

Praxis and Emancipation: The Lessons of Feminist Theory in International Relations

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Introduction

There has been much debate in recent years about the potential contribution that critical theory can make to International Relations (IR). What is most striking about this debate, apart from the absence of any real intellectual engagement between the combatants, is the complete disregard, accorded by all sides, to the place of feminist theory in this inter-paradigm jousting for the lead. Strange as it may seem, despite the obvious parallelisms, critical international theorists have paid scant attention to the work of their feminist colleagues, and when they have nodded in their direction it has been only to beckon them over into the more 'inclusive' 'neutral' arena of a universalistic, rather than gendered, critical theory (Linklater 1994:128).

Our interest in this paper is to explore the relationship between these two bodies of theorising in light of Stephen Leonard's argument that feminist theory is one example of *Critical Theory in Political Practice* (1990). Indeed, the central thesis of this article is that feminist IR theory, at present, is the most developed form of critical theory in the discipline. We shall show how feminist theory explicitly seeks to accomplish that task which Marx, the patriarch of critical theory, originally defined as its main purpose, that is, 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Marx 1968: 41).

In order to develop this argument, we have divided the paper into three parts. In the first part, we outline what we take to be the three defining features of critical theory, emphasizing the significance of praxis in each. In the second part, we examine the theoretical frameworks offered by two leading critical international theorists – Andrew Linklater and Robert Cox – and argue that the introduction of gender analysis problematises the approaches of both scholars. In the third part, we illustrate the ways in which the theoretical approaches of two feminist IR theorists, Christine Sylvester and Cynthia Enloe, embody the central requirements of critical theory.

Theory and Praxis: Critical Theory's Three Tasks

The best way to begin our discussion of what constitutes a critical theory is to refer to the defining features outlined by Stephen Leonard in his book, *Critical Theory in Political Practice*. Here, he outlines what he takes to be the overall purpose of critical theory and its three central tasks. The over-riding goal of critical theory must be the realization of self-liberating practice. In order to achieve this task, critical theories must embody the following three moments: a) the task of deconstructing prevailing truths and social practices in order to locate the sources of domination within them; b) the task of grounding its theoretical and metatheoretical assumptions *in the actual social practices and struggles* of particular marginalised groups and their experiences of domination; and c) the task of offering an alternative vision of a life free from such domination (Leonard 1990: 4-8).

In the first moment, critical theorists illuminate relations of domination and particularly, how they are characteristically underwritten by theoretical perspectives which relegate the self-understandings of particular groups to the margins. In the second moment, the critical theorist allies herself with a specific addressee. As Leonard states, 'without the recognition of a class of persons who suffer oppression, conditions from which they must be freed, critical theory is nothing more than an empty intellectual enterprise' (Leonard 1990: 14). Thus, rather than speak from an 'objective' understanding of what constitutes oppression, the theorist seeks to critically interpret the experiences and struggles of her addressee. The third moment calls on the theorist to critically draw on the *actual practices and discourses* of her addressees in order to imagine new forms of social life which may liberate them from domination.¹ These alternatives, however, cannot be utopian; rather they must be based on identified possibilities for change within the existing social order.

What is most important about Leonard's framework for critical theory is that it centralizes praxis as both the objective of critical theory and as a central conceptual tool. The term praxis is now making frequent appearances in critical IR literature, although it remains a relatively undefined and unexplored concept.² Thus, we would like to explain what we take it to mean in this paper. The *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* defines praxis as follows:

This Greek term for 'action' or 'practice' was given a special meaning in the early philosophy of Karl Marx. It refers to the idea of 'the unity of theory and practice'. Thought or theory, Marx claimed cannot be seen as separate from practice as some abstract standard or contemplative ideal. It arises out of practice and is developed and modified by it. Marx considered that the split between ideal and reality, between an irrational world and a rationalist critique of it, could only be overcome by the development of a theoretical consciousness among social groups engaged in the practice of changing the real world (Bullock, 1988: 676).

