frustrated them. Had we had more clearly defined goals and tasks during the school project, maybe we would have been able to perform different adult positions to greater satisfaction for all parties. I will not say that there was no outcome to the in-school activity, nor that nobody gained from it, because in the end, all the children were able to use the software, to chat and to browse the Internet. However, unrecognisable knowledge in an uncertain frame is not something that one can point to and say: "I made this, and it was worth this much". Although the products could be pointed out in a digitally rendered world as houses, parents and teachers seemed to have a hard time understanding what the use value of the activity amounted to, and as mentioned above, recognisability is a major factor of empowerment, or put otherwise paraphrasing Foucault: there is no power, when it is not recognised as such. And so, it is debatable whether we empowered the children at all.

Thus, to conclude, the different kinds of adult position is not to be taken lightly. It is a position that places both researchers and the people involved in the research at risk. It is not enough to be on the side of the 'little people' – one must also take account of the more powerful people surrounding them. By being too different, not only did we jeopardise our own credibility and our chances to continue

our work at the school, but also the visible benefits for the children involved. The failure to produce results that were recognisably valuable to teachers and parents produced a lack of recognisable benefit to the children in a school context. However, in the end it all turned out for the better. In the true spirit of 5D, the research team learned a lot from the second project and went on to make more projects in – and outside of school hours at the school, but that is a different story[16].

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Tine Jensen, M. Psych., doctoral student, and associate professor at Roskilde University, Dept. of Psychology and Philosophy/Science Studies. She graduated from Copenhagen University in 1997 and has worked within various fields, among which are day care social psychiatry, rehabilitation, and futures studies. Since 2000 she has been employed at Roskilde University where she obtained a three-year doctoral stipend. Alongside her doctoral studies she has been part of the research team 5D-Copenhagen in which she has conducted research for the project: "5D – Local Learning Communities in a Global World" in the years 2001-2004. This project was financed The European Commission's Fifth Frame Program, sub-project: School of Tomorrow. Email: tinex@ruc.dk

…reading Bandile Gumbi's Poetry 'Chop-Change' + 'Contradiction':

Today's complexities seem at times hard to put into linear thought. Interestingly, poetry and other artistic forms of expression seem to me to be able to hold a momentary, non-linear and somehow more inclusive complex statement. Reading and absorbing Bandile Gumbi's poetry brought a smile of recognition, a relaxing smile. The words and phrases linked me to images and experiences, opened up a space inside where I swam for a while. As I emerged from the depth, I recognised my own need to formulate such a web-like space in my own journal contribution. The interactive presentation of the Creative Youth Workshop (included in the journal CD) is such an attempt. I feel myself moving in this direction even more as time goes by, and Bandile's contribution encouraged this inner drive. I am coming to value and cherish these forms of expression as an exciting tool and methodology to tackle difficult complex social issues – a new field of exploration. In a way, this is also my growing edge, for I have too long accepted without enough questioning that such forms of expression lie outside of the realm of scientific and academic discourse.

…by Anni Vassiliou

…reading Anni Vassiliou & Tina Ligdopoulou 'It Takes Two':

I found a very strong relation between my work in 5D and the weavings of Anni Vassiliou and Tina Ligdopoulou. Not so much that it has to do with "little people" – in more than one sense, but more in the performance of, as they state: "multiple realities". I find this term very inspirational for my own analyses – just the term that I was missing in my work with 3D-virtual environments. I am particularly taken with the quiet and subtle ways in which metaphor, dreams, space and time are interrelated in the text. It reminds me somehow of the dreamtime of aboriginals. The way that goal, results and achievement are troubled in this text, and in the work, also strikes a chord with me. They succeed at expressing things that I have been struggling with in my own work.

…by Tine Jensen

…reading Jane Callaghan's 'Becoming a psychologist':

Having received the bulk of my own training as a psychologist at the University of London at the end of the 70's, early 80's there seemed little room for enquiry into the professional identity I was being initiated into. Whatever questioning was going on, was happening outside our formal reading lists, on our own time and in extracurricular conversation between fellow students. It is thus very meaningful for me to see this kind of enquiry taking place within academia. Reading Jane Callaghan's article, especially her exploration of the construct of the 'caring psychologist' as a possible alternative to the construct of the 'professional psychologist' furthers my own questioning of the construct of 'youth worker', as I experienced more questions than answers in the process of training professionals (sociologists, social workers) during the Creative Youth Workshop project in Thrace, Greece. I express my thoughts in the interactive presentation

(see journal CD) where I ponder tentatively around a new professional identity – that of a 'social artist'.

…by Anni Vassiliou

…reading Tine Jensen's 'When faith and good will is not enough':

I felt such affinity reading Tine Jensen's account of the 5D project that it is impossible to include all my thoughts in a note! I believe one of the strongest assets of this specific journal issue lies in providing us with this platform of interchange and meeting – beyond the value of each contribution lies the opportunity to discover new paths of exploration that we offer each other, to dialogue and co-create, within us and also possibly in the future among us. I'll take this opportunity then to thank the editors for their effort to create this space, from dreaming it up to supporting its manifestation.

Also – on a more personal note – it was interesting for me to notice that the first three articles I chose to read in depth (after reading through all the abstracts) were intimately interwoven with the last statement in my own short biographical note: 'In the moment, within the realm of socio-cultural youth work, it is the cross-roads of cultural and the artistic expression, innovative technologies and education in its wide sense which motivates and energises my exploration.' In a way, it's as if my inner Wizard (to borrow a 5D actor-role) is guiding me on a search path which holds personal meaning.

Tine Jensen puts into words one of the biggest challenges also facing the team of adults who implemented the Creative Youth Workshop project in Thrace, Greece: to attempt to offer children the opportunity to structure, plan and control the content of their activities. Tine gives structure and voice to a process I have experienced but not yet had words for: 'different kinds of adult'. As my own experience has taught me, when aiming to empower and gain access to childrens' learning potential, it is indeed helpful to step into the role of the 'Other'. As Tine puts it, a 'marginal newcomer entering as someone who is aware and open about her otherness'. The fact that 'this position challenges set and largely unquestionable relations between adults and children' is something that deserves closer study. For, in my view, building new sustainable patterns of relating and learning (the school of tomorrow, Europe of tomorrow) is an art we need to become skilled in – both within and around our educational systems.

One of the crucial issues that arises is how to question older foundations, while simultaneously understanding their usefulness in the context in which they were born – respecting them, rather than brutally blowing them up. Working creatively with resistance to change seems to me to be a useful meta-skill to explore. Tine's article and the questions she artfully raises on so many levels challenged me to articulate more clearly in the future all the different difficulties and issues born of the relations between adults and youth in the CYW project.

