

**What Ever Happened to Liberal Feminism?**  
**A Discussion of the Contribution of Liberal Feminism to**  
**International Relations Theory**

by

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### Abstract

International relations, as a theoretical and practical subfield of political science, has recently been the subject of much criticism due to the apparent hostility of the dominant realist paradigm toward the incorporation of feminist inquiry. Recently, in light of changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, alternative ways of thinking and theorizing about international relations have found avenues of entry into the central debates.

Despite the presentation of feminist inquiry as a coherent theoretical perspective, it is more adequately conceptualized as a fractured discourse. The prevailing interpretation of feminist international relations theory has been captured by radical feminism to the exclusion of all other perspectives. Despite its current credibility, it is suggested that the radical critique is fundamentally limited. In seeking alternative approaches to the development of feminist international relations theory it has been suggested that a liberal feminist interpretation may provide a more adequate theoretical foundation.

What is at stake in pursuing a reconstruction of liberal feminism in international relations is whether ideas such as the division between public and private space, the empirical foundation of knowledge and the gender neutrality of institutions like the division of public and private space can sufficiently represent the interests of women without being co-opted into the mainstream of theoretical inquiry. This thesis argues that liberal feminism makes only a very limited contribution to the study of international relations theory. In its predilection for continuity over destabilization and description over analysis, liberal feminism analysis fails to embrace a critical perspective on gender inequality in the international system. It is only by broadening the scope of its discussion, in understanding gender as a description of an unequal power relationship created and sustained by the structure of social, political, and economic institutions, instead of a more functionally defined inequality, that a liberal feminist perspective could be legitimately included within the scope of international relations theory. This task would, however, appear to be an inherent feature of the contradictory relationship between liberal and feminist theories and, in all probability, is a fundamentally irreconcilable tension.

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## INTRODUCTION

International relations (IR), as a theoretical and practical subfield of political science, has recently been the subject of much criticism due to its apparent hostility toward intellectual change and the incorporation of alternative ways of thinking and theorizing. While the criticism leveled at international relations as an academic discipline is derived from a broad spectrum of revisionist discourse it has been seen as particularly antithetical to the interests of women and feminist inquiry, to the extent that it has been described as "...one of the most gender blind, indeed crudely patriarchal of all institutionalized forms of contemporary social and political analysis."<sup>1</sup> This resistance to change would appear to be an inherent feature of international relations that can largely be attributed to the dominance of realist thinking as an intellectual axiom. While Marxist/world systems and liberal theories have attempted to challenge the realist hegemony, they have only ever existed as minor themes and, as such, have had more impact on focusing contingent areas of study, such as comparative politics, than on the systematic analysis of international relations. The promulgation and acceptance of new theories has primarily been impeded by an unwavering subscription to realism's fundamental principles, in particular its construction of the state as the sole unit of analysis in the international system.<sup>2</sup> Given that the practical context of the international system has supported a state-centric perspective it is easy to dismiss the constructs which underpin alternative theories, such

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<sup>1</sup> R.J.B. Walker 'Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations', in V.S. Peterson (ed), *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)visions of International Relations Theory*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1992, p.179.

<sup>2</sup> S. Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions*, Macmillan, London, 1994, p.ix.

as class, international institutions, and now gender, as they fall outside these parameters and challenge the so called essential knowledge of IR. However, with the changes initiated by the end of the Cold War and the removal of Cold War overlay, the sovereign state would appear to warrant a lesser place in IR discourse than it has previously occupied.<sup>3</sup> As such, the discipline has entered a critical period of re-evaluation in which voices that were previously silenced by the theoretical hegemony have found avenues of entry into the mainstream debate. Feminism is one such voice.

### **International Relations and Feminist Theory**

As described and analyzed under the central tenets of realist thinking, international relations is perceived to be particularly antithetical both to a feminist interpretation of IR and women's experiences in the international sphere. The premise for this opinion the assumption that the state is an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity and, as such, delegitimizes or ignores the experiences and interests of women. Typically, under these conditions, the purpose of international relations theory is presented as a description and analysis of the causes of war and the role and function of states, as primary actors, in this system of interaction in which the desired objective is the acquisition of power.<sup>4</sup> On this premise, feminist theorists claim that women are excluded because they have no defined role in the processes of war; women are neither decision makers nor are they afforded the

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, M. Ayoob, 'The Security Problematic of the Third World', *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2, January 1991, pp.257-283. The feminist critique of international relations is a reaction against the gender bias and blindness of realist IR theory. It is slowly being incorporated into the IR theory discourse because challenges to the state have raised questions about the ability of realist theory to explain change in the international system.

<sup>4</sup> K.J. Holsti, in C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.68.

opportunity to become warrior-citizens who participate in the pursuit of power, the defense of the state, and, concomitantly the survival of the body politic. Alternatively, criticism is leveled at IR theory in its presentation of the international system as a gender-neutral space. As the subject matter is perceived to deal with inanimate institutions and genderless states neither masculine nor feminine constructs are considered to be relevant. However, feminists claim that this idea is a misrepresentation, that effectively what is presented are male norms and perspectives under the guise of gender neutrality. Consequently, women are excluded both explicitly and implicitly from the international sphere and from IR theory.<sup>5</sup>

The feminist agenda seeks to redress both forms of exclusion by promoting gender, and, more specifically, gender difference as a category of analysis and explanation. Its project is to find and create a space for women; to investigate the ways in which institutions maintain particular relations and assumptions based on socially constructed notions of gender and to bring an end to patterns of domination and subordination in the international system.<sup>6</sup> Although the diversity of the feminist agenda, and the problems which additional variables, such as socio-economic class, race, culture and sexuality bring to analysis is openly acknowledged, feminist inquiry appears to display similar problems of a dominant discourse that silences other feminist voices in the same way that it claims to be silenced by mainstream IR.

Paralleling the development of the feminist movement, its populist and academic manifestations, feminist theorizing in and about IR is polarized between its radical and

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<sup>5</sup> A. Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.44.

<sup>6</sup> J.A. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p.15

liberal variants. Although radical feminism is marginalized within the overall spectrum of IR theory, it is the dominant strand of thinking within this intellectual periphery. As a critique it challenges the invisibility of women in international relations and attributes their absence to the centrality of the sovereign state.<sup>7</sup> From a radical perspective, it is only through a complete rejection of existing theories and structure, a phase of male exclusion, that an adequately gender sensitive theory can be developed.

From some perspectives the radical critique is fundamentally limited. While it can deconstruct current theory and describe how women are structured out of the discourse as a critique it makes no positive contribution to reconstruct theory and is consequently marginalized by its inertia. R.J.B.Walker counterargues such criticism by contending that the contribution of revisionist theories is found in being a crucial site of change where ideas can be distilled, rather than being concerned with its practical context and application.<sup>8</sup> However, radical feminism suffers from more than simple intellectual inertia. As a consequence of its separatist agenda, radical feminism has alienated many of the scholars who could be extending the parameters of inquiry and evaluation. Subsequently, without alternative perspectives and critical reevaluation there is a danger that the one dimension becomes an almost universal truth which contains the possibility of further inhibiting intellectual diversity.<sup>9</sup>

From a survey of the literature it would appear that this has occurred with regard to liberal feminism; its contribution has been stifled by the suggestion that it is inauthentic,

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<sup>7</sup> C. Sylvester, *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> RJB Walker, *op. cit.*, p.180.

<sup>9</sup> C. Hoff Summers, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1994, pp.17-18.

as it fails to fundamentally debase present theory and is thus vulnerable to cooption by mainstream IR theory. However, this dismissal of liberal feminist IR theory is precipitate. It could be suggested, for example, that in not pursuing a separatist agenda liberal feminism may actually be able to make a positive contribution to the reassessment of the discipline, as opposed to a negative critique, and provide a more satisfactory interpretation of the role of women, or the function of gender, within a more holistic and comprehensive notion of IR.

With its ideological origins firmly grounded in the central tenets of liberalism upon the pursuit of equality (for women in international relations) through the state and institutional apparatus, liberal feminist international relations theory seeks to understand the underrepresentation of women in IR by finding ways in which women 'were there' in past events or ways in which their role in the present can be augmented while leaving a state-centric theory unchallenged. The characterization of IR as the (realist) high politics of peace and security in the public realm is therefore an accepted definition, as is, to a certain extent, the description of women's natural domain as the private/domestic sphere.<sup>10</sup> The ultimate goal of liberal feminism in international relations is to expand the categories of discussion to include women's activities in order that previous inequalities and omissions can be eliminated.

Essentially, liberal feminist IR theory has two possible orientations: one which favors the state and society as an agents of change and the other which emphasizes the role of

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<sup>10</sup> S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, p.13.

the individual as the functionary of the IR system.<sup>11</sup> From alternative perspectives, ie radical feminism, both the state and the individual/citizen are considered to be inherently antithetical to the feminist agenda as being embodiments of the male dominated, patriarchal culture. To subscribe to them in the promotion of women's interests is the equivalent of false consciousness by submitting to the orthodoxies of the very institutions that oppress. Despite radical feminist opposition to the liberal agenda, this latter perspective may actually provide avenues of entry for feminism into the realm of international relations theory which are denied by the confrontationalist and destabilizing approach of radical feminism. There is no intrinsic reason why the state and the individual/citizen in a feminist context can only be perceived in negative terms. Dominant feminist thinking has chosen to look at the individual solely as an abstracted and self-serving entity to the exclusion of all other perspectives. The choices made in the construction of the role of the state and the individual raise a number of questions which have direct and significant impact concerning the foundation principles of liberal and other feminist thinking about men and women and their socialization and social roles

This thesis seeks to understand what is at stake in pursuing a reconstruction of liberal feminism in international relations; whether these ideas are adequate, whether by accepting certain ideas as given concepts, like the division of the public and private spheres, women can be sufficiently represented by liberal feminism. Is it enough to 'bring women (back) in' to IR through identifying their under-representation and recommending change to their position and status through accepted societal channels

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<sup>11</sup> M. Harrington, 'What Exactly is Wrong with the Liberal State as an Agent of Change', in V.S. Peterson (ed), *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)visions of International Relations Theory*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1992, pp.66-68.

such as education and reorganizing the division of labor, or will it be, as radical feminists suggest, that satisfactory acknowledgment of women's roles in international relations will only occur through complete abstraction and differentiation?

### **Chapter Outlines**

In trying to arrive at a better understanding of these questions and the issues that they raise it is necessary to understand the context from which they arise. Chapter one, therefore, discusses the development of feminist theory, from its general origins to its concrete manifestations in international relations. It places the two major strands of feminist IR theory in the broader context of general feminist theory and attempts to come to some understanding of what feminism, as an essentially contested concept, is and means at present. From this contextual setting the discussion moves towards the literature that has developed in IR on feminist theory to see the need to create space for women and valorize their experiences, their contributions to international relations and to understanding the particular perspectives that have developed within the discipline. This is particularly interesting given that there has been a significant time lag with regard to the development of feminist thinking in IR as compared to political science, in general, and other social sciences. The dominance of radical feminism to the exclusion of other, liberal perspectives is readily apparent within IR. What is also evident is the dominance of this discourse without critical evaluation from within the discipline and outside. By engaging in a critique it is possible to see avenues of entry for other perspectives and

begin to uncover answers to the question of what ever happened to liberal feminism in international relations?

Chapter two centers on a discussion of liberal theory, its ideological origins, and its feminist, international relations and feminist international relations interpretations. Beyond this, it is important to address the reasons for the exclusion or marginalization of liberal feminist thought, in particular the suggestion that it is too similar to mainstream theorizing to make a significant contribution regarding the place of women in international relations. Yet, it is important to be cognizant of the alternative arguments: the reasons feminist liberal theory should be considered as a valid contributor to the current critical evaluation of international relations. The answers to these questions will be unearthed by taking key concepts, like the state, the individual, and other factors, such as the way knowledge is constructed and analyzed, to see how they are interpreted differently by liberal feminism from the IR mainstream and from other feminist analyses and to see how it provides a more constructive interpretation and where inherent flaws compromise its contribution.

The final chapter will try to bring some sense of conclusion to the debate surrounding the place that liberal feminism occupies, or should occupy, in international relations theory debate. It will be argued that it is simply not sufficient to bring women in to international relations by highlighting and identifying the sources of their exclusion. Neither is it acceptable to suggest that change can be brought about through pre-existing institutions and systems of thought. Gender is not simply about the description of the physical attributes of sex difference; rather, it describes relations of power which are, to

some extent, a function of these physical features but largely attributable to cultural meanings derived from, and reinforced by, various social, political, and economic institutions. There are, therefore, inherent problems in trying to use these same institutions, which have vested interests in perpetuating these structural conditions, to bring about change. Having highlighted these problems, it would appear that there is a fundamental need to analyze the origins and substance of gender constructs and gender based power relations instead of simply describing them. In deconstructing definitions to their base meanings there are infinite opportunities to alter the balance of gender power relations and even to redefine gender itself. In doing so, it allows for the possibility of re-evaluating the role and position of women in international relations.

### **Concluding Comments**

This thesis argues that liberal feminist interpretation makes only a very limited contribution to the study of international relations theory. While many of the arguments made by liberal feminists can be substantiated, to a certain extent, and do present a perspective which is sensitive to gender concerns and a gendered reading of security interests, there are a number of questions about the form and content of liberal feminist analysis that remain unanswered. It is in uncovering the answers to these questions, by discussing the role of the state, the individual, the division of space within the domestic and international spheres, in addition to considering the implications of feminist epistemology, that a more conclusive summation can be drawn on the present context and future relevance of liberal feminism to international relations theory.

Feminism's rudimentary agenda is to reconsider the substance of gender relations; to examine female-male interaction as a product of existing social, economic and political conditions, to acknowledge the effects of these entrenched hierarchies of power and to identify possible alternative constructions of gender relations. Given that the fundamental inadequacy of the existing system is an implicit assumption, the subtext of feminist theory seemingly demands the destabilization of the existing order. It is here, in attempting to re-evaluate critically the status quo that one queries the ability of liberal feminism to conduct a valid critique of international relations theory from its entrenched position within so called masculine knowledge. The premise for this assertion is based on the assumption that all variables discussed within liberal theory are universally applicable. More significantly, however, these variables are assumed to be neutral structures which essentially provide a context in which events occur, rather than being imbued with values which shape the events that occur within their boundaries. Consequently, women cannot simply be added to existing structures to manufacture a sense of equality and produce a non-gendered or gender sensitive world view.

The purpose of feminist international relations theory is to find intellectual space for women in a discipline that has traditionally considered gender as an irrelevant concept. In defining the parameters of its subject as the study of state to state interaction and most often as an expression of military activity, the exclusion of gender as a valid variable has been entirely plausible. On the basis of this knowledge it could be suggested that liberal feminism is absent from the study of international relations because gender considerations are simply not a legitimate part of the theory and practice of international relations.

However, this argument is easily dismissed because of the presence and relative intellectual power of a radical feminist point of view within mainstream theorizing about international relations.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, liberal feminism's absence is almost certainly attributable to the inherent difficulties and contradictions of its theoretical agenda; its predilection for continuity over destabilization and description over analysis. If liberal feminism continues to confine the parameters of its discussion to description and fails to embrace a more critical perspective on gender inequality in the international system its marginal status will be perpetuated. It is only by broadening the scope of its discussion, in understanding gender as a description of unequal power relations created and sustained by the structure of social, political, and economic institutions, instead of a more functionally defined inequality, that the number of women who can legitimately be included within the scope of international relations is able to be increased. However, this task would appear to necessitate a compromise between the principles of liberal and feminist thought. Given the inherent contradictions between their basic agenda, the reconciliation and compromise of liberalism and feminism would appear to be fundamentally unobtainable.