Thus, on the one hand, praxis gives rise to and fundamentally shapes theory, and on the other hand, it is fostered and given direction by critical thought and reflection. It is important to be clear that the relationship that we are focusing on in this paper is that between theory and praxis; that is the relationship be-

tween theory (and the theorist) and theory-guided struggles oriented towards social change. This relationship implies that the theorist takes a supportive, but at least partially autonomous and critical approach *vis-a-vis* her addressee. In this conception, theory is not only a scientific or philosophical exercise but also a politico-normative one which has *practical intent*. The truth of the theory, therefore, can only be verified, in the final instance, 'in the successful process of enlightenment and that means: in the practical discourse of those concerned' (Habermas 1973: 2). In other words, critical theory is successful to the extent to which its normative orientation, theoretical explanations of social relations, and its ability to identify possibilities for social change resonate with the experiences and aspirations of its addressee.

At this point, it is important to clarify, in greater detail, what we mean by the notion of an addressee. Within the critical theory tradition there have been two ways of conceptualising the addressee. On the one hand, Marxists and early Frankfurt School theorists sought to ally themselves with one particular social agent, *i.e.*, the working class, in the belief that their interests could be generalised to society as a whole. Revolution of the working class was the liberation of all. On the other hand, those critical theorists following in a Habermasian vein rejected the idea of a particular addressee in favour of a universal subject, *i.e.*, humanity. The problem with the former position is that it assumes that it is possible to prioritise our different experiences and identities and to privilege one over all others. The problem with the latter position is that it tends to downplay difference and overestimates the feasibility of speaking to the interests and experiences of all people; it thus fails to appreciate, at least theoretically, the conflictual and power-riven nature of social relations. The danger then is that, in the name of a universal addressee, the needs and interests of particular groups, usually the most powerful, prevail. Both approaches, in different ways, rely on a false universalism, a particular addressee masquerading as a universal. As we shall see below, the approaches of Linklater and Cox fall into this trap.

We now turn to the work of Linklater and Cox, who both seek to offer critical theories of international relations which privilege historical change, praxis and the question of emancipation. While neither approach claims to capture the specificity of gender relations, both ostensibly seek to offer a comprehensive explanation of the dominant modes of exclusion and subordination that exist in global politics. Given their intention to offer a *macro*-theory, therefore, we will interrogate both of these approaches in terms of their ability to shed light on forms of gender domination and feminist praxis. Our argument here is not that every critical theory must engage in gender analysis, but rather that any theory that claims to be critical and comprehensive, must, at a minimum, allow the theoretical space to do so. In other words, its logic and concepts cannot, at the outset, preclude its theorisation. In this light, it is Cox who offers the more critical and, therefore, more promising approach, although, as we shall see, there are serious limitations to the critical potential of his project as well.

Turning first to Linklater, the main weakness of his framework stems from how he understands the main objective of critical international theory. He

specifies its most important task as follows: ‘[t]he critical project in International Relations needs to understand the interconnections between different levels of exclusion *but it should focus the greater part of its attention on the sovereign state as a problematic form of political community*’ (Linklater 1994: 129, our emphasis). While this statement of purpose may seem rather straightforward, at least to international relationists, it in fact involves four inter-related claims about power and its location in social life.

The first of Linklater’s claims is that there are different forms of power relations—what he refers to as dynamics of inclusion and exclusion—that exist and intersect. Presumably, these would include not only relations of gender, class, race, and sexuality but also the power dynamics created by geographical, regional and linguistic differences. His second claim is that the sovereign state is a problematic form of political community. Here Linklater implies that, despite the variety of power relations that exist in our social life, some of the most important exclusionary practices can be understood in terms of prevailing understandings and practices of citizenship. His third claim, which is not referred to explicitly in the quote above, is that the problematic nature of the state and, more specifically, the social bond of citizenship, derives from the fact that it creates and justifies an insider/outsider dynamic which both excludes obligation to the external ‘other’ (foreigner) and works to marginalise the internal ‘other’ (cultural minorities) within the state. His final claim is that it is this particular dynamic, that of insider and outsider, that should be the focus of critical international relations theorists.

The tensions within this framework abound. While Linklater, in one breath, recognizes that different dynamics of inclusion and exclusion exist and intersect, in the next breath he privileges one of these dynamics as *both primary and separable* from the others. By making it *primary*, Linklater has uncritically accepted the statist terms of IR discourse in developing his problematique. Unwilling to give up the sovereign state as the central concern of international relationists, Linklater is forced to constrict his vision of exclusionary practices only to those which explicitly stem from the existence of the sovereign state, *i.e.*, citizenship. By making it *separable* he is claiming that we can do the critical project in IR without understanding how power relations are mutually constitutive. Thus, in the first instance, Linklater is making an unqualified, unreflexive claim about what forms of domination and exclusion are primary in global politics. In the second instance, he is effectively *abstracting* the state and the insider/outsider dynamic from its concrete social and political content.