…by Anni Vassiliou

Vote for the British National Party

says the banner on the mill chimney
on the road that goes by the Ritzy where
we danced blind drunk on a Sunday
past St. Mary's and the Catholic Club,
the barman with his withered hand,
the first division football ground.

Past the crowds of sweating houses,
the people with underlined faces,
the motorway where Paul
played chicken on his Raleigh,
the green canal that simmers
by the banner on the chimney.

Eighteen summers.
They told us not to swim in there,
how rusted bikes and furniture
and stale weeds like unwashed hair
could wrap around your legs

but the water drained warm from the factories
where the sticklebacks grew lazy and fat
and miners took their baths
fresh-black from the pit and came out white
with a hot green smell like a kitchen
and the steaming streets that they lived in.

Home. Where the name of a town
is a mouthful of stone
and the wet-coat taste of rain on a road
with its collar turned up to the wind
and a drunken fling in a car on a moor
with the streetlights pooled like stars.

The name of a town gets kicked and cracked.
by thirty thousand fascist votes.
Burnley. Oldham. Halifax.

Clare Shaw
(For biography, see article by Clare Shaw.)

Trafficking in Women[1]

Giota Touloumi, Feminist Center of Athens

Abstract

The contribution from the Feminist Center of Athens focuses on the politics of trafficking and enforced prostitution in Greece. Highlighting the spread of the phenomenon of trafficking and sexual slavery, and the role of clients, mainstream media and immigration controls and policies in the establishment of this new industry of exploitation of foreign women, the feminist collective declare solidarity with the victims of enforced prostitution and suggests possible sites of resistance and struggle.

Keywords: *trafficking, enforced prostitution, feminist advocacy, women*

Trafficking in human beings, according to the UN Protocol "for the prevention, suppression and punishment of the trafficking of persons, particularly women and children"[2], is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, incitement or admission of persons under threat or exercise of violence or other forms of coercion, kidnapping, fraud or abuse of power or exploitation of a particularly vulnerable position, with the purpose of securing the agreement of these persons to their exploitation from another person". The term 'exploitation' includes among other practices, the exploitation for the sake of prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation, enforced labour, slavery and similar practices, and the removal of body organs. In our country, as in most other countries of Europe, trafficking in human beings is closely related to sexual exploitation.

According to International Law, international trafficking is recognized as a serious abuse of human rights and a contemporary form of slavery, as well as a particular form of violence practiced against women. States are under the obligation, for offences that come under the category of trafficking, to prevent crime and protect the victims, but most of all to provide them with psycho-social rehabilitation and financial compensation[3].

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[1]Intervention of the *Feminist Initiative against Enforced Prostitution of Foreign Women*, at the inaugural meeting of the Greek Network of the Global Women's Strike, 10–11 May 2003, Athens.
Translated from greek into english by Alexandra Zavos.
[2] UN Protocol for the Prevention, Suppression and the Punishment of Illegal Trafficking with the Purpose of Sexual and Economic Exploitation, Particularly of Women and Children, article 3, 2000, Peking Platform, 4th Global Meeting of the U.N. for Women, 1995.
[3] Directions for the Treatment of Victims of International Prostitution, U.N. High Committee for Human Rights.

Nevertheless, in our presentation we will focus on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which is the most prominent form of exploitation in our country.

Dimensions of the phenomenon

Before we introduce a brief revision of the actions and proposals of the Feminist Initiative against enforced prostitution of foreign women, which operates at the Feminist Center of Athens, we would like to look at some facts that highlight the dimensions of the problem.

It is known that trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation has grown significantly in the last decades. It is estimated that it represents the third largest 'criminal enterprise' after illegal trafficking in drugs and arms. According to UNICEF's calculations, approximately a million children are coerced yearly into prostitution, The International Organization of Migration estimates that in the year 2000 only, approximately 700.000 women were drawn, through coercion, deception or ransom into prostitution at a global level, while at least 300.000 women from Eastern and Central Europe were promoted from the networks of organized crime into Western European Countries, out of which 85.000 – 90.000 in Greece. 72% of the women who are illegally circulated are sold and bought at least three times. It is estimated that from these 'enterprises' of organized crime, financial profit of at least 7 billion Euros were incurred on a global level during the year 2000.

Reasons for the illegal circulation of people

The reasons for the growth of contemporary slavery are directly related to the reasons for the growth of international migration. The basic reason remains the growing economic disparity between nations as well as between social groups. Structural political, economic and social changes in different areas of the world, such as Latin America, Northeast Asia, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, combined with the rise in warfare, have led to the rise in migration in the past decades, primarily towards Western European countries. Poverty, unemployment, violence, as well as conditions of economic precariousness in these countries represent the main reasons for seeking out a better life in more economically developed countries. Furthermore, the global trend towards growing poverty of women has directly affected what we would call the 'feminization of migration'. It is known that in the last decades there has been a rise in women who decide to migrate on their own, seeking survival alternatives but also to financially support their families who remain in the countries of origin.

The phenomenon of exploitation of immigrants in general and trafficking of women in particular is significantly reinforced by the immigration politics of receiving countries. The inflexibility of the new laws on migration, the creation of Fortress Europe, make conditions worse and contribute to the growth of illegal trafficking networks.

The Ministry of Public Order is finally admitting that we are without question talking about a contemporary form of slavery, which is spreading at lightning speed and is connected to international economic inequality, to immigration policies and to the demand for "cheap

sexual services" in the growing sex industry. It is worth noting that the problem of trafficking is closely related to internal demand in receiving countries and with the involvement – more and more often – of groups of organized crime, in which, let it be noted, state officials and the police are also implicated, because of the high profits and minimal dangers involved.

Conditions of Survival of Women-Victims of Trafficking

The forms of violence and coercion used by slave traders and traffickers, – rape, beatings, withholding of money earned, imprisonment and isolation, destruction of personal belongings – are primarily aimed at preventing any attempt towards escape by the woman-victim, at ensuring the highest possible profit with the acceptance of more and more clients, and of course at inflicting personal humiliation and causing alienation from anything signified as personally valuable.

From the above description it is obvious and clear that all actions connected to trafficking in human beings and their exploitation constitute abuses of human rights and crimes against personal freedom.

Moreover, the serious and irreparable physical injuries of these women, as a result of the inhuman conditions of the their enforced prostitution, constitute further explicit abuse of their reproductive rights, which have been consolidated through international contracts which have been signed by Greece as well and some of which have even become internal laws of the country.

