



**LUNDS**  
UNIVERSITET

Lund University  
Department of Political Science

Master's Thesis in Global Studies  
Spring Term 2009  
Supervisor: Jens Bartelson

# The False Promise of Gender-Neutrality

A Discourse Analysis of the Feminist Debate in  
International Relations

Maria Eriksson

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	6
1.1 Research Aim.....	8
1.1.1 Research Questions.....	9
1.2 Material and Demarcations .....	9
<b>2 Theory Overview</b> .....	11
2.1 Performativity .....	12
2.2 Heteronormativity .....	14
2.2.1 Subversion .....	16
2.3 Power .....	17
2.4 Feminist Poststructuralism.....	18
<b>3 Methodology</b> .....	21
3.1 Internal Discourse Analysis .....	21
3.1.1 Deconstruction .....	23
3.2 Poststructuralism in IR.....	24
3.2.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis.....	25
<b>4 The Feminist Debate in IR</b> .....	27
<b>5 Neo-Feminism</b> .....	29
5.1 Performing Gender .....	29
5.2 Heteronormativity .....	33
5.3 Neo-Feminism or Post-Feminism? .....	37
<b>6 IR-Feminism</b> .....	40
6.1 Performing Gender .....	40
6.2 Heteronormativity .....	43
6.3 Subversive Possibilities .....	45
6.3.1 Normative Critique .....	46
<b>7 Conclusion</b> .....	48
<b>8 Bibliography</b> .....	53

# Executive Summary

The overarching focus of this thesis is knowledge production in International Relations (IR), focusing in particular on feminism. It deals with a debate between neo-feminism and 'traditional' IR-feminism that has developed over the past few years in Great Britain. This debate concerns the relationship between feminism and mainstream IR, and whether or not gender should be distinguished from feminist theory and added as a variable to mainstream IR theories. Neo-feminist scholars claim that feminism has played out its role; that committing to a study of women and femininity is biased and misrepresentative. They want to distract gender as a variable that can be used in combination with non-feminist theories to study both men and women; masculinities and femininities. Feminist scholars of IR, however, claim that neo-feminism reproduces heteronormativity and patriarchal structures in I/international R/relations, and that the critical project of feminism has far from reached its end. This debate is important, not just for the future of feminist theorizing, but for International Relations in general, since it brings to the fore questions about neutrality, objectivity, knowledge production, power relations, and a historical exclusion of women and feminist scholars from IR. Methodologically, I approach this debate from a poststructural perspective, arguing for the importance of recognizing the productive capacity of discourse and language, and arguing against any assumption that IR as an academic field is outside of the discursive production of the subject.

In order to make explicit the arguments in this debate, its discursive formation and its effects on the study of international politics, I conduct an internal discourse analysis based on Brian C. Schmidt's conceptualization of this method as advantageous for studying the development of a specific debate or academic field. But my main theoretical and methodological framework is based on (feminist) poststructuralism; the discourse analysis is thus mainly informed by the writings of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Chris Weedon. Theoretically, I develop a framework based on three concepts: performativity, heteronormativity, and power. Judith Butler develops the concept of performativity in order to show that gender is not a noun that can be deployed to describe a specific sex. Rather, both gender and sex are *performed*; constructs of a heterosexual matrix that produces the subject in terms of gender/sex/desire coherence. Suggesting that gender is always performed destabilizes the presumed natural link between sex and gender, whereby sex is exposed as just as constructed as gender. Through regulatory practices and repetitive acts, both gender and sex are always performed, suggesting that there is no pre-discursive subject existing outside, or previous to, these acts. Related to Butler's performativity is heteronormativity, a concept that Samuel A. Chambers and Terrell Carver (2008) develops from

Butler's heterosexual matrix. In short, heteronormativity is the process whereby the heterosexual subject becomes established as 'normal' and 'natural'. The normative in heteronormativity expresses the regulatory and normalizing function of norms; the restrictions set out by a heterosexual matrix that both requires and reproduces the masculine/feminine binary. Heteronormativity establishes the heterosexual subject, heterosexual sexuality and desires as normal, thus rendering other subject positions, other sexualities and desires as deviant, unnatural, and even unintelligible. Performativity and heteronormativity suggest a poststructural understanding of the discursive production of the subject. Recognizing the subject as discursively produced opens up possibilities for subverting a heteronormative discourse that continue to exclude non-normative subjects. Subverting heteronormativity is more than just exposing and questioning the construction of gender; it is a repetitive act whereby the natural foundation of heterosexuality is exposed, disturbed, and weakened. In relation to performativity and heteronormativity, and of relevance for my analysis, is the concept of power, which I here understand in Foucauldian terms; i.e. as productive rather than repressive. This means recognizing that power is everywhere, in every relation and on a multiplicity of levels, and that gender can never be neutral since it is both a product of power/discourse relations, and productive of the gendered subject.

In the analysis of the feminist debate in IR, I deploy these concepts to look at how gender is performed and how heteronormativity is reproduced in this debate; what kind of truth claims that are made in the texts; and what connection these claims have to power and the center of International Relations. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate why this debate has come about; what forms of knowledge that are produced; and why particular forms of gendered knowledge is (re)produced.

I analyze five texts from the neo-feminist body, and four texts from IR-feminist authors; texts that I have chosen as representative of the main arguments in the debate. My analysis shows that neo-feminism to a large extent is both informed by, and (re)productive of, heteronormativity. By reducing gender to an explanatory instrument and sex to measurable categories, a heterosexual matrix based on the coherence of gender/sex/desire is established as true. By adding gender to conventional theories of international relations, a 'gender-neutral' research is presumed to be possible. In effect, the productive capacity of language and discourse, and the power structures that legitimize certain types of truth claims while discrediting others remain hidden behind a logocentric understanding of language as descriptive and representative. Based on this reading of neo-feminism, I propose that this approach is not 'neo' to feminism in the sense that e.g. neo-realism is 'neo' to realism, i.e. as a development of the original theory. Rather, I suggest that neo-feminism is better conceptualized as *post*-feminism, in the sense that e.g. postmodernism is 'post' to modernism: as a critique, or even rejection, of the original approach.

The texts that represent IR-feminism advocate a continued commitment to feminism as a critique of established epistemologies and methodologies, and as a theoretical understanding of international politics that

does not reproduce patriarchal structures, heteronormativity, or exclusion. The arguments put forth by these authors contain strong possibilities for subverting heteronormativity – and IR as a coherent academic field. In rejecting conventional methodology and research agendas, and established ontological and epistemological assumptions, IR-feminism can, through a self-positioning at the margins of what is considered International Relations, voice a critique and disturb the inside/outside distinction that produces IR as a coherent academic discipline. This is a form of normative critique that questions the limits of what is knowable and of what is considered ‘valid research’. Feminist epistemologies and methodologies are often discredited within a field like IR that promotes traditional research values such as objectivity, neutrality, validity and replicability. But rather than claiming space by adapting to these values, IR-feminism continues to disturb these assumptions about ‘research’ and continues to produce knowledge that does not conform to prevailing norms.

My intention with this thesis is twofold; firstly, I want to show that IR is productive of the reality that it claims to merely describe; and secondly, I want to argue for a continued commitment to feminist epistemologies and methodologies. The purpose of my analysis is to disturb assumptions about ‘gender-neutral’ knowledge claims, and to show how language is *always* productive, but *never* representative. Any claims of IR being ‘outside’ of the discursive production of subjects, identities – and the human – are reproductive of a knowledge that continues to exclude non-heteronormative lives from the ontological reality.

Keywords: International Relations; feminism; heteronormativity; performativity; knowledge production

Words: 19 736

# 1 Introduction

Over the past twenty years feminists within the field of International Relations (IR) have offered ostensive critique towards conventional IR theories such as realism and liberalism. They have revealed the inherent masculine conceptualization of the international society and the maintenance of patriarchal structures within the field. In many respects, feminist IR theorists have contributed immensely to the study of international relations, yet they remain marginalized and often excluded from the mainstream production of knowledge on international politics. Over the past years a debate has developed between two strands of feminism: ‘traditional’ IR-feminists and ‘neo-feminists’, where the first group argues for a continued commitment to feminist epistemology and methodology, and the second group makes claims for a centralization of gender studies without any feminist agenda. This thesis focuses on that debate.