The weakness of Linklater’s work becomes evident when we explore some of its dimensions in light of feminist insights on power, praxis and emancipation. First let us take citizenship, the social bond that Linklater privileges in his exploration of the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics of the state. Feminist approaches to citizenship have shown that to understand the ‘us/them’ dynamic of citizenship solely in national or even cultural terms is to hide from view the myriad of cross-cutting, unequal social relations that constitute it. In terms of gender, as Evelyn Fox Keller states, dominant conceptualisations of citizenship displace ‘women, their work and the values associated with that

work, from the culturally normative definitions of objectivity, morality, citizenship, and even of human nature' (Quoted in Jones 1991:783). In other words, from a feminist perspective, Linklater's central concern, that is the 'insider'/'outsider' dynamic, is one already predicated on masculinist identity and power.

A second way of throwing into relief the contradictions of Linklater's approach is by examining the political implications of his normative vision. Linklater's emancipatory goal is the decentering of the sovereign state through both the sub-nationalisation of political authority, in order to protect cultural difference,³ and the internationalization of authority, in order to extend our citizenship bond beyond the sovereign state. Two questions arise when considering his first recommendation of devolving political authority to cultural minorities. First, what normative grounds does he rely on to justify his privileging of cultural difference over other forms of difference? Why should critical international relationists only pay attention to this form of exclusion? Second, what should be done when the devolution of power to one minority group implies the subordination of another? This is not just an abstract problem. As feminist analyses of nationalism have shown, many nationalist leaders and governments have defined women's traditional roles as the kernel of their cultural authenticity, arguing in domestic and international fora that the question of women's rights is a cultural rather than political one (Kandiyoti 1991, 1995, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). In India, for example, where there are conflicting Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh interpretations of the appropriate role of women in community life, the state has chosen to oppose Muslim women who have tried to use state-wide constitutional provisions to assert and protect their rights against those communal interpretations (Kandiyoti 1991). Turning to his second recommendation, the internationalization of decision-making, one again is struck by the problematic nature of this trend for women. Feminist research on women's participation and influence in politics has shown that women participate more and have most influence at the local level.⁴ Thus, the internationalization of political authority in contexts such as the EU cannot be assumed to be a positive force in the enabling of women's political participation.

In sum, Linklater's efforts to articulate an emancipatory project is fundamentally limited by his attempt to work within the narrow parameters of the discipline of IR; as a result, he simplifies and circumscribes the task of critical theory to the understanding of the sovereign state as a problematic form of political community. Rather than confront the complexity of different power relations that exist within as well as across sovereign state boundaries, Linklater abstracts and privileges one particular social relationship, that of citizenship, and what he sees as its attendant identities: cultural/national identity, the statist identity of citizenship and our identities as humans. By ignoring both the way in which power relations intersect, and thereby generate a myriad of other identities, and the way in which these relations constitute not only the social bond of citizenship, but all others relations within a political community,

Linklater is unable to foresee the exclusionary political implications that his approach legitimates.

Turning now to Cox, at first blush, his framework resonates with the conception of critical theory set out in the first section of this paper. Indeed, the emphasis on social and political relations, the insistence on a historical approach, the view of theory as normatively laden and a commitment to social change and emancipation make his framework an ideal candidate for the most developed form of critical theory in IR. Nonetheless, despite the obvious strengths of the Coxian paradigm, a number of questions arise when considering his conceptualisation of social forces and praxis from a feminist perspective.

Although Cox offers us a conceptual tool – ‘social forces’ – to identify and talk about alternative forms of praxis, he weds this concept to a *productionist paradigm* to the extent that it refers to a social grouping ‘engendered by the production process’ (Cox 1996: 100). This narrowing of the potential addressee to a social class within the relations of production serves to substantially constrain his political imagination: class conflict becomes the primary motor of social change while alternative forms of transformative politics are left in the shadows of his structuralist framework.