Trafficking in women constitutes the most abhorrent expression of unequal power relations among the two genders.

Feminist Initiative against the Enforced Prostitution of Foreign Women

The Initiative was set up approximately six years ago. The occasion was precipitated by the suicides in 1998 of several young women who were victims of slave traders-pimps. We gave a press conference then during which we analyzed the goals of this initiative and expressed our solidarity to the women-victims, while we simultaneously organized a protest outside the General Security Headquarters of Athens.

It's worth noting that the media suddenly 'discovered' the phenomenon – the uniformed protectors of law and order in the role of pimp and the reputable citizens above all suspicion in the role of modern day slave owner. In reality the whole brouhaha was probably related to an attempt, consciously or not, to regulate the prostitution market rather than an effort to understand the phenomenon, which is systematically obscured, while at the same time constitutes a daily experience for huge parts of the population….

Briefly the activity of the Initiative was following:
• Publishing and disseminating informational-counseling leaflets in several languages (Albanian, Rumanian, English, Russian, and Greek).

• Contributing significantly towards the annulment of article 34 of the new Immigration Law, that, with the excuse of wanting to accommodate the movement of artists, promoted and supported the prostitution rings.

• Intervening with proposals for the drafting of Law 3064 concerning "the fight against human trafficking, crimes against sexual freedom, pornography against minors and more generally the economic exploitation of sexual life and the aid towards victims of such acts". These proposals have been cosigned by several feminist and antiracist groups and organizations. It is worth noting that the above mentioned law, even though it contains some partial positive regulations, aligns completely with European politics that treat the phenomenon of international body trade not as a problem of basic human rights violations, but rather as international crime of illegal trafficking of populations, with repressive measures rather than victim protection programs. Furthermore, we note that while the criminal activity of pimps constitutes supposedly, the target of the new law, unfortunately many trials currently under way are based on previous laws, and, thereby with the direct deportation of victims which was taking place until recently, end up in 'not guilty' verdicts, and so of course do not actively deal with the pimp networks and the entanglement of public servants and police in them.

• Together with other feminist and antiracist groups and NGOs developed propositions for the drafting of the Bill on Aid.

• Finally, taking advantage of the trial which was going to take place (but then was of course postponed) on the island of Siros on the 5th of March 2003, of entrepreneurs and police who were accused of being involved in prostitution networks, a large number of feminist activists traveled there to denounce once more all complicity and/or toleration of pimps by the state. It should be noted that not only do those who are involved in prostitution networks not get indicted, but in contrast the people who denounce them are accused and harassed. Obviously this serves to discourage denouncements and encourage the networks.

The role of the clients

Obviously the networks of enforced prostitution would not be able to operate without the participation of the clients.

The client does not represent some special case, nor are his actions related to predisposition or some such notion. The client-victim relationship is primarily a financial relationship. The prostitute-client relationship is also a racial/gendered relationship. Prostitution is a form of male sexual violence and violation of human rights of women and is closely tied with the overall rise in violence in representations of sexual acts in the whole spectrum of society. The feminist movement first highlighted the reduction of women to sexual objects, the fetishization of sex, the ruthless presence of men, be they clients, pimps or cops, and the ascertainment that abuse and violence are constitutive elements of prostitution. …. Here we will focus on enforced prostitution and its clients.

According to research conducted by Lazos, between 1991 and 1995 there was a 387% rise in foreign prostitutes, usually victims of illegal trafficking, and a corresponding 22% fall in greek

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prostitutes. Male clientele showed a rise of 45%. Regular clientele amounts to 350.000 men per year, whereas occasional clientele, 1.200.000. These men finance the network of adult women trafficking with more than 20 million Euros yearly. Yet it is an 'open secret' that those who use the victims of contemporary slavery for their sexual gratification are in a position to know that the 'merchandise' on offer is subjected daily to violence and torture. The amounts of violence against victims of enforced prostitution rise every year, as more and more clients learn that they can do everything, burn with cigarettes, beat, whip, and most usually have sex without protection. This however has implications for the whole of society, as a particular model of masculinity is cultivated, that of the hard macho-man, and a particular model of femininity, of the submissive woman-victim.

Therefore, clients are responsible to a large degree for the spread of the crime in its present tragic dimensions and should therefore be punished. It is ethically unacceptable to punish the victims for illegal prostitution and furthermore illegal entry and settlement in the country, and not to punish the main accomplices to the victim's illegality. Let it be noted, and this is among the positive aspects of the law, that Law 3064/2002 punishes the clients with six months' imprisonment, but only in those cases where the victims are under age. Even though we believe that this particular stipulation will never be enforced in action, and even though the fact of the broadening of criminalization could arouse different reactions, we want to believe that the educational character of the law will give the new generation, most of all, the possibility to recognize that sexual encounters with victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation constitutes a violation of human rights and personal freedoms and is penalized.

The role of dominant media

The reporting of issues related to enforced prostitution from mainstream media is very revealing. Every triumphant and utterly moralistic exposure of trafficking networks is combined with seductive half naked bodies in an perpetual strip-tease that haunts male fantasies. Not to mention 'pink' adds, which almost always promote enforced prostitution and contribute to the daily familiarization of our society, and especially the youth, with its existence, and its legitimization finally in the consciousnesses of people, both men and women. Therefore, we want to raise the issue of banning such written or electronic adds.

The responsibility of the society

Finally, the hypocritical stance of the whole of society, of women included, must be noted, as they pretend the phenomenon does not exist while it is happening right next to them. The exorcism of collective accountability which is attempted daily through non-stop moralizing must be highlighted and denounced.

Given the dimensions and the seriousness of the phenomenon, the disproportionately small weight this has gained in the context of left movements is amazing; not to mention the outrageous behaviour that can be sometimes observed even among people (comrades?) who

participate in the so-called movement of movements, who consider it natural and innocent to joke about this matter. It is our duty to contribute to the raising of awareness. Such behaviours (laughs, jokes etc.) are NOT to be accepted.

Immigration policy

Because, as we said in the beginning, we consider that the practiced immigration policy provides fertile ground for the trafficking and over-exploitation of foreigners, we believe it is necessary to institute regular legalization processes for immigrants (men and women) so as to curtail the potential of their over-exploitation. We must, in coordination with other antiracist organizations, contribute to the opening of the borders and to the elimination abolition of Fortress-Europe.