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, R. Keohane, 'International Relations Theory: Contributions of the Feminist Standpoint', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1989, pp.245-253.

## Chapter I

### Constructing the Context: A Discussion of Feminist Thinking<sup>1</sup>

“Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view which they confuse with the absolute truth”

Simone de Beauvoir<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction

Before evaluating the contribution of feminist liberal theory to international relations it is essential to investigate the origins and development of feminism as a social movement and as an intellectual tradition. While this may appear to be a simple task of describing ideas and concepts, feminism is in fact difficult to define. In *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* Zillah Eisenstein concludes that the essence of all feminism is grounded in liberal thinking.<sup>3</sup> Although this description may be true, to the extent that feminists seek equality of opportunity and recognition of women as autonomous beings, to subscribe to it in totality is problematic. The one agreement is, obviously, that

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<sup>1</sup> The fractured discourse of feminism presents numerous problems to this discussion of feminist thinking and writing. In many ways, it is almost impossible to begin this task. While the feminist pioneers of Seneca Falls and British Suffragettes may provide tangible starting points to identify the ideas that have inspired and driven contemporary feminism, as women have gained more rights and more visible roles in social, political and intellectual life the feminist agenda has become increasingly eclectic. It is not only ideological distinctions that alter the substance of feminist claims but also the influences of race, class and sexual orientation. The feminist epistemologies referred to in this discussion are the product of North American feminist activism and thinking and necessarily they reflect the biases of the academics writing it. While many claim to be part of the intellectual periphery, the very fact that they are within the university structure suggests a certain privileging of position. This is, however, not to deny the influence of gender marginalization within the mainstream, nor the possibility that any form of marginalization may make these academics more sensitive to the experiences of those further out on the periphery.

<sup>2</sup> Simone de Beauvoir in J.A. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, Longman, New York, 1981 pp.4-5.

feminism as a social movement and as subject of academic inquiry, has a plurality of meanings and can accurately be described as an essentially contested concept.<sup>4</sup> If feminism is reduced to its most fundamental level to accommodate this diversity it could simply be described as a way of finding a separate thinking space which is created by women for women.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, no consensus as to how women's interests can be defined in a coherent manner, how these interests are best represented and achieved or even agreement as to who or what 'women' are.

Once these definitions of women are established, it provides the basis for a framework within which to evaluate the contribution of a liberal feminist interpretation of international relations. However, it is also necessary to select certain variables that will give meaning to this framework. Given the context of the discussion is international relations theory it would seem logical to use the role and function of the state to discuss the competing interpretations of mainstream and revisionist IR theory. Equally, given that both feminist and liberal theories discuss the individual there would be a certain utility in including the individual as a citizen in international relations. Beyond these categories there are a spectrum of ideas that could legitimately be included in this analysis. In making arbitrary decisions to choose variables that reflect the base assumptions and fundamentals of international relations it has been decided to use the division between public/private space and epistemological foundation. While the connections may, at times, appear to be tenuous, there is, in fact, clear justification. Beyond the superficial level of describing areas where women can and cannot go, the

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<sup>4</sup> S. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, p.163.

<sup>5</sup> R. Delmar, 'What is Feminism?', in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds), *What is Feminism?* Basil Blackwell, 1986, p.27.

public/private dichotomy represents the notion of inclusion and exclusion which is a definitive concept for international relations and gender theory. Meanwhile, coming to terms with the epistemic location of a theory provides some insight into where thinking and ideas originate from. In turn, this creates a context within which to situate a discussion, critique or rebuttal of competing theories.

To extend further the discussion of the contribution of liberal feminism to international relations theory warrants a discussion of the construction of knowledge. A principle criticism of liberal feminism is its acceptance of empirical knowledge; that is, the possibility of deriving facts from theories tested in a value neutral environment. In failing to understand the implicit nature of gender biases in knowledge and institutions, liberal feminism is unable to analyze critically and evaluate gender as a concept. Consequently, it can only describe women's exclusion from the international environment and propose short term solutions for women's inclusion if it chooses to ignore the structural and cultural biases which work against women's participation in the international domain. It is for these reasons that empirical thinking cannot provide a satisfactory foundation for feminist thought and subsequently why questions about the viability of a liberal feminist interpretation of international relations theory abound.

### **Feminism as a Social Movement**

Although feminism's post-enfranchisement renaissance was inspired by the liberal feminism of Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* and the National Organization of

Women, its substance has been the discourse of radicalism.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Friedan and NOW sought change through existing social, political and economic institutions, radical feminism earns its name by seeking change for women's status through challenging and destabilizing prevailing norms and values about who women are and what their role and functions are in modern society.<sup>7</sup> The world view of radical feminism is defined by the notion of an omnipresent patriarchy, or male hegemony, which oppresses women in both the public and private spheres through the systematic use of both physical and structural violence.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence of the centrality of patriarchy to radical feminist theory it has remained largely undefined;

“...it is the amorphous force that works behind the scenes to oppress women and to undermine feminism; it is so overwhelming and insidious that nearly every aspect of society embodies its evil. Our language, government, entertainment, education...everything is patriarchal; and for that reason the enemy of women.”<sup>9</sup>

For those feminists who have tried to derive a more coherent definition, patriarchy has been expressed as a society which embodies masculine ideals, expressed as hierarchies of power and order, most commonly characterized by rational, aggressive individualism.<sup>10</sup> Yet even this definition still suffers from caprices of ambiguity.

However, it is not so much what radical feminists are working against as what they are working towards that is the fundamental project. In essence, radical feminism aspires to

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<sup>6</sup> The terminology of radical feminism is somewhat arbitrary and is open to challenge and discussion. There are many other labels from New Victorianism through to Gender feminism and Victim feminism which can be used as rubrics for the same ideas. It must be remembered that these are not self-conscious labels. Each interpretation claims to be quintessential feminism and, as such, these labels are given by groups challenging this authenticity.

<sup>7</sup> S. Djikstra, 'Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan: The Politics of Omission', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1980, pp.296-301.

<sup>8</sup> Gloria Steinam in C. Hoff Summers, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1994, p.188.

<sup>9</sup> R. Denfeld, *The New Victorians: A Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995, p.156.

<sup>10</sup> C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p.14.

the achievement of matriarchal organization, which from their perspective would alleviate the oppression of the female condition and, in general, be a more advanced method of social organization. This worldview is premised on the assumption that women, because of their biological function, as life givers, are innately different from men who are constructed as life takers. This fundamental difference is often extended to include the notion that by the rights conferred through their status as life givers and as part of the oppressed, women are morally and perceptively superior to men.<sup>11</sup> Despite its challenge to conventional understandings, this goddess culture is a passive definition of feminism. Through its gynocentrism and emphasis on community, nurturing, and intuition, women are not actively encouraged to seek change through challenging existing institutions but expect that change should come through the acceptance of this higher moral order and inner transformation.<sup>12</sup> There is no advantage in seeking change through existing institutions as they are representatives of the patriarchy and which creates and sustains assumptions about gender and gender relations. Therefore, any claims against these institutions will simply be subsumed to protect the patriarchal hegemony.

There are, however, other ways of thinking about women which are diametrically opposed to the ideas of radicalism and the goddess culture. Although liberal feminism has been a minor theme in feminism's recent past, this alternative construction has found a voice through a new generation of writers exemplified by Naomi Wolf, Renee Denfeld

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<sup>11</sup> C. Hoff Summers, *op. cit.*, p.74. These ideas are a summary of major radical feminist writings. For expanded versions of these see, for example, C.A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, Harvard University Press, 1987; Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Penguin, 1979; and Adrienne Rich, *On Lies and Silence*, W.W. Norton, 1979. Rich's book is particularly notable for its discussion of international lesbian culture.

<sup>12</sup> N. Wolf, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How it Will Change the Twenty First Century*, Chatto Windus, New York, 1993, p.149; and R. Denfeld, *op. cit.*, p.16.

and Christina Hoff Summers.<sup>13</sup> While each author uses her own terminology to translate fundamental concepts into their practical context there is a common thread underpinning their writing. This commonality is the belief that radical feminism constructs women as victims; the passivity which is revered as an expression of female superiority in fact disempowers women and prevents them from taking responsibility for the amelioration of their position in society.<sup>14</sup> Rather, feminism should be a matter of power, that is, to acknowledge the power that women already hold and to extend this power until equality, however defined, is achieved. As such, liberal feminists seek to end the acceptance of cultural and biological stereotypes of women as pacifist-nurturers propounded by radical feminism and to accept that aggression, competitiveness and autonomy are equally valid expressions of femininity. Their world is essentially more complex than a dichotomy of the binary opposites, public/private, male/female, aggressor/nurturer, that is suggested in radical feminism's subtext. Reflecting its ideological heritage, the feminist liberal agenda seeks to achieve its objectives by petitioning and challenging existing institutions. Far from being structures which create and sustain assumptions about gender, institutions are perceived as being value neutral and as an avenue of change.

### **Inside the Feminist Classroom: Thinking About Feminist Epistemologies**

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.152. There is a distinct difference between Wolf's position in *Fire with Fire*, which expounds the power feminism, as compared to her original work, *The Beauty Myth*, Chatto and Windus, 1991, which clearly depicts the notion of woman as victim. See also R. Denfeld, and C. Hoff Summers, *op. cit.* Just as radical feminism has a variety of terminologies there is open debate over the use of liberal feminism to describe this set of ideas. Liberal feminism, has deep historical roots from Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart and Harriet Mill to Betty Friedan's reinterpretation in the 1960s and as such while the fundamentals have remained the same, their substance or practical context has changed. Other labels in current usage include power feminism and equity feminism.

<sup>14</sup> N. Wolf *ibid.*, p.148.

Once inside the feminist classroom, epistemology becomes far more complex with the addition of other cleavages to an already fractured discourse.<sup>15</sup> The cleavage between radical and liberal feminisms refers only to the most basic, ideological division. In removing feminism from the realm of a social movement into the domain of academic inquiry there is considerable contention about how to categorize feminist perspective, either on the basis of politico-ideological considerations or on the basis of their epistemological implications.<sup>16</sup> While the politico-ideological divisions are self-evident and have already been discussed to some extent, epistemological implications are somewhat vague.

Feminist epistemology can, in general, be broken down into three subgroups, empiricism, standpoint, and post modernism. While they are largely independent of their politico-ideological classifications, they do contain some commonalties and emphasize specific points of reference. For example, empiricism is often conflated with liberal feminism. It seeks to describe the role of gender and catalogue women's underrepresentation without devolving into potentially destabilizing analysis that would seek to alter fundamentally the status of women, or question the meaning of social and political practices.<sup>17</sup> To this end empiricist feminism accepts basic positivist premises and is concerned with finding ways in which women were present, either by reinterpreting traditional areas of participation or by expanding the legitimate categories of discussion to include areas more conducive to women's involvement.<sup>18</sup> Just as liberal feminism

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<sup>15</sup> C. Hoff Summers, *op. cit.* p.88.

<sup>16</sup> S. Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Government Institutions*, Macmillan, London, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p.12.

considers the state to be value neutral and an acceptable agent of change, empiricist feminism holds that social scientific knowledge is a viable and valuable way of knowing, as long as it is removed from the “distorting lenses of particular [male] observers.”<sup>19</sup> While other interpreters would doubt the ability to achieve such a separation the distinction between public and private spheres of human interaction makes this separation and therefore the removal of distorting lenses entirely possible.

Continuing along the theoretical spectrum, standpoint feminism seeks to move empiricist description toward an analytical/theoretical agenda.<sup>20</sup> This agenda would seek to valorize women’s experiences while beginning to find a separate thinking space that begins to examine critically the social construction of gender. Any given definition of gender is manufactured by the social mores of a dominant group, in this instance of gendered analysis, the prevailing interests of men and masculinity. In many respects standpoint thinking acts as bridge between the radical and liberal poles of social movement feminism. That is, while it begins to redefine parameters through the deconstruction of the cultural definition of women and analyze the existence and implication of the patriarchy and its structural oppression of women it makes no attempt to move beyond a theoretical agenda and put these ideas into practice.<sup>21</sup> Neither does it attempt to analyze the differences between women or the fallacy of gender homogenization. Standpoint thinking mirrors the biological determinism that is the

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<sup>19</sup> M. Hawkesworth in *ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> While ‘standpoint’ can simply refer to a generic perspective, its meaning in this context is somewhat different. When used by Harding and Zalweski for example, it refers to a specific way of thinking in and about feminism which is exclusively for women. In this sense it reflects many of the same ideas contained within radical feminism.

<sup>21</sup> C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp.43&49.

foundation of victim/radical feminism. Where essential and universal man once stood preeminent essentialist and universal woman has been constructed to take his place.<sup>22</sup> Effectively, these absent agendas condemn standpoint thinking to subscribe to fallacies of knowledge inherited from the masculinist and patriarchal world that it purports to criticize.<sup>23</sup>

Rounding out this particular discussion of the feminist classroom is postmodern feminism as the intellectual expression and attenuated conclusion of social movement radicalism. While acknowledging the contribution of standpoint theory to the deconstruction of knowledge, feminist postmodernism is skeptical as it considers this particular approach to be intellectually naive.<sup>24</sup> Under a postmodern interpretation women cannot be considered as a generic group. Women embody the diversity of humanity in microcosm and, as a consequence, there can be no concept of a single standpoint or perspective. There are factors of race, class and sexual orientation to consider in how women perceive the world and, any theory or analysis must sensitive to these particularized interpretations. In effect, "...everything finite, definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society" is rejected.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that

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<sup>22</sup> S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, p.20.

<sup>23</sup> C. Sylvester, 'The Emperor's Theories and Transformations: Looking at the Field Through Feminist Lenses', in D.C., Pirges and C. Sylvester (eds), *Transformations in the Global Political Economy*, Macmillan, London, 1990, p.242. This presents a really curious paradox. Standpoint feminism's rejection of the masculinist and patriarchal world is extensive, to the point where the scientific method is rejected as a bastion of male culture for its embodiment of rational individualism. This is an inappropriate form of knowledge for women as it has implicit expectations which privilege men's knowledge and experience. In doing so, it cannot be expected objectively to include women's experiences and consequently marginalizes them.

<sup>24</sup> C. Weber, 'Good Girls, Little Girls and Bad Girls: Male Paranoia in Robert Keohane's Critique of Feminist International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 1994, pp.342-347; See also M. Zalewski, 'The Women/Women' Question in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 1994, p.416.

<sup>25</sup> J. Kristeva, 'Oscillation Between Power and Denial', in S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, p.21.

feminist postmodernism begins to analyze the way that knowledge about women and gender relations is constructed and can be deconstructed, this epistemic location is compromised by intellectual paralysis. How can relations be reoriented or demands be made if there is no referent object, that is, if there is no agreement as to who or what women are?<sup>26</sup>

Given that feminism is a relatively new addition to intellectual discourse it is constantly open to change and reconsideration. The above typology of empiricist, standpoint and postmodern theory, drawn from Sandra Harding's 1986 work on the science question in feminism has provided an accepted and acceptable framework for feminist theorists.<sup>27</sup> However, Sandra Whitworth's writings have moved away from this typology, reverting back to the terminologies of liberalism, radicalism, and postmodernism while adding a further division, feminist critical theory, to the discussion. The rationale behind Whitworth's feminist critical theory is grounded in familiar criticism, that the other interpretations resort to essentialism which do not advance the inquiry into the role and function of women and their relationship to the world in which they exist.<sup>28</sup> Instead, Whitworth chooses to begin such a study with the notion of gender, as the quasi-scientific knowledge of culturally grounded sexual difference, rather than woman, which is a biological construct accompanied by specific expectations and associations of the politics of feminism.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> M. Zalewski, 'Feminist Standpoint Theory Meets International Relations Theory: A Feminist Version of David and Goliath', *Fletcher Forum of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp.15-18; and C. Sylvester, 'The Emperor's Theories', *op. cit.*, pp.245-249.