This privileging of class relations, in theory, and working class alliances, in substantive terms, is underwritten by his Marxist understanding of identity formation and politicisation. While Cox does focus on the legitimating function of ideas as well as their transformative power, he does not consider the way in which identity is socially constructed. For him, ideas can take two forms. The first are intersubjective meanings which are broadly shared ideas about social reality; they are taken-for-granted truths about the world. For example, for most of us, that we live in a world of sovereign states is an accepted truth. The second are collective images held by specific groups of people and derived from their particular position in the relations of production. In other words, workers will have a different world view from their bosses.

This two-sided depiction of the role of ideas is problematised as soon as one considers feminist arguments about the socially constructed nature of identity. In terms of Cox’s intersubjective meanings, feminists would agree that ideologies exist which serve to legitimate dominant power relations, but they would question to what extent these ideas are in fact shared and, if so, by whom. More specifically, they would seek to illuminate in what ways these ideologies and discourses are masculinist and serve to justify a particular set of gender relations. Although Cox’s framework would not preclude this line of enquiry, it offers few tools in this regard. With respect to Cox’s collective images, we find a more problematic conceptualisation of identity. Here it is assumed that the ideas that we hold about the social world are constructed around our experience within a mode of relations of production. Feminists have demonstrated, however, that the construction of a politicised identity does not necessarily occur within the context of class relations. Identity, Sylvester has argued, cannot be understood as static, singular or universal (Sylvester, 1994a). Nor can it be easily deduced from the material circumstances of social forces. Instead, it

must be conceptualised as the changing expression of peoples self-understandings within the context of intersecting power relations.

The implications of this understanding of identity become clearer when one looks at just some of the different forms of praxis that are occurring in the world today. Cox suggests that one possible source of emancipatory praxis is the mobilisation of unestablished or established workers. Clearly this is one place to look since both women and men have responded politically to the negative effects of the globalisation of production. However it is important to note that women often experience the detrimental effects of globalisation differently from men and, indeed, their needs and interest as workers are often subordinated to the resistance efforts of male workers. For example, in Honduras, while male banana plantation workers attempted to challenge the stranglehold that the United Fruit Company had on their lives, their female counterparts (who worked as cleaners and packers) were 'excluded from the unions by their fathers and brothers who imagine[d] their own conflicts with management to be more "political", more "serious" than those of the women' (Enloe 1993: 108-9). If women workers are marginalised by their male colleagues, on what grounds can a counterhegemonic alliance be built if it is to avoid another type of hegemonic politics, a gendered politics? Furthermore, both women and men have organised around issues which cannot be reduced to the politics of production. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights and Women Living Under Muslim Laws are two transnational movements that have prioritised other power relations and identities.

In sum, although Cox's approach offers a starting point to conceptualise the importance of ideologies in the constitution of power relations, it does not provide the tools to explore the way in which power relations overlap around a variety of identities. By separating out relations of production from gender relations and assuming that the latter can be understood in terms of the former, Cox circumscribes his projects' ability to speak to the experiences of a number of marginalised constituents. Thus Cox and Linklater, despite their very different projects, ultimately fall into the same trap of relying on a false universalism which marginalises difference in general and gender in particular.

The Unity of Theory and Praxis: Feminist Theory as Critical Theory

In this third part of the paper we explore the argument made by Stephen Leonard, that feminist theory is a critical theory, in light of the work of two feminist IR scholars, Christine Sylvester and Cynthia Enloe.⁵ As we shall show, both Sylvester and Enloe take as one of their main tasks the demonstration of the link between the practices that oppress women and the ideologies, theories and metatheories that support those practices. In other words, they engage in a ground-clearing exercise which exposes taken-for-granted truths to be socially constructed, historically contingent, gendered and, therefore, oppressive. Second, rather than attempting to realise theory in practice, they both seek to draw from feminist struggles in an effort to see how theory can

simultaneously speak from praxis as well as critically guide it. Finally, to differing extents, they both seek to outline an alternative vision of self-liberating politics.