Suggestions

Thessaloniki 2003 Anti European-Summit meeting: 1) Participation with a plenary presentation on trafficking, 2) Organization of women's demonstration focusing on women's slavery.
In general: 1) Highlighting of the issue (e.g. by organizing events, protests etc.), 2) Active solidarity with the victims: publishing of information material, creation of support networks, presence at trafficker's trials (e.g. at the Siros trial and others in process), support to those who make denouncements and to the victims of enforced prostitution, 3) Resistance to 'Olympic Prostitution' and the promotion of the sex industry that is attempted, 4) Mobilizations to force changes at a constitutional level, especially in relation to securing provisions for victims[4], 5) Cooperation with other antiracist organizations and NGOs for the promotion of changes in immigration policy, 6) Creation of a pan-hellenic feminist network to highlight the issue and offer support to victims.

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[4] At the time of writing this article the presidential decree on Aid has just been published. As was to be expected, the proposals of both feminist and other antiracist groups and NGOs were not taken into consideration. A quick reading is enough to understand that the specific decree does not offer any substantial aid. It appears that its only purpose is to show 'work' so that Greece can be removed from the State Department list of countries where slavery is blooming and the state taking no constitutional measures. This goal has been achieved in fact. It remains up to us to highlight the lack of effectiveness of the decree and to push for its radical reformation.

The Feminist Initiative Against the Enforced Prostitution of Foreign Women is part of the Feminist Center of Athens. The Feminist Center was founded in 1998 and brought together several different groups and initiatives – some old and some new – who are actively working and collaborating on bringing women's issues to the foreground of political debates and social policies.

Housewives, maids, cleaning ladies and caregivers in general. Care in the communication continuum[1]

Precarias a la Deriva[2]

Abstract

A handful of women, all irregular workers, set off to map and name the unexplored territory of their own daily lives, their own working conditions, in order to imagine ways of collectively organizing, intervening and reinventing their situations. In the course of their explorations they discovered that the present crisis of care is, in one way or another, central for all: as workers in the expanding care industry, as persons that give and that need care in a world where the meaning of care and the strategies for providing it are undergoing radical transformations. Their work is an investigation into the economy of care in a neoliberal metropolis and the feminist debates surrounding it.

Keywords: *feminism, work, migration, care, sex, attention, affect, households, reproduction, conflict, participant research*

Point of Departure

From July to December of 2002 a small group of women roamed the city of Madrid in an effort to invent maps and tools for talking about our work and our lives, asking ourselves 'What is our strike?'[3]. We had observed in the Spanish general strike of that year that for people like us whose work is short-term, free-lance, invisible or informal, the classic strike was not a useful or realistic means of making demands. We had also observed that this kind of work was becoming more and more prevalent in all sectors, but was especially concentrated in sectors dominated by women, and that this reality effected not only our working conditions but every aspect of our daily lives. Finding ourselves without tools with which to intervene in any of this – or even words in which to describe it – we hit the road, asking questions. By December we had come up with few answers and many more questions and put together a 'Grand Show' to share these thoughts with others and to initiate a second phase in a sort of networked cooperation

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[1] This article is a slightly modified fragment of the chapter "Close encounters in the second phase: the communication continuum sex-care-attention" from the book *A la deriva por los circuitos de la precariedad feminina.* Traficantes de Sueños, Madrid. 2004. (in English:www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias/ close_encounters.htm)

[2] *Precarias a la deriva* is a collective project of research and action in Madrid, moved by the modest proposal of linking precarious women workers, mapping the metropolis from within, and eventually turning it on its head. Join us at http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm

[3] On the first phase, see www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias/balbuceos-english.htm

loosely organized through several workshops, some more wandering interviews, and an ongoing process of discussion which we hope will eventually become a means of constructing a new space of aggregation: the *Laboratory of Women Workers*. This article represents a tentative summary of some of our thoughts and observations in this second phase.

Our comings and goings in the first phase had already illuminated a series of problems on a number of levels. On the theoretical level we struggled with the idea of precariousness. From the beginning we had intuited that 'precariousness' might serve as a category to group all these forms of work which are in one way or another irregular, unstable, mobile, but we also feared that it might have the effect of flattening the tremendous differences between some situations of precariousness and others. On the methodological level we asked ourselves 'how shall we approach each other when we are sometimes so close and sometimes so far?' And in terms of political action, we were dogged by the difficult question of how to generate conflict in environments which are invisible, fragile, private… or in environments which are more or less codified, such as the ones that opened up in the heat of the mobilizations during the invasion of Iraq… or in diffuse environments like shopping malls, department stores, public transportation, etc. We had important testimonies and we had generated a modest series of tools. The experiential knowledge that we generated through our 'drifts' or wandering interviews had set us on track and had permitted us to expand our point of view almost vertiginously. On the other hand, the consolidation of the network of contacts that had formed around the project and the invitation to strike was still in the bud, as were many of the utterances, slogans and hypotheses that we hoped to produce.

One of the persistent questions that came up in almost all the drifts was the matter of care, which shapes and impacts all of our lives The drift guided by domestic and care workers left us so agitated that we decided to make this question the center of our first cycle of workshops.

The Workshop on Globalized Care. Talking about crisis

The Workshop on Globalized Care was held in three sessions. The participants were women each of whom was a mixture of some of these things: domestic workers and caregivers, migrants, scholars, activists, lawyers, social mediators, etc. The first session was an effort to approach the present panorama of care: social transformations, feminist positions, the role of migration and immigration law, the legislation of domestic work, the situation of the labor market. Then later we got to thinking about a 'caregivers' uprising': experiences which exist so far and others that could exist in the future.

The discussion, as always, got good and complicated because it is true that there are just too many things mixed together in this question: (1) the history of the sexual division of labor and its present configuration; (2) the feminization of migratory flows and the 'passing along of inequality', (3) the legal framework which fixes the status of domestic work as subemployment and that of women as subalterns, (4) the content of this work: its temporal, spatial, subjective and other limits and (5) the fronts open for struggle.

To some extent our interest in globalized care is the same as that which motivates the whole institutional topic of 'reconciliation of work and family life,' although we depart from different premises and move toward different conclusions[4]. For the moment we are going to

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[4] On reconciliation: Consejo de la Mujer, *Conciliar la vida. Tiempo y servicios para la igualdad*, CAM, 2003;

call this a 'crisis': *"the mainstream reproductive scheme presently comes into conflict on one side with the pressure exerted by the deregulation of work (both masculine and feminine) and the lack of public services and, on the other, with the expectations that access to education, more or less stable employment, sexual self-determination and, in general, feminism's position on the liberation of women has generated since the 1970s."*[5]

> "With the rupture of the Fordist family model, in which the social infrastructure of home and care was resolved through the exclusive dedication of women to this unpaid work, we find ourselves confronted with a new scenario and with it the rupture of the old structure of care in which deferred reciprocity guaranteed that those who were cared for in their childhood and youth would be in the future the caretakers of their elders." (from S. del Río and A. Pérez Orozco, "La economía desde el feminismo: trabajos y cuidados" *Rescoldos*, n.7, 2002.)

