

‘Skeleton Women’: Feminism and the Anti-Globalisation Movement

Abstract

This article explores the intersections between feminism and ‘the anti-globalisation movement’. It draws attention to the marginalisation of overtly feminist voices within anti-globalisation movement texts. However, the adoption of a feminist postmodernist approach shows that this marginalisation is exaggerated and exacerbated by dominant discourses about globalisation, feminism and social struggle. Further, attention to the ‘subjugated knowledges’ of movement activists at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre reveals ideological and organisational interconnections between feminism and the anti-globalisation movement, although these interconnections depend on the activities of self-declared feminists. By broadening understandings of both ‘anti-globalisation’ and ‘feminism’, and by tracing their linkages in movement practices, this article aims to contribute to the strengthening of immanent transnational solidarities. It also raises questions for feminist postmodernist enquiry, because of the concluding emphasis on movement practices and embodied agency.

‘Skeleton Women’: Feminism and the Anti-Globalisation Movement¹

Skeleton woman – the uninvited guest – also showed up in Seattle. And the illusion of wealth, the imaginings of unfettered growth and expansion, became small and barren in the eyes of the world. Dancing, drumming, ululating, marching in black with a symbolic coffin for the world, Skeleton woman wove through the sulphurous rainy streets of the night. She couldn’t be killed or destroyed ... (Hawken 2000, 33)

The powerful metaphor of ‘Skeleton Woman’ is used by Paul Hawken to convey the inexhaustible and growing opposition to the policies of global elites, sharply revealed at the protests against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle at the end of 1999. Skeleton Woman serves as a reminder to the architects of the WTO that ‘Life always comes with Death, with a tab, a reckoning’; she is growing ‘anew her flesh and heart and body’ and must ultimately be accommodated (Hawken 2000, 33-34).

For Hawken, the fact that the skeleton is a woman appears incidental. She stands for ungendered resistance to globalisation. Yet this is strikingly gendered imagery. Hawken takes it from the work of feminist psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes. Her retelling of what was originally an Inuit poem also indicates the need to face up to ‘the Life/Death/Life cycle’, but in the very different context of committed love relationships (Estes 1998, 127). Further, Estes emphasises the symbiotic resolution of the story. When a fisherman hooks up the bones of a dead woman from the deep, he runs screaming to his home to hide, dragging the skeleton behind in his fishing lines. Eventually, the terror of the fisherman subsides and he reaches out to untangle the bones of Skeleton Woman before falling asleep. He weeps a single tear as he dreams, which Skeleton Woman drinks, before using his heart as a drum to renew her flesh and then creeping into bed beside him. Thus is through acceptance of their deepest

fears of commitment, death and the 'not-beautiful' in themselves and others, that lovers become transformed: 'the strength and power of each is untangled, shared' (Estes 1998, 163). Finally, Skeleton Woman is for Estes one manifestation of the universal 'Wild Woman' archetype, signifying the deeply knowing and instinctual way of being which needs to be recovered within the modern female psyche (1998, 1-12).

What happens if the gender of Skeleton Woman is acknowledged as significant in Hawken's retelling of the story? Perhaps Skeleton woman can be seen as a metaphor for embodied feminine resistance juxtaposed to an abstract masculine globalisation? Such an abstract, universalising reading would greatly simplify complex global realities and gender identities and I want to push enquiry in a different direction. Hawken's metaphor motivates me to investigate the actual gendering of activism at Seattle and elsewhere. More specifically, I want to examine the role and position of feminism and feminists within the anti-globalisation movement.² I propose that feminists are the 'Skeleton Women' haunting this movement.

One strategy for my investigation is suggested in a parallel debate about the relationship between the anti-globalisation movement and anti-racist struggle. 'Betita' Martinez (2000) has asserted that people of colour from the United States were marginalised at Seattle, because of their preoccupation with day-to-day survival, their relative ignorance about the WTO and their correct perception that anti-WTO activism is white-dominated. It has since been claimed that the success of the Seattle protests has encouraged too much emphasis on spectacular mass demonstrations, which necessitate transnational travel and favour young, white, middle-class activists

(Crass n.d.; Dixon n.d.). While Martinez responds by arguing that people of colour must mobilise themselves, others urge those dominant within the movement to develop ‘a more multidimensional focus on diverse forms of radical activism. And further, we can recognize and ally ourselves with preexisting movements of diverse peoples who are organizing in their communities – and have been for a long time’ (Dixon n.d.). Naomi Klein has made a similar move with regard to what she sees as the marginalisation of feminist concerns. She insists that the answer is ‘less about changing the movement than the movement changing its perception of itself’ (in Thomas 2002, 51).

There are two things going on here: exclusionary hierarchies within the movement are being exposed and received understandings of what constitutes the movement are being challenged. I adopt such a strategy in this article. However, I do not follow the injunction to focus on local, community-based struggles. Such studies have successfully drawn attention to the extensive mobilisations of people of colour, particularly in third world contexts, both for survival and against globalisation (e.g. Esteva and Prakash 1998). When conducted by feminists, they reveal the widespread participation of women (e.g. Rowbotham and Linkogle 2001). Nonetheless, in this article I will retain a more general focus on feminism and anti-globalisation as globalised movements with simultaneously local and transnational manifestations (Author Reference; Naples 2002,1-8). I will unpack dominant discourses about the two movements that represent them as entirely distinct, and highlight alternative discourses that allow for the possibility of interconnection.