The Unity of Feminist Metatheory and Praxis: Sylvester's Empathetic Cooperation

While Christine Sylvester's attention has been largely focused on the metatheoretical debates in IR theory, her work still engages with the three central moments of critical theory. Starting with the first moment, Sylvester engages in a broad-ranging critique of the tradition of western political theory and the 'great debates' in IR theory (Sylvester 1988, 1992, 1994a and 1994b). Demonstrating how these gendered discourses reflect characteristically male ways of knowing and being, she explores how they construe and eclipse women as knowers and as actors, leaving women 'homeless in the canons of IR knowledge' (Sylvester 1994a: 316).

In a self-reflexive move, Sylvester also takes issue with the two dominant approaches in feminist social theory: feminist standpoint and feminist post-modernism. At the heart of the debate between these two perspectives is a disagreement over the nature of the female subject in feminist theory.⁶ On the one hand, she agrees with standpoint feminism that there is a need to preserve the notion of women as real historical subjects who act in the world, experience marginalisation in a number of ways and produce particular types of knowledge which, in turn, can be drawn upon in the construction of more emancipatory social relations. On the other hand, Sylvester problematises the essentialising tendencies of standpoint perspectives by asserting the postmodern claim that as 'women' we are socially constructed beings with no fixed identity. The challenge for feminists then, according to Sylvester, is to 'snuggle into the tensions at the fulcrums of feminist representations of "women"' and to embrace both '*the situated and shifting* frames of knowledge that filter across the eyes of disenfranchised groups' (Sylvester 1994a: 317, our emphasis). Using Kathy Ferguson's concept of 'mobile subjectivities', Sylvester argues that our identities:

... are temporal, moving across and along axes of power (which are themselves in motion) without fully residing in them. They are relational, produced through shifting yet enduring encounters and connections, never fully captured by them. They are ambiguous: messy and multiple, unstable but perservering (Ferguson, quoted in Sylvester 1994a: 326)

Thus, for Sylvester, women must be understood both as real historical subjects who experience domination as gendered beings and as 'imagined subjects' who are constructed by dominant patterns of knowledge and power which impose on them particular ideas of what it means to be a woman and 'foreclose a vast array of alternative identities' (Sylvester 1994a: 323). The task at hand, then, according to Butler, is to negotiate 'the apparent need to formulate a politics which assumes the category of 'women' with the demand, often politically articulated, to problematise the category, interrogate its incoherence, its

internal dissonance, its constitutive exclusions' (Butler, quoted in Sylvester 1994a: 322).

Thus, it is important to understand that Sylvester's focus on this seemingly abstract debate about epistemology is grounded in an interest to respond to a longstanding tension within the feminist movement, that is, how does one build solidarity among women, when efforts at feminist praxis have highlighted the difficulties of organising and uniting women with very different experiences and identities. It is in response to this challenge that Sylvester addresses the second moment of critical theory and offers us what she calls a method of 'empathetic cooperation'.

As a practice, empathetic cooperation involves 'the ability and willingness to enter into the feeling or spirit of something and appreciate it fully in a subjectivity-moving way. It is to take on board the struggles of others by listening to what they have to say in a conversational style that does not push, direct or break through to "a linear progression which gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes"' (Sylvester, quoting Minh-ha, 1994a: 326). It is to negotiate respectfully with difference allowing for identity slippages. As a research gaze, it provides a lens to navigate through contending versions of IR in order to locate and illuminate empirical instances of this form of cooperation. Sylvester documents empathetically cooperative practices in the actions of feminist peace campaigners at Greenham Common and in negotiations between EC officials funding women's producer cooperatives in Zimbabwe. With respect to the latter case, Sylvester documents how all the different actors involved in the cooperatives – the EC micro-projects officials, the Greek women who helped to establish the cooperatives and the Zimbabwean women who run them – allow for slippages in their identities in order to achieve their different, sometimes seemingly incommensurable goals (Sylvester 1994b: 197-207). Thus, empathetic cooperation is at once a way of engaging in politics, a conceptual tool which helps to locate this form of praxis, and a metatheoretical resolution to the political dilemmas of the feminist movement.⁷

Finally, as part of the third moment, the method of empathetic cooperation calls on all of us, both as theorists and practitioners, to enact our ability to be self-reflexive and to allow our identities to be decentred in order to make room for 'the other'. According to Sylvester, it enables us to recognise and realise the normative goal of respectful negotiation 'that heightens awareness of difference and enables us to appreciate that theory [and practice] can be a range of cooperatively decided and contending positions' (Sylvester 1994a: 327). Thus, Sylvester manages to develop a method that points to the possibility of self-liberating practice, which allows for both solidarity and difference.