<sup>27</sup> See S. Harding, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, p.23-24.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.25.

In essence feminist critical theory extends radical/postmodern feminism, further undermining the foundations of knowledge as to who and what women and men are, as well as seeking to understand their material and ideological relationships. Feminist critical theory departs from postmodernism at this point to emphasize the role of individual actors in creating the context of gender interaction rather than simply deferring to the amorphous power of the equally amorphous patriarchy.<sup>30</sup> One of Whitworth's principle arguments for this approach is that it avoids "...the indefinite regress and political paralysis which characterizes postmodernism" by accommodating historical variability. In doing so, it purports to avoid universalization and essentialism by constantly creating new interpretations specific to each temporal or other defined grouping. While Whitworth's rationale holds to a point questions could equally be raised about the utility of this approach. It is, at times, difficult to see where the distinction between postmodernism and critical theory falls. Equally, critical theory can be subject to similar criticisms as postmodernism with its tendency towards specificity in content. The units of analysis are reduced to such a exact point that they begin to lose analytical validity and it becomes impossible to derive generalized knowledge or conclusions from these particular avenues of inquiry.<sup>31</sup>

### **The State of the International Relations Discipline**

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> This is of course contingent on the premise that a general theory is the desired end product of such investigation. It could, quite possibly, be that the desired end state is to develop an appropriate form of criticism that can be used to dismantle and transform as is suggested by Carole Pateman's notion of the theoretical subversiveness of feminism. C. Pateman, 'The Theoretical Subversiveness of Feminism', in C. Pateman and E. Gross (eds), *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, NorthEastern University Press, Boston, 1986. p.4.

Feminist theorizing is, evidently, a distinct challenge to ways of thinking and knowing and has a tendency to provoke intellectual ferment whenever it intersects with conventional understanding. This certainly holds true for International Relations theory. In the post Second World War era IR, as an academic discipline, has often been criticized for its theoretical insularity and hostility to new ideas with a basically uninterrupted subscription to the axioms of realist thinking.<sup>32</sup> Alternative foundations of knowledge, which do not concur with realist thinking are, are actively excluded from the debate. While this characterization of IR theory as a hostile realist monologue is, to some extent a misrepresentation of the current state of the discipline, given that neoliberalism and critical theory are clearly audible voices in theory debates, IR has remained largely unaffected by on-going revisionist debates which have characterized the intellectual climate across a broad spectrum of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. It has only been in the very recent past, with the dislocation brought about in the practical context of IR by the end of the Cold War, that thinking space has become available for a discussion of alternative perspectives. It is this context which has allowed gender an opportunity to be considered as an authentic analytical variable and, evidently, provoked a highly contentious debate.<sup>33</sup>

The conventional wisdom of international relations contends that its purpose is to describe and analyze the causes of war, the essential actors and the world system in which

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<sup>32</sup> M. Zalewski, 'Feminist Standpoint Theory', *op. cit.*, p.14. At its inception international relations was a more open debate, reflecting a great diversity in traditions and schools of thought. There have been three significant debates in International Relations between realism and idealism, classical and scientific knowledge, and now a more diverse debate which incorporates the gender question as well as issues of post-state analysis and the more general antifoundationalist approaches to IR. It is only in recent history that IR theory, with the emergence of the Cold War and structural realism, has become so insular.

<sup>33</sup> J. George, 'International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space: Another View of the Third Debate', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, September 1989, p.269.

these forces operate and interact.<sup>34</sup> The realist lens which has focused thinking and theorizing about international relations interprets these three facets to be the state as a unitary actor, driven to a hypothetical and actual state of war by the unbridled pursuit of national self interest in a fundamentally anarchic international system. As such, security assumes a largely military definition operating at a state-systemic level.<sup>35</sup> While realism's primary agenda is to describe and analyze the international system, there is also the expectation that a testable and generalized theory of international interaction will be developed.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, in the depersonalized domain of the state, any knowledge, outside that derived from positivist investigation and that which is empirically verifiable, has no bonafide claim to be included in the theory and practice of international relations.

Despite the fact that the realist perspective has provided the centripetal force for the current practice of international relations, other perspectives and constructions do have significant input into the debate. Their claims to difference notwithstanding, these alternative theories are all effectively working from similar bases of knowledge and within the similar parameters.<sup>37</sup> For example, although neoliberals emphasize the role of the individual in the international system their theoretical parameters are still delimited by

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<sup>34</sup> K.J. Holsti in C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory...op. cit.*, p.68.

<sup>35</sup> The difference between classical realists and structural neo-realists is highlighted. Hobbes, Machiavelli and Rousseau were, for example concerned with issues of individual security in the state of nature. It is the structural neo-realists who have diverted the realist agenda somewhat to be concerned with purely military and state based definitions of security.

<sup>36</sup> C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory...op. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>37</sup> It could be contended that Marxist/world systems analysis would undermine the logic of this argument given that the premises of their perspective are very different to realism, liberalism and their various reinterpretations. However, for all intents and purposes Marxist/world systems theory plays little or no part in the contemporary debate over IR theory and it is for this reason that it has been excluded from the parameters of this discussion.

the state, which is once again operating in an anarchic domain.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, while the definition of security is broadened explicitly to include the subsystemic level and go beyond the military dimension the extent to which this new definition of security is viable is constrained by the limitations of positivism which most easily accommodates state based analysis and definition.<sup>39</sup>

The third voice of current debate, critical theory, embraces an even more arcane interpretation of the problematics of IR theory yet still has much in common with conventional truisms. As an essentialist critique of the fundamentals of IR, critical theory challenges the basic units of analysis as well as the ways in which this information is obtained and utilized. In its most basic terms critical theory conducts its reassessment through the dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion. Principally, critical theory picks up on a Kantian ideal: moving beyond state based analysis to a definition grounded in human equality. This would both transcend the implicit limitations of variables such as class, race, gender and nationality, yet, be equally sensitive to their particularized interpretations.<sup>40</sup> In working against a unidimensional conception of the discipline critical theory accommodates definitions below the state level which allows the individual to be considered as a legitimate actor and unit of analysis in the international system. Equally, its difference and importance is clearly evident because of its ability, through the fractured lens that is postmodernism, to reintroduce normative/postpositive

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<sup>38</sup> See for example, M. Zacher and R. Matthews, 'Liberal International Relations Theory: Common threads and Divergent Strands', in C. Kegley (ed), *Controversies in International Relations*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory...op. cit.*, pp.30-31.

<sup>40</sup> A. Linklater, 'The Question of the Next Stage of International Relations Theory: A Critical Theoretical Point of View', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp.89-92

thought to International Relations.<sup>41</sup> These credits notwithstanding critical theory encounters substantial criticism from feminist sources. The substance of this critique originates with the absence or marginalization, through its analysis as an exception or special case, of the gender variable within critical theory analyses and discussions.<sup>42</sup> On this premise, feminist scholars contend that despite its pretensions to debasing all currently constructed knowledge, critical theory implicitly accepts IR as male homestead, where women are still considered to be illegitimate actors.<sup>43</sup> Under this interpretation, critical theory, in its present form, cannot provide a suitable theoretical context for advancing a feminist interpretation of international relations.

### **Thinking About Gender in IR Theory: A Radical Feminist Perspective**

The perception that the basic parameters of the discipline are permanently entrenched is only the starting point on a web of criticism which censures the fundamentals of International Relations theory. From a feminist viewpoint, it is as if this way of thinking and the refusal to consider alternative foundations of knowledge systematically silence feminist voices. While IR theory is presented as a gender neutral space it is according to

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<sup>41</sup> S. Smith, 'The Forty Years Detour: The Resurgence of Normative Theory in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, VI. 21, No. 3, Winter 1992, p.505; and C. Brown, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Reassessment*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p.222.

<sup>42</sup> C. Brown, *ibid.*, in his discussion of critical theory affords only a cursory glance to feminism and feminist interpretations of international relations. The only voices that are heard in Brown's section on New Challenges in International Relations are male; Richard Ashley, Michel Foucault and Derek Parfit are just a few of the names whose ideas form the content of the discussion. In Brown's defense, it could be argued that the majority of feminist theorizing has been written since 1992, when his book was published. However, *Millennium* published a special edition in Autumn 1988 (Vol. 17) that deals exclusively with issues of gender and international relations which Brown fails to utilize.

<sup>43</sup> C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory...op. cit.*, p.8.

feminist theorists part of a heavily gendered identity.<sup>44</sup> Although feminists find numerous incidences of this phenomenon, the state as the basic unit of analysis for conventional theory is, perhaps, the logical starting point.

Under a radical/standpoint feminist interpretation of IR theory the state loses its neutrality and is instead constructed as a male homestead. Far from being a context of impersonal structures and systems in which events occur the state as an IR actor sets up patterns of inclusion and exclusion determined by the need to carry out the basic acts of governance.<sup>45</sup> Those who are included are deemed citizens of the state and entitled to its benefits, while the rest remain excluded from its privileges and protective capacity. However, on this basis alone, there would appear to be no valid reason why the state should, or even could, be considered as an exclusively male homestead working toward the exclusion of women. The feminist rejoinder to this statement presses for an analysis of the notion of a citizen. From their point of view, based on a Hobbesian, Machiavellian or Rousseauvian pretheory of International Relations, a citizen is defined as a warrior-patriot or one who can defend the state.<sup>46</sup> Given that women are not permitted to

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<sup>44</sup> F. Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1994, p.149.

<sup>45</sup> A. Linklater, *op. cit.*, p.82.

<sup>46</sup> The discussion of International Relations pretheory occupies a great deal of feminist scholarship. In general it refers to the works of Plato, Hobbes, Machiavelli, and to a lesser extent that of Jean Jaques Rousseau. Given that these pretheories are believed to structure the development of modern theories then the way that women are constructed within them is particularly significant. Most highlight the exclusion of women from the discourse, especially with Hobbes, and the exclusion of women from participation in the formation of the Social Contract. Female absence here equals legitimate absence later. However, while female exclusion may have been a part of pretheoretical discussion there are many valid questions to be raised concerning the appropriate use and interpretation of historical tracts and the potential analytical consequences of ahistorical interpretation. If questions such as these are considered then Hobbes *et al.* may have different roles in the present debate between IR and feminist rethinking. However, it is also important to acknowledge that even in modern IR writing, in an era when women have obtained rights of citizenship, they are still conspicuously absent. See C. Sylvester, 'Empathetic Cooperation: A Feminist Method for International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 1994, p.319.

participate in the act of war, and therefore the defense of the state, by virtue of perpetuated patterns of masculinist social control, they will never be warriors, nor true patriots, and are excluded in totality from the rights and privileges of citizenship. Instead, women exist within a private sphere of morality, family, and irrationality as the protected subjects of the warrior-patriots.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of inclusion and exclusion, if the state does not represent, or at least acknowledge, a sum total of security interests held by its constitute population how can it be considered to be the legitimate provider of security? The feminist dilemma that emerges from this question is particularly significant. Given that the state is the overarching embodiment of the warrior-citizen it also sanctions the use of force and determines what constitutes legitimate violence.<sup>48</sup> Feminist thinkers argue that through the glorification of war, as a result of its official sanction, the state can also be held responsible for the reproduction of structural conditions of violence within its physical and ideational boundaries.<sup>49</sup> Continuing from this women, as the non-warrior-citizens, are excluded from state protection. Consequently, they live in systemic insecurity, at risk not only from violence, that is the byproduct of international action, but also violence which occurs inside the state, both in the public and private spheres. For the latter two categories the state is complicit through its "...selective sanctioning of non-state violence...", especially in its refusal to intervene in domestic violence.<sup>50</sup> From Spike

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<sup>47</sup> J.B. Elshtain, *Women and War*, Basic Books, New York, 1987, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> R. Grant, 'The Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory', in R. Grant and K. Newland (eds), *Gender and International Relations*, 1991, p.18.

<sup>49</sup> V.S. Peterson, 'Security and Sovereign States: What is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously', 1992, p.45.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*; and J.A. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, Columbia University Press, New York, p.30.

Peterson's perspective the relationship between women and men, and women and the state, is akin to a protection racket where women are under threat and have compliance demanded from them in order to receive protection. Their insecurity dilemma is thus heightened.<sup>51</sup>

Not only is the basic unit of IR analysis challenged by feminist rethinking but, equally, the actual substance of academic inquiry is a matter of serious contention. As previously mentioned, the realist definition of IR is preoccupied with state interaction as characterized, at least in part, by the study of war. Consequently, the absence of women has been accepted by placing this definition in the context of a division between high and low politics. Accordingly, International Relations, as state based interaction, falls within the purview of high politics, while areas where activity occurs at the substate level, incidentally areas where women have substantial interests, are considered to be part of the lower echelon.<sup>52</sup> It can thus be argued from the traditional perspective that the absence of women from the IR discourse is not part of a systematic exclusion and is, in fact, both a contingent and necessary feature. However, on the basis of earlier discussion, with regard to the role of the state as legitimate actor and the domestic insecurity dilemma of women, feminist theorists refuse to accept either this description or its inevitability.

The principle dispute coalesces around the question of how the study of IR can be considered gender neutral when the principle actors in foreign and military policy, IR's authoritative domain, are predominantly male? Furthermore, why should it be that only state to state level contact is considered valid when activities that occur at the substate

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>52</sup> S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, p.xi.

level are independently significant, as well as having implications for high state politics and international interaction. To draw an example from IR theory these ideas are contained within Rebecca Grant's discussion of Rousseau's stag hunt as a metaphor for the security dilemma of states.<sup>53</sup> In this metaphor, states are symbolized by male hunters in pursuit of a stag. In order to catch the stag each hunter must cooperate. The risk in cooperation is, however, that hunters may defect and opt to pursue individual ends which are immediately attainable, such as the capture of a hare, rather than endure the risk of not snaring the stag. In much the same way, while states see the benefits of cooperation with one another over security issues, there are obvious benefits to be derived from defection and the pursuit of individual gain, especially in the realist world where power and its acquisition are paramount considerations. However, it may be that there are other options available to the hunter (state) in the pursuit of the stag (power) that are not represented in the analogy. Grant and Tickner argue, from the standpoint of woman as nurturer, that if women and women's experiences were considered to be a legitimate part of the analogy a different range of choices would become available to hunters. Beyond the analogy, this would inevitably necessitate a radical redefinition of the subject content of International Relations.<sup>54</sup> Aside from the intimation that women's solutions would be communally organized, based on a biologically determined definition of women as cooperative nurturers, there is little concrete evidence of how exactly women would hunt the stag nor, therefore, of the consequences of their different hunting style.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> J.A. Tickner, *op. cit.*, p.31 and R. Grant, *op. cit.*, pp.15-16.