My method here could be called 'feminist postmodernist', although this label is problematic. Both categories are complex and contested, and the relationship between them is fraught. Feminist commitments to 'women', to the epistemological value of experience and to collective organisation for liberation, face a significant challenge from the postmodern decentering of the subject, scepticism towards claims to truth and emphasis on micro-resistances (e.g. Nicholson 1990; Flax 1990; Ramazanoglu 1993). Further, many feminists are uncomfortable with the postmodern focus upon discourse as the locus of enquiry, as this can be interpreted as a move from 'things' to 'words', from material structures to the terrain of culture, from who speaks to what is said (Barrett 1992; Ransom 1993). However, there are some fruitful convergences between feminism and postmodernism. Both share a concern with power, knowledge and the construction of the subject. They insist that how we represent and speak about the world has constitutive effects on that world and they are critical of the ways that some voices and representations are universalised while others are marginalised. Some feminist pioneers have extended the methodologies of genealogy and deconstruction found in the work of Foucault and Derrida to feminist concerns (e.g. Landry and MacLean 1996; Butler 1993). Others stress an ongoing if fruitful tension between their feminist and postmodernist commitments, a position described by Christine Sylvester as 'feminist postmodernist'. For Sylvester (1994, 11-14) this involves interrogating the construction of subjects like 'women' while simultaneously resisting the total erasure of subjectivity by paying empathetic attention to what such subjects say, to who speaks. Feminists working in this vein tend to be pragmatic and eclectic in their method, concerned less with the rigorous application of deconstructionist techniques than with the general task of unpacking dominant discourses and revealing alternatives (Fraser and Nicholson 1990, 35).

It is in such a ‘feminist postmodernist’ spirit that this article adapts the categorisation of discourse provided by Jennifer Milliken (1999, 229-230):

- as ‘systems of signification’, operating as ‘background capacities’ through which meaning is fixed;
- as producing the world, bound up in relations of power and authorising who can know and act;
- as ‘the play of practice’, whereby authorising discourses are understood as unstable and continually challenged by subordinated discourses.

Although Milliken is not explicit about this, her categorisation could be mapped on to different concepts of discourse. A distinction has been widely noted between discourse as strings of words in an utterance or text and discourse as a general narrative of meaning, generated by and through social practices and institutions (Howarth 2000, 2-5; Weedon 1987, 20, 22). Milliken’s first strategy applies to texts and her second to more general narratives. Her third could be applied to both, but I am most intrigued here by the use of the word ‘practice’. It seems to me that the relationship between discourse and practice needs more attention, a point to which I shall return.

This three-part categorisation of types of discourse and strategies for analysing them maps to some extent on to the three parts of the analyses that follows. In the first part, I examine texts that have some authority amongst activists to ‘fix’ the identity of the anti-globalisation movement. Echoing Martinez, I ask ‘where are the feminists?’ and find them largely absent. This leads me in the second part to identify the broader social narratives underpinning these texts in the form of exclusionary discourses of

globalisation, social struggle and feminism, and to highlight alternative discourses that allow for a fuller recognition of movement interconnections. In the third part, I explore the ways in which such alternative discourses are elaborated in websites associated with the movement. This is in effect to study movement practice as a site for the generation of subjugated knowledges. I look particularly at websites associated with the World Social Forum. Here I find a feminist presence within the anti-globalisation movement, although it currently remains rather skeletal. The line of enquiry pursued in this article hopes to contribute to making feminism a more fully acknowledged, thriving presence within the anti-globalisation movement more generally – to help put flesh on the bones of Skeleton Woman. As the story told by Estes indicates, such a move holds out the possibility of transforming both feminism and the anti-globalisation movement within a more equal partnership.

Where are the Feminists? Exclusions in Authoritative Movement Texts.

I begin by looking for the presence of feminism and feminists in books about the anti-globalisation movement. This is to follow Milliken's first type of discourse analysis – the study of a system of signification through a focus 'upon a set of texts by ... authorized speakers/writers of a dominant discourse' (Milliken 1999, 233). My selection of authoritative texts must be acknowledged as partial and situated. Published in the wake of Seattle in 2000-2001, they are explicitly concerned with the delineating what was at the time an emergent movement. They are written by often prominent activists within that movement, in English.³

- Klein's highly influential *No Logo* (2001) investigates resistances to corporate influence and 'branding', including culture jamming; campaigns against Nike, Shell and MacDonalds; and campus and city attempts to instigate consumer boycotts against sweatshop-produced brands. *No Logo* is in many ways informed by a feminist consciousness. It is also explicitly critical of what it sees as a feminist preoccupation with a politics of identity in the 1980s (2001, Chapter 5), and anti-globalisation activism is positioned as a move toward a more materialist politics.
- Alexander Cockburn et al.'s description of 'the new movement' evident at Seattle traces connections between the Ruckus Society, Earth First!, groups campaigning for economic justice, movements of Third World solidarity, anti-NAFTA organising, and a 'new student activism' around sweatshop labour (Cockburn et al. 2000, 2-3). Cockburn and friends declare 'the new movement' to be 'less sexist' than older movements 'and rich in ethnic diversity' (2000, 4), although they do not develop this claim in the rest of the text.
- Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach trace the outlines of a 'global democracy movement' encompassing trades unions, the corporate accountability movement, 'citizen empowerment' groups, and efforts to bridge the concerns of environmental groups and social justice struggles (2000, 9-10). Their section on 'dealing with diversity' has nothing on women or feminists. Although ecofeminists Starhawk and Vandana Shiva contribute to the collection, they do not write explicitly with a feminist voice. The need to tackle gender inequalities is

acknowledged in a final chapter on the democratisation of the global economy (James 2000, 206-207).

- Amory Starr's survey clusters groups into three main strands (Starr 2000). She entitles these 'contestation and reform' (including groups ranging from peace and human rights organisations to cyberpunks), 'globalization from below' (including labour and the Zapatistas) and 'delinking, relocalization, sovereignty' (anarchists, small business activists and religious nationalists). Feminist organisations are not included in any of the strands, although fleeting acknowledgement is made of a gender dimension to the analysis made by some groups such as the Zapatistas.
- In a compendium entitled *Anti-Capitalism: A Guide to the Movement*, Susan George lists 'workers and unions, small farmers and their organisations, consumers, environmentalists, students, women, the unemployed, indigenous people, religious believers' (2001, 21). The book has a section on 'Actors' which includes chapters on unions, students, anarchists and socialists, and a directory of groups ranging from ATTAC through Jubilee Plus to the Zapatistas (Bircham and Charlton 2001, 269-336). Unusually, the book echoes George's inclusion of 'women' by dedicating a chapter to them in the 'Issues' section (Egan and Robidoux 2001). However, the only women's group included in the 'Directory' is the 'Lesbian Avengers', who marched topless in the streets in Seattle.