But let us go bit by bit. By *hegemonic reproductive scheme* we understand the nuclear patriarchal family with a strong sexual division of work which determines the division between the public and the private, production and reproduction; it is indubitably a white, middle class family, legitimate heir to the bourgeois family of the 19th century, and extended as a model (attention, as a model, not necessarily as an experience) to almost all other layers of society throughout the first half of the 20th century. This scheme maximizes biological and social reproduction, in Bourdieu's sense, both that which has to do with the transmission of inheritance and that which has to do with the care of offspring in intimate collaboration with the State and with the maintenance of the moral order. In Francoist Spain, this model was colored by the special hue of an authoritarian welfare State[6], the moral and institutional predominance of the Catholic religion and the propaganda about women as 'angels of the home'. The crisis of this model began in the post Francoist period and has become more acute in the last decades. 'Crisis' here does not suggest that sexual division is not still being produced, that previously women of the lower class were not subjected to an intensive model of work outside and inside the home, nor that this model is deployed in the same ways in different contexts (for example in the rural context) or that the same processes happen everywhere at the same time. The nuances are important, nevertheless it seems pertinent to speak of a hegemonic model and to clarify that when we talk about the sexual division of work we do not assume that women do not work outside of the house. Nevertheless we do see that reproduction ceases to take place primarily in the bosom of the extended family and that, from the 18th century onwards in Europe a series of collective services are established that, leaning upon the family and upon women, are oriented towards educating, pacifying and integrating the population and quieting the danger that in that period, and in others thereafter, the popular classes have represented[7]. We needn't mention

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particularly, Tobio, E. "Conciliación o contradicción: cómo hacen las madres trabajadoras" and Garcia C., "Organización del trabajo y autonomía personal. Apuntes para un debate sobre flexibilidad y conciliación".
[5] Marugán, B. and Vega, C. "Gobernar la violencia. Notas para un análisis de la rearticulación del patriarcado", *Política y Sociedad*, vol. 39, pp. 415–435, 2002.
[6] On the Spanish welfare State: Giner, S. and Sarasa, S. (eds) *Buen gobierno y política social*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1997 and Adelantado, J. (coord.)*Cambios en el Estado de Bienestar. Políticas sociales y desigualdades en España*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2000. For a general vision with statistics on the changes in the family: del Campo, S. and Rodríguez-Brioso, M. "La gran transformación de la familia española durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX" *Reis*, 100, 2002, pp.103–165
[7] Jacques Dozelot explains how the crisis of the family was produced in the *ancien regime*. The relation

that this model has been object of successive crises and readaptations; for example, after the two World Wars.

One of the elements of the current crisis – *deregulation* – has to do on the one hand with the loss of masculine employment in the 1980s and on the other with the growing expansion, fragmentation and diversification of employment niches for women, no longer in administration or manufacture but in the service sector: cleaners, caretakers, servants, waitresses, shop keepers, telephone operators, advertisers, beauticians, sex workers, escorts, etc., a sector in which, as we know, work is ever more precarious.

The second aspect of this crisis, the absence of public service, has to do with the development of the so-called 'Mediterranean' Welfare State, called 'Mediterranean' because it sounds nicer than 'rudimentary' or 'familyist'. This means that reproduction is in the hands of women, frequently in the 'double work-day' regime, and that only in the absence of a woman will the State intervene. Services are, especially in the field of care, a complement to the action of women. Homes with resources will contract another woman, probably immigrant, to externalize part of this work. And this is where other dimensions enter into play, like immigration regulations: the fact, for example, that migration law rests upon discriminatory phenomena that are unjustifiable from any Euro-orthodox point of view such as the pre-assignation by law of certain jobs (domestic service) to certain population groups (foreign women) in function of their sex and their condition as *aliens*. If all those European declarations really held any

water these phenomena would be considered attacks against human rights.

The third element, the *generalization of feminism*, forms part of the subjective horizon of Spanish women and constitutes a popular and populist tool in the hands of most parties and some commercial brands. The acceptance of women's autonomy has been disseminated and individualized[8]. Despite this, the ideal of autonomy runs up against feelings of stress, especially when one undertakes to make oneself independent (young people in their parents' houses, married women unsatisfied with their husbands or women charged with dependents), or in matters of maternity, education, equality in promotions or the division of work. Autonomy, despite its effects upon self-esteem, ends up being little more than an ideal towards which one can barely even strive, something for 'superwomen', something which may even be annoying to the extent that it is unreachable. To these aspects we must add another key factor: the *aging of the population* which together with the falling birth rate is provoking a situation of uncertainty and, as the media say, of social alarm which in the coming years may modify or at least nuance the criminalizing discourses on immigration in favor of others which place more emphasis upon the profitable character of the migrants as a labor force, and even more dangerous, as a procreative force necessary in just proportions. Probably we will witness a combination of both orientations.

All these elements form part of our debates, but in the last months something has changed in us. Perhaps its that we're getting older or that talking about these things in the first person reminds us that we too will be caretakers

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between State and family powers changes; the family organizes itself more flexibly, and a sense of autonomy and protection of its members arises… (p.51–95); *La policía de las familias*, Valencia, Pre-Textos, 1998.
[8] Vega, C. "Interroger le féminisme: action, violence et gouvernementalité" *Multitudes. Feminismes, Queer, Multitudes.* Exils, Paris, 2003. Online at www.sindominio.net/karakola/texts.htm

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and eventually, cared for. Or not? To varying degrees some of us already care for the people we live with, ourselves, and in a still rather lax way, members of our families. Almost none of us have children, nor could we, given our present living and working situations. One of us has them 'on the other side of the pond' and manages one of her households by telephone, with all the uncertainty which that represents. But, let's see, what options do we have? Many of us are mortified by the thought of living with our families, even by the thought of having to care for them: we'll see how our elders get along. We flee from emotional blackmail and affirm our desire to maintain relationships which are free, that is to say, based upon affect and not obligation. Nevertheless these same relationships – more insecure to the extent that they don't produce guarantees nor are subject to formal contracts – do not produce frameworks – resources, spaces or bonds – for care. Okay, we haven't married, we have constructed other kinds of units for cohabitation but… how will we deal with the need for care in these environments? Will we go back to the family? To which family, if we are the youngest members? To the partners, for those that have them? Will we have partners? Speaking in the first person together has its risks. We look back to the family even when it is not grabbing our chin and turning our face, and it is difficult for us to think of each other as caretakers, or of the few institutions which we generate as facilities for care. Look out: the hardcore of care is not tea and cake on a depressive afternoon.