<sup>54</sup> R. Grant, *ibid.*, p.16; and J.A. Tickner, *ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>55</sup> While I have chosen the label of radical feminism to describe this way of thinking it is a relative judgment. In discussing feminism there are schools of thought that that would dismiss this account of the feminist stag hunt as feminist false consciousness effected by cooption to patriarchal thought processes. For

However, the feminist agenda for International Relations does not end at this point. Although it is an embryonic and underdeveloped approach to IR there is a definite feminist perspective as to what a reconfigured discipline will look like and how it will address fundamental issues in international relations. At present, the discourse would appear to be dominated by the writings of radical feminists such as Christine Sylvester, J. Anne Tickner, Rebecca Grant and Spike Peterson.<sup>56</sup> From their perspective, each level of security is connected and there can be no notion of (inter) national security until domestic security is achieved.<sup>57</sup> There is therefore, an alternative conception of the security dilemma which emphasizes the security of the individual over that of the state. Evidently, a feminist analysis would emphasize the importance of the individual's security and the domestic analogy both as ends in themselves and as a building blocks for a more holistic approach to interstate relations.

All feminist IR theory is essentially an individual level deconstruction of security within the broader context of the collective experience of women. In light of this highly particularized perspective and in taking IR out of the realm of the state, into the realm of the individual it suggests that areas of interest to feminist IR will be very different from conventional manifestations. The pursuit of power by states as evidenced in studies of nuclear arsenals, force structure, weapons deployment, territorial integrity and state

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example, C.J. Adams' 1990 book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum 1990), describes such activity as hunting to meat eating as a submission to the patriarchy because of its implicit violence. Similarly, the problem of classification is all too evident when trying to locate authors in an ideological framework. J. Anne Tickner for example is generally classified as a liberal feminist, however, much of her work would appear to be just as comfortable within the parameters of radical feminism. This issue will be discussed more fully at later points.

<sup>56</sup> There are of course other authors writing on this subject but those cited would appear to define the parameters and intellectual trends.

<sup>57</sup> J.A. Tickner, *op. cit.*, pp.55-64.

sovereignty are deemed to be external to the provision of rudimentary security and the study of International Relations when juxtaposed against issues of women's health/population control, and finding solutions to domestic violence perpetrated by men against women. According to feminist writers these issues cannot be considered as a legitimate part of International Relations, while traditional constructs of knowledge and knowing are still in place, as there are no coincidences of interest. Equally, to consider them within conventionally defined IR would unravel all the premises of action; "...the whole theoretical approach to international relations rests on a foundation of political concepts most of which would be far more difficult to hold together coherently were it not for the trick of eliminating women from the prevailing definitions of man as a political actor."<sup>58</sup>

It would appear that feminist interpretation is intimately linked to an economic definition of security.<sup>59</sup> Tickner cites the correlation between levels of violence against women and economic hardship to justify this reoriented definition.<sup>60</sup> Her argument is built around the idea that increasing military spending, which states use to demonstrate their capacity to achieve and project power, frequently leads states to economic austerity. Funds are then diverted away from social welfare programs which primarily impacts directly on women, as the socio-economically marginalized. Later, there is secondary effect as unemployment rates rise and individual or familial economic misfortune is compounded. The cumulative effects of such a scenario are reflected in increased

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<sup>58</sup> R. Grant op. cit., p.19

<sup>59</sup> This is certainly the direction that feminist scholarship has taken, Sandra Whitworth's recent work in *Feminism and International Relations, op.cit.*, would appear to be the beginning of a decisive movement away from traditionally defined IR concerns.

<sup>60</sup> J. A. Tickner op. cit. p.56

physical and structural violence against women in both the public and private spheres. Thus, if military spending was reduced and states no longer sought the projection and acquisition of power as the validation of their status in the international system, then women would not be at such risk and security could be considered a legitimate concept.

However, the addition of global economic security is only the first stage of the redefined International Relations environment. Economic security, for example, cannot be considered in isolation from environmental security as the environment is the context and substance of economic development. Typically, environmental security includes issues of sustainable development not only in terms of resources but also for the production of food and the availability of drinking water, but beyond this purely instrumental relationship there is the specific gendered reference which emphasizes the innate link between women as nurturers and the natural environment. One point of contention for feminist international relations scholars is that they want equal respect for bringing life into the world and nurturing its development as is given to the ending of life through the glorification of war and the warrior-patriot.<sup>61</sup> In moving away from the warrior-patriot and working towards a (re)gendered perspective, feminist scholars seek identity through the idea of a citizen-defender who embodies the spirit of these ideas, if not their physical manifestation.

Extending these ideas about women, security and international relations to perhaps their outermost conclusions are writers such as Betty Reardon. Reardon's 1993 book, *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security* focuses on different aspects of women's contribution to international relations, and, by implication, also on women's

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p.93.

exclusion from the discipline.<sup>62</sup> Reardon's rejection of the present constructs of IR is more holistic, preferring to redefine her subject as peace studies. This is, however, not the "negative peace" of systemic patriarchal violence, which characterizes current relations, but a "positive peace" which is economically and socially just.<sup>63</sup> The basic premise which underpins this inquiry into the feminist vision(s) of global security is an unwavering belief in the inherently pacific nature of women and her valorization as a nurturer and a peacemaker.<sup>64</sup> The new agenda for a women's discussion of international relations should, therefore, be oriented towards changing modes of thinking. Further to this end it should, ideally, bring issues of national and world-wide security into focus through a gynocentric lens, emphasizing sustainability and equity, but also protection.

Evidently, if the earlier discussion of feminist theory is taken into account, this feminist critique and reassessment reflects only one perspective, rather than a broad cross section of reconsideration. Beyond the consensus on women's exclusion from international relations specific ideological convictions, which moderate the general feminist agenda, create distinct and deep seated divisions to the point where no agreement can be reached as to the form and extent of women's exclusion, or even appropriate solutions to this problem. From the emphasis given to a biologically determined definition of woman, the expectation of a regendered, rather than gender neutral, end-state theory and the recurrent theme of woman as victim, it is obvious that

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<sup>62</sup> B.A. Reardon, *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security*, SUNY Press, New York, 1993.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, pp.39-51. Reardon's definition of systemic patriarchy violence is far more comprehensive than any other feminist author cited heretofore. As well as domestic violence (crimes of the hearth) she also includes "verbal violence" (p.40) and the words that wound. Nonviolence is a distinct strategy that should be pursued at all levels.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

radical/standpoint feminism is the dominant discourse. This is not to say, however, that other possible interpretations of feminist IR theory can be completely discounted. In fact, this is far from the case. As Sandra Whitworth's 1995 book, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions*, shows there are possible avenues of feminist inquiry and explanation contained within a feminist critical theory approach to international relations and political economy. Yet, in the absence of further work from this point of view, and, equally, in the absence of a liberal/empiricist perspective it is difficult to see the contemporary feminist IR discourse as reflecting more than the single radical standpoint.

### **The Inherent Inadequacies of Radical Feminist International Relations Theory**

In many ways, the criticism leveled by radical/standpoint feminists against the IR mainstream is equally applicable to their own intellectual behavior. One of their primary criticisms, even of critical theory, is that the mainstream debate systematically silences the feminist voice by using the basic constructs and premises which underpin its theories to invalidate feminist claims. However, this criticism emerges under circumstances where there could be no possible expectation that feminist thinking could conform to the assumptions which make these theories hold true.<sup>65</sup> Yet, at times, it would appear that this is precisely how standpoint feminists judge, and dismiss, other perspectives, in particular feminist liberal/empiricist analysis.

This is not to discredit or diminish the contribution that radical/standpoint feminism has made to IR theory during its critical period of reevaluation. It is simply to suggest

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<sup>65</sup> Robert Keohane, for example, takes a positivist view of theory which renders his critique at best narrow and at worst external to the discussion at hand.

that other perspectives should be given a more systematic investigation and that the ideas advanced by standpoint feminism should be considered more circumspectly. The dearth of criticism of feminist scholarship highlights this particular concern. It is fallacious to assume that just because this is a new aspect of inquiry that it should be exempt from valid critical investigation.<sup>66</sup> If anything, its novelty should serve to heighten trenchant inquiry not necessarily skepticism into the subject area.

One of the most pressing problems for feminist theories of international relations is how to discuss the notion of gender without transgressing the fine line between necessary generalization and intellectually limiting cultural essentialism and biological determinism. While purporting not to want to subscribe to these social constructions, which are in part responsible for the invisibility and marginalized status of women in International Relations, it would seem that some form of stereotyping is an unavoidable hazard. The very name, standpoint feminism, suggests that this interpretation is more vulnerable than other feminist schools. It implies that a single lens is used to focus their worldview and subsequently inform their theory. To be able to use this lens it is inevitable that generalizations about women's identity and interests will be made. Given that gender is a relational concept similar assumptions about men and masculinity will also be formed, as well as a commentary concerning relationships between the sexes.<sup>67</sup>

In simple terms, biology and reproductive function set the parameters of radical/standpoint discussion on gender and gender relations. The rationale of the

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<sup>66</sup> The emphasis here is on the word valid, as there is a great deal of criticism from the mainstream which dismisses the feminist critique out of hand without allowing it an opportunity to present its ideas and evaluate it objectively.

<sup>67</sup> M. Zalewski, 'Well, What is the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?', *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, 1995, p.341.

argument follows that because women bear children they are endowed with a moral superiority and an innately nurturing and peaceful spirit, oriented towards the sustenance of life. In contrast, men are biologically removed from the reproductive cycle, and as children are separated from the nurturing influence of mothers by a culture that devalues the work and qualities of women.<sup>68</sup> As children in a patriarchal society boys learn to value the antitheses of feminine attributes, and as men they aspire to attain the highly prized aggressive and conflictual tendencies that are the physical and psychological manifestations of the warrior-patriot.

Through its biological determinism, radical/standpoint feminism universalizes the notions of woman and man across both time and space. This denies not only the possibility of individual difference but also the influence of culture, class, race, religion and other socio-cultural variables in determining patterns of behavior in self-definition as well as in relations between women and men.<sup>69</sup> This essentialism is empirically insupportable and exposes serious flaws in standpoint feminist thinking and explanation. In many ways the only thing that radical/standpoint feminism accomplishes is to replace universal man, which they criticize the patriarchy for producing, with universal woman.<sup>70</sup> Equally, it would appear that standpoint feminists are unwilling to examine the ramifications of their reconstructed stereotypes in an extended discussion. For example, a significant proportion of standpoint argument is founded on the belief that women live in insecurity, determined by the inequality of power relations between the sexes as represented by the levels of male-female violence at a society wide and domestic level.

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<sup>68</sup> S. Whitworth, *op. cit.*, pp.17-18.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p.20.

However, while these statistics of male-female violence are compelling there is no mention of the equally high, and in some instances greater levels, of male-male violence and, even more significantly, the comparable rate of violence within lesbian couples.<sup>71</sup> The consideration of these statistics invalidates a number of premisses used to underpin key standpoint arguments. Gender attributes can no longer be considered as biologically defined polar opposites; women cannot be constructed as peace-loving nurturers, nor can men be solely defined by their violent and domineering natures. In challenging these assumptions gender is marginalized as a category of difference and this raises questions concerning its legitimacy as an analytical variable.

The utility of radical/standpoint theory is further brought into question when the basic units of analysis are taken into consideration. The end of the Cold War has, to a degree, destabilized the international system initiating a reconsideration of the sanctified status of the state in international relations theory. With its redefinition of the security dilemma to include personal, physical, and other structural conditions of security, as defined by the individual members of society and not by the state, feminist theory presents itself as a viable non-state framework for analysis.<sup>72</sup> An analytical structure such as this would be particularly useful in looking at quasi/failed states. In these locations the concerns of the population are not focused on territorial integrity or the protection of the state from external threats but the protection of the population from the state itself and its various agents. To relate this situation specifically to feminist theorizing it is under these

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<sup>71</sup> R. Denfeld, *op.cit.*, pp.47-48.

<sup>72</sup> This is not a true redefinition as Hobbes included many of these same ideas in his definition of the security dilemma. However, it can be considered as a redefinition in terms of moving the parameters of discussion away from structural neorealism and their interpretation of the security dilemma.

conditions that women are most at risk from domestic and societal violence and where their status is most in need of amelioration. Feminist theorizing should, therefore, be able to make a considerable contribution to such analysis, explanation, and prescription.

In this sense, a feminist perspective on international relations would appear to be an authentic voice in the IR theory debate at a time when traditional voices are under intense scrutiny for their apparent inability to explain interstate relations within existing parameters. At a general level the utility of a gender variable could be called into question, as post-state analysis, where substate security concerns are being taken into consideration, which has already been accommodated within existing frameworks. One only has to turn to the works of Barry Buzan, Raimo Vayrynen, and Mohammed Ayoob to find broadened definitions of security, nonstate actors, and internal security dilemmas as integral elements of IR's theoretical debate.<sup>73</sup> The feminist retort to this is that these authors do not take domestic security to its base meaning. In failing to do so the fundamental element of the security dilemma is lost and there has been no real intellectual movement away from the IR mainstream. Furthermore, these authors continue to work within the existing parameters of an inherently male gendered security analysis and see no need to question the foundations of this knowledge, nor the way it structures the study and content of international relations.

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<sup>73</sup> The broadened definition includes elements such as environmental and other non-military definitions of security which have specific relation to the domestic context as well as interstate relations. See for example Tad Homer Dixon 'On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict', *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Fall 1991, pp.76-116. See also B. Buzan 'New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty First Century', *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp.431-451; M. Ayoob, 'The Security Problematic of the Third World', *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2, January 1991, pp.257-283 and R. Vayrynen, 'The Nature of Conflicts in Future International Relations', in G. Lundestad and O.A Westad (eds), *Beyond the Cold War: New Dimensions in International Relations*, Scandinavian University Press, Oslo, 1993.

However, the latter charge could quite legitimately be leveled against radical/standpoint feminism. In perpetuating the same gender stereotypes of men and women as the theory they criticize standpoint feminism requires little rethinking to occur concerning the basic structure and content of international relations. Standpoint theory is, therefore, easily assimilated into mainstream analysis but consequently fails to achieve its fundamental objectives of destabilizing the mainstream of International Relations theory and finding a separate thinking space for women within the discipline. Robert Keohane's comment that feminist radical/standpoint provides the most promising avenue of contribution for feminist thinking to retheorizing about international relations is, perhaps, the most readily accessible corroboration of this idea.<sup>74</sup> However, if the essence of radical feminist thinking was to be taken without the epistemic location of standpoint theory, it is unlikely that Keohane would find this interpretation of feminist theory so palatable.

## **Conclusion**

Feminist international relations theory is not a readily accessible idea. As an essentially contested concept and new subject of academic inquiry the underdevelopment of theories and a permanent sense of intellectual flux creates an almost prohibitive atmosphere when attempting to enter into the debate. This embryonic condition notwithstanding, there has been a definite development within feminist international relations thinking to a point where a dominant discourse has emerged. Superficially,

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<sup>74</sup> R.O. Keohane, 'International Relations Theory: Contribution of the Feminist Standpoint', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18, No.1, 1989, p.245.

radical/standpoint theory would appear to provide the solid foundation for the discussion and advancement of feminist thinking within International Relations. It defines who and what women are, where their interests have been compromised by conventional ways of thinking and how these interests can be promoted and achieved in practice, as well as in theory.