So what are the commonalities in these depictions of anti-globalisation resistances?

First, the following surface repeatedly: the Zapatistas, militant environmentalists, (anti)consumer groups, labour, social justice organisations including debt

campaigners, and North American students campaigning on sweatshop labour.

Second, the acknowledgement of diversity in the movement leads to a preoccupation with the need for 'coalitions'. However, there is marked lack of attention to the processes by which such coalitions could be constructed and sustained. Further, some coalitions are seen as more desirable than others, with some emphasis on building links between environmentalists and labour. None of the above texts are concerned with making alliances between 'their' movement and women's groups and/or feminists.

This brings me to the third feature of these texts: there is occasional but usually limited recognition of the participation of women. Some analyses draw attention to, or involve interviews with, women as well as men activists (Coates 2001). However, gender is not commented upon or presented as relevant to motivations or styles of activism. The chapter dedicated to women in the anti-capitalist compendium is in the section on issues rather than actors. This is despite the fact that the chapter authors emphasise that 'women have been in the streets and organising at every level of the movement from Seattle to Prague to Porto Alegre to Quebec City' (Egan and Robidoux 2001, 81). Some wider acknowledgement is made of the high profile of women 'leaders' - Shiva, George, Klein, Arundhati Roy - this is perhaps one reason why Cockburn et al. claim the movement to be 'less sexist' than its predecessors. However, a welcome for women leaders is not in itself evidence of a wider feminist sensibility or a guarantee of feminist leadership. It is also surely not accidental that the only women's *group* that receives particular mention in several accounts is the Lesbian Avengers. It is difficult to judge whether this should be seen as successful participation by the Avengers and other 'queer' activists in a new politics of spectacle

or as a worrying remnant of an older politics of the left in which women activists are either sexualised or marginalised. Alternatively, perhaps women are rarely active in this new movement in specifically *women's* groups, for whom the fact that they are women is a key organising element? This is disputed by feminist writings on activism against globalisation, which draw attention to the extensive participation of individual women and women's groups at all levels, in ways that draw upon or challenge gender identities and roles (e.g. Miles 2000; Rowbotham and Linkogle 2001; Naples and Desai 2002).

This brings me to the fourth and final feature of the texts discussed above: the fact that explicitly *feminist* contributions are rarely included. This is despite the fact that several of the acknowledged women 'leaders' are known in other contexts as feminists. Klein is an interesting partial exception here. Her work is clearly influenced by a background in feminist activism. *No Logo* (2001) stands out for the extent of its awareness of the gendered impact of globalised economic processes, and Klein acknowledges some feminist impetus behind 'anti-logo' and anti-consumption activism. However, as indicated above, the book also contains a critique of feminist 'identity politics' on U.S. campuses, and the new movement as a whole is positioned as a move away from such politics. Significantly, Klein has returned to this argument more recently because of what she perceived as its misuse by activists. She has criticised those who see feminism as irrelevant to anti-globalisation struggles and drawn attention to a more materialist strand of feminism that should be incorporated (in Thomas 2002). I will return to this move below. It is worth noting here that it appeared in a feminist journal rather than in an anti-globalisation movement handbook.

On the whole, feminists and feminism are rarely found in the authoritative movement texts examined above. The role of women and of the need for an anti-sexist movement is occasionally acknowledged, but only fleetingly and superficially and there is no concern to build coalitions with feminism. Worse than that, these texts fail to recognise feminism as an integral presence within the anti-globalisation movement and even position the movement as transcendent of feminism. This has the effect of actively excluding feminism from anti-globalisation politics.⁴

Productive Discourses: (Anti-)Globalisation, Social Struggle and Feminism

Following Milliken's second strategy for discourse analysis, I now broaden my focus to broad narratives of meaning that are generated through practices and institutions; that naturalise certain ways of life and courses of action; and that feed off and into 'common sense' (Milliken 1999, 236). Specifically, I examine general narratives of globalisation as driven by economic forces; of social struggle as violent confrontation with the state; and of feminism as centering on identity and as universalising/imperialist. The combined effect of these discourses is to produce a 'common sense' view, reflected in the texts above, of feminism and the anti-globalisation movement as separate, even incompatible entities. Blurring Milliken's neat tripartite categorisation, I will immediately move to challenge such discourses by pointing to alternatives. This 'juxtapositional method' aims 'not to establish the "right story" but to render ambiguous predominant interpretations ... and to demonstrate the[ir] inherently political nature' (Milliken 1999, 243). Specifically, I will draw attention to discourses of globalisation as having multiple dimensions, of social

struggle as nonviolent, and of feminism as focusing on intersecting inequalities and striving for democracy and diversity in movement organising. Taken together, these discourses point to ways in which feminism and the anti-globalisation movement can be perceived as interconnected.

The common-sense understanding of globalisation clearly places economic processes centre-stage. In particular, the focus in most analyses is upon the role of corporations and international financial institutions such as the WTO in pushing for a neoliberal agenda of 'free' trade, the reduction of state barriers to and intervention in trade processes, and the continuing integration of domestic markets. Further, it can be argued that this understanding of globalisation is, in many instances, *economistic*, assuming a priori that economic processes are causal, even determining, of other social, cultural and political phenomena (Author Reference; Robertson and Khondker 1998). Indeed, an emphasis on the determining impact of the global economy has become so widespread that it now dominates approaches to globalisation in academia, activist circles and the media, and is characteristic both of liberal advocacy of globalisation and critical opposition.