Testimonies from the other shore

As we began to talk about these questions we came up against the particularities of the situation of those of us who are migrants in domestic service and in care work. In 'First Stutterings', our analysis of the first phase of our investigation, we refer to the transfer of much reproductive work to migrants. This has various consequences all arising from one problem: reproductive work has not been distributed and the conditions of employment make the work of 'native' women more difficult. That homes do not have 'wives' does not mean that things do not have to get done; what is more, they say that in modern homes despite – or precisely because of – all kinds of technological advances the amount of work is greater. Although income frequently is not especially high, many heterosexual (and homosexual, we imagine) couples avoid the conflict: they contract someone (by the hour) and they are in peace. If there are children and two salaries, even if the salaries are precarious and/or flexible, the solution, besides the grandmother, is clear. This gives rise to a 'demand', a niche for precarious women's work which corresponds perfectly to the 'supply': that of migrant women who are looking for work or life alternatives in the centers of global capitalism and who cannot opt for other jobs[9].

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[9] This has been amply analyzed in the literature on the interaction between the structure of the labour market in Spain and immigration laws. For example in S.Gil "Políticas públicas como tecnologías de gobierno. Las políticas de inmigrantes y las figuras de la inmigración" in Aguirre, M. and Clavijo, C. (eds.) *Políticas públicas y Estado de bienestar en España: las migraciones. Informe 2002.* FUHEM, Madrid. As S. Parella Rubio explains, "…the 'institutional framework' itself not only legally delimits the so-called ethno-stratification, but moreover it participates in the configuration of a labor market which for the migrant work force is strongly sexed, relegating women to typically 'feminine' activities, most susceptible to invisibility and exploitation. This situation has clear repercussions upon the composition of migratory flows and migratory strategies, exercising a pull which serves to make migrant women pioneers in the migratory chain, knowing that Spanish migratory policies offer them greater possibilities than men to regularize their legal situation." (p. 286), "El trasvase de desigualdades de clase y etnia entre mujeres: los servicios de proximidad", *Papers*, 60, 2000.

So there we have the *pull* and the *push*. And, from our point of view, what should be insisted upon is the pull: the structure of the Spanish labor market with its explosion of submerged work, underemployment and unemployment. This is especially the case now that, under the neoliberal lens, the impoverishment of the Third World is increasingly regarded as an incapacity to develop and thus something that countries should take care of themselves.

The buying power of middle class households is dropping, and with it the salaries of those who pick up the kid from school, look after the baby, clean and cook, fix up the house, the office or the lobby, take grandma for a stroll or do the babysitting. Those who have more resources or want special services – upper class families, companies, institutions – take advantage of the general conditions of a sector at the margin of legality, or what is worse, with a legal structure that nurtures abuses. The demand for live-in and day workers, as L. Oso explains, depends upon whether the family has small children; for the middle class sector the live-in worker costs almost the same and does so much more. Single family homes in the periphery of the big city have space enough to lodge a live-in, the architects have designed them that way. Professional couples without children, in the interest of intimacy and affective peace, opt for an 'assistant'[10].

> …the jobs that came up the most were as a live-in, taking care of children, with four, five kids in incredible conditions. What comes up the most is live-in work because – just imagine, if they are looking for day workers and they pay them 480 for example, and they pay 540 to a live-in – with a live-in you have a slave, because the majority of live-in work,

I don't know if there are exceptions because one can't generalize everything, but in most cases they think they are the owners of the person who is there as a live-in. The person who contracts you thinks they're paying you well, they're giving you a house, they're giving you food, and using uniforms, and treating you as an inferior… So they see the case as: Which is a better deal for me, to have a live-in or a day worker? Clearly the live-in. So the number of jobs available for day work goes down and now there's barely no day work to be had. There are very few jobs and only in conditions in which the people say: I don't want to have somebody, because I don't feel like it, I don't have the liberty – but for these reasons, not because of the exploitation but because they say: I can't because of personal conditions, intimacy and so on, or they don't have space to have a live-in. But in general right now it is live-in work that's available, either with elderly people or with children. (domestic worker, Globalized Care Workshop I)

This niche, especially in the case of those who work by the hour – generally Spanish women but also immigrants with work permits – has clearly been perceived by service companies. Many workers, seeing how fragile and unpredictable their situations are, opt to sell part of their salary to these growing companies.

It is, without a doubt, a complicated situation, as some women told us during the sessions of the workshop:

> The other day a colleague at my job, I work in a place where, well, people are hard-working and have had a period of more or less decent salaries and a certain status, basically middle class, anyway this woman has two children and a husband who works

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[10] C. Catarino and L.Oso "La inmigración feminina en Madrid y Lisboa: hacia una etnización del servicio domestico y de las empresas de limpieza", *Papers*, 60, 2000.

in a company traveling, and the kids are fourteen and eighteen and they're driving her crazy, and now her mother is alone and since she fell down the other day she can't be left by herself. A woman who was widowed young and so she has been very independent since she was quite young…so my friend said to me, "I just don't know what to do" and I said, "But this is appalling, nobody can live like this." So she was thinking about taking a vacation to be with her mother in July and then her mother would go with the other sister in August, but this is too much, no? So then she thought about tele-assistance, but tele-assistance is no good because what her mother really needs is company. That is, the problem isn't just taking care of an elderly person who in a given moment might hurt herself and then the ambulance would have to come, its that what she is suffering, and to some extent what she is looking for is company and affection. So she looks at the problem and in the end she will make a contract in which she pays a shit salary – because that's the way it is – to another woman. There is this whole sector of working people who find themselves in this juncture when the kids are still not grown, the parents are already old, and they are stuck in between with men who don't collaborate and as I see it, even if they do collaborate the pressure that exists in the labor market is such that that wouldn't solve the problem either, so when there is not a collective resolution of "we are going to do this for whatever" then everyone fends for themselves however they can, and one of the alternatives is to contract another woman. (Feminist activist and working mother, Globalized Care Workshop III)

To this we must add a central question which we already pointed out in our 'First Stutterings' and which is intermixed in each and every one of the aspects which we have gone through above and to which we will continue to refer: *affect* The literature on the 'global chains of affection', which we will address later, reconstructs the bonds of care in which migrant women link the family members and people being cared for in the country of origin, the families for which they presently work, and the affective relationships they establish in the places where they live. It is not exactly a transfer – those that are mothers continue to act as mothers although in a different way, they continue to be university graduates although they work in domestic service; rather it is a reordering or renegotiation of roles and, in this sense, of identities[11]. Among these renegotiations, something has happened and is happening in the Spanish context with the caretaker grandmas, who are so important and of whom so little is spoken.