On a more critical note, we have seen in Sylvester's work a reflective and insightful negotiation of the question of feminist epistemology and female subjectivity. While important to the development of self-liberating praxis this is not enough. In order to critically guide feminist praxis, feminist theory in IR must incorporate, into a single framework, *both* the metatheoretical insights, developed largely through the post-positivist turn in critical/feminist theory,

and analyses of more structural and material dimensions of power. It is in this connection, that Sylvester's work is at its weakest. While granting considerable attention to understanding the contingent and fluid nature of agency, she overlooks the way in which power relations can obstruct any efforts at empathetic cooperation and leaves us with the impression that, as agents, we act in a void. It is when we turn to the work of Enloe that some of these structural forces come into view.

Theory from the Bottom Up: Enloe and the Politics of Everyday Life

Whether she is starting with the Filipina maid in Gulf War Kuwait, the Russian mother challenging the state's right to conscript her son, the Banana plantation worker in Honduras, the Zapatista rebel in Chiapas or the American woman soldier challenging the masculinized regime, Enloe's focus is on women and men in their daily lives and everyday struggles. From this vantage point, Enloe constructs a critical theory that illuminates the dense webs of intersecting power relations that together make up world politics.

The deconstructive moment in Enloe's work centers on the interconnected discourses and practices of both international and domestic politics. Her range of interests cover the Cold War, the Gulf War, Banana plantation politics, the politics of nationalist movements and governments, the American military, and more. In each case her critique proceeds from the perspectives of the many women (and men) implicated by these structures of power. Enloe's analysis of the Gulf War, for example, does not begin with George Bush, Saddam Hussein, oil politics, or the balance of power, although all of these are eventually brought into her analysis. Rather she starts with Saudi women challenging the restrictions on their right to move freely in their country, Kuwaiti women trying to hold their elites accountable to their promises, American women soldiers mobilized for the war or a Filipina maid in Kuwait City. She explains her preference for beginning at the margins when she says,

I had been taught by feminists over the last twenty years to be wary of presuming that political actors with the most power—and the most media coverage—were the most-useful-starting-points-for-figuring-out-exactly-how-politics-work-I-might-get-back-to-George-Bush, Francois Mitterand, King Fahd, and Saddam Hussein eventually. But coming to their ideological outlooks and uses of state power by way of particular groups of women, and the relationships of those women with other women, would prove more fruitful than taking the masculinist shortcut. That was the path paved with presumptions that powerful men would reveal the most about why a crisis had developed and why it was following a particular course (Enloe 1993: 162).

By looking through the Filipina maid's eyes at the Gulf War, a number of power dynamics come into view. This includes the impact of the oil boom on the family economy within Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and the strategies of state elites in countries such as Sri Lanka and the Phillipines who chose to ignore the plight of their female nationals working abroad, in an effort not to offend Gulf states on whose oil they depend (Enloe 1993:167). What is also brought

into the field of vision is the class and ethnic politics at work when Iraqi soldiers act out their masculinist privilege in choosing to rape a Filipina maid over a Kuwaiti woman. The discourses and practices of the Gulf War, then, from this vantage point cannot be understood solely in terms of balance of power politics. According to Enloe,

[T]o make sense, then, of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we have to talk about soldier's ideas of manliness, middle class women's presumptions about housework, and the IMF's strategies for handling international debt. *Debt, laundry, rape and conquest are only understandable in relation to each other* (Enloe 1993:168).

Thus, Enloe's starting point brings into focus a spectrum of relations of domination that help to sustain a range of social and political hierarchies as well as a militarized, statist politics.

If Enloe's earlier writings focused on empirical and conceptual analysis, her recent work has more consciously and explicitly attempted to draw out the theoretical implications for IR. She begins by pointing out to her IR colleagues that her analysis of the everyday lives of people at the margins provides evidence of 'the amounts and varieties of power it takes to form and sustain any given set of relationships between states' (Enloe 1996:186). To begin with states, for Enloe, 'presumes *a priori* that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that exactly how they are kept there could not possibly be of interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer' (Enloe 1996: 188). One consequence that flows from this is the oversimplification and reification of world politics in general and power in particular: 'international politics looks 'like a Superman comic strip, whereas it probably should resemble a Jackson Pollack' (Enloe 1996: 188-89). Thus, in the first moment of critical theorising, Enloe challenges international relations theorists to dare to look beyond the statesman and the state to those marginal locations where power is producing its effects; by looking there, she tells us, one can learn something about the the operations of power at the centre.