In a highly significant move, many critics redefine globalisation as the latest stage of capitalism. According to Klein, 'the critique of "capitalism" just saw a comeback of Santana-like proportions' (2002, 12). I would add that it is Marxist critiques of capitalism in particular that are making a comeback. While Gramscian modifications of Marxism dominate in the discipline of International Relations (Rupert 2000; Gill 2003), activist texts tend rather toward an ad hoc, strategic appropriation of elements of Marxism (Starr 2000), or a reductive, even structurally determinist, version which

depicts globalisation as driven by changes in the mode of production. This usually brings with it an attempt to reframe ‘anti-globalisation’ activism as ‘anti-capitalist’: as a struggle against more fundamental economic structures (e.g. Callinicos 2003), which functions to root the movement in class identity and interests. Some effort may be made to conceptualise class-based resistance in an inclusive manner (Barker 2001, 332). However, alliances with groups that cannot be primarily defined in terms of class location, or that are suspected of reformist accommodation with capitalism, are likely to be hierarchical – if such groups are granted a role at all. Certainly, it becomes difficult to imagine that gender might be causal of globalising dynamics and feminist mobilisation thus integral to reshaping them. Thus it is no accident that Sam Ashman’s account of resistances in India touches on the Narmada dam protest without mentioning that many of its leaders are women or the extensive tradition of women’s ecological and anti-state activism in India, concluding instead by emphasising recent strikes that have ‘tied together opposition to neo-liberalism’ (2001, 240-241; cf. Rajgopal 2002). Or that Mike Gonzales’s (2001) description of resistances in Latin America does not incorporate the extensive mobilisation of women’s groups in opposition to structural adjustment and militarised rule.

These reductive analyses of (anti-)globalisation do not go uncontested. See, for example, the long-established pluralist approach to globalisation in academia, which focuses on the interplay of economics, state power and cultural formations (e.g. Held and McGrew 2003). A more critical discourse is also emerging, which recognises the devastating impact of capitalism without privileging it as universally determining, through an insistence on the need to analyse its intersections with racial and gendered hierarchies. Evident in Gramscian and anarchist approaches (Rupert 2000; Peoples’

Global Action 1998), I suggest that this ‘intersectional’ discourse is most developed in feminist accounts (Author Reference). Black and third world feminist scholarship has long stressed that multiple forms of power intersect in different ways in different localities, requiring context-specific contestation (King 1988; Collins 2000; Mohanty et al. 1991; Alexander and Mohanty 1997). These ideas have been further elaborated in a recent wave of feminist literature focusing specifically on globalisation (Afshar and Barrientos 1999; Marchand and Runyan 2000; *Signs* 2001; *Feminist Review* 2002; Naples and Desai 2002). Thus, for example, Kimberly Chang and L.H.M. Ling (2000) argue that globalised hi-tech capitalism is underpinned by sexualised, racialised and national hierarchies, as manifested in the large-scale migration of Filipinas to fulfil domestic service roles. They examine the multiple, ambiguous strategies deployed by Filipinas to cope with their positioning. Sharon Ann Navarro’s (2002) study of *La Mujer Obrera* demonstrates that its opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement is motivated by profound awareness of the interconnections of liberalisation with gendered inequality. Its efforts to resist draw heavily on, but also face obstacles within, Mexican culture. In effect, feminist intersectional analyses of globalisation open up space for the recognition of multiple axes of oppression and identity structuring, motivating and also limiting mobilisation. They point to a more inclusive understanding of the anti-globalisation movement as taking different forms in different contexts and as needing to integrate a feminist sensibility if it is to be effective and emancipatory.

However, the marginalisation of feminism and women’s groups in dominant representations of the anti-globalisation movement is reinforced by another discourse, one that depicts social struggle as centering on violent confrontation with elites. This

surfaces strongly in some Marxist and anarchist texts, pointing to their revolutionary tradition. Cockburn et al. emphasise that the violence of ‘the Battle of Seattle’ was productive: ‘Along with the poison, the flash bombs and the rubber bullets, there was an optimism, energy and camaraderie that I hadn’t felt for a long time’ (Cockburn et al. 2000, 52). This is combined with a critique of the ‘jackboot state’ in which the police are exposed as increasingly militarised. There is a strong resonance here with the analysis of participants in the so-called Black Bloc, who respond to state and corporate violence with the tactical destruction of corporate property and the escalation of confrontation with police. We seem to be seeing the crystallisation of what is often referred to in the UK as a ‘spiky’ discourse of social struggle amongst sections of anti-globalisation activism. This discourse is reinforced to some extent by elite and media representations of protest as a ‘war zone’ and of activists as ‘violent’ or even ‘terrorist’, although state violence is evacuated from this version (e.g. Klein 2002, part 3). Further, I suggest that this discourse draws on overtly masculine imagery, thus privileging the position and activities of some male activists and marginalising most women and feminists. This is alluded to in ‘Jo-Ann Wypijeski’s DC Diary’ (in Cockburn et al. 2000), which complains of the ‘one-upmanship’ or ‘machismo’ displayed by protestors bragging about the number of times they have been gassed (Cockburn et al. 2000, 76-77).

Of course, this spiky discourse is not uncontested. Its converse can be found in a ‘fluffy’ discourse of nonviolent direct action that is also widespread within the anti-globalisation movement, although often obscured by the media attention given to violence. A strong relationship between women and nonviolence has been postulated in essentialist terms, attributed to women’s physiology, spirituality and capacity to

bear children. Alternatively, it has been seen as socially constructed, deriving from the social division of labour, gendered archetypes, or feminist analysis of the connections between militarism, male violence and patriarchy (McAllister 1982; Elshtain 1987; Ruddick 1995). I would stress that a straightforward equation of men with violent and women with nonviolent modes of struggle is impossible to sustain in the face of critiques of essentialism, countless counter-examples – and analyses of gender identity positing multiple masculinities and femininities, cross-cut by other hierarchies and manifesting themselves in context-specific ways (e.g. Connell 1987; Hooper 2000). My argument is rather that discourses of social struggle are gendered and that, in particular contexts, nonviolent discourses of direct action may have the potential to open up space for women and feminists to participate. A connection between women, feminism and nonviolence has featured particularly prominently in Western peace movement discourses. Several of the snapshots of the anti-globalisation movement discussed in the first section include a role for peace activism, and this role has grown in significance in the context of the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. It is notable that Lindsay German's (2001) chapter on the peace movement in the anti-capitalist compendium is one of the few to foreground the role of women activists.