In 1997, J. Ann Tickner wrote an article that has since shaped the feminist debate in International Relations: *You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists*. Here, she shows how feminist epistemologies and methodologies continue to be marginalized and excluded from the mainstream of IR, and how there is a constant miscommunication between feminists and IR theorists. The response that Tickner got from IR theorist Robert O. Keohane is telling of the view on feminism held by many mainstream IR theorists:

Keohane goes on to imply that Tickner has yet to convince him of the worthiness of feminist scholarship. In this process, he reiterates that Tickner, and feminist scholars generally, should aspire to harmonize with present standards, which are tautologically identified as the (only) legitimate grounds for making authoritative judgments and acceptable claims to IR knowledge production. (Zalewski 2006:56)

Cynthia Weber similarly shows how IR theorists tends to push feminist scholars to adapt to conventional IR standards: “the gender variable simply expresses what feminists study – or, [...] what feminists *ought* to study, which is gender” (Weber 2001:83, italics in original). But *gender* is here detached from any feminist agenda, and generalized to simply mean femininity and masculinity: “it makes feminism and feminists manageable because it places them within one reasonable realm – gender – and places gender itself within the confines of a variable. Now IR scholars can look at gender as a discrete set of relationships that they can explore qualitatively or quantitatively” (Weber

2001:83). The consequences of these views on feminism in IR is that either IR-feminists have to abandon any feminist agenda, any normative aspiration and any alternative knowledge production and adapt to conventional IR epistemologies and methodologies; or they remain marginalized and ‘misunderstood’, with their research always questioned and criticized for lacking validity and relevance.

In recent years, a debate between what Zalewski (2007) refers to as neo-feminists, and so called ‘traditional’ IR-feminists (henceforth IR-feminists) has developed in Great Britain around this question of adaptation. What is at stake is whether IR-feminists should consciously position themselves at the margins in relation to ‘orthodox’ IR theories<sup>1</sup> and issues, keeping with their ‘alternative’ modes of research and knowledge production; or if they should claim a central position, adopting – and gendering – mainstream IR ontology, epistemologies, and modes of analysis. The call for a central positioning is made by the neo-feminists, who advocate an analysis of gender freed from its “feminist commitments” (Zalewski 2007:303). According to the IR-feminists, neo-feminism reproduces heteronormativity within the field of IR by working with, rather than against, existing power hierarchies and thereby sacrificing their feminist commitments for a ‘gender-neutral’ analysis. The neo-feminists, on the other hand, claim that IR-feminism is “an increasingly ineffective means of producing comprehensive and effective gender analysis, because of the relative absence of attention paid in this literature to the injustices suffered by men within international politics” (ibid).

The theoretical foundation of this thesis, as well as my own theoretical preconceptions, is found in Judith Butler’s writings. It is – predominantly – her theoretical and philosophical discussions that will guide my analysis. According to Butler (2004a), the naturalization of binaries such as man/woman, sex/gender, and nature/culture leads to an internalization of sexual difference that becomes so closely linked to the subject self that the mere notion of a different conceptualization threatens the very foundation of that subject. She proposes a theory to deconstruct these binaries and the discourse on heterosexuality that they are connected to. The overall aim of her theory is to expand the scope of what is considered ‘human’; to open up for a culture where sex, gender, and sexuality is not bound up in binaries which establish hierarchies of norms and knowledges that naturalize certain forms of sexuality and gender identities while effectively repressing others; and where the sex is analyzed in terms of ‘becoming’ and thus linked to the becoming of gender, rather than being seen as a biologically fixed truth (Butler 2006). Two Butlerian concepts are central to this thesis: heteronormativity and performativity. Along with a discussion on Foucauldian power and feminist poststructuralism, these concepts

---

<sup>1</sup> Jill Steans uses the term ‘orthodox’ IR-theories, referring to realism and neo-realism (Steans 1998: chapter 2). J. Ann Tickner uses the term “methodologically conventional IR scholars” with which she refers to “realists, neorealists, neoliberals, peace researchers, behavioralists, and empiricists committed to data-based methods of testing” (Tickner 1997:613). I will henceforth mainly use the term mainstream IR-theories – or refer to the center of IR – in which I include the theoretical and methodological approaches that Steans and Tickner label as orthodox or conventional.

will be presented and discussed in the Theory Overview-chapter. In the Methodology-chapter I will discuss epistemological and methodological implications of this thesis, and present the methods I will use in my analysis. Chapters 4 to 6 consist of an internal discourse analysis of the debate between IR-feminists and neo-feminists, where I will make explicit the main arguments in the debate, and discuss why these particular forms of knowledge are produced.

## 1.1 Research Aim

In 1996, Adam Jones published an article called *Does “Gender” Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations*, where he attempts to alleviate ‘gender’ from its feminist commitments, arguing that feminism’s focus on women and femininity makes it an inadequate theory for studying gender in International Relations, and that a satisfactory analysis of men and masculinities is missing from the feminist project. Following this reasoning, R. Charli Carpenter published an article in 2002 called *Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint?*, where she suggests that although feminists’ focus on women’s oppression and their commitment to an emancipatory agenda are commendable qualities, ‘gender’ should not be conceptualized solely in terms of ‘woman’ and ‘femininity’. Rather, it should be added as an “explanatory instrument” to mainstream IR theories (Carpenter 2002:161). Mary Caprioli similarly argues for an incorporation of ‘gender’ into conventional IR theories in *Feminist IR Theory and Quantitative Methodology: A Critical Analysis* (2004). These articles sparked off a debate about how gender and feminism should be conceptualized within International Relations, with a dividing line between IR-feminists and neo-feminists (with the authors outlined in this paragraph representing the neo-feminist body). This debate considers what epistemological claims should be made by feminism; if we are stronger at the margins or at the center; if gender is as much about masculinity as it is about femininity; and if power is best reversed by playing along or by breaking all the rules.

The aim of this thesis is to critically analyze how discourses on gender inform – and are produced by – this debate; how and why heteronormativity is (re)produced; and which subversive possibilities are present. My intention is to make explicit how gender is performed in neo-feminist and IR-feminist texts, and to expose and critique hierarchical oppositions and presumed borders which maintain power relations and preserve distinct modes of knowledge production. This is thus not just a matter of deconstructing feminism, but of deconstructing the limits of what is presumed to be a coherent academic discipline called International Relations.

My research questions as presented below, have been developed in line with the distinction between first-order factual questions (which deal with the



“constitution of the factual framework itself” (Hansen 2006:22)), and second-order factual questions (which counter the answers one obtains from the first questions) made by Lene Hansen: “It is a key goal of discourse analysis to show how these first-order facts are dependent upon a particular discursive framing of the issue in question and that this framing has political effects” (Hansen 2006:22). Following a poststructural understanding of language, power and discourse, and the production of the subject, my research questions belong to the first-order factual questions, as they deal with the production of knowledge within the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism. This means that my analysis focuses on exposing how discourses on gender and heteronormativity simultaneously inform and are (re)produced in the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism; it also means an analysis of *why* certain forms of knowledge are produced and certain truth claims are made.

### 1.1.1 Research Questions

1. *How do discourses on gender and heteronormativity inform the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism, and how is heteronormativity (re)produced in this debate?*
2. *What forms of (gendered) knowledge are produced in neo-feminist and IR-feminist texts, and what are the effects of these knowledges on the subject?*
3. *Why is heteronormativity and certain forms of gender subjectivities (re)produced in the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism, and why do these two approaches conceptualize gender and heteronormativity differently?*

## 1.2 Material and Demarcations

The debate between IR-feminism and neo-feminism is of great impact for International Relations in large. Arguments to abandon feminist commitments and to advocate a gender-neutral analysis where gender is just another analytical variable are put against arguments to remain committed to feminist theory and research agendas. Hence, the course of this debate will strongly impact how feminism and gender analysis will develop in – and in relation to – International Relations. This is why I think that this debate is of particular interest for feminism in general and IR-feminism in particular. This is also why I limit myself to an internal discourse analysis of this debate. In Chapter 4 I will outline specifically which authors and texts that I will analyze. As will be discussed in the Methodology-chapter, an internal discourse analysis means analyzing the discursive development of a delimited field rather than looking for developmental explanations in external events. According to Brian C. Schmidt (1998), theoretical debates are to a larger extent shaped by the contents of the debate and the academic field within which it is articulated than by external political and social

events, and an analysis of these debates are therefore more explanatory of a fields development than an analysis of this fields contextual surroundings. Furthermore, this demarcation will help direct the research process and the text analysis to the core of the subject under study: knowledge production within feminist IR theory.