However, if the substance of standpoint theory is pressed to any great extent, a number of serious methodological and substantive problems begin to emerge. This suggests that this particular interpretation, despite its current acceptability, may not be most adequate way of analyzing International Relations through feminist lenses. Even though other feminist perspectives are largely excluded from the IR theory debate by the dominance of standpoint theory, their different ways of knowing, created by alternative ideological and epistemological foundations, contain the possibility of a more satisfactory feminist theory of international relations. Essentially, this becomes a choice between two alternatives; to pursue the challenge from the perspective of postmodern/critical theory or through liberal feminism. Feminist postmodern/critical IR theory is gaining an increasingly prominent profile as a consequence of the significance of the Third debate to the current reevaluation of international relations.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, liberal feminist theory, as the original standard of intellectual and social movement feminism, is often dismissed out of hand with no consideration of its unique value and contribution. Thus, where postmodern/critical feminism has the potential for its voice to be heard, liberal feminism has been summarily silenced. It is for this reason that liberal feminist theory has been

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<sup>75</sup> C. Sylvester, *Feminist Theory...op. cit.*, p.140.

chosen as the paradigm of inquiry: to examine critically whether this exclusion is justified or an unfair consequence of standpoint theory's intellectual hegemony.

## Chapter II

### Just Add Women and Stir:

#### A Critique of Liberal Feminist International Relations Theory

“If we throw out culture because it is masculine...we...are left with nothing, not even the language to express our rejection.”

Simone de Beauvoir<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

In many ways, the substance of liberal feminist international relations theory (LFIRT) epitomizes radical feminism's criticism of the liberal interpretation of women in the international sphere. From their critical perspective, the substance of liberal feminism in recent IR theory debate is like the parable of the woman who waits by the hearth while the (radical feminist) warrior ventures onto the academic battlefield to fight feminism's intellectual war. To conceptualize this idea in alternative terms, liberal feminist international relations theory is about describing activities: what women do in the international sphere and where the specific locus of activity is, rather than about understanding the attitudes of women, where they come from and how the current system could be modified to valorize these experiences.<sup>2</sup> The simple description of activities requires no redefinition of the parameters of inquiry. However, once an analytical

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<sup>1</sup> S. de Beauvoir in M. Walters, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Women: Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Martineau and Simone de Beauvoir', in J. Mitchell and A. Oakely (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, p.356.

<sup>2</sup> S. Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions*, Macmillan, London, 1994, pp.13-14.

deconstruction of attitudes is undertaken, existing foundations of knowledge appear to be less well grounded than previously anticipated and, at times, difficult to justify.

The absence of an analytical agenda is the essence of criticism that has been used by radicals to marginalize the liberal feminist interpretation of international relations and silence its voice in the theoretical debate. However, this is not the only avenue of criticism. Liberal feminism is equally brought into question for its use of, and subscription to empirically derived knowledge and its acceptance of existing concepts and units of analysis. While these ideas may not appear to be peculiarly problematic, for standpoint feminists they equate with the absorption and cooption of feminist thinking into the masculine world. Given that radical feminism's ultimate agenda is the destabilization and subversion of traditional understandings and interpretations, this is tantamount to the invalidation of liberal feminism as a legitimate perspective in IR theory as it cannot even pretend to represent the interests of the women to any satisfactory degree.

While there may be justification for these claims it would appear to be an unduly hasty dismissal. A comprehensive reading of the literature of feminist international relations theory yields very little evidence that would substantiate radical feminism's unconditional dismissal of liberal feminist IR thinking. Authors, such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe, and Anne Tickner, situate their work within the tenets of liberal feminist theory.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps if the critique of LFIRT is examined and either justified or disputed it would be

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<sup>3</sup> That there is some dissension surrounding it all about the classification of authors, for example I would classify J. Anne Tickner as somewhat of a radical feminist. While she is not as radical as, for example, V. Spike Peterson, Tickner does not conform to the standard expectations of mainstream liberal feminist international relations theory. This distinction will be explored later in the paper.

possible to make a judgment about the utility of liberal feminism to international relations theory.

### **Liberalism: The Intellectual Origins of Liberal International Relations Theory**

The origins of both liberal feminist theory and its critique lie in a broader theory/ideology debate which spans the divide between the domestic and international spheres of political inquiry. Thus it is liberal thinking that must first be understood before venturing into the specifics of the feminist debate in international relations. The state, the individual/citizen, the notion of a bifurcated public/private space, and the relationship between these units and women exemplify the parameters of discussion. Only on the basis of the above analysis and its juxtaposition against radical critique will it be possible to pass some judgment on the utility of liberal feminism as an interpretation of IR theory.

Even though international relations theory is the subject of inquiry it is liberalism as a theory of domestic politics that underpins this discussion. The differences between the domestic and international sphere, characterized by their different actors and end state goals, are largely overridden by the common pursuit of solutions to problems of order and disorder in the domestic state of nature and the anarchic international society of states. For instance, it is only in the late twentieth century that the main contributors to liberal international relations theory have been scholars in the field rather than political philosophers and economists.<sup>4</sup> The transference of theory between international and

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<sup>4</sup> M.W. Zacher and R.A. Matthew, 'Liberal International Relations Theory: Common Threads and Divergent Strands', in C.W. Kegley (ed) *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1995, p.108.

domestic politics has increased relevance within the feminist context. Considering that feminist theory seeks to analyze international relations as a function of domestic (in)security the line separating the two spheres becomes necessarily permeable.

Like all domestic political theories liberalism seeks to describe its interpretation of the of the relationship between the individual and the state. While other theories, such as Marxism, may emphasize class relations as the core unit of analysis liberals, of all hues, are primarily concerned with the individual/citizen as the underpinning element of their analysis.<sup>5</sup> It is at this point, however, that the nuances of interpretation and temporal sensibilities come into play. Classical liberalism, the liberalism of John Locke and John Stuart Mill, defines the individual/citizen as a rational agent acting impartially in both public and private spheres in the unqualified pursuit of self-interest.<sup>6</sup> The individual/citizen is only accountable to a broader notion of state and society inasmuch as it concurs with his own interests. Consequently, he cannot be expected to modify these interests and desires to accord with the wishes of others or be held accountable to any notion of a greater good.<sup>7</sup> The state is, therefore, conceived of as a neutral structure or framework that allows the individual/citizen to pursue his own interpretation of the good and should not be used to restrict the individual's capacity for self-determination.<sup>8</sup> While the state may have limited rights in ordering the public sphere to maximize freedom and minimize conflict over interests, by its very definition liberal theory must guarantee the

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<sup>5</sup> A. Jagger, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> There is an implicit assumption of universal rationality in the pursuit of certain desirable social products which essentializes human nature regardless of history, race, gender, or socio-economic status. Rationality is always expressed as a potential quality rather than a tangible. While its assumption is universal its practice can be impeded by factors such as absence of education or childhood.

<sup>7</sup> J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Penguin, London, 1974, p.163.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

protection of the individual/citizen from the influence and interference of the state in his private affairs.

To summarize classical liberalism as such provides a coherent while prohibitive overview of its underpinning assumptions. The public/private dichotomy can be explained in simple terms as a division of space which delineates legitimate areas of government action and individual sovereignty; the issue of rationality presents greater difficulty. Within liberal theory rationality describes both an individual's method of determining choices and a specific way of collating information and understanding the construction of knowledge. To address these issues sequentially, an individual's rationality, as alluded to above, refers to his ability to make decisions to further his own self-interest; it is the essential quality which allows participation in the public sphere, particularly participation in political activity. However, the other definition of rationality in classical liberal thinking refers to the movement away from intuitionism towards the adoption of Enlightenment principles, such as the scientific method, in the derivation of liberal thought and knowledge. While such concepts may seem alien to liberalism as a social and political theory general ideas such as the existence of objective factual knowledge and the ability to derive knowledge by testing hypotheses against empirically verifiable examples, are deemed to be equally applicable.

To preempt the discussion of gender and gendered interpretation of liberal theory slightly it is important to acknowledge that the public/private divide and the notion of rationality have distinct masculine biases. Given the historical location of the development of classical liberal theory it is inevitable that different assumptions about

gender will inform theoretical premises. In this instance it is implied that there is a fundamental difference in the physical and emotional constitution of men and women that affects the behavior of both groups.<sup>9</sup> When these ideas are expanded this biological definition creates a hierarchy of power in which women, because of their status as child bearers, become subordinate entities and are denied the opportunity to be considered as rational actors. Aside from Aristotle *et al.*'s biological determinism, which militates against women ever attaining rationality, the expectation of early marriage can be charged with denying women access to the educational opportunities that Locke, in particular, and all classical liberals consider to be the essential qualification for rationality.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, given that they are not rational individuals, women are precluded from participating in the public sphere and all its activities.

Classical liberalism has, however, been subjected to a number of reconsiderations. It is the notion of the atomistic individual/citizen that is the principle source of much contention. Even though Jeremy Bentham is considered to be a classical liberal his utilitarian ideals, emphasizing the greatest good for the greatest number, work against many of the assumptions of atomistic individualism and give credence to the existence of greater good, however defined.<sup>11</sup> Modern liberal theory also calls into question the idea of the nightwatchman state. John Rawls, for example, redefines the state in order to confer upon it a number of additional powers. This changes the role of the state from the

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<sup>9</sup> See Aristotle's commentary on the sexes in C. Garside, 'Can a Woman be Good in the Same Way as a Man?', *Dialogue*, Vol. 10, No. 3, September 1971, p.536.

<sup>10</sup> J. English (ed), *Sex Equality*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1977, pp.31-32.

<sup>11</sup> For example, as an issue of minority rights, if there is a society of twelve people and ten are sadists who derive great pleasure from the torture of the remaining two, does their pleasure outweigh the pain and differently defined happiness of the two non-sadists? The answer, as defined within the parameters of classical liberalism, would evidently be negative, although Benthamites would profoundly disagree.

invisible hand to a more intrusive structure which actively seeks to ensure the equality of citizens.<sup>12</sup> Rather than giving individual/citizens negative rights to protect them from the state, Rawls seeks to create a welfare state where individual/citizens are entitled to receive benefits in order to maintain basic social and economic parity. Despite Rawls's altered perspective on the state, his interpretation of liberalism is still committed to the individual/citizen.<sup>13</sup> However, the definition of individual/citizens by positive rights necessitates an intellectual shift away from atomistic individualism toward a compromised position, where the presocial individual is moderated by the institution of community yet individual rights still outweigh collective responsibility and interests.<sup>14</sup> Michael Sandel, however, abandons the atomistic individual/citizen to a greater extent as he perceives that it interprets the essence of human nature incorrectly. Far from being separate entities who are essentially independent of one another, human beings are inherently social creatures bonded by ties of history, language and other commonalities.<sup>15</sup> Sandel argues, therefore, for a starting point in liberal theory that reflects the importance of community and kinship to the pursuit of equality in the minimalist state.

Evidently, liberal theory has undergone significant change, change which has forced the reconsideration of the most fundamental of liberal beliefs. The primacy of the individual/citizen has been compromised to reflect a growing importance of community, while the state, although retaining a semblance of neutrality, has been afforded a more

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<sup>12</sup> J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> J. Crittenden, *Beyond Individualism: Reconstructing the Liberal Self*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p.68.

<sup>15</sup> T. Hall, 'Beyond the Procedural Republic: The Communitarian Liberalism of Michael Sandel', C. Wolfe and J. Hittinger (eds), *Liberalism at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Contemporary Liberal Thought and Its Critics*, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland, 1994, p.75&p.88.

intrusive role to facilitate the equal distribution of social goods between its rational individuals. These altered perspectives largely reflect changes in the practical context to which theory has responded in order to maintain pertinence. It is implicit that a more modern/communitarian interpretation of liberal theory has a less definite understanding of the demarcation between the public and private spheres.<sup>16</sup> With the ability of individuals to make claims on the state the scope of the public sphere has increased at the expense of the private. Equally, with the state assuming a more benevolent role in the pursuit of equality, there is less need to ensure the protection of the populace from the state, which is essentially the original division was implemented.<sup>17</sup> For the most part, these changes in perception and function render the division between public and private spheres largely obsolete. While issues of individual sovereignty, equality, and the minimalist state may not appear to be immediately relevant to the discussion of international relations theory there are, nonetheless, a number of parallels and connections that can be drawn between the domestic and international political environments. Moreover, while the assumption of rationality is maintained, the altered balance, if not redundancy, of the public/private divide removes many of the assumptions concerning the inherent irrationality of women.

### **Liberal International Relations Theory<sup>18</sup>**

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<sup>16</sup> E. Frazer and N. Lacey, *The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal Communitarian Debate*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1993, p.72.

<sup>17</sup> R. Dworkin, 'Liberalism', in M. Sandel (ed), *Liberalism and Its Critics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984, p.64.

<sup>18</sup> To arrive at a conceptual understanding of liberal international relations theory it is perhaps necessary to construct its theoretical context. While LIRT forms part of a spectrum of ideas on interstate behavior its major counterpoint, however, is realist theory. Primarily, realism and liberalism are diametrically opposed with regard to their perceptions of the international system. While liberalism has a basic belief in the state as a rational actor and the possibility of international community and a society of states, realist theory is grounded in the fundamental anarchy of interstate politics. Consequently, as states pursue their interests,

Whereas domestic liberal theory addresses the state of nature as it exists within the state, liberal international theory seeks to come to terms with the potential disorder that exists between states in the international system which threatens to overwhelm the potential for a cooperative community of states that is present in their international system. Individual/citizens competing for limited domestic goods are replaced by states trying to gain control over scarce macro-level resources, such as power and territorial space. In many ways it is as if the units of analysis have simply been enlarged while the intellectual constructs remain constant.<sup>19</sup> Zacher and Matthews, for example, identify three themes which they perceive characterize the fundamentals of liberal international relations theory. Primarily, they are concerned with the transformation of the international system to promote greater peace, justice, prosperity, and human freedom. Secondly, it is international cooperation and interdependence that will bring about this transformation by minimizing or removing the conditions that are the source of potential conflict between states. Finally, transformation is pursued more succinctly through the commitment of states to modernization through democratization, market capitalism and faith in human reason.<sup>20</sup> To draw these ideas together under a single rubric, liberal international relations theory is concerned with the provision of state level security through fostering

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expressed as the maximization of power, they are caught in a very basic security dilemma. Even though cooperation would limit the impact of anarchy, each state's desire to maximize its share of relative power increases its fear of betrayal and precludes collaboration.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ashley, for example, discusses the conception of the state as a sovereign rational unit with a coherent set of interests that it conveys and seeks to achieve...and say that this is just the extension of the way that liberals construct the individual/citizen. R.K. Ashley. 'Untying the Sovereign State: The Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1988, p.248&p.256 with specific reference to the activities of state as grounded in the compact between the reasoning men of a domestic population and the state.

<sup>20</sup>M. Zacher and J.A. Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp.110-112.

interdependence and transparency in action between states so that their actions are not misconstrued as hostile in order that international harmony is preserved.<sup>21</sup>

The underlying theme which informs all three assumptions, but which is stated explicitly in the last, is an abiding faith in human reason and rationality. Although it is a theory of international politics and primarily deals with the interaction of states as system actors, liberal international relations theory mirrors its domestic counterpart in retaining the individual/citizen as the primary unit of analysis and making explicit the link between what individuals do within the state, relations between states, as collectivities of individual/citizens, and state behavior in the international sphere.<sup>22</sup> Liberal theory is explicitly not an idealist venture and is not intent on describing the harmony and coincidence of interstate interests. It is more concerned with the potential for antagonism that exists between states in an unregulated environment and seeks the best way to moderate these negative influences.<sup>23</sup> This is remarkably similar to the problems facing the individual/citizen in the domestic sphere and the construction of the state as an invisible hand that regulates interaction without impinging on individual/citizen interests. It is, however, simply expressed at a broader level and the notion of a regulative state is similarly expanded and renamed as interdependent organization. The resulting situation is that a quasi-public/private divide is effectively sustained at the interstate level. Rather than delimiting the areas where government may or may not intervene in private affairs

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<sup>21</sup> C.W. Kegley, 'The Neoliberal Challenge to Realist Theories of World Politics: An Introduction', in C.W. Kegley (ed), *Controversies in International Relations Theory*, St Martins Press, New York, 1995, p.13.