However, I now want to turn to discourses of feminism which represent it as unconcerned with, or complicit in, globalised processes. There are at least two such discourses relevant here. First, as evident in Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, feminism can be represented as operating on the terrain of identity and culture. Klein focuses on feminist campaigns for fairer representation of women in the media and curriculum but feminist debates on identity are more complex than that, including extensive

struggles over the content of the category 'women' and its relations to feminist politics (e.g. Riley 1988; Parmar 1989). The notion that such debates are what feminism is most centrally about has been given force by external commentary in academia. Notably, 'new social movement' theory tends to classify feminism with other 'new' movements concerned with culture and identity, in contrast to older movements concerned with material redistribution and access to state power (e.g. Melucci 1989; c.f. Habermas 1981). When combined with economic discourses of (anti-)globalisation, it positions feminism as unconcerned with, and surpassed by, the return to materialist movement politics exemplified by the anti-globalisation movement.

A second relevant discourse presents feminism as a universalising ideology and movement. By this I mean that feminism is understood to make claims about women's identity and oppression that are universally valid, and to respond by promoting a global movement of women, transcending national boundaries. This understanding of the feminist project was widespread in liberal and radical feminism in the 1970s and 80s, and the debates about identity described above emerged partly in response to its limitations. It has been thoroughly critiqued within feminism, particularly with regards to the notion that feminism thus constituted is somehow transcendental: 'already oppositional or outside global processes' (Basu et al. 2001, 944). Feminist critics reveal this discourse to be an imperial western construct, exported throughout the world on the back of iniquitous colonial and globalisation processes and serving to mask geo-political, economic and racial hierarchies between women (Mohanty 1998). A universalising/imperial discourse of feminism still circulates today, as evident in its mobilisation by British and U.S. elites in the context

of the war against Afghanistan (Brah 2002, 38-41) and the continued conflation of it with feminism as a whole by hostile nationalist and fundamentalist elites. Its effect is to position feminism as integral to globalisation; as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Needless to say, these discourses of feminism are partial, contradictory and contested. It is significant that Klein, as noted above, has modified her earlier depiction of feminism in terms of identity politics to point to the co-existence of a more materialist discourse. She claims that identity politics were:

an aberration from the history of the feminist movement and an aberration within the global feminist movement, which never stopped focusing on economics. It's not that people stopped making the arguments – they were – its just that they weren't being heard within the more privileged mainstream of feminist discourse. (Klein interviewed in Thomas 2002, 49-50)

Klein's move is useful in reminding anti-globalisation activists of the long-term existence of more materialist versions of feminism, but her analysis remains oversimplified. A concern with identity is not incompatible with a concern with economic inequality; further, there are different 'mainstreams' of feminism depending on the location of the observer. I would argue that the focus on identity highlighted by Klein occurred simultaneously with the intensification of transnational feminist organising during and after the UN Decade for Women, in which black and third world feminist arguments about the inequalities of global capitalism became increasingly influential. This fed into an explosion of feminist theorising and practice around 'development', and subsequently into the recent wave of feminist critiques focusing explicitly on globalisation, as highlighted above (Author Reference). It should be recalled that such critiques insist on the intersections of economic hierarchies with gendered, racial and

cultural forms of power. They remain centrally concerned with how gendered identities are constituted and with how these structure women's resistances to or complicity in globalisation. Many feminist analysts also foreground the impact of globalisation on feminism itself, grappling with the implications of globalised inequalities and solidarities between women; tracing the complex relationship between struggles in different localities; and challenging hierarchies between local groups and transnational federations (e.g. Sperling 2001; Naples and Desai 2002). Strictly speaking, this is an intersectional rather than reductively materialist discourse of what feminism is concerned with and how it operates. But the upshot is that feminism is represented as centrally concerned with the many dimensions of globalisation and the ways in which these shape feminism itself.

This brings me finally to a discourse of feminism that represents it as striving to organise democratically in ways that are sensitive to global diversity. Western radical feminists of the 1960s and 70s developed a participatory democratic model of autonomous movement organisation, intended, amongst other things, to enable diverse women to speak for themselves.⁵ The model has since been criticised for generating its own hierarchies and exclusions and for neglecting centres of power (Author Reference). This may be responsible for a turn in some feminist quarters to more formal democratic participation. Certainly, much contemporary transnational feminist organising adopts formal, institutionally-oriented organisational modes, as evident in critical assessments of the phenomena of 'ngo-isation' and 'mainstreaming' (e.g. Alvarez 1999). However, it has been pointed out that many transnational feminist organisations are characterised by flattened horizontal networks and the devolution of power to local contexts (Moghadam 1995). Also relevant here is the

black and third world feminist literature on ‘coalitions’, which insists that complex intersections of power, and the multiple, cross-cutting identities and oppressions they produce, require diverse struggles for social change to connect with one another on a strategic and democratic basis (e.g. Albrecht and Brewer 1990; Reagon 1998). It can be argued that feminist efforts to develop modes of organising that are democratic and sensitive to diversity remain incomplete and in process. But taken together they constitute a discourse about feminist organising that confronts the stratifications and divergences caused by globalisation . Further, the black and third world feminist insistence on coalition politics points to the possibility that feminism and the anti-globalisation movement can and ought to be constructed as intertwined.