## 2 Theory Overview

Judith Butler has written over ten books, a significant amount of articles, and she is one of the most acknowledged authors within both feminist and queer theory. Hence, her theoretical and philosophical contribution to the academic world is immense. However, for the purpose of this thesis I have chosen to focus on two of her books: *Gender Trouble* (2006) from 1990, which is regarded as Butler's primary work on gender studies and which has had a huge impact on queer theory; and *Undoing gender* from 2004, which further develops the concepts presented in *Gender Trouble* and deals with more current political events. I have chosen to base my theoretical framework on these works because in these Butler discusses the two concepts most relevant for my analysis: heteronormativity and performativity. Briefly, I focus on these concepts because they expose assumptions about a normative heterosexuality and the normalization of gendered binaries. They also offer subversive possibilities that can be used to develop IR-feminist theory. I will outline and explain these concepts and their relevance for this thesis further ahead in this chapter.

Samuel Chambers and Terrell Carver's book *Judith Butler and Political Theory* (2008) is my third main theoretical source concerning heteronormativity and performativity. Here, Chambers and Carver discuss Judith Butler's theories in relation to political theory and how her concepts can be used in a political theoretical analysis (as well as why they should be). Their conceptualization of heteronormativity and performativity in relation to political theory provides the framework for applying these concepts to IR-feminist theory.

Much of Butler's writings draw upon psychoanalytic theory and French philosophy, and she discusses issues such as the psychic formation of the subject, the Oedipus complex and the related incest taboo, embodiment, Lacanian notions of the Symbolic, Freudian conceptualization of sexuality and so on; and she draws upon authors such as Monique Wittig, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Lacan, and, as one of her most frequent sources, Michel Foucault. With the exception of Foucault, I will not discuss these authors, as they are not immediately related to the topic of this thesis. Thus, I will not do a separate reading of the writings discussed by Butler in order to reinterpret her original reading of these texts. The reason for this demarcation is that Butler is my main analytical resource: my intention is to use her concepts as analytical tools, not as objects of analysis.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> However, I do admit that the lines between the two will at times be blurry and perhaps I will even have to grant that there is no clear line between them. Especially when the writings I attempt to analyze also make use of Butler and/or the concepts outlined below. Heteronormativity have, for example, been discussed and conceptualized by a variety of authors, but my usage of the term in this thesis is limited to the conceptualization made by Chambers and Carver. Furthermore, the fact

In order to analyze the (re)production of (gendered) knowledge and heteronormativity, and situate this debate in the larger field of IR, I need to make use of the concept of power. But power is not a given, already made concept. It needs to be specified. Based on my readings of Butler and my own theoretical presuppositions I will use a Foucauldian conceptualization of power in my analysis. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978), Foucault conceptualizes power in terms of power/discourse relations in an attempt to move past a juridical understanding of power to an analysis of power that is at play in all relations, where the common link between power and the law is revealed as a mere concealment of the actual power relations in society. I am focusing on Foucauldian power, firstly because of his influence on Butler and many other poststructuralist feminists, and, secondly, due to his writings on discourse analysis, and his analysis of the relation between power, discourse, and knowledge production.

The conceptualization of heteronormativity, performativity, and power that will be presented below will show a close alignment between these concepts and poststructuralist theory. In *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory* (1987), Chris Weedon develops a feminist poststructuralism that advocates discourse analysis as the most compelling method for analyzing heteronormativity, power relations, and the discursive production of the subject. I will in this chapter give a brief outline of the theoretical implications of feminist poststructuralism. However, for the purpose of this thesis, poststructuralism will be more of a methodological consideration than a theoretical one. Its methodological strengths will be discussed in chapter 3. In short, poststructuralist theory is a rejection of the Symbolic; of pre-social and pre-cultural structures determining behaviors and outcomes, subject positions and accessible identities. It is not a coherent theoretical framework that sets out to investigate, explain, and narrate ‘reality’; it does not pretend that research leads to truths. It works at and with the limits of knowledge and language, and is thus effective, both theoretically and methodologically, for deconstructing discourses and power relations.

## 2.1 Performativity

In much feminist theory the anatomical sex is distinguished from the cultural gender in a classical nature/culture dichotomy. Since Simone de Beauvoir’s statement “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (Beauvoir, quoted in Butler 2006:11), the social construction of gender is well established; femininity is cultural, not biological. But the sex remains biological, natural, and precedes the becoming of the gender. An anatomically correct woman becomes a feminine gender and an anatomically correct man becomes a masculine gender.

---

that both Butler and Foucault have influenced some of the texts in my analysis is an advantage rather than a disadvantage since it connects the theoretical approach with the analysis, and lends support to the arguments put forth in this thesis.

So what about the sexes that are not anatomically correct, or the man that becomes feminine and vice versa? According to Butler (2006), sex is not a pre-cultural given; it is as fraught with meaning and construction as gender is, and one becomes one's sex just as much as one becomes one's gender. This does not imply a reversal where gender precedes sex; rather it is a disturbance of a normative heterosexuality that requires the man/woman dualism, since this dualism effectively excludes and renders unintelligible those sexes and sexualities that do not comply with the heterosexual matrix.

As a response to normative heterosexuality, Butler develops the notion of performativity, which implies that one not only becomes one's gender; one performs it in repetitive acts regarding e.g. corporeal stylization and speech (Butler 2006:34; Chambers and Carver 2008:3). Understanding gender as performative is a destabilization of the link between sex and gender, something that is particularly expressive in drag. But it is not just a matter of one sex imitating the opposite gender since that gender is already an imitation in the sense that gender is no more than a copy of a copy, a construction imitating a supposedly natural male or female sex that turns out to be 'sex-less' if it is not expressed through the created gender (Butler 2006:185-187). In this sense femininity does not logically follow from a female sex, since *the sex is female only in as far as it is performed as the feminine* (Butler 2006:9f). Furthermore, what the performance of drag brings to the surface is the *created* link between anatomical sex and gender identity. Drag is not necessarily a parody of the feminine; rather it is a parody of the assumption of the feminine as natural: "it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its coherence*" (Butler 2006:187, italics in original).

However, performativity is not limited to drag. Through the regulatory practices and repetitive acts related to heteronormativity, *gender is always performed*. Corporeal stylization, language, and actions produce and reproduce the gendered subject every day, all the time. Gender is something "*enacted – inscribed in daily practices of speech, both expressed and formed through dress, manner and behaviour [sic]*" (Chambers and Carver 2008:3, italics in original). Included in this notion of gender is that it is not a natural consequence of a given sex, rather it implies a notion that perhaps sex itself is performed (ibid). The corporeal stylization of gender is presumed to express a specific sex. Performing a gender is a strategy of survival, as gender is required if one is to be considered an intelligible person: "Discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture" (Butler 2006:190, quotation marks in original). Hence, it is not an act, a performance in the theatrical sense; rather, performativity is the idea that gender is not a noun that exists separately from the individual that enacts it: "Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (Butler 2006:190,

quotation marks in original). It follows that sex does not necessarily need to be interpreted as the dualistic male/female. If sex is female only in as far as it is realized through the feminine gender, and there is no more feminine gender, then there would be no more female sex (Butler 2006:9, 34). Instead, there would be a person, and the sex of that person would no more signify its essence than would its mouth or nose or any other body part.

Performativity is closely related to power: by establishing gender as a natural consequence of sex, the construction of both sex and gender is disguised, and thus appear to be unrelated to power and discourse. Within the discursive regulations of gender the limits of what constitutes a specific gender are established: “Knowledge and power are not finally separable but work together to establish a set of subtle and explicit criteria for thinking the world” (Butler 2004:27). The criteria for thinking gender is ‘a male sex leads to a masculine gender (even if this masculinity is socially constructed), and a female sex leads to a feminine gender’. These regulations are what inform the subject about its available subjectivities and behaviors, and since it poses as natural it also hides its relation to power and discourse.