<sup>22</sup> States are the primary actors in the international system although there is space available for the discussion of non-state actors, including the individual. See p.55 for further expansion of such ideas.

<sup>23</sup> A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 1993, p.394.

this divide describes the boundary between legitimate interstate activities, for example, border disputes or territorial expansion, and domestic interests, such as economic and social policies, of states in which no other state, or group of states, may intervene on any level.

While institutional liberalism has dominated the practical agenda of liberal international relations theory for the greater part of the twentieth century, there are many different avenues for achieving liberal aspirations. Cognitive liberalism, for example, expresses a Kantian/Enlightenment ideal that education, in particular education in the scientific method, as the fabric of human reason and rationality, will produce good citizens committed to the promotion of peaceful interstate relations. The good citizen, given an interest in participation and the amelioration of the human condition, is principally found within a democratic system. To this end, republican liberalism suggests that democracies are inherently peaceful and unlikely to engage in war given that states are risk averse when the issue of public accountability is introduced.<sup>24</sup> The connections between the various strands of liberal thinking do not, however, end here. Bound up in this schema of risk aversion is the essence of commercial liberalism, which assumes that states who trade together will not become enemies as the benefits of mutual trade far outweigh the potential gains to be made by engaging in war.<sup>25</sup> In order for liberal international theory to hold true in its explanation of state interaction in the international

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<sup>24</sup> M. Doyle, 'Liberalism and World Politics', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, p.1151; and R. Schweller, 'Domestic Structure and Preventative War: A Democracies More Pacific?', *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1992, p.242. There are a number of qualifications to be introduced with regard to this argument. While democracies will not fight one another they will engage in war with non-democratic states to protect their interests or preserve the status quo of power relations and distribution.

<sup>25</sup> M. Zacher and J.A. Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp.124-132.

sphere one or more of these conditions must be present in the domestic structure of the states under consideration. States, in themselves, are undesirable structures and it is only what occurs within the state that affords the institution any legitimacy in liberal international relations theory.

### **Liberal Feminism: A Critique and a Theory**

Already, it is obvious where and why feminists can take exception to liberal theory in its domestic and international interpretations. Even the most cursory glance through the writings, debates and discussions of liberalism reveals that women have no specific space of their own and thus they appear to be largely absent from the theoretical agenda. Despite this absence some feminists still find a distinct intellectual space for themselves within liberal discourse, although the need for a separate theory evidently suggests some disaffection with the space that women are entitled to if they continue to subscribe to liberalism's core beliefs and values.<sup>26</sup> Generally, liberal feminists pursue a number of options to justify the incorporation of liberalism's ideological framework as their own. For example, justification is often premised on uncovering the role of women in existing theory, either through actualization or reconstruction. This is exemplified by frequent reference within liberal feminist scholarship to texts such as John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*, or the citation of women writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Martineau, and their reactions to the works of male political philosophers like

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<sup>26</sup> A. Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.11.

Locke, Burke, Rousseau, Bentham, and Mill as the founding fathers of liberal theory.<sup>27</sup> More commonly, however, justification is derived from the assumption of gender neutrality in writing and theorizing. The use of the male pronoun is not perceived to be a comment on gender status in theory, nor is meant to reflect the description of an exclusive and hostile patriarchal world, rather it is adopted for ease of reference and to liberate women from the degraded definitions of womanhood and femininity which have limited their aspirations, perceptions, and socio-economic roles.<sup>28</sup> Because women are not actively excluded they can be superimposed onto theory and its expectations and are, by default, included within the his, him, and he of liberal discourse.

The critique that produces liberal feminist theory is predominantly a gendered analysis but equally adopts a number of arguments from other ideological critiques. In particular, it strongly resembles communitarian criticism of liberal theory in attempting to move the discussion away from abstracted individualism towards a greater sense of community and collective behavior. The transcendental individual/citizen is rejected in favor of a communitarian conception of human nature on number of gender based premises; from the basic fact that such abstraction does not provide an adequate framework from which to examine gender relations, as they are functions of social interaction, to the more radical argument suggesting liberalism's denial of a socio-historical connection which trivializes the importance of motherhood/womanhood by undermining the importance of kin

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<sup>27</sup> A.S. Rossi, *Essays on Sex Equality: John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970; see also J. Annas 'Mill and the Subjection of Women', *Philosophy*, Vol. 52, 1977; and Mary Wollstonecraft in M. Walters, *op. cit.*, pp.317.

<sup>28</sup> M. Walters, *op. cit.*, p.377. Walters characterizes degraded definitions as those which perceived men and women to be different on the basis of character and biological qualities that they possess. Through cultural permutation the masculine qualities have been valued more highly than the feminine and women become defined by their biological function and their status as the weaker sex.

relationships.<sup>29</sup> However, as will become evident in the discussion below, the extent to which the individual/citizen is abandoned in favor of the community is still a matter of contention between liberal feminists.

A potential difference pervades this basic commitment to liberalism's thesis concerning equality and the amelioration of the human condition from oppressive social norms and relations.<sup>30</sup> For liberal feminism contemporary society violates liberalism's central tenets in its treatment of women and the denial of equal rights and opportunities on the basis of gender. Given that gender is an irrelevant criterion on which to base such value judgments, as it does not generally affect an individual's capacity to perform a task, women are unfairly discriminated against. The consequences of such discrimination are far reaching, extending well beyond the superficial consequences of economic marginalization to include an absence and reduction of opportunities across a broad spectrum of ideas, particularly in education. Given that education is liberalism's key to rationality and, therefore, equality, the absence of this opportunity is particularly significant.<sup>31</sup> In expressing such vehement concern for the collective rights of women, liberal feminism closely resembles modern liberalism in emphasizing the notion of duty and obligation of the state and the state's role as a legitimate actor in the protection of women's interests and the redistribution of social goods over classical liberalism's concerns for individual/citizen rights. However, this is once again a reflection of the inherent tensions within liberalism, in that some elements of liberal feminism do not abandon the individual/citizen in entirety, continuing instead to locate liberalism within

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<sup>29</sup> Drucilla Cornell in E. Frazer and N. Lacey, *op. cit.*, p.56.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>31</sup> A. Jagger, *op. cit.*, p.177.

the spectrum of individual rights. While the achievement of collective rights promotes one element of the liberal agenda, formal equality, the notion of women as a group disregards their individual wishes and interests, denying women the equal right and opportunity to pursue a purely self interested agenda.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the greatest problem for liberal feminism is the reconciliation of the role of the state with a feminist agenda. While the state's utility and value are all too evident, with regard to the above distribution of goods and resources in search of equality, it does embody some remaining vestiges of sexism in thought and action. Although such practices have been removed in many formal, legal, senses, the state is still not perceived as a neutral entity as a result of the continued perpetuation of the public/private dichotomy. This bifurcation is an essential part of liberal theory in that it guarantees the freedom of the individual and the restraint of government. What is not a necessary part of the public/private split are the implicit expectations about gender and gender relations. There is still the assumption that men are able to move between both the public and private sphere, whereas women continue to be confined solely within the private. In the perpetuation of such ideas women are denied the political rights and identity that are fundamental to liberalism. Two questions do, however, persist unanswered; why do liberal feminists still conceive of women as defined by their work in the private sphere and what is the practical agenda that will bring about the politicization of the private?

In trying to reconcile these questions of liberalism and feminism, Susan Moller Okin offers humanist liberalism as an alternative to patriarchal liberalism. Here, in redefining the boundaries between the public and the private, the personal becomes political and

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p.176.

women are fully included within the public sphere. Women are, therefore, automatically afforded the standards of justice and equality available to classical liberalism's individual/citizens.<sup>33</sup> On the basis of this simple definitional change, liberal theory can quite legitimately be conceived as a gender neutral theory, with a framework entirely applicable for feminist reinterpretation.

### **Liberal Feminist International Relations Theory**

As with the relationship between domestic and international theories of liberalism, liberal feminist international relations theory can in one sense simply be seen as the transference of ideas to a broader framework. However in other ways the movement between these two spheres is restricted somewhat as the substance of liberal feminism appears to undergo distinct transformation when placed in the context of international relations. Many of the concerns and ideas that have come to characterize the liberal feminist agenda would seem not to apply in the international context. This includes, for example, liberal feminism's preoccupation with the absence of adequate welfare systems and the subsequent economic marginalization of women, domestic issues seemingly without international counterparts. Such generalizations can only hold true, however, if the definition of security is accepted as the high politics of peace and security operating at the state systemic level, a definition which LFIRT is, evidently, willing to sustain.<sup>34</sup>

In general, liberal feminist international relations theory retains the same analytical agenda as its feminist parent theory. In doing so, LFIRT continues to describe the role of

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<sup>33</sup> S.M. Okin, 'Humanist Liberalism', in N. Rosenblum (ed), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass), 1989, p.53.

<sup>34</sup> S. Whitworth; *op. cit.*, p.13.

gender and catalog women's underrepresentation without devolving into potentially destabilizing analysis that would seek to alter fundamentally the status quo of either the characterization of women or the meaning of political practices in the international sphere.<sup>35</sup> To this end, liberal feminist international relations theory is concerned with incorporating women into the mainstream and finding ways in which women were present by reinterpreting traditional areas of participation, from women's war work at the home front to nurses at the front line. In doing so, the legitimate categories of discussion are expanded to include areas more conducive to women's involvement. Supposedly, the inclusion of women's work in international relations immediately redresses their previous exclusion and alleviates the apparently patriarchal disposition of international relations theory.<sup>36</sup> However, in terms of liberal theory's other key concepts, while the role of state/international organization and the public/private dichotomy have remained constant, the individual/citizen has experienced profound change. Principally, under a feminist interpretation, women lose their individual identities and are, instead, subject to the confines of collective definition and group analysis.

Finding liberal feminist interpretations of international relations theories, in practice, is quite a difficult task as a result of the silencing of this voice by radical feminism. Some authors, such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe and J. Anne Tickner, are considered to write from this perspective. However, the arbitrary classification of authors into neatly compartmentalized ideological boxes is essentially limiting. Indicative of this problem is

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p.12. Women's work in international relations covers a wide range of subjects from factory work in munitions depots during war, nursing at the front line, to diplomats' wives hosting official functions within the private sphere of their homes.

Anne Tickner who, for the purposes of most feminist IR discussions, is classified as a liberal feminist. However, in many ways the substance of her writing would be equally as comfortable on the periphery of radical feminism. For example, her major work, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, employs much of the discourse of radical feminism in sustained discussions of the patriarchy, the masculine state, personal and substate definitions of security, and in the categorization and definition of women by their status as nurturing life givers.<sup>37</sup> However, the conclusion of the book moves Tickner away from the radical stereotype with the assertion that the end state is not to replace the essentialist masculine theory with essentialist feminism but to use this period of exclusion as a temporary site and the first step towards a gender neutral theory.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast Jean Bethke Elshtain's interpretation of liberal feminism in international relations embodies many of the ideas that radical feminists argue are the inherent limitations of liberal feminist international relations theory. The public/private dichotomy is the fundamental element of her thinking about IR, yet it serves only as a descriptive context and is given no analytical utility or critical capacity for theorizing about gender and the transformation of gender relations in the international sphere. Consequently, while Elshtain acknowledges the explicit limitations of such definitions about women and men, she offers no solutions for overcoming these problems; women remain as "beautiful souls" ensconced in the security of the private sphere and men are the just warriors and

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<sup>37</sup> J.A. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, Columbia University Press, New York 1992, p.39&p.44 This is a position that she later retracts, see J.A. Tickner, 'Feminist Perspectives on Peace and World Security in the Post Cold War Era', in M. Klare (ed), *Peace and World Security Studies: A Curriculum Guide*, Lynne Reinner, Boulder, 1995, p.43.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p.130

ardent defenders of the public realm. Elshtain's conservatism is also reflected in the title of her 1987 work on *Women and War*. Implicit in the content of this book is the subscription to the dominant ideology of realist IR, that war and its attendant definitions of state to state relations are the only valid descriptions of the international system. Although Elshtain claims to be looking for alternative images of citizenship through the personal recollections and anecdotes that she uses to relay the stories and images of women in war it is seemingly impossible to construct an 'other' from within the very system of thought that oppresses.<sup>39</sup>

Cynthia Enloe's *Banana's Beaches and Bases* is perhaps, the quintessential liberal feminist interpretation of international relations. Using the public/private dichotomy as her basic analytical construct, Enloe asks her readers to consider the impact of everyday activity on the international sphere and how these activities shape interstate relations.<sup>40</sup> The substantive chapters of her book reflect this agenda with the socio-historical construction of international relations creating a niche for gender to be considered as a legitimate analytical variable, in contrast to its exclusion under a conventional/military definition of international relations.<sup>41</sup> Despite the inclusion of gender the state is still retained as the overarching unit of analysis. Additionally, a significant place is given to international organization, but these institutions are only relevant considerations when taken in the context of the gendered individual/citizen. For example, one chapter is given

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<sup>39</sup> J.B. Elshtain, *Women and War*, Basic Books, New York, 1987, p.227.

<sup>40</sup> C. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Pandora Books, London, 1989, Introduction.

<sup>41</sup> For example her book includes chapters on the economic marginalization of women through the labor practices in banana plantations in Latin America and the connection between international domestic service and interstate relations.

over to the study of domestic servants and world politics. It is contended that the debt policy of the International Monetary Fund encourages poor states to export women as domestic servants. The rationale behind this argument implies that women working overseas will remit a portion of their wage to the home country and in doing so provide surplus capital which enables these financially disabled states to address their national debt problems and other issues of state level economic marginalization. Enloe suggests that the treatment of these exported women, their economic and physical insecurity, contains the potential to affect relations between states. Despite the initial skepticism which surrounds any attempt to alter fundamentally the parameters of discussion, the potential for this to occur was all too evident in the execution of the Filipino maid in Singapore in 1994. In taking such a stand Enloe politicizes the private and internationalizes the domestic, removing boundaries by discussing women's economic marginalization as a function of domestic politics and equally as a function of interstate relations and the international system.

From the works of these three authors the precise meaning and definition of LFIRT is still largely ambiguous. What can be ascertained is that LFIRT is a theory for redressing the omission of women from international relations theory grounded in the ideological origins of liberal and liberal international relations theory. Given this intellectual heritage it is possible to make certain generalizations about key assumptions, although it is important to account for the moderating influence of gender. Despite this caution, the state retains its primary place as a gender neutral structure whose interests largely determine the legitimate scope of international relations.