Skeleton Woman at Porto Alegre: Websites and Subjugated Knowledges

In this third section, I continue to destabilise the authority and coherence of dominant discourses, and to facilitate what Milliken calls ‘the play of practice’, by focusing more specifically on ‘subjugated knowledges. [This] is essentially an extension of the juxtapositional method, with the difference that alternative accounts are not just pointed out but are explored in some depth’ (Milliken 1999, 243). Further, this method pays systematic attention to the concrete ways in which ‘subjugated knowledges’ are produced and might provide the conditions for resistance (Milliken 1999, 243-245). In what follows I turn again to movement texts, but this time to the debates and declarations posted by activists on the internet about the key ‘anti-globalisation’ event, the World Social Forum, between 2001 and 2003. I focus only on the English language texts, mainly those published on the website of the Forum itself and also some published on associated feminist and anti-globalisation websites.

Internet documents seem to me to provide access to a discursive realm that is highly contingent and contested. They reveal a more complex picture of the movement and its relation to feminism than that evident in the authoritative movement texts explored above.

The World Social Forum (WSF) met for the first time in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the last week of January in 2001, as a counterweight to the regular gathering of global elites at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The WSF was intended as a space in which alternatives to neoliberal orthodoxies could be discussed, under the banner ‘Another World is Possible!’. It has since spawned a huge mobilisation process in the form of a rolling series of national and regional fora, with numbers of participants and issues discussed expanding exponentially. I will focus my attention here on the annual Forum. At the first, the organisers expected 2,000 people and as many as 10,000 showed up, representing 1,000 groups from 120 countries.

Participation has continued to grow at an astonishing rate: the third gathering, in January 2003, saw over 100,000 participants, with 20,763 delegates from 717 organisations and over 150 countries (WSF 2003a; Cockcroft 2003; Karadenizli et al. 2003). These numbers alone are testament to the growing importance of the Forum as a site of movement construction. In its ‘Charter of Principles’, the WSF declares itself:

an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism ... (WSF 2002)

The Charter makes it clear that the WSF is not meant to have a determining vanguard role but seeks to enable the expression of diversity and plurality within a context of 'mutual recognition'. This resonates with feminist approaches to movement organising. However, this does not mean that there are no hierarchies within the Forum. Several commentators emphasise the continuing influence of founding groups, particularly the French branch of ATTAC, which campaigns for the reform of international finance, and the local (Marxist) Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) (e.g. Hardt 2002). At the second Forum, the 'Declaration of a Group of Intellectuals' (2002) pointed to a tension between 'a neo-Keynesian' accommodation with capital and a 'post-capitalist' insistence on the need to develop 'another economic logic'. For Michael Hardt (2002), the key division really lay between an anti-globalization, pro-sovereignty position (which included social democratic as well as Marxist strands and dominated thanks to the PT and ATTAC) and a 'non-sovereign, alternative globalization position' (which included internationalist Marxists, among others). According to James Cockcroft (2003) the Forum of the following year may still have been dominated numerically by social democratic reformists but a 'participatory socialist position', including some Marxists and also anarchists, became dominant ideologically. It is worth noting that all these categorisations focus on economic analyses and connected strategies for political organisation. To some extent, this reflects and feeds into economic discourses of (anti-)globalisation. However, there is also considerable disagreement on where the faultlines lie - hardly surprising given the size and scope of the Forum. Certainly, reductive Marxist formulations have not become entirely dominant, and the overall impression is that the Forum has not been, and perhaps cannot be, entirely captured by any one doctrine.

Further, there appears to be space at the WSF for groups to elaborate non-economistic discourses of (anti-)globalisation. Declarations posted on the WSF website describe a struggle that is against ‘the globalization of capital, its imperial political expressions and increasing militarization’ (‘Declaration of a Group of Intellectuals’ 2002), and opposed to ‘a system based on sexism, racism and violence, which privileges the interests of capital and patriarchy over the needs and aspirations of people’ (‘Call of Social Movements’ 2002). The latter moves explicitly away from economism in its insistence on the need to confront the interconnections of capital with patriarchy and militarism. This is an ‘intersectional’ discourse of the kind described above as most developed amongst feminists, and as enabling recognition of the multiple axes of oppression and identity around which groups do and should mobilise.

Affinities with some elements of feminism, I would argue, are reinforced by a growing anti-militaristic discourse at the WSF. The Charter states that military organisations are not allowed to participate, thus immediately privileging non-violent modes of direct action. And this emphasis seems to have been strongly reinforced in the context of the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. The ‘Call of Social Movements’ (2002) insists that a key goal is the struggle ‘against war and militarism ... We choose to privilege negotiation and non-violent conflict resolution’. The huge march ostensibly against the Free Trade Area of the Americas on the penultimate day of the 2002 Forum had a strongly anti-war theme. So did the opening march of the 2003 Forum, and anti-war events had a high profile throughout, including in a set of panels on the ‘thematic area’ of ‘Democratic world order, fighting militarization and promoting peace’ (Osavo 2003; WSF 2003b; Cockcroft 2003). This appears to be accompanied by a sidelining of ‘spikier’ elements of the movement. A closing panel

in the 2002 Forum responded to questions from the floor about elite violence by criticising the role of the Black Bloc (Sivaraman 2002). Black Bloc-style actions against property or the police appeared to play only a limited role in WSF actions that year (Glock 2002) and I could find no mention of them at all on the website for 2003. Further, it should be noted that feminist groups are using the fora to develop and articulate their understandings of the connections of war and violence with issues of gender inequality and identity (e.g. 'Asian Women's Statement' 2002).