## 2.2 Heteronormativity

The heterosexual matrix produces gender, both in the form of manifestations of masculinity and femininity and in the consolidation of the same in the shape of men and women. This production is thought to rely upon male and female sex as the foundation of gender. The third term of the matrix is opposite-sex desire, that which holds the matrix together. Heteronormativity is the force that maintains the matrix, since it is within this heteronormative core that sex becomes gender (or vice versa). (Chambers and Carver 2008:150)

The normative in heteronormativity expresses the regulatory and normalizing function of norms; the restrictions set out by a heterosexual matrix that both requires and reproduces the masculine/feminine binary. On the other hand, the process of conceptualizing a normative heterosexuality can in itself be a subversive act, since the function of naturalization requires that the naturalizing process remains hidden. The moment that it is exposed as a process, it can no longer claim a naturalness since this naturalness is dependent on the norm’s pre-cultural and foundational existence; its establishment as a process effectively disturbs this claim (Chambers and Carver 2008:142). But what exactly is this process of heteronormativity? It is a process whereby the heterosexual subject is established as natural. Heteronormativity establishes the heterosexual subject, heterosexual sexuality and desires as normal, thus rendering other subject positions, other sexualities and desires as deviant, unnatural, and even unintelligible (Butler 2004:57, 218; Chambers and Carver 2008:144, 146f).

In *Gender Trouble* (2006), Butler does not actually use the term heteronormativity; instead she uses a heterosexual matrix to show the process and the effects of a normative heterosexuality (i.e. “heterosexuality when it operates as a [regulatory and normalizing] norm” (Chambers and Carver 2008:137)). As Chambers and Carver highlight, the norms governing heterosexuality and the gendered subject “serves the particular end of producing subjects whose gender/sex/desire all *cohere* in certain ways” (Chambers and Carver 2008:144, italics in original). What makes a person intelligible is its presentation as a gendered subject; a person who claims no gender is thus not really a person. “One important sense of [heteronormative] regulation, then, is that persons are regulated by gender, and that this sort of regulation operates as a condition of cultural intelligibility for any person” (Butler 2004:52): for a person to be intelligible the gender it presents must cohere with its anatomical sex and heterosexual desire. Heteronormativity should not be equated with homophobia, rather it is a term which expresses heterosexuality as normative and as a “regulatory practice” (Chambers and Carver 2008:144). This regulatory practice produces discrete and uniform genders through the establishment of a “compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler 2006:43). “Heteronormativity emphasizes the extent to which everyone, straight or queer, will be judged, measured, probed and evaluated from the perspective of the heterosexual norm. It means that *everyone and everything is judged from the perspective of straight*” (Chambers, quoted in Chambers and Carver 2008:146f, italics in original). Furthermore, the matrix is not fixed, but is constantly produced and reproduced through regulatory practice, repetitive acts, and language (Chambers and Carver 2008:148). What Butler (2006) does with the heterosexual matrix is to show how heterosexuality is normalized and naturalized through an institutionalization of heterosexual norms that appeal to a pre-discursive law that governs the ontological human:

both gender and sex *gain their very coherence* through heteronormativity. As categories of both thought and identity, sex and gender become intelligible within the terms of heteronormativity. And this is precisely why lesbian and gay identity is consistently rendered *unintelligible* by heteronormativity. A woman who desires a woman is an impossibility. (Chambers and Carver 2008:151, italics in original)

Hence, heteronormativity establishes the sex/gender division (where the natural sex precedes the cultural gender) and opposite-sex desire, effectively prohibiting other forms of identities and desires: “for heterosexuality to remain intact as a distinct social form, it *requires* an intelligible conception of homosexuality and also requires the prohibition of that conception in rendering it culturally unintelligible” (Butler 2006:104, italics in original). Homosexuality must exist and be prohibited at the same time in order for heterosexuality to be made the culturally viable.

This prohibition of homosexuality serves another purpose than just rendering the heterosexual, gendered subject intelligible; it also masks the productive capacity of discourse, and the relation between power and discourse. As will be discussed further in paragraph 2.3, the juridical notion of power as regulation and prohibition serves to mask the multiplicity of power relations present in the production of the gendered subject: “this juridical model presumes that the relation between power and sexuality is not only ontologically distinct, but that power always and only works to subdue or liberate a sex which is fundamentally intact, self-sufficient, and other than power itself” (Butler 2006:129). Furthermore, “juridical power must be reconceived as a construction produced by a generative power which, in turn, conceals the mechanism of its own productivity” (ibid). It follows that normative heterosexuality not only works to produce distinct gendered subjects and heterosexual desires, but also to mask the productive capacities of power by presenting power as prohibition. Destabilizing heteronormativity is, therefore, also to expose these power relations in their productive function.

### 2.2.1 Subversion

In relation to heteronormativity, Chambers and Carver (2008) develop a theory of subversion. They conceptualize subversion as “a political project of erosion, one that works on norms from the inside, breaking them down not through external challenge but through an internal repetition that weakens them” (Chambers and Carver 2008:142). Subversion is “a critical theoretical and political practice of working on norms from within, of undermining those norms. Eroding their efficacy, calling them into question either by merely calling them out (i.e. revealing their condition as norms) or by challenging their status, their grounding or their effects” (Chambers and Carver 2008:142). Hence, subverting heteronormativity is more than just exposing and questioning the construction of gender; it is a repetitive act whereby the natural foundation of heterosexuality (and its presumed fixity in gender binaries) is exposed, disturbed, and weakened. And since subjectivity is always a product of discourse, these repetitive acts must take place within discourse; they must take place within and through the norms that they set out to subvert. The intention is not to subvert identity as such (although the destabilization of gender identities will most likely be an effect of subverting heteronormativity), but to subvert the repetitive acts that reproduce normative heterosexuality (Chambers and Carver 2008:148); rejecting identity or deviating from the norm is thus not necessarily subversive acts, since norms “depend for their survival on a certain percentage of deviant cases” (Chambers and Carver 2008:149). But what then *does* constitute subversive acts? Merely deviating from the norm is clearly not enough, but there is no given agenda for what is enough; subversion, put simply, consists of acts that are “challenging, calling into question and/or undermining *the presumption of heterosexuality*” (Chambers and Carver 2008:155, italics in original). Hence, “subversions of



heteronormativity can and will emerge whenever the presumption of heterosexuality is frustrated” (ibid). But what these acts actually consist of is always contextually dependent. As Butler states, “[t]he effort to name the criterion for subversiveness will always fail, and ought to” (Butler 2006:xxiii); the aim is not to replace one set of gender norms with another set (even if this later set might be considered more ‘equal’ or open); rather *it is a matter of questioning what we take as foundational of human intelligibility* and attempt to break down this presumed foundation through repetitive acts that exposes its naturalness as fiction. One example of this can be drag, but it can also be a matter of deconstructing heteronormativity in language: “[subversion] can emerge in projects that deconstruct heterosexuality, that demonstrate its discursive effects and its internal contradictions” (Chambers and Carver 2008:155). Hence, subversion can take place both practically – through a performance of gender that “exposes the internal structure of heteronormativity” (Chambers and Carver 2008:153) and the presumed coherence of gender/sex/desire – and theoretical – through a deconstruction of theoretical heteronormative presumptions and an exposition of discursive productions of the heterosexual matrix.

## 2.3 Power

Norms concerning gender and heterosexuality are closely related to the question of power:

The question of who and what is considered real and true is apparently a question of knowledge. But it is also, as Foucault makes plain, a question of power. Having or bearing ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ is an enormously powerful prerogative within the social world, one way in which power dissimulates as ontology. (Butler 2004:215, quotation marks in original)

When heteronormativity establishes the gendered heterosexual subject as the intelligible human certain forms of knowledge are being produced and legitimized, knowledges that are related to power and discourse. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1978), Foucault makes the now famous statement that “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1978:93). This does not imply, however, that power is disconnected from its effects or practices, nor that it is untouchable, abstract, and impossible to deconstruct. Rather, this statement is a rejection of the assumption that power only functions through law and that it only has a negative effect in form of regulations and prohibitions (Foucault 1978:85f). Power exists in every relation, on a multiplicity of levels, and has many shapes and functions (Foucault 1978:92f). A juridical power assumes that “domination, submission, and subjugation are ultimately reduced to an effect of obedience” (Foucault

1978:85), and thus effectively conceals the productive capacities of power. When power is recognized only in its visible juridical and institutional disguise, its plurality of effects and its presence in discourse and knowledge remains hidden: “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault 1978:86). Hence, the production of subjects through discourse, the fact that subjects are always produced through and in relation to discourse, and thus power, is effectively hidden. Power needs to be identified in its “force relations” (Foucault 1978:92) which exist in a multiplicity of instances, procedures, institutions, and discourses, and it needs to be understood as a process, not as a static accumulation of prohibitions and regulations. As a process it is constantly moving, changing, and it is also always open for critique, subversion, deconstruction, and resistance.