The state does not, however, have a free hand in determining its sphere of interest and influence. The neutral individual is retained as the basic unit of analysis, albeit moderated by the inclusion of gender as a variable and the concession to its communitarian definition, either as part of a general group or with a gendered identity. Despite its concessions to the group, LFIRT retains a strong sense of what the state may or may not intervene in, which suggests that the public/private distinction remains firmly in effect. However, liberal feminism would appear to have redrawn the boundaries of the public/private division so that the content of each is significantly altered from traditional expectations. Thus, while the high politics of peace and security are still the primary definition of the public, it has been expanded to include some personal issues such as domestic physical and economic security, as a function of international politics and the personal security of the domestic population expressed as protection from the state. Even though the private realm has been diminished somewhat by this redefinition radical feminists still take liberal feminism to task for its refusal to define the personal as political and confront the issue of the gendered state.<sup>42</sup>

### **Gender, the State and the Individual: A Critique and Counter-Criticism of Liberal Feminist IR Theory**

Despite the coincidence of method and basic ideals there are fundamental tensions between liberalism and liberal feminist international relations theory. It is these tensions that provide the basis for the critique leveled against liberal feminism by other feminist

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<sup>42</sup> C.C. Gould, 'Private Rights and Public Virtue: Women, the Family and Democracy', in C.C. Gould (ed), *New Perspectives on Women and Philosophy*, Rowman and Allenheld Publishers, New Jersey, 1983, p.9.

perspectives. The essence of these counter-claims suggests that liberal feminism is, in fact, the ultimate expression of feminist false consciousness. To this end, it is often suggested that the only purpose liberal feminism serves is to highlight the inherent inadequacies of liberal theory and its failure to theorize about gender as a legitimate category of difference.<sup>43</sup> Equally, given that liberalism is perceived to be about patriarchal individualism while feminism is about sexual egalitarianism and collective behavior there is an obvious disjuncture between the two perspectives.<sup>44</sup> Beyond these arguments LFIRT is further marginalized by liberalism's status as the dominant ideology. In arguing this case it is assumed that because liberalism, expressed as liberal democracy, pervades societal, domestic government, and international organization, take for example the United Nations, it denies the possibility of a feminist agenda. Women, it is claimed, are automatically absorbed into its theoretical and practical concerns. In turn, this absorption masks the special, that is gendered, needs of women, thus denying their basic interests. To substantiate these claims and the other arguments that will be discussed below would be to undermine the very core of liberal feminism's claims to authenticity.<sup>45</sup>

The feminist critique of liberal feminist international relations theory is a seamless web of interdependent concerns. Superficially, every argument can stand alone, both in making its case against liberal feminist international relations theory and defending its suggested alternative, but in trying to make these explanations plausible, in slowly unpacking each idea in order to substantiate its claims, it is readily apparent that this

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<sup>43</sup> S.M. Okin, 'Humanist Liberalism', *op. cit.*, p.40.

<sup>44</sup> Z. Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, Longman, New York, 1981, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> S. Brown, 'Feminism and International Relations Theories of Gender Inequality', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Autumn 1988, p.462.

assumed independence is founded on false premises. In order to understand one part of the critique, it would be advantageous to have to come to terms with, or be able to discuss simultaneously, the other elements before confronting this particular issue. For example, to understand state neutrality, it is better first to come to terms with the perceived inadequacies of the public/private dichotomy. The comprehension of both these ideas is made easier if the failure of rational individualism is part of the discussion's subtext, yet, the critique of the rational individual/citizen is best understood when the intellectual location of both the state and the public/private split are securely established. Bearing these qualifications in mind, the following discussion proceeds somewhat cautiously in the consideration of radical feminism's critique of the central tenets of liberal feminist international relations theory.

Principally, it is the assumption of gender neutrality that is the source of greatest contention between liberal feminism and other sources of feminist interpretation. While liberal feminism is generally accepting of the possibility of a gender neutral state and a gender neutral construction of the individual/citizen as founding principles for their theory other feminist interpretations perceive this thinking to be fundamentally flawed to the point where to adopt such constructs would invalidate the subversive properties which define the feminist agenda. For the greater number of liberal feminists the state is simply an inanimate institutional structure that works like an invisible hand predisposed to no specific ends except, perhaps, the redistribution of goods and resources in order to maintain a basic assumption of equality.

For other feminists, however, the state is an unnatural category for feminist thinking and should, in fact, be abandoned in entirety as a consequence of its implicit gender bias.<sup>46</sup> Catherine MacKinnon, for example, argues that the state is a primary tool of masculine social control and sexual oppression, to the point where it is assumed to possess a male identity. Specifically, this gendered identity is determined by the possession of rationality and objectivity with which the state is endowed by its status as a legal creation.<sup>47</sup> While the nexus between male gender and legality may seem obscure, radical feminists, such as MacKinnon, see a connection between the rationality of the legal state and the definitions of these qualities as peculiarly male characteristics. This connection is determined by the traditions and history of western political and social thought which deny women the possibility of possessing such capabilities on the basis of their biological/reproductive function.<sup>48</sup> The motive of the state is to operate within these parameters and to include only subjects that concur with its criteria of rationality and objectivity. As such the state becomes an instrument of the patriarchy whose subliminal objective, regardless of the sphere within which it operates, is to maintain women's subordinate status.

In the domestic context such subordination is easily achieved through the manipulation of lower wage rates and the perpetuation of a double work day, where women are allowed to participate in the public sphere so long as they continue to bear the

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<sup>46</sup> S. Watson and R. Pringle, 'Women's Interests and the Post-Structuralist State', in M. Barrett and A. Phillips (eds), *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.55.

<sup>47</sup> C.A. MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass), 1989, pp.160-163.

<sup>48</sup> See discussions of Aristotelian, Freudian and Jungian theories of sex difference in J. English, *op. cit.*, and S. Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979.

burden of responsibilities, such as housework and child rearing, in the private sphere.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the assumption of state neutrality infers the exclusion of women from the international sphere. Liberal international relations theory is predicated on the assumption that the coincidence of interests between the individual/citizen, the state, and interdependent organization determines what are appropriate and inappropriate activities to be conducted in the international sphere. It is, therefore, unlikely that the interests and concerns of women will find a voice through liberal international relations theory or its feminist reinterpretation. While the limitations of the individual/citizen will be discussed below, it can be seen from previous discussions on the absence of state neutrality that there is no reason to assume that the state, nor interdependent organization as an enlarged state, will represent the interests of women in the international sphere when it fails to do so domestically.

If the discussion, as it is in LFIRT, is framed in terms of the public/private dichotomy, legitimate actions in the international sphere, such as the defense of the state and state interest, are purely public activities. Since women are excluded from the public sphere it is unlikely, if not impossible, that their interests would be taken into consideration by the state or reflected on the international agenda. From this it is assumed that as long as women's interests are not represented by the state then they cannot be legitimate participants in the defense of state.<sup>50</sup> For feminists analyzing international relations from this standpoint a work such as Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, serves very little utility in addressing the problems of women in international relations. While it may

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<sup>49</sup> Z. Eisenstein, *op. cit.*, p.248.

<sup>50</sup> R. Ashley, *op. cit.*, p.249.

highlight women's exclusion and marginalization, in its refusal to see the state as a gendered entity liberal feminist analysis fails to understand the role that the state and international organization play in the perpetuation of such conditions.

Whatever aura of authenticity radical feminism has woven around its analysis of the state and its gendered identity there are certain fundamental flaws in their reasoning and assumptions that compromise the credibility of their explanation of the state as a legitimate part of feminist politics. There are two possible avenues of argument that can be used to rebut the claims of radical feminism. Principally, it is the gendered identity of the state that marginalizes the position of the state in feminist analysis. Under a radical feminist interpretation the world is structured around pairs of binary opposites to reflect the duality of the public and private worlds. Then, in keeping with this dichotomy and describing gender identity in these terms radical feminists subscribe to a strict partition which denotes the male persona as rational, objective, and aggressive while women are described as their polar opposites, nurturing, pacifist and intuitive.

While these characteristics and divisions are often passed off as natural, and therefore unquestionable, character traits it is usual to validate the exclusion of women from the public sphere by drawing on Aristotelian, Freudian, or Jungian analysis of sex relations.<sup>51</sup> Whether women are presented as partial men, defined by their reproductive capacity, or portrayed as functions of male needs in each instance they become part of a dyadic relationship (man/woman, good/bad, rational/irrational) where the former is given

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<sup>51</sup> C. Whitbeck, 'Theories of Sex Difference', *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2, p.54. These thinkers represent ideas on sex relations and sex difference which are accepted as entrenched motifs in western philosophical thought.

intrinsic value over the latter.<sup>52</sup> However, just because these binary relationships have become accepted parts of academic discourse over an extended period is there any specific reason why they should be considered verbatim representations of human society? There is no given reason, aside from tradition, nor any biological mandate that gives credence to the inevitability or legitimacy of such constructs.<sup>53</sup> Human character is complex and gender identity is not an absolute value. If gender has no specific identity then the assumption is sustained that gender neutrality is automatically demonstrated. It is only when cultural and biological stereotypes are accepted as given qualities that neutrality is compromised and that radical feminists are able to sustain their discourse of the patriarchal state.

Once the gendered identity of the state is called into question, other assumptions made about the role and function of the state begin to unravel. Under radical feminist analysis the state is charged with actively seeking to subjugate women and working towards their oppression as a reflection of its male persona. The argument follows that in sustaining the division between the public and private spheres LFIRT condones the state's subjection of women by continually emphasizing the importance of male activity in the public sphere. In defense of the state and liberal feminism it could be argued that the institution is only a context and that it is governments that act and are the expression of state.<sup>54</sup> On the basis of this representation the state can be perceived as a gender neutral entity capable of promoting women's interests in the public sphere.

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p.58

<sup>53</sup> J. English, *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>54</sup> P.J. Katzenstein, 'International Relations and the Analysis of Change', in E.O. Czempiel and J.N. Rosneau (eds), *Global Change and Theoretical Challenges*, Lexington Books, Lexington (Mass), 1989, p.297.

In response, radical feminists could argue that gender neutrality can still not be assumed. It is not the institution as a framework that embodies masculinity but the very people who run government that determine the gendered nature of the state. Given that governance is work conducted in the public sphere, and that work in the public sphere is the legitimate activity of men, state interests subsequently reflect the aspirations and intent of those who operate the institution. Effectively, the state is inherently male. This situation is especially true in foreign policy and international relations where all actors, from foreign ministers to armies to those who theorize about international relations are predominantly male. Their androcentric nature is inevitably reflected in the attitudes, perceptions and substance of their labor. Liberal feminists are, therefore, deceiving themselves in believing that the state is an institution capable of representing women's interests.

In this continuing dialogue the liberal feminist could quite legitimately respond that the same interests and concerns are reflected and represented when a woman is in charge of the state. One only has to look to Margaret Thatcher's decision to go to war against Argentina in the Falklands, or the frequent incursions between the Arabs and Israelis during Golda Meir's leadership or the numerous decisions legislated in favor of women in terms of participation in the armed forces that have been made under male governments to see the inadequacies of such an argument. As an institution the state has basic needs and aspirations in the international sphere which have to be met in order for the domestic context to function. This would imply that its actions and preferences are

not necessarily coefficients of gender thus gender neutrality could therefore be a credible assumption.

Equally liberal feminist international relations theory easily deconstructs radical feminism's second argument against the state as a neutral agent. As already discussed, from a radical feminist perspective the state is a tool of the patriarchy. It symbolizes man's oppression of woman and, particularly in the international sphere, is representative of systemic violence against women, both as a function of interstate conflict and sanctioned violence within the state. Quite obviously, the state is not held in high regard and perceived as a convenient tool to be used by the patriarchy to perpetuate the status of women as an underclass, but is there any logical reason why the state should be termed so negatively?

In as much as the state can be considered to work against the interests of women, so also can it be reconfigured as an agent that condenses and focuses power to bring about change.<sup>55</sup> Such an argument draws heavily on modern liberalism and the interpretation of the state as an actor that ensures the equality of opportunity rather than the atomistic forms of liberalism that are the principle subjects of feminist critique. There is no intrinsic reason why in a feminist context the state can only be perceived in negative terms. While it is easy to subscribe to the notion of the state as an instrument of structural and systemic violence against women the possibility also exists that the state could be a useful agent of change for women. Rather than perceiving the state as an oppressor its apparatus can also be seen as a way of condensing and focusing power to bring about

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<sup>55</sup> M. Harrington, 'What Exactly is Wrong with the Liberal State as an Agent of Change', in V.S. Peterson (ed), 1992, p.66

change in the specific context of a democratic system.<sup>56</sup> Within this argument the only way that the state could be constructed as an oppressor would be for those who are denied participation in a democratic system or who are in a non-democratic context.<sup>57</sup> The deconstruction of the state as an instrument of oppression reflects the different strands of feminist thinking, contrasting the notion of woman as victim, closely associated with more radical elements, against more assertive feminist theory and practice.<sup>58</sup> To abandon the state in totality, for example, could leave the political world in the realm of both the private and semi-private corporation. Because these are not subject to the rigors of public election and accountability there is no obligation for them to accommodate other concerns and act in an altruistic manner; it would thus be more difficult to perceive the state as an agent of oppression where there is a nexus of responsibility.<sup>59</sup>

Radical feminism's fundamental criticism of liberal feminist international relations is, however, the centrality of the atomistic individual to liberal theory. The individual/citizen, like the state is called into question based on the assumption of gender neutrality while, in fact being inherent masculine/rational in thought and behavior. In addition, the liberal citizen is questioned for his atomism, his abstraction from a socio-historic context which grounds the individual and connects him through community and more specifically kinship ties. Since the individual/citizen is the base unit of analysis for

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> This discussion is relevant only to a Western context. If cultural variables are added to an already diverse array of considerations then the analysis has the possibility of becoming so complex and diffuse as to render itself inutile. Equally, the radical feminist would reply that this condition would only hold for a particular socio-economic class of women within particular societies. Since the majority of the world's women do not live in such situations then arguments such as these are automatically invalidated.

<sup>58</sup> Naomi Wolf *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How it Will Change the Twenty First Century*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993, pp.147-150.

<sup>59</sup> M. Harrington, *op. cit.*, pp.66-68.

liberal international relations theory, on the basis that what occurs within the state is the primary determinant of what happens between states, the consideration of these arguments is particularly significant.

Turning first to the issue of gender neutrality, the arguments for the individual/citizen take a very similar line to those made against the state. Like the state, the individual/citizen is assumed to possess a male gendered identity because he is a rational agent in thought and behavior, an actor in the public sphere and a legitimate part of the international system. The same secondary argument follows: that women are denied the opportunity to obtain the same political rights and privileges as liberalism's individual solely on the basis of their biology which entombs them in the private sphere. While radical feminism's reasoning may have held some credibility when Mary Wollstonecraft argued against such thinking in the eighteenth century, there is little evidence to support these claims in the present context of international relations.<sup>60</sup> There are many arguments that mitigate the supposed irrationality of women which follow in a similar vein to the examples of government by women that were used to justify the gender neutrality of the state. Rather than retracing familiar ground it should be sufficient to argue that the individual/citizen's identity is not implicitly gendered and only assumes such an identity when these specific meanings are consciously attached.

To take a different approach to the discussion of the individual; it could be implied that the assumption of rationality which forms an intrinsic part of the male gendered identity of the individual/citizen is actually its fatal flaw. To pre-suppose rationality is, according to Frazer and Lacey, to assume that everything can be reduced to a common

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<sup>60</sup> M. Wollstonecraft in M. Walters, *op. cit.*

denominator of interest and desire.<sup>61</sup> In the international sphere this is akin to the expression of a national interest to which all members are working within the state, and possibly the existence of a mutual interest between states in the international system. Such an idea is a complete anathema to radical feminists. Put simply, under the terms of their analysis, with its categorization of relations into binary opposites, and given the different spheres that men and women occupy, it is inconceivable that the two genders could possess coincident interests.