This brings me to the extent to which feminist groups and discourses are a constitutive presence in the WSF. Participating groups range from Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) to the World March of Women (WMW), and from the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ) to the Articulacion Feminista Marcosur (AFM). These and other groups met up just before the 2003 Forum to coordinate their strategies and to produce a feminist anti-war statement, and the World March of Women then headed up the opening demonstration. There followed many autonomously-organised feminist workshops, on topics ranging from education to religious fundamentalism (DAWN 2003; WICEJ 2003; WMW 2003b; AFM 2003). Further, it appears that feminists have steadily increased their presence on panels organised by other groups and under the official WSF banner. According to Virginia Vargas (2002, 20), '[f]eminism ... mainstreamed in several panels and workshops on trade, financing for development, global reforms, migration, peace and much more' in the 2002 Forum. In 2003, two of the five 'thematic areas' around which the official panels of the Forum were grouped - On 'Principles and Values, Human Rights, Diversity and Equality' and 'Political Power, Civil Society and Democracy' - were coordinated by representatives of the AFM and

the World March. Unsurprisingly, feminist groups were a strong presence on panels in these areas (see WSF 2003b). The control of these thematic areas stems from the fact that the AFM and World March are on the International Council, which advises on the political direction of the Forum (nine feminist group are listed as members in AFM 2003). The World March notes two further achievements. It claims responsibility for the opening emphasis in the ‘Call of Social Movements’ on the intersections of capitalism with militarism and patriarchy (Burrows 2002). And in 2003, it achieved a strong presence in the Youth Camp, organising workshops and a demonstration against harassment and violence, in a setting previously resistant to feminist voices (Beaulieu and Giovanni 2003).

However, there were also continued feminist complaints of the marginalisation of their concerns at the 2003 Forum. ‘The struggle against capitalism is still considered to be the primary struggle in the minds of many’ (WMW 2003a) and ‘gender issues were as usual very marginalized as not being a “priority” given these troubled times and the more “serious” issues to tackle’ (Karadenizli et al. 2003). In other words, an intersectional discourse of globalisation was still overshadowed by more reductive discourses. Also, a feminist analysis was strongly evident in the official panels of the 2003 Forum *only* in those thematic areas organised by feminist groups. In short, the integration of feminist concerns into anti-globalisation discourses remained dependent on the concrete presence of self-declared feminists.

It is salutary, then to find widespread recognition that feminists remained a marginal presence at the Forum in 2003. There is acknowledgement among feminists that they bear some responsibility for this, because of their desire to preserve autonomy and

because the 'ngo-isation' or institutionalisation of many women's groups has delegitimised them in the eyes of many at the Forum (Karadenizli et al. 2003, 1-2; Veneklasan 2003). But there is also a critique of hierarchies at work in the Forum. Klein (2003) has issued a stark warning of the increasing role of 'big men' - charismatic male leaders who have come to prominence within hierarchically-organised, leftist political parties. Although, as we have seen, there are several feminist organisations on the International Council of the Forum, it seems that the agenda-setting power of this council may be limited; further, the feminist presence on it remained in 2003 at less than ten per cent (Waterman 2003; Albert 2003). Further, Cândido Grzybowski (2002) has pointed to a 'structural bias that hinders women from exercising leadership roles. He gives the example of the opening Press Conference in 2002 which, though led by a woman, was dominated by nine men; and he blames a 'Jurassic macho culture ... in civil society'. Grzybowski points here to the deep-rooted discourses of gender roles and social struggle emphasised above. It is in this context, then, that self-declared feminist groups are not and cannot be fully content with their undoubted achievements at the World Social Forum thus far. They continue to struggle for a larger feminist presence and the fuller integration of feminist insights into the Forum and thus into the anti-globalisation movement more generally.

Conclusion: Putting Flesh on the Bones of Skeleton Woman?

In this article, I have been searching for the feminists, and the feminism, in the anti-globalisation movement. My examination in the first part of texts purporting to be representative of this movement indicated that feminism is barely present: granted a fleeting mention at best and deliberately sidelined at worst. In the second part, I

argued that this marginalisation is at least in part reflective of broader social narratives. I pointed to the widespread adoption of an economistic approach to globalisation, which has helped bolster a resurgent, reductive Marxist discourse that turns the ‘anti-globalisation movement’ into the ‘anti-capitalist movement’, predicated on class identity. I also drew attention to the prevalence of a discourse of social struggle that emphasises masculinist imagery of war and violence, and to discourses of feminism which represent it as focused on identity and culture and organised as a universalising/imperial project. In sum, these discourses construct anti-globalisation activism and feminism as distinct entities that speak past each other. However, the second section of the article also pointed to discourses on globalisation that foreground the intersection of economic forces with other hierarchies; to nonviolent discourses of social struggle; and to discourses of feminism as concerned with intersecting, globalised inequalities and as striving for democracy and diversity in movement organising. These alternative discourses can aid in the construction of feminism and anti-globalisation as interconnected struggles. The third part of the article sought evidence for such interconnections in the ‘subjugated knowledges’ of movement practice, as exemplified by the internet documentation surrounding the World Social Forum. I found that feminism has found increasing purchase at the Forum but is still not fully integrated. It remains heavily dependent on the presence of actual feminists and this presence remains conditional and contested.

In sum, I found Skeleton Woman at Porto Alegre. Her refusal to be killed or destroyed ensures that ‘Porto Alegre man’ (DAWN 2002, 3) has not achieved total hegemony within the movement. But she needs to grow in strength: by prioritising the elaboration of a feminist contribution to the critical analysis of globalisation, by

continuing the struggle for a feminist voice within the anti-globalisation movement, and by strengthening coalitions with other strands within this movement (Francisco n.d.). As Estes' story reminds us, putting flesh on the bones of Skeleton Woman holds out the promise of enriching both feminism *and* the anti-globalisation movement, as they become stronger, more inclusive, and more fully intertwined in their joint pursuit of other possible worlds.