The gendered subject is produced within discourse, and the limits to what is a knowable gender regulate what is considered to be an intelligible human (Butler 2004:41). For example, assumptions of a pre-discursive heterosexuality and binary sex/gender formations suggests that these aspects of the subject are created outside of discourse, and are therefore natural and universal (Butler 2006:9f). This would render those subjects that do not conform to this truth unintelligible. But what Butler (2006:128f) shows is that there is no subject outside of discourse; sex and sexuality are products of a heteronormative discourse, but when they present themselves as pre-discursive they effectively mask the power/discourse relations that are at play in the creation of the subject. Butler states: “a restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field performs a *regulatory* operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption” (Butler 2004:43, italics in original). The normalizing effect of heteronormativity thus legitimizes hierarchical relationships and structures, and disguises its own power relations. What performativity suggests is (1) that sex, gender and desire are constructed by discourse; and (2) that these discourses can be deconstructed and subverted from within through a rejection of the gendered actions they presume and a reformulation of what sex, gender, and sexuality means (Butler 2004:218).

## 2.4 Feminist Poststructuralism

Chris Weedon (1987) is my main theoretical source on feminist poststructuralism. She conceptualizes poststructuralism as a theory and a methodology for questioning structuralist assumptions about power/knowledge relations and for deconstructing language and its role in the discursive creation of the subject:

For poststructuralist theory the common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness is *language*. Language is the place

where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*. (Weedon 1987:21, italics in original)

Weedon (1987) rejects the notion that language is a purely descriptive and transparent tool for expressing experiences and subjectivity. Instead, she sees language as creating the subject and the experiences it sets out to describe (Weedon 1987:78). In the production of gendered identities and sexual categories, language is thus a central site of power/knowledge relations and of establishing ontological and epistemological limits concerning what counts as gender – and in effect what counts as human: “It is in language that differences acquire meaning for the individual. [...] Language differentiates and gives meaning to assertive and compliant behaviour [*sic*] and teaches us what is socially accepted as normal” (Weedon 1987:76). Thus, language is one of the central sites where gender is performed. It is also one of the central sites for the subversion of established gender subjectivities.

The poststructuralist understanding of language is born out of a critique of structuralist ideas about signification and logocentrism. In logocentrism, the word is “conceived as existing in itself, as foundation” (Culler 1983:92). The word is given a metaphysical presence where it is seen as being directly linked to truth and reason (Wright 1992:316f). Logocentrism assumes that the word is pre-discursive and self-existent, a representation of meaning and a signifier of truth, reason and logic (Culler 1983:92). It also rests on the assumption that oppositions always consist of a “superior term [which] belongs to the logos and is a higher presence” and an inferior term which exists only in relation to the superior term, as its negation or disruption (Culler 1983:93). Rejecting these assumptions, Jacques Derrida suggests that words are never representative but open to a never-ending process of meaning formation (Weedon 1987:25). There is thus not one single signification of ‘woman’ or ‘feminine’, but a multiplicity of discourses that produces versions of ‘woman’ and ‘feminine’: “feminist poststructuralism insists that forms of subjectivity are produced historically and change with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields which constitute them” (Weedon 1987:33). Furthermore, the ways in which different subjectivities are produced by discourses “have implications for the process of reproducing or contesting power relations” (Weedon 1987:92). Different discourses have different relations to socio-cultural institutions and, in effect, different relations to power (Weedon 1987:97). The subjectivities that are available within the boundaries of what is considered natural and normal are limited, and subjectivities that do not conform to existing ideas and practices will be rendered unintelligible. In order for discourse to establish itself as natural, it presents itself as true and hides the power relations at play in its production and establishment: “This gives rise to a battle to fix particular versions of femininity and masculinity as natural. [...] this can be described as a battle for the signified –

a struggle to fix meaning temporarily on behalf of particular power relations and social interests” (Weedon 1987:98). Language is a particularly important aspect of stabilizing natural subjectivities, since language, when it itself is presented as foundational, hides the relationship between power, discourse, and knowledge: when the word becomes signifier of a particular meaning as truth, the production of this ‘truth’ in discourse, and in language itself, is effectively masked.

A prevailing notion within much feminism is the idea that feminism speaks for women; that the experiences of women are in some way coherent and can be narrated in a descriptive sense in order to show a universal and common oppression of women under patriarchal structures (Butler 2006:2, 5). But this notion denies the constructive capacity of language and its relation to discourse and power. It also presupposes a unitary identity as ‘woman’, thus denying the multiplicity of subjectivities and experiences that make up the subject, as well as the many sites of oppression, and of resistance. Feminist poststructuralism questions this type of feminist reasoning. As a theory, it exposes the connections between language, knowledge and power, and the discursive production of the subject. It is clear that Butler to a large extent applies a poststructural attitude to her reasoning, and both heteronormativity and performativity is easily conceptualized within feminist poststructuralism, as is Foucauldian power. The common denominator is the rejection of the notion that there are structures and laws existing outside of discourse and culture that are somehow fixed and universal, and from which specific effects can be deduced. Rather, poststructuralism recognizes the production of structures and laws as a part of power/discourse relations, and thus exposes their contextuality and specificity. What performativity does is reverse the cause–effect relationship, suggesting that *it is the effects that produce the ‘cause’*; structures only becomes institutionalized through their effects, they do not exist separate from them, just as suggested above that sex only becomes naturalized in as far as it is expressed through gender.

## 3 Methodology

**Ontology** A way of specifying the nature or essence of something. Different ontologies offer different beliefs about social existence, and different distinctions between categories of existence (for example, rocks, primates, people).

**Epistemology** A theory of knowledge that specifies how researchers can know what they know. Different epistemologies (for example, *empiricism*, *realism*) offer different rules on what constitutes knowledge, and what criteria establish knowledge of social or natural reality as legitimate, adequate or valid. (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:171, 173, italics in original)

Questions of ontology and epistemology are central to the production of knowledge. Locating heteronormative assumptions and performative acts in feminist IR theory implies asking questions such as; what constitutes the human?; what makes for intelligible subjects?; how is gendered categorization linked to power and discourse?; why is a certain type of knowledge conceived as more ‘true’ than other types of knowledge?; and, put simply (and yet one of the most problematic questions of all), why do we know what we know?

At the core of this thesis is knowledge production. My intention is to analyze the (re)production of gendered knowledge within the current feminist debate in International Relations, focusing on heteronormativity, performativity, and power relations as discussed in the Theory Overview-chapter. Both my theoretical and methodological approach is grounded in feminist poststructuralism, as developed by Chris Weedon. In this chapter I will discuss *Internal Discourse Analysis* as a method for deconstructing a specific academic debate, and how this can be combined with Foucauldian discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralism.

### 3.1 Internal Discourse Analysis

As discussed in the Theory Overview-chapter, feminist poststructuralism exposes and questions the presumption that structures and laws are universal and pre-discursive by pointing to the discursive construction of the subject and the reversed relationship between cause and effect. Theoretically, this is a rejection of structural determinism, heteronormativity, and naturalized binaries such as

sex/gender, nature/culture, and masculine/feminine. Methodologically, Weedon's feminist poststructuralism is concerned with discourses and the interplay between discourse, power, and knowledge production. Poststructuralism is most commonly associated with deconstruction, and I do not want to dismiss the importance of a deconstructive method even within the process of discourse analysis. As I will show, exposing and reversing hierarchical oppositions may be a method belonging to a theory of deconstruction, but it is an equally important tool in a discourse analysis, particularly when the aim of the analysis is to make explicit the impact and reproduction of discourses and their relation to dominant modes of knowledge production and power relations.