The final critique against the individual/citizen from a radical feminist point of view is the atomistic nature of the liberal individual/citizen. In keeping with his profoundly gendered identity, the liberal individual/citizen seeks no ties of community or kinship nor any grounding in any social or historical context. It is only under such conditions that the individual can be the aggressive warrior who defends the state and is a principle actor in the public sphere, such as the stag hunt analogy in Rousseau's writings on international relations. Such abstraction is profoundly disturbing from a feminist perspective as it devalues woman's primary identity as a life giver and a nurturer. Because they give life, women are unable to perceive their interests in terms of self-interest, preferring instead to build ties of community and kinship, which reinforce their own identity and vicariously sustain life.<sup>62</sup> With such an altered perception of their self-identity it is reasonable to see how feminists could perceive their exclusion from the current international relations discourse and why they seek a theory which reflects better the collaborative spirit that defines and includes their biologically constructed identity.

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<sup>61</sup> E. Frazer and N. Lacey, *op. cit.*, p.61.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p.56.

Once again the question must be asked if there is any necessity in seeing the individual/citizen in liberal theory as this atomistic entity who only acts in self interest? This notion is a source of great consternation within liberal theory as well as for liberal feminists.<sup>63</sup> While the assumption of atomistic individualism may hold within classical liberal theory, there are many forms of non-atomistic individual/citizens to be found in modern and liberal feminist theory. To argue against liberalism on the premise of the abstracted individual/citizen is a misreading of the theory, particularly in international relations theory. Given that liberal IR theory is premised on notions of interdependence through international organization, which is carried over into liberal feminist international relations theory, the presence of an atomistic individual/citizen, or atomistic state at this level, becomes difficult to sustain. It is preferable to think of the individual as being abstracted only in the sense that he (or she) is capable of expressing free will within a collective context.<sup>64</sup>

While the state and the individual/citizen are important concepts in liberal theory it is the division of human existence into public and private spheres which is the context that sustains these other fundamental ideas. In domestic theory the division is perpetuated to restrict the sphere of government activity so that the individual/citizen's affairs remain as his own concern but also to ensure that the state can intervene when necessary to preserve the potential for equality. Similarly, in liberal international theory the division is retained

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<sup>63</sup> S. Wendell, 'A (Qualified) Defense of Liberal Feminism', *Hypatia*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1987, pp.69-72.

<sup>64</sup> L. Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1993, p.17.

not only to preserve the sense of the individual/citizen as a legitimate actor but also to demarcate legitimate behaviors of state action and non-action in the international sphere.

Despite the suggestion of false consciousness emanating from the radical feminist thinking, liberal feminists retain the public/private split as a fundamental part of their theory and construction of the world. The radical feminist criticism stems from their differing perception of security. Given their basic assumption that there can be no separation of the public and private spheres, as the personal is political, their security definition reflects this change, emphasizing the domestic insecurity dilemma of women and the necessity of protection of the person from the state before any state based or interstate notions of security can be considered. However LFIRT argues that the current delimitations of the public and private are not fixed and instead reflect artificial constructs of culture and ideology. Thus far from being definite entities the boundaries of the public and private are quite malleable and open to redefinition.<sup>65</sup> It is, therefore, quite legitimate for liberal feminism to redefine the public/private dichotomy: to diminish the content of the private yet still retain principles of government non-intervention, to maintain state sovereignty in the international, public, sphere to reflect its perceptions of women's interests.<sup>66</sup> For example, in *Banana's Beaches and Bases* Enloe's understanding of security is still defined, at one level, by military considerations but allows for the possibility of including other dimensions, such as economic security, which are more accommodating of women's needs. Simultaneously such a definition works towards a gender sensitive yet largely gender neutral interpretation of international

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<sup>65</sup> S. Wendell 'A (Qualified) Defense of Liberal Feminism', *Hypatia*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1987, p.81

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

relations. After all there is no necessary nexus between the public as male and the private as female beyond that of an associational framework.<sup>67</sup>

The final criticism of liberal feminist international relations theory stems not from its content or its subject but its method. While radical feminism finds a great deal lacking from the substantive content of liberal feminism, it is particularly critical of the continued use of empirical analysis and the scientific method as the valid way of understanding the role and status of women in international relations. Simply stated these terms are a rubric for making hypotheses and testing their validity in a value neutral environment. The minor criticism is that empiricist approach is a reflection of masculine thinking, given that it is both scientific and rational in which case, it is antithetical to the knowledge that can be gained from women's intuitive thinking. While the credibility of a specific way of thinking for women may be in doubt the major contention of radical feminists is, however, that empiricism is uncritical and ends up describing, rather than analyzing, gender relations in the international environment. This may appear not to be particularly significant; it does in fact have far-reaching implications given that the meaning of gender is a socio-cultural construction. Given the number of permutations of culture, gender becomes very ambiguous. As such, it is important to understand the particular bias that informs the idea before understanding the implications of a gendered analysis on international relations. Thus, while description is an important first step in the process of accommodating gender into a theoretical framework only by adding an analytical component does gender's meaning become apparent and it gains intellectual credibility.

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<sup>67</sup> C.C. Gould, *op. cit.*, p.16.

## Conclusion

In essence, liberalism and feminism would appear to be two incompatible theories grafted to one another in an artificial symbiosis subsumed by ideological tensions. While liberalism is a theory of order and tradition, feminism appears to be an antiestablishment theory whose basic agenda is to challenge existing perceptions based on attitudes towards women. For this reason alone radical feminism would appear to have a convincing argument against a liberal feminist interpretation of international relations theory. The radical critique demonstrates a significant number of flaws within LFIRT which undermine its ability to represent gendered interests and understand the role of gender in the international system. The implicit male identity of the individual, and of the state, combined with the patriarchal assumptions of the division between public/private spheres are just three possible avenues of criticism which radical feminists use to undermine the credibility of liberal feminist international relations theory.

While this is the basis of a seemingly convincing argument the radical feminist critique can, in fact, be turned back on itself, to invalidate their interpretation of international relations. When the basic positions of liberal and radical feminism are expanded either for clarification or justification, numerous flaws and inconsistencies are all too evident within radical feminist thought. Principally there is a sense that radical feminism has oversimplified many of the premisses of liberal feminist thought which, in effect, has made it easier for radical feminism to dismiss the liberal position. While there are many instances of such simplification perhaps the most obvious concerns the unidimensional construction of liberalism's individual as atomistic and abstracted,

without acknowledging that this is only one of a number of representations of the individual in liberal theory. If an alternative construction of the individual is chosen, perhaps one that is more representative of a communitarian interpretation of liberalism and the liberal individual, then radical feminism's criticisms are less effective. Equally, sustaining the public/private divide on archaic descriptions of sex difference sets up an artificial argument about the notion of gendered space and the exclusion of women from the sphere of politics and international relations. The discussion is, therefore, left problematic.

In trying to avoid a placatory conclusion which will provide no satisfactory answers to these questions it is necessary to approach the evaluation of liberal feminist international relations theory from other avenues. One element of the critique against LFIRT concerns its methodological approach to the study of gender in international relations, and the decision to employ the central tenets of the scientific method and empirical investigation as the basis of the theory. In doing so, LFIRT fails to examine critically the basis of its knowledge about women and feminism. In seeking an objective and absolute definition of gender and gender relations in international relations theory, which is implicit in empirical investigation, LFIRT fails to see that gender is not a simple description of the physical attributes of sex difference. Rather, it describes relations of power which are to some extent a function of these physical features but largely attributable to cultural meanings derived from, and reinforced by, various social, political, and economic institutions. Evidently there are inherent problems which undermine theoretical integrity in trying to use these same institutions, whose vested interests in perpetuating certain

structural conditions, present a significant obstacle to effecting change and fostering understanding on the role and place of gender and gendered interpretations of international relations theory.

## Conclusion

### What Ever Happened to Liberal Feminist International Relations Theory?

What, therefore, does an investigation into liberal feminist analysis reveal about its ability to provide a coherent and authentic explanation of the central problems and theoretical dilemmas facing international relations theory? Given that the prevailing discourse retains state based explanation of the international system, feminist analyses, which emphasize the individual as the primary actor in a reconfigured international system with no boundaries between domestic and international affairs, still exist at a largely sub-thematic level. To the extent that there is a sense of a feminist international relations theory, it is the discourse of radical feminism which dominates this intellectual space, seemingly to the abrogation of all other feminist interpretations including summary silence of liberal feminist international relations theory. What remains, however, is to unearth the validity of this exclusion, not only in terms of radical feminism's claims to hegemony but more importantly in terms of liberal feminism's intellectual agenda. In perspective, it would appear that it is liberal feminism's ideological origins which marginalize its theoretical agenda as a viable construct for the explication of international relations.

In its critical failure to define gender and gender relations in the international system liberal feminist international relations theory confirms its status as an entrenched member of the periphery of revisionist IR discourse. As exemplified by the writings of Jean Bethke Elshtain and Cynthia Enloe, LFIRT is intent on discussing the absence of women

in international relations, or their minority status, as a simple omission which can be easily overcome by expanding the legitimate scope of IR to include areas more conducive to women's participation within traditional international relations. The logical extension of such an argument concludes that once numerical parity is attained in theory and in practice, gender equality in IR is simultaneously achieved.

There are, however, a number of difficulties with regard to this argument which detract from this simplistic argument. Surprisingly the most vehement criticism of liberal feminist IR theory has come from within feminist thinking itself. While mainstream analysis has been cautious in its approach to revisionist discourses it has been less hostile towards liberal feminist interpretation given that it operates within similar theoretical and conceptual parameters. Yet it is for precisely this reason that other feminist schools of thought are particularly critical of a liberal feminist approach to international relations theory. If the essence of feminism is to challenge the existing order and to destabilize traditions and accepted institutions in order to create an acceptable space for women, it may legitimately be argued that any theory working from a base of knowledge within these traditions and institutions cannot possibly achieve its stated intentions.

To return to the more specific criticisms of liberal feminist international relations is, however, to return to discussions of the state, the individual, the division of space, and feminist epistemology. A discussion of each of these variables reveals inherent deficiencies in liberal feminist reasoning and its deconstruction of gender. Yet, within each category of analysis LFIRT embodies the essence of the contradiction discussed above. While the state, the individual, the division of public/private space and even

liberal feminist epistemology can all be presented and justified as a gender neutral space they cannot advance a feminist interpretation of international relations. In continuing to employ the essentials of empiricist investigation, or perpetuating an abiding belief in the existence of a testable, generalizable and absolute truth on women in international relations, liberal feminism cannot, by virtue of its nature, embrace a critical perspective on the meaning of gender and gender inequality. Instead of offering an analysis of the causes, sources, and structural impediments to physical and intellectual participation in international relations, LFIRT can only describe women's exclusion.

Far from being a definite entity, gender is inherently ambiguous. What can be ascertained is that gender is much more than a description of difference based on the physical attributes and characteristics of sex difference; instead, gender is better understood as a socio-cultural construction describing relations of power which, in this instance, are relations of power within the international system. Adding this analytical dimension to an interpretation of international relations theory necessitates understanding the biases which underpin and inform gender before trying to accommodate it within a theoretical framework. If it is accepted that meaning is both derived from and reinforced by various social, political, and economic institutions there are, evidently, inherent problems in trying to use these same institutions which have vested interests in perpetuating structural conditions antithetical to women as the context to effect change and foster understanding on the role and place of gender and gendered interpretation of international relations theory.

At this point a distinct problem emerges. With liberal feminism excluded for its inability to provide an acceptable framework for a gender sensitive analysis of IR what other options are available to feminist international relations theory to sustain its claims of being a legitimate part of the international relations discipline? Given that radical feminism was used as the critique of LFIRT, radical feminism should surely be a legitimate option. However, as is evident from the number of counterarguments that can be leveled against a radical feminist interpretation of international relations and its critique of liberal international relations theory, radical feminism does little more than provide a critique of the present without offering positive avenues for future inquiry either for the discipline as a whole or the subfield of feminist theory. As a consequence, feminist international relations theory is apparently left without an analytical structure for promoting the study of gender issues in international relations.

### **Alternative Futures for Feminist International Relations Theory**

If, however, it is still conceded at this point that gender enhances the understanding and interpretation of international relations theory then a way has to be found to construct another basis of knowledge that comes closer to defining gender as a distinct category of analysis. It is this challenge that feminist scholars must confront and then conquer in order their ideas to become an essential element of international relations theory. Indeed, Sandra Whitworth has suggested that this challenge be taken up by feminist critical theory. The central tenet of the argument embodies analytical agenda as suggested above where a critical approach to gender is used to understand its construction, the effect of

cultural and other meanings that have been imbued in gender, and how these have been used to legitimate the underrepresentation of women in the international sphere.<sup>1</sup> Whitworth's interpretation seeks to minimize the inertia of radical and postmodernist theory by emphasizing the role of individual actors in creating the context of gender interaction rather than simply deferring to the amorphous power of the patriarchy.<sup>2</sup> In taking this approach, feminist critical theory seeks to avoid essentialism and universalization of radical and postmodern frameworks by continually creating new interpretations specific to each temporal grouping. However, while the theory of this approach appears to be plausible, its practice may prove to be difficult. Aside from Whitworth's own work on international political economy this framework has not been widely applied and is particularly absent in terms of security studies analysis, the source of the greatest contention between feminist scholars and the academic mainstream of international relations.

In many ways it is difficult to conceive how a feminist critical theory of security studies would be constructed and what role it would play in the clarification of the core dilemmas of international relations. In terms of other feminist perspectives a feminist critical theory differs in that its principle concern is with the material conditions and social forces that create and sustain gender rather than a biological definition of sex difference.<sup>3</sup> As such, a feminist critical theory security dilemma would diverge from other feminist approaches that are grounded in the explicit bias of feminine pacifism. For

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<sup>1</sup> S. Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions*, Macmillan, London, 1994, p.24.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.30

<sup>3</sup> S. Whitworth, 'Gender and the Inter-paradigm Debate', *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer 1989, pp.265-272.

example, feminist critical theory could not sustain Grant's reinterpretation of the Rousseauvian Stag Hunt as its credibility is dependent on the biological difference of gender. Yet this negative definition brings IR scholars no closer to what feminist critical theory would look like in the explication of events occurring within the international system. At this stage in the development of feminist critical theory it seems as if its inquiry is a conundrum rather than a coherent theory. If feminist critical theory requires the reconstruction of the starting point of the relationship between gender and international relations, as Sarah Brown suggests it must, it is likely the puzzles of application will remain intact until this problem is addressed.<sup>4</sup>

Feminist voices have been presented with a window of opportunity to challenge the conventional wisdom of international relations theory. However, despite the existence of a number of feminist interpretations the presentation and discussion of a gender-sensitive international relations theory is evidently dominated by radical feminist interpretation to the extent that all other points of view have been summarily silenced. Although liberal feminist international relations theory is one such silenced voice its exclusion is very much justifiable. LFIRT's predilection for continuity over destabilization and description over analysis marginalizes its contribution to the discipline precluding any future inclusion unless the integrity of its theoretical agenda be dramatically altered. An adequate feminist analysis or interpretation of international relations theory can only be brought about if gender is understood as a description of unequal power relations that is created and sustained by the structure of social, political and economic institutions

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<sup>4</sup> S. Brown, 'Feminism and the International Relations Theory of Gender Inequality', *Millennium: Journal of international Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Autumn 1988, p.464.

instead of a more functionally defined inequality that can simply be altered simply by changing the categories of analysis to include areas more empathetic to women's participation in international relations. However, if this criterion is the essential element of a utile feminist analysis of international relations theory then the irreconcilable contradictions between ideological liberalism and theoretical feminism deny the possibility of liberal feminism from assuming a more crucial role in the academic inquiry into international relations theory.

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