I close with brief speculations on the implications of these conclusions for the 'feminist postmodernist' approach adopted in this article. First, it seems to me that enquiry seeking to aid in the project of 'putting flesh on the bones of Skeleton Woman' needs to shift its focus from movement discourse to movement practice. More specifically, there is an urgent need for attention to the mechanisms, processes and actions through which feminists can successfully influence movement agendas and construct democratic coalitions with other activists. Discourse analysis is only of limited help here. Foucault's work is ambiguous on the relationship between discourse and practice, with some interpretations emphasising that practice is constituted by discourse and others focusing on 'discursive practice' (Howarth 2000, 64-84). In my view, both function to flatten out the differences between diverse practices and do not provide tools to evaluate them. Alternative methods for the empirical study of movement practices will have to be used, like interviewing and participant observation, alongside efforts to elaborate criteria for evaluation from the standpoint of movement activists. This brings me, second, to the need to shift from the study of discourse as productive of movements to movement activists as producers of discourse. I argued above that the integration of feminism into the anti-globalisation movement relies on the presence of self-declared feminists. This

indicates the need for further examination of exactly which feminists, how they come to feminism, how they insert themselves in anti-globalisation struggles, etc. In other words, the call to ‘put flesh on the bones of Skeleton Woman’ can be interpreted not only as a political injunction to strengthen a feminist presence within the anti-globalisation movement but also as an epistemological injunction to study feminists as embodied political agents. This involves a shift into ‘feminist standpoint’ epistemology. As Janet Ransom puts it, ‘it *does* matter “who is speaking”’(1993, 144). In sum, a feminist postmodernist approach yields significant insights into the discursive construction of transnational movements. But it also raises pressing questions of political strategy and agency that point enquiry in new directions.

Epilogue

In January 2004, after completing an earlier draft of this article and driven in part by its conclusions, I went to India to investigate further the feminist presence in the anti-globalisation movement, primarily at the fourth World Social Forum in Mumbai. Myself, Bice Maiguashca and Rekha Pande conducted interviews in Rekha’s home town of Hyderabad as well as in Mumbai, partly in an effort to counter the emphasis on transnational sites of activism in studies of the anti-globalisation movement by paying attention to ongoing local struggles. Unsurprisingly, we found that a transnational/local dichotomy quickly collapsed. Many of the Hyderabad activists considered themselves part of a wider anti-globalisation movement and some were involved in the Forum processes, and the Mumbai Forum was intensely shaped by its place and time, as evident in the high profile accorded to issues of caste, communalism and historic experiences of colonialism. Most importantly in the

context of this article, we were frankly astonished by the visibility and power of women activists at the Forum. Many panels were feminist-organised, women-dominated and provided complex feminist analyses of war, communalism and coalition-building. It is notable that ‘patriarchy’ was included among the five key ‘thematic areas’ for official panels. We were further surprised by our encounter with a small but highly articulate core of feminist activists in Mumbai Resistance, a Marxist-Leninist alternative to the Forum, who drew our attention to the exclusions generated by an emphasis on nonviolent direct action in the Indian context. The context-specific reasons for the strong presence of feminists in anti-globalisation activism in India clearly need more investigation, as do the divisions of ideology and strategy amongst them. Nonetheless, it seems that the feminist struggle to achieve a greater presence in the Forum, and in the anti-globalisation movement more generally, did achieve a significant boost in Mumbai. Skeleton Woman is gaining ‘eyes, voice and spirit. She is about in the world and her dreams are different ... She will not be quiet or flung to sea anytime soon’ (Hawken 2000, 34).

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Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Bice Maiguashca, Peter Waterman, Debra Liebowitz and four anonymous readers at *Signs* for their perceptive, helpful and often challenging comments on earlier drafts of this article.

2. The notion of an 'anti-globalisation movement' is highly contentious. The label 'anti-globalisation' is rejected by many activists, on the grounds that it is purely

oppositional; that it misrepresents the movement as parochial and protectionist; that the term ‘globalisation’ is itself ideological; and that the movement is actually anti-capitalist or putting forward a different kind of globalisation (e.g. Graeber 2002; Callinicos 2003, 13-14). Nonetheless, it seems to me to that ‘anti-globalisation’ still functions as the only widely recognised shorthand amongst English-speaking activists and academics, and it is for that pragmatic reason that I continue to use it here. It is also debatable whether the term ‘movement’ is an accurate description of the diverse activisms that have emerged under the ‘anti-globalisation’ label. Critics fear that it imposes totalising and hierarchical assumptions about identity and organisation (e.g. Esteva and Prakash 1998,13). The language of the ‘politics of resistance’ is preferred by many theorists (e.g. Gill 2003; Gills 2000; for background see Chin and Mittelman 2000; Abu-Lughod 1990). However, this terminology is also not without problems, potentially positioning activism as micro-level, fragmented and purely oppositional. I continue to use the label ‘social movement’ because it actively assigns a continually contested collective agency and identity to diverse resistances (for a fuller discussion, see Author References).

3. It is likely that a very different picture of the composition of the movement would be revealed by a survey of Spanish and Portuguese texts, given the relatively high profile of Latin American feminist *encuentros* and of women activists in the Zapatistas, and also given the location of the World Social Forum 2000-2003 in Brazil. Certainly, there are several texts that appear to deal explicitly with feminist voices and demands in Spanish and Portuguese on the web pages for the 2003 World Social Forum (see also Alvarez with Faria and Nobre 2004, the translated introduction to a Portuguese journal collection on feminists and the Forum).

4. More recent publications, especially the excellent *Notes from Nowhere* (2003), show some interesting discursive developments. These include a strengthening of the tendency to provide detailed case studies of local, community-based activism, which has the effect of highlighting the extensive involvement of people of colour and third world communities and can also sometimes draw attention to women within those communities: for example, in the *Sans Papiers* in France, the *piquetero* movement of the unemployed in Argentina, and South African neighbourhoods struggling for housing and electricity (*Notes from Nowhere* 2003, 38-45, 472-481, 488-489). In addition, *Notes from Nowhere* has many pieces by women including, unusually, a couple of explicitly feminist contributions focusing on the actions of women's groups (*Notes from Nowhere* 2003, 290-295, 340-345). Thus there appears to be increasing space opening up in 'authoritative texts' for feminist voices, perhaps partly as a result of the feminist struggles outlined in the third part of this article.

5. A participatory democratic model is also evident within anti-globalisation activism. This seems to me to be due less to the influence of feminism than to the influence on both feminism and anti-globalisation of anarchist traditions of organising (Graeber 2001).