In *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (1998), Brian C. Schmidt proposes a method of internal discourse analysis for analyzing the historical development of International Relations as a distinct academic field:

By 'internal' I mean a focus on the actual conversations about the subject matter of international politics pursued by previous generations of academic practitioners who self-consciously identified themselves with the field of international relations. This approach is offered as an alternative to histories that insist that the development of the field of international relations can be understood primarily in relation to external events taking place in the realm of international politics. (Schmidt 1998:1, quotation marks in original)

What Schmidt sets out to do is to "reconstruct an actual conversation" (ibid) within International Relations to show the discursive history of the field. Traditionally, International Relations' history has been written in terms of external events affecting the development of the academic field. It has been assumed that great political events such as the two World Wars or the end of the Cold War – events that have taken place in the so called 'real world' – have shaped the debate and theories within the academic world. According to Schmidt, however, the discursive development of International Relations have primarily been shaped by the theoretical debates taking place within the academic field, something that is shown in the diverse responses that external events have received by a plurality of scholars with different theoretical approaches and explanations (Schmidt 1998:37). Furthermore, external events cannot explain "conceptual changes" (Schmidt 1998:38) within an academic debate: "Although the exogenous events of international politics at any given point in time may provide a relevant context for understanding the scholarly conversations, references to this context cannot explain the particular theoretical and methodological dimension of the conversation" (ibid).

Schmidt's internal discourse analysis is a convincing method for analyzing the feminist debate in International Relations since it directs the analysis to the most relevant academic material, suggesting that this material in

itself can explain theoretical debates and developments within its field (Schmidt 1998:38). However, in one important respect I will depart from Schmidt's method of discourse analysis, and this is due to the different focuses of our analyses; whereas Schmidt sets out to *reconstruct* (Schmidt 1998:38) a historical conversation, I am *deconstructing* a present debate. My intention is not to show the historical development of discourse within a given academic field, but to analyze the impact and reproduction of discourses within an ongoing debate. Hence, I need not put the pieces together; I need to pick them apart. Schmidt (1998:9) himself recognizes the importance of deconstructing dichotomies and binary oppositions in order to critically investigate the epistemological and methodological limits to a perceived coherent academic field.

### 3.1.1 Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a method for exposing and reversing hierarchical oppositions in a text (Culler 1983:85). In line with Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), I will "take deconstruction [...] as reflecting on, questioning, and unsettling existing assumptions, meanings and methods. Deconstruction in this sense exposes binary thinking and questions how ways of thinking, telling truths, reading texts, and so on, have been socially constituted in particular contexts" (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:88). As a part of a discourse analysis, a deconstruction of the feminist IR debate will expose how binary oppositions and heteronormativity is reproduced and normalized within and through certain discourses. For this purpose, the concept *différance*, as developed by Jacques Derrida is particularly relevant. Derrida's *différance* is a combination of difference and deferral, meaning that oppositions are never fixed but always related: "différance [*sic*] is not an opposition, not even a dialectical opposition; it is a reaffirmation of the same, an economy of the same in its relation to the other, which does not require that the same, in order to exist, be frozen or fixed in a distinction or in a system of dual oppositions" (Derrida and Roudinesco 2004:21). *Différance* is a process of "differentiation beyond every kind of limit" (*ibid*) – a differentiation of the same – and hence a disruption of fixed oppositions and the separation between signifier and signified; it is that which separates but also that which binds, since meaning is dependent on this differentiation. Differences are thus not fixed oppositions such as inside/outside, since 'inside' would not have any signification without 'outside'. It follows that what 'inside' signifies depends on what 'outside' signifies and vice versa; a word's meaning is always deferred – it can never be understood or expressed on its own – since its definition is always dependent on other words, from which it differs. Meaning can thus never be fixed, as is assumed by structuralism's emphasis on universal law and the separation between signifier and signified: "the difference between signifier and signified cannot be one of substance and [...] what we may at one point identify as a signified is also a signifier. There are no final meanings that arrest the movement of signification" (Culler 1983:188). The notion of *différance* blurs the distinction between signifier

and signified that is taken for granted in logocentrism, and exposes the ‘meaningless’ and non-fixity of philosophical oppositions.

## 3.2 Poststructuralism in IR

In my theoretical outline in Chapter 2, I propose an understanding of gendered subjects as products of discourse and language, in line with feminist poststructuralism. But the theories of Weedon, Butler, and Foucault that I there rely on predominantly stem from a philosophical context and might seem foreign to the study of international politics – however, poststructuralism should not be discarded in International Relations. In *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (2006), Lene Hansen discusses the place of poststructural analysis in IR, focusing on the discursive production of identity in relation to foreign policy:

To say that identity is *discursive* and *political* is to argue that representations of identity place foreign policy issues within a particular interpretive optic, one with consequences for which foreign policy can be formulated as an adequate response. To theorize identity as constructed through discourse, and for policy to be dependent thereon, is to argue that there are no objective identities located in some extra-discursive realm, hence identity cannot be used as a variable against which behavior and non-discursive factors can be measured. (Hansen 2006:6, italics in original)

Bringing this notion of discursive identity production into IR is important because it challenges common assumptions about objectivity and representation. It exposes the knowledge produced in IR as constructive of the ‘reality’ that it claims to describe and scientifically measure. As Hansen makes clear, no academic analysis is freed from discourse, and knowledge is always simultaneously a product of discourse and producer of discursive ontology: “Identities are thus articulated as the reason why policies should be enacted, but they are also (re)produced through these very policy discourses: they are simultaneously (discursive) foundation and product” (Hansen 2006:21). When one recognizes this discursive production of identity and its relation to e.g. foreign policies, then the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism becomes of great importance not just for gender studies and feminism, but for International Relations as a distinct academic field: assuming that gender can be used as an explanatory variable denies the discursive production of the gendered subject, and reinforces an understanding of IR as representative of an independently existing reality. Hence, exposing the production of gendered subjectivities can destabilize



these assumptions, and allow for a reformulation of the ontological and epistemological grounds on which IR makes its truth claims.

Hansen's outline of the discursive production of identity in foreign policy might be read as an implicit contribution to the feminist debate in IR that I here set out to analyze: similar questions of representation, objectivity, and neutrality are discussed by Hansen. In this thesis, however, I use Hansen's text as a methodological device, not as an object of analysis; her outline of poststructuralism and discursive identity production in IR, and international politics more general, effectively anchors my theoretical and methodological base with the academic field of International Relations, showing that questions concerning discourse, subjectivity, gender, and knowledge production cannot be discarded with reference to IR being a neutral field that studies an objective reality. Hence, the internal discourse analysis outlined by Schmidt, in combination with Hansen's poststructuralism, make up a compelling framework for; firstly, selecting material; and secondly, for analyzing this material as produced by – and reproducing – discourses on gender and heteronormativity.

### 3.2.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

The internal discourse analysis as developed by Schmidt is more concerned with the discursive history of the field of International Relations than with questions of power and knowledge production, and how these are related to discourse. Although he states that his intention is to “recover, and differentiate, the actual discursive realm of disciplinary history from the variety of rhetorical and legitimating histories that currently populate the field” (Schmidt 1998:11), he fails to account for the fact that these histories are also constituted by discourse, and thus produced by those power relations that establish what counts as legitimate knowledge – and legitimate history. Furthermore, as Hansen (2006) shows, discourse is not finally separable from any ‘external reality’ since discourse is part of the creation of that reality. What counts as ‘real’ is a product of the knowledge and truths that are legitimized by dominant discourses. Poststructural discourse analysis is most commonly associated with the writings of Michel Foucault; Weedon (1987:chapter 5) proposes a Foucauldian discourse analysis for exposing the relation between the text and its social and historical context, as well as the power relations and discourses that have been at play in the production of the text and the interests that it serves:

It is in the work of Michel Foucault that the poststructuralist principles of the plurality and constant deferral of meaning and the precarious, discursive structures of subjectivity have been integrated into a theory of language and social power which pays detailed attention to the institutional effects of

discourse and its role in the constitution and government of individual subjects. (Weedon 1987:107)

Within any discursive field, there is a plurality of competing discourses. Some of these discourses are dominant, whereas others resist and challenge these dominant discourses and the knowledge that is produced (Weedon 1987:35). According to Foucault (1984:109), discourse is both established through a process of control and prohibition, and, simultaneously, always out of reach from the controlling mechanisms:

discourse is not simply that which manifests (or hides) desire – it is also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized. (Foucault 1984:110)

If the academic field of International Relations is taken as a discursive field in line with Schmidt's notion of internal discourse analysis, then there will be, within this field, both dominant and resisting discourses. Neo-feminism and IR-feminism are informed by different discourses which have different relations to power, institutions, and dominant modes of knowledge production. Knowledge within the debate is produced by and in accordance with these discourses: "In order to develop strategies to contest hegemonic assumptions and the social practices which they guarantee, we need to understand the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimized forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification" (Weedon 1987:126). Discourse analysis is a way to reveal the power relations that are at play in the production of knowledge, and to locate the subversive possibilities within an academic field in order to challenge the dominant discourses.