Turning now to Leonard's second moment, Enloe clearly grounds her theorisation of power in the struggles and activities of everyday life. One example is her analysis of the Zapatista uprising against the Mexican state in 1994. Here she provides a reading of the power dynamics and social relations of rural Indian Mexico and the ways in which the rebels developed analyses of the connections between the policies of the neo-liberal Mexican state, the emerging inter-state relationships embodied in NAFTA and their own poverty-stricken lives (Enloe 1996: 195). Thus, in stark contrast to Linklater, Enloe's focus on praxis allows her to provide us with a very different view of power:

Hierarchies are multiple, because forms of political power are diverse. But the several hierarchies do not sit on the social landscape like tuna, egg and cheese sandwiches sitting on an icy cafeteria counter, diversely multiple but unconnected. They relate to each other, sometimes in ways that subvert one another, sometimes in ways that provide each other with their respective resiliency (Enloe 1996: 193).

From the perspective of those marginalised one can see more clearly the way in which power relations *intersect and mutually constitute each other*; those

seeking to resist power structures often make connections that are hard to see from the centre. Thus, Enloe's approach to power helps us to understand, in a relational way, how power at the centre is related to and in many ways dependent on domination at the margins.

While an understanding of power is necessary to locate the possibilities for social change, this, on its own, is not sufficient. One also needs an understanding of how these power structures can be resisted and transformed; it requires at least a conceptualization, if not a theorisation, of the tensions granted within social structures and the ways in which praxis may transform these structures. Although Enloe's stated intent is to understand the possibilities for social change—and occasionally she does give us examples of successful praxis—she dedicates most of her attention to locating and analysing praxis, rather than conceptualising *the relationship between* praxis and social change.

Turning to the third moment of critical theorising, Enloe refuses to develop a grand vision of social change. Instead, she suggests that any emancipatory project must build upon the aspirations of those in the margins; they must be visions from the bottom up. This in turn means that they must be socio-historically located, multiple and subject to change: a more accountable military in the Soviet Union, a less masculinized military in the US, a more equal distribution of resources in Chiapas along class, cultural and gender lines, a less masculinist nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, a recognition of the contribution of women to the Banana Plantation economy in Honduras, and so on. Thus, for Enloe, the normative project is given voice through the interpretation of the struggles and aspirations of those seeking to change their lives.

In sum, Enloe's work, probably more than any other in international relations, fulfills the central requirements of critical theory. Her work speaks directly to her addressees in their many and diverse locations. It is a type of critical theorizing that does not allow for levels of analysis or disciplinary divisions, and does not work around any clean separations or lines. Centres are understood in relation to margins and margins are understood in relation to centres. While, it is messy and hard to get a handle on in parts, so is the world. This is not to say that there are no problems in her approach. By not taking the easy route of reducing international politics to any one dynamic, and by grounding her analysis in the experience and praxis of those most marginalised, Enloe faces a far more daunting task than her realist or Marxist colleagues. At times her work can tend toward the anecdotal and seems too descriptive; her lack of theoretical analysis of her addressees' critical projects, and the connections between them, prevents her from conceptualising the possibilities for broader projects of social change. It clearly needs more of an explicit theoretical focus if it is to speak to critical international relationists. But then again, they are not her preferred addressees.

Conclusion

This paper began with a question about the relationship between feminist theory and critical international theory. Despite their ostensibly common concerns with relations of domination and emancipation, these two approaches have had very little to say to each other. We have argued that the reason for this silence has been due, at least in part, to their different approaches to the question of praxis; while critical international theory has developed along lines which have served to marginalise praxis, feminist theory has centralized it both as one of the main sources of its metatheoretical and theoretical reflections and as a form of politics to which it is committed. As such, we have argued in this paper that feminist theory in IR is the most developed form of critical theory in the discipline.