All the questions derived from this global readjustment are interesting to us. Not as a conflict between women or from a perspective of blame – the liberation of some at the price of oppression of others – a vision which can be perceived in some feminist statements, particularly those which have interpreted postcolonial criticism as an intonation of *mea culpa*, appealing in the end to individual goodwill. Nor, in the opposite direction, do we see this readjustment as an engine driving the anxiety and the vengeance of real legitimate caretakers against sadistic foreigners[12]. Rather we are interested in these questions as a dynamic which contributes to the reconfiguration of

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[11] L. Agustín in *Trabajar en la industria del sexo* (Editorial Gakoa, Donostia, 2005) laments that this perspective has not been developed more when talking about sex work.

[12] See the recent scandal made in the Spanish press about the abuse by an *Ecuadorian* live-in of the blond twins of an absent white mother.

households, families, the sense of intimacy and of the private, the ways of loving, of caring and of managing affect. They interest us also in their connection with sexuality, with an affective continuum which has always been present and which distributes functions as wife, lover, caretaker, sexual servant, companion, mother, contracted wife, etc. They interest us, finally, because the capacity to make alliances and the capacity of the most vulnerable sectors of women to demand negotiation and introduce conflict is what will assure better conditions for all. It is a question of rooting out, once and for all, the idea of loyal or disloyal competition, the clauses of national priority as an excuse to nurture precarization and ethnification, and sexual difference as an argument for 'specialization' in the lowest ranks. Capital fragments the social in order to subtract value, we aggregate it in order to elevate it and to move it into other places. Without a doubt, we find ourselves in a force field, a field in which the symbolic is being created and life practices determined. Its time to intervene. In the end, in one way or another, we are talking about the daily life of each and every one of us.

Daily wars

And in terms of strategy… what can we say? We have discussed long and hard, this way and that. Really, as a friend from the Feminist Assembly of Madrid says, we have already been thinking this over for a long time, this question of putting life, the sustainability of life, in the center, although we have not yet come upon the solutions or better, the ways, in which to put this invisible conflict into the public space[13]. Perhaps we are getting close. Quantify, valorize, visibilize, withdraw, mercantilize, abolish, industrialize, share, salarize the social

economy, reconcile, fight for a domestic social salary…

The scenario we are sketching here evidently has little to do with policies of 'reconciliation' which see institutional feminism and the measures designed in its name as tools forming part of the great narrative of women's progressive liberation. Our analysis is different. It is primarily global, in the sense that it contemplates the reality of as many women as possible – housewives, workers, from both shores, paid or not, married or not, legal or illegalized, in unions which are recognized or those which are not, etc. – as a whole and in relation, as ambiguous and conflictive as this may be. It is worthless for us to talk about reconciliation or even of valorization if we do not also talk about distribution or division, or better yet, of cooperation and conciliation for all in fair conditions. It is worthless if when we speak of the home we do not also speak of the precarization of existence and of employment and vice versa. As some critical positions have indicated, the debate on the reconciliation of home and work departs from inadequate premises (it is women who have to do the reconciling) and either avoids crucial questions (such as that of migrant work, that of the legal forms of union and of citizenship, that of precarious and feminine conditions of work) or directs conflicts towards positions of pacification in which inequalities are justified.

The situation of social services and their progressive privatization, not only does not auger well but predicts serious losses. The distribution of housework is very limited and faces many difficulties due to the resistance of men, the lack of resources and the flexibilization of employment. Women who

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[13] For part of these debates within the Spanish feminist movement, see *Feminismo es…y sera* Records of the 2000 Feminist Meeting, Cordoba.

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work in the domestic and care sector have not witnessed any reform in an almost feudal labor legislation[14]. Instead, they have seen how their living conditions have gotten worse amid the flourishing of service companies and immigration policies as well as the traditional difficulty of forcing negotiation in these sectors.

The longstanding feminist strategy of visibilizing, valorizing and even quantifying[15] domestic work and its contribution to the economy is fundamental, but to this we must add the analysis of precarious work and migration, as until very recently these efforts were based upon the model of a 'typical' (and 'native') woman, home and employment. These analyses are not always accompanied by reflections which permit a politicization of our lives, which favor the articulation of knowledges, change and collective conflict. The so-called social economy – the third sector – is sometimes a perversely perfect partner to the opportunities for accumulation offered by the (no longer so) 'new sites of employment' and the recent forms of subcontracting. This is accentuated even more in the case of women. The idea of a social salary, about which we spoke in the national feminist encounter in Cordoba in 2000 and in other meetings, is an opportunity to adjust the debates about work and life. It may, however, leave untouched the question of value, salary and conditions (experienced by domestic employees) and the limits of cooperation (which all of us experience in our homes).

On the other hand, talking about affect necessarily implies getting past the framework of employment or even of work and entering into the realm of relation, something inseparable from any activity but particularly essential in the activities we are talking about. We are caretakers, all of us, but moreover we need to be cared for, we like it and we have a right to it. But the affect that we seek should not be a question of minimums, of obligation and guilt, of dependence. Rather it should be a free affect, although (today) this might be linked to a salary, and for it to be free it must be just. Affect, as we well know, is not a panacea, and it is not good enough to talk about it in general terms. Love has qualities, and it is a part of social relations which must be constructed and deconstructed: love, service, work, solidarity, etc. For this reason the struggles that are related to affect, such as those in the fields of nursing or education, are not strictly labor struggles but citizen as well as personal struggles. They are struggles against daily wars. And the challenge which we confront in these workshops is just that: to transform care into a social claim which modifies affect and converts it into an abundant common good. This is something which has been a constant challenge for feminism, and which the neoliberal offensive of recent years has converted into an emergency.