## 4 The Feminist Debate in IR

In the following chapters I will do an internal discourse analysis of the debate between neo-feminists and IR-feminists that is currently taking place ‘within’ International Relations in Great Britain. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate why this debate has come about; what forms of knowledge that are produced; and why particular forms of gendered knowledge is (re)produced. I will focus on how gender is performed and how heteronormativity is reproduced in this debate; what kind of truth claims that are made in the texts; and what connection these claims have to power and the center of International Relations. Hence, I will deconstruct the main arguments in the debate and analyze these with reference to theories by Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Chris Weedon, as discussed in previous chapters. By treating this debate as a discursive field and doing an internal discourse analysis of this field, I can expose how neo-feminism and IR-feminism relate to discourses on gender; I can analyze the places where the texts interact and oppose each other, which limits they set to what is knowable and how they relate to each other and to power and the larger field of International Relations.

The texts I have chosen to analyze does not make up the complete debate, but can be considered representative of the most important arguments. My notion of what constitutes the most important arguments in this debate is of course arbitrary, and another type of analysis might emphasize completely different aspects. However, my analysis is guided by an overarching alignment with feminist poststructuralism, and more specifically by the theoretical concepts performativity and heteronormativity. Hence, what I consider to be the most important arguments in these texts are (1) statements that are either immediately performing gender (i.e. producing a certain gendered subjectivity) or theoretically discussing gender; and (2) statements that are either (re)producing heteronormativity, making truth claims that are based on or productive of a heterosexual matrix, or theoretically discussing heteronormativity. The outline of the articles below should not be understood as a clear cut division between a neo-feminist and IR-feminist body of research. Considering this debate as a discursive field in the way that I do here implies an understanding of the included texts as relational and interdependent; they cannot and should not be separated into oppositional positions. However, neo-feminism and IR-feminism can be divided along a line of rejecting or committing to a feminist agenda, and it is along this line that I have divided the texts. This is not to suggest that gender and heteronormativity is understood completely differently in the two bodies of texts, rather this is a practical division to help make explicit certain assumptions about feminism, power, and mainstream IR. Since the main focus of the debate is how

feminism should relate to mainstream IR and whether ‘gender’ belongs to a feminist methodology or can be added as an explanatory variable to any methodology, separating the texts in this manner is a way to situate them in relation to feminism and mainstream IR – and to each other – based on the rejection of, or commitment to, feminism made by the authors themselves.

The texts that will be analyzed are as follows:

<b>Neo-feminism</b>	<b>IR-feminism</b>
Adam Jones, <i>Does ‘Gender’ Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations</i> (1996)	Johanna Kantola, <i>The Gendered Reproduction of the State in International Relations</i> (2007)
Dibyesh Anand, <i>Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence</i> (2007)	Laura Shepherd, "Victims, Perpetrators and Actors" Revisited: Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence (2007)
Mary Caprioli, <i>Feminist IR Theory and Quantitative Methodology: A Critical Analysis</i> (2004)	Marysia Zalewski, <i>Do We Understand Each Other Yet? Troubling Feminist Encounters With(in) International Relations</i> (2007)
Lara Coleman, <i>The Gendered Violence of Development: Imaginative Geographies of Exclusion in the Imposition of Neo-liberal Capitalism</i> (2007)	Terrell Carver, Marysia Zalewski, Helen Kinsella and R. Charli Carpenter, <i>Gender and International Relations</i> (Carver et. al. 2003)
R. Charli Carpenter, <i>Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint?</i> (2002)	

# 5 Neo-Feminism

In the introduction to a theme-issue of *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* (2007) on Gender and International Relations, Judith Squires and Jutta Weldes describe neo-feminism as a way to study gender in terms of both masculinity and femininity: “we argue that it is entirely possible to deploy diverse approaches to gender, only some of which are overtly feminist, that as a whole nonetheless unsettle the concerns and presumptions of more established IR scholarship” (Squires and Weldes 2007:191). They go on to state that the introduction of neo-feminism to International Relations is “clearly beneficial” [since it] “brings men and masculinities into view, allowing ‘the man question’ [...] to be interrogated and the masculine norms of IR theories and practices actively to be unsettled” (Squires and Weldes 2007:191, quotation marks in original). Neo-feminism is thus gender analysis without a feminist agenda. It is a rejection of the focus on woman in feminist theory, claiming that man is a gender too and therefore need to be studied to the same extent as woman. Rather than advocating alternative epistemologies and methodologies, neo-feminists wants to center gender studies by adding a gender variable to mainstream IR theories and methodologies.

## 5.1 Performing Gender

It might seem obvious that equating gender with ‘woman’ is biased and that it disregards ‘man’ and excludes masculinity from the analysis.<sup>3</sup> However, merely adding man/masculinity to the analysis and then adding the gender analysis to mainstream IR methodologies, will never disrupt an understanding of gender in binary terms, or effectively undermine the gender/sex/desire matrix that produces the heterosexual subject. The result will rather be the opposite: a reproduction of compulsory heterosexuality. In *Feminist IR Theory and Quantitative Methodology: A Critical Analysis* (2004), Mary Caprioli discusses the incorporation of gender analysis into traditional IR research, with an emphasis on quantitative methods. In her article, both sex and gender are conceptualized in a heteronormative terminology: “We know, for instance, that masculine and feminine values are not inherent to each biological sex but are adopted behaviors

---

<sup>3</sup> However, feminists such as Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray would claim that masculinity indeed is *not* a gender: “Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes. Gender is used here in the singular because indeed there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the ‘masculine’ not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general” (Wittig, quoted in Butler 2006:27, quotation marks in original).

[...]. Gender (masculine/feminine) and biological sex (men/women), however, are often used interchangeably” (Caprioli 2004:260). In this statement, gender is established as constructed, whereas sex is produced as natural and both gender and sex is reduced to opposing dualisms in a perceived natural heterosexual order:

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary result in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire. (Butler 2006:31)

Seen in the light of Butler’s statement, the linguistic separation firstly between sex and gender, and secondly between binary genders, is a performative act of reproducing the heterosexual subject. In other words, the understanding of gender as masculine/feminine and biological sex as men/women, completely excludes those humans that do not fit into this matrix from the analysis of international relations; in effect they are rendered unintelligible by a knowledge that establishes the subject in heteronormative terms; they are not allowed any subject positions in Caprioli’s understanding of the sexed/gendered subject.

Caprioli’s differentiation between constructed gender values and natural sexes is a performative reproduction of the fixed sexed and gendered subject, where the natural sex makes up the material subject, and the constructed gender expresses this material sex: masculinity and femininity might be reduced to cultural values, but they remain unconditionally linked to the man or woman whose sex they represent. Hence, the hierarchical oppositions man/woman, masculine/feminine, inside/outside (where sex is inside – or foundation – and gender is outside – or representation) remain as stable structures of language, knowledge, and the ‘real world’.