If critical international theorists are indeed committed to enabling self-liberating praxis, what can they learn from their feminist colleagues? It is important to be clear that we are obviously not arguing that feminist theory is the only 'true' version of critical theory; there are other addressees whose historical situation requires theoretical attention and critical support. We are arguing, however, that feminist theory teaches us at least three crucial lessons in terms of formulating a genuine critical theory.

First, any critical theory that tries to formulate a perspective from the vantage point of a *universal addressee* needs to seriously reflect on the feasibility of speaking meaningfully to the needs and experiences of all people. While orthodox Marxists may still hold onto the notion of the proletariat as the universal class, most critical thinkers now have questioned the possibility of deriving a generalizable interest from the needs and interests of a particular group. As feminists have shown, power relations operate in a variety of ways that cut across class, racial, ethnic, and political lines: Any critical theory concerned with not reproducing new forms of oppression must be sensitive to different forms of exclusion and domination, and particularly how they are mutually constitutive. The challenge then for critical theorists, and particularly for those in international relations, is to articulate a theoretical approach which recognises the importance of solidarity while at the same time acknowledges the multiple, fluid and contingent nature of our identities.

In this connection, a further point needs to be made. One problem that is clear in the work of both Linklater and Cox is that neither scholar explicitly addresses the question of identity and the conditions under which it becomes politicised. As arguably one of the fundamental requirements for theorising praxis, it is telling that, in the context of IR, it is the work of a feminist theorist which stands out as the most sustained effort to tackle this question and its importance for alternative forms of politics.

Second and related to the previous point, feminist theorising has brought to light the difficulties of *macro-theoretical* approaches. Any attempt to understand the world as a social totality runs the risk of reducing the world to one structural principle or dynamic and thereby universalising people's experiences. There is a difference between noting the mutually reinforcing nature of

structural forms of oppression and seeking to prove that all these forms derive from one single power source. As feminists have told us, any theory that does not consider the impact of gender as a form of power in and of itself cannot possibly understand one of the central features and sources of domination in contemporary societies.

Third, as Leonard has argued, any theory explicitly trying to realise a normative goal must take into account the wishes and objectives of the struggles that they support. Feminists have also argued that abstract ethical debates have a limited source of imagination to articulate a conception of the good that is both meaningful to particular constituencies and practically realisable. Indeed, as feminists have learned it is only in the context of negotiating the practical and strategic questions faced by movements that one can begin to fully grasp the philosophical and ethical dilemmas posed by these questions. For them, the universal/particular dichotomy is not a philosophical quandary, as it is for Linklater, but rather a strategic, political and normative question which can be resolved only in relation to praxis.

International Relations has always reified structural forces, abstracting them from the power dynamics animating all aspects of social life. Critical international theory, if it is to succeed in its central goal of fostering emancipatory praxis, must turn away from IR's disciplinary starting points and seek out new points of departure. It has been argued in this paper that feminist theory can steer the way, not because world politics is reducible to gender, but because feminist theory has demonstrated the necessity and possibility of uniting metatheory, theory and praxis.

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Notes

1. The articulation of an alternative vision then is not solely a philosophical or ethical project, but rather one grounded in the aspirations and perspectives of those marginalised groups addressed by the theory.
2. Exceptions to this neglect of praxis are Fred Halliday (1996), Jurgen Haacke

(1996), and Christian Heine and Benno Teschke (1996).

3. Although Linklater talks about the recognition of special group rights in general terms, it is clear throughout his discussion that he is talking about cultural groups.

4. This is not to say that women have not successfully used political authority at the regional or international level. In the EU for example, they have successfully used European laws to challenge the practices and laws of their own states. However, this was the result of contingent factors rather than a necessary outcome of regionalised institutional politics. The fact that the women's movement in Norway were a large part of the coalition against joining the EU because they felt that EU standards would have the effect of eroding the political and socio-economic rights they have gained as women in the Norwegian state, we would argue, bears this point out.

5. Our contention is not that all feminist theory is critical theory but rather that, because it has grown out of a political movement, there is an imperative to ground even metatheoretical and ethical debates in practical problems. To what extent some feminist theories are grounded enough to be useful to their addressee is an open question.
6. For a helpful review of this aspect of Sylvester's work and a comparison to Cynthia Enloe's approach to the female subject, see Marysia Zalewski (1994).
7. Of course, this resolution applies to similar types of dilemmas experienced in the praxis of other movements.

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