The struggles of caretakers – of housewives in impoverished countries, immigrants, social workers – are still just beginning, and the burgeoning experiences point to an aggregation that could interrupt the

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[14] On European legislation and other questions related to the domestic sector: H.Lutz "At your service Madame! Domestic servants, Past and Present. Gender, Class, Ethnicity and Profession" http://www.vifu.de/new/areas/migration/projects/lutz.html
The articles published in the two volumes produced by the International Women's University (ifu) can also be consulted in: VV.AA, *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries. Gender on the move* and *Gender, Identities and Networks* Leske+Budrich, Opladen, 2002.
[15] Along these lines are some important contributions such as those of Cristina Carrasco, Soledad Murillo or Arantxa Rodríguez, among others. Useful reflections can be found in the notes of the recent conference "Caring has a cost: the costs and benefits of caring" 2003, www.sare-emakunde.com

atomization and precarization of personal services, the degradation of the public and the anguish and juggling-acts required by family commitments[16]. The struggles of (under)cared-for people, which have been significantly organized in some countries of the Third World (and have barely existed in Europe, with the possible exception of France), represent the other side of the same problems: resources, quality and cooperation. In this sense, the conflicts produced by migrants and those who work in questions of care, conflicts grounded in work but above all in citizenship, in the imaginary and in lifestyle, demand a greater degree of elaboration and confluence.

Feminist politics

So in our comings and goings, and from the experience of these workshops, we begin to illuminate some tentative paths for political action:

First of all we have managed to work out a few *points of attack*. The crisis of care, or better, the political articulation of this fact is one of those points. We don't think there is a simple way of posing the question, a single formula like a social salary, salaries for housewives, distribution of tasks, or anything like that. Any solutions will have to be combined. This is a submerged and many-legged conflict, involving immigration policy, the conception of social services, work conditions, family structure, affect… which we will have to take on as a whole but with attention to its specificities.

Facing securitarian and criminalizing discourses from both the Right and the Left we must learn to think about security as a collective good, centered in the sustainability of existence. The media doesn't talk about this question, the politicians even less. Once in a while a sociologist appears, alluding to the population pyramid or the changes in the forms of the family. Others, progressive ones, begin to argue against the government that in fact we need migrants, but we still haven't freed ourselves from the their instrumentalization: we need them, yes, but as a work force and as uteruses for procreation.

In the midst of all this, there are sectors which are on the warpath, among them the service companies but also the insurance companies which are seeing how dependency policies can be fit in as an alternative, for those who can afford them, to the public system of pensions. All of this is little discussed, and the overexploitation of women in (family or salaried) regimes of care work is discussed even less. The terms of the sexual contract are in play and we would like to contribute to making them explicit and, above all, politicizing them.

Our fascination with the world of sex-work, which we have been encountering bit by bit in recent drifts, once again situates us in a complex map in which we have to look at migration policy and labor rights, but also rights in the realm of the imaginary. There is a continuum here, which for the moment we are calling Care-Sex-Attention, and which encompasses much of the activity in all of the sectors we have investigated. Affect, its quantities and qualities, is at the center of a chain which connects places, circuits, families, populations, etc. These chains are producing

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[16] Some references on migrants' struggles in the domestic field are: www.solidar.org, www.kalayaan.org, www.cfmw.org. Here we should also point out the struggles for survival of women in Latin America and the emerging citizen struggles that thematize questions of resources and care such as that of the movements of women from the periphery in France, with the slogan: *'ni putes ni soumises'* or the network of migrant and autochthonous women in Tuscany, *'Punto di Partenza'*.

phenomena and strategies as diverse as virtually arranged marriages, sex tourism, marriage as a means of passing along rights, the ethnification of sex and of care, the formation of multiple and transnational households.

Second, we have talked about the need to *produce slogans* which are able to bring all these points together. Past slogans have become too limited for us, too general, too vague. Permitting ourselves a delirious brainstorm in the last session of the 'Globalized Care' workshops, we realized that some of these slogans could take us into spaces as ambivalent but as necessary demanding the ability to have and raise children, while at the same time taking up the radical discourses of the family as a device of control, dependence and blame of women. Shocking, no?

Third, the need to constructing *points of aggregation*, spaces to come together and resist our atomization and our solitude, is clear. If this territorialization cannot take place in a mobile and changing work place, then we will have to construct spaces for it. The *Laboratory of Women Workers* would be an operative place/moment to come together with our conflicts, our resources (legal resources, work, information, mutual care and support, housing, etc.), our information and our sociability. To produce agitation and reflection. A good idea, and a difficult one: at the moment we are thinking about it, not only the practical aspects but particularly the capacity this might have to attract, connect and mobilize sectors as different as domestic workers and telephone operators.

Fourth, we underline the importance of *public utterances and visibility*: if we want to break social atomization, we have to intervene with strength in the public sphere, circulate other statements, produce massive events which place precariousness as a conflict upon the table, linking it to the questions of care and sexuality. One concrete proposal in this direction would be to construct forms of intervention, perhaps using guerrilla communication as some friends are already doing.

And fifth, we begin to consciously encounter the need to mobilize *common economic and infrastructural resources*. We want to be able to 'free'[17] people, just like the parties do: free from illegality, free from precariousness. We could organize a marriage agency, we can disobey, falsify, pirate, shelter and whatever else occurs to us. The proposal of the *Laboratory* space, as well as almost any other proposal, requires money, and money, well... We don't want to fall into the star system, touring and talking and not developing the local network that is so important to us, nor do we want to fall into the dependency of subventions. In short, we're thinking these things over, all to the tune of '*Pasta Ya!*'[18].

One thing leads to another. From drifts to more drifts, from workshops to thousands more dialogues and debates, demonstrations, public spaces, the possibility – beyond a politics of the gesture to one of daily gestures – of accumulating density, history, links, narration, territory… to be continued.

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[17] In Spanish the word *liberar* has the double meaning of 'setting free' in general and of 'freeing someone up' to do political (party or union) work: that is, paying them for their hours of activism.

[18] 'Money Now!' a play on the phrase 'Basta Ya!' ('Enough!'), the slogan of a civic movement against terrorism in Spain. 'Pasta Ya' has become the cry of those who demand a basic social salary.

Precarias a la deriva is a collective project of research and action in Madrid, driven by the modest proposal of linking precarious women workers, mapping the metropolis from within, and eventually turning it on its head. Join us at http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.html

annual review of critical psychology online

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From 2006 *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* will be published online as an open-access journal. Each issue will be peer-reviewed and organised around a specific theme by guest editors who will have responsibility for inviting contributions and assembling the journal. The first online issue of the journal, number 5, will be devoted to critical psychology around the world, and will be edited by Manolis Dafermos (University of the Aegean) and Athanasios Marvakis (University of Crete). The articles in this special issue address crucial questions: Why is there psychology, and what form does it take in different cultural settings? Why is there critical psychology, and what role does it play in relation to political activity? What are the conditions for the development of critical work in and against psychology, and what forms of solidarity across cultural traditions are possible?

Issue number 6, to be published in 2007, will be on the theme of Asylum and Migration guest edited by Jane Callaghan and Rose Capdevila (University College Northampton).

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