This ‘real world’, or rather, the idea of a *foundational ‘reality’* goes unquestioned in *Does ‘Gender’ Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations* (1996), in which Adam Jones criticizes feminist emphasis on woman and femininity and argues for the need of analyses of man and masculinity in IR. This text clearly expresses the strong hold that a positivistic understanding of language as descriptive has on IR scholars: “essentialist and constructivist positions tend to converge – when feminists turn to a critique of the *actually existing* social and global order (Jones 1996:409, italics in original). These essentialist and constructivist positions refer to different feminist theories: essentialist feminism is most commonly associated with maternal and radical feminism, whereas constructivist perspectives, in this article at least, refer to post-positivist feminism.<sup>4</sup> The part emphasized by Jones himself – “the *actually*

---

<sup>4</sup> It might be worth noting here that as far as Jones is concerned, these are the only two types of feminisms that exist, and he most favorably rely on maternal and radical feminism to represent

*existing* social and global order” (ibid) – assumes that there is an independently existing reality out there, pre-discursive and unconstructed, ready to be studied, measured, and explained by IR scholars. Furthermore, by emphasizing that this ‘actual reality’ is where essentialism and constructivism meet, the constructed gender becomes the essential sex; gender might be admitted as constructed, but this construction only holds on a theoretical level because ‘reality’ is made up of ‘real’ men and women (consisting of sexed material bodies). This produces the sexed subject as stable and pre-discursive, and normalizes the sex as foundational of the gendered subject. Of course, it could be argued that Jones is just unfamiliar with feminist theories, but, nonetheless, this summary of feminist understandings and commitments is clearly informed by a heteronormative discourse that produces a discretely sexed and gendered ontological human – a discourse that is then reproduced by that same text. This clearly establishes sex as foundational, essential, and in effect reproduces binaries such as sex/gender, natural/cultural, and inside/outside. In order for these oppositions to be reversed – rather than reproduced – an understanding of both gender and sex as performative is required. The discursive production of the sexed body has to be recognized, and the causal link between sex and gender has to be exposed as constructed by heteronormative power relations that depend on the naturalization of the discrete heterosexual subject. In this article, gender is reproduced as a noun, as descriptive of one of two sexes: man or woman, instead of being understood in terms of repetitive acts that performs the essence that it claims to describe.

Recognizing that (at least) gender cannot be fixed in a system of binary oppositions, *The Gendered Violence of Development: Imaginative Geographies of Exclusion in the Imposition of Neo-liberal Capitalism* (Coleman 2007) represents a more Butlerian conceptualization of gender: “Gendered identities do not form a simple (masculine/feminine) binary but, as products of power-laden social practices, are multiple, contradictory and open-ended” (Coleman 2007:205). The article also emphasizes the importance of discourse in the production of the gendered subject: “the discourses which make sense of capitalism also narrate the places of gendered bodies within the existing order, drawing on and (re)producing gendered identities” (Coleman 2007:205). Even though Lara Coleman’s recognition is not in itself subversive of heteronormativity, it destabilizes assumptions about fixed and stable genders, and it is informed by poststructural notions of discursive production of the subject, leading to a rejection of knowledge and language as purely descriptive or explanatory. In a discipline such as IR, where research is often associated with objectivity and measurable validity, and tends to be “privileging causal epistemological research projects over those which use, and require, other forms of knowledge” (Hansen 2006:9; see also Caprioli 2004:260), exposing the productive capacity of language and discourse is one way to reverse hierarchical oppositions such as rational/irrational, inside/outside, and order/anarchy, and disturb assumptions about neutral knowledge production and observable realities.

---

feminist critiques as a whole, even though essentialism is rejected by most feminist scholars (for examples in IR, see e.g. Sylvester 1994; Steans 1998; Weber 2001).

On the other hand, Coleman does not disturb the notion of the foundational sex. The article discusses neo-liberal development discourses and how these produce “‘imaginative geographies’ which define certain spaces, not so much in terms of their physical boundaries or objects within them, but in terms of gendered representations of these spaces as ‘civilised’ [*sic*] or ‘savage’” (Coleman 2007:207, quotation marks in original). In this light, Coleman analyzes how neo-liberalist influences on development agendas are based on an inclusion of the minority and an exclusion of the majority (Coleman 2007:206). But there is no recognition of how this gendered division of space produces the sexed subject; rather the sex is completely removed from the analytical usage of gender as masculine/feminine descriptions of spacing. Hence, albeit gender is recognized in its open-endedness and fluidity, the effects that this hierarchical differentiation has on the production of the sexed/gendered subject is completely excluded. The civilized/savage division is made based on the inclusion/exclusion of *recognized* subjects, i.e. those lives that belong to the ‘ontologically human’. But where does the *unrecognized* – the life that is not recognized in either space; that is not even recognized as human – belong? Furthermore, the gendering of these spaces in a hierarchical masculine/feminine economy reproduces the subjects inhabiting these spaces *as gendered*, in effect further excluding those subjects that do not conform to the heterosexual matrix. Indeed, they are already excluded from Coleman’s analysis, and thus reproduced as unintelligible within her conceptualization of gender. Coleman states that her article focuses on “the mutually constitutive relationship between gendered identities and neo-liberal capitalism, looking at how neo-liberal development and the violence attendant on it is legitimised [*sic*] and made possible through the mobilisation [*sic*] of hierarchically ordered gender identities” (Coleman 2007:205). But there is no recognition of that these “hierarchically ordered gender identities” (ibid) also produce the subjects living under neo-liberal structures *as sexed*. Rather, she relies on an understanding of gender as “a tool of what might be called ideology critique” which means a concern for “how a certain logic of gendered meanings and images helps organize the way people interpret events and circumstances” (Young, quoted in Coleman 2007:205). Hence, gender is a way of understanding one’s surroundings; gendered structures create different masculine/feminine “meanings and images” (ibid) through which ‘reality’ is discursively understood, and reproduced. In line with neo-feminism, this separates gender from sex, and establishes gender as an *analytical tool* for making sense of gendered discourses and structures (which are recognized by Coleman (2007:205) as mutually constitutive). But gender norms (in Coleman’s article understood as “meanings and images” (ibid)) can never be separated from the body:

In fact, the norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstated in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life. The norm has no independent ontological status, yet it cannot be easily reduced to its instantiations; it is itself (re)produced



through its embodiment, through the acts that strive to approximate it, through the idealizations reproduced in and by those acts. (Butler 2004:48)

If gender norms are always tied to the body in the way that Butler here suggests, then the separation that Coleman – and neo-feminism in general – attempts, reproduces a notion of gender as ontologically independent, a notion that Butler here effectively refutes. Hence, using gender as an analytical *tool* of any kind masks the ways in which gender norms produce the (sexed) body – and are reproduced on the surface of this body.

## 5.2 Heteronormativity

In *Feminist IR Theory and Quantitative Methodology: A Critical Analysis* (Caprioli 2004), a separation between gender and sex is suggested as methodologically favorable in the sense that sex then can be used as a measurable variable: “Sex, therefore, is a meaningful category in feminist analysis because it helps us understand the effects of the prevailing masculine/feminine stereotypes at all levels of analysis. In other words, *sex becomes an indicator of gender* and can be empirically measured” (Caprioli 2004:260f, emphasis added). This separation between sex and gender – where sex is a measurable variable and gender is a socially constructed quality that is appropriated by the sexed human – is inevitably reinforcing a notion of a natural sex that precedes the constructed gender. Stating that the sex *indicates* the gender suggests that sex can be read *on* the surface. This can be understood as contrasting the notion that gender is what appears on the surface as indicator of a specific sex, but it should rather be read as a confusion of the two terms, and an establishment of normative heterosexuality, where e.g. a feminine gender always follows from a female sex. What is assumed to be *on* the bodily surface in this case is an anatomical sex that is expressed through specific corporeal stylization that reveals this sex to the observer. Furthermore, this separation is informed by a heteronormative discourse that assumes that there are stable, coherent subjects ‘out there in the real world’ that can be studied in terms of their natural sex. Gender, in this sense, becomes behavioral characteristics that are ‘given to’ sexed subjects to explain social and cultural inequality. Hence, oppression of ‘women’ is reduced to a hierarchical ordering of gender qualities, where the ‘masculine’ qualities are valued higher than the ‘feminine’ ones. Butler states: “When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice” (Butler 2006:9). But rather than gender being “radically independent of sex” (ibid), Caprioli’s article suggests an understanding of *gender as descriptive of sex*. In order for sex to be “an indicator of gender” (Caprioli 2004:261), there has to be a measurable correlation between the two where *sex signifies gender* – gender is the corporeal stylization of sex; the external expression of the internal. This type of analysis presumes a causal relationship between the two. Butler goes

on to state that “gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive’, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts” (Butler 2006:10, italics and quotation marks in original). Quantitatively measuring sex in order to analyze gender inequalities, as is suggested in Caprioli’s text (2004:260-263), thus reproduces an understanding of the subject based on a heterosexual matrix of gender/sex/desire. Rather than locating the ways in which sex is *performed* through gender, this text assumes that gender is something that the sexed subject *has*; gender is the natural consequence of a specific sex, and the sexed subject is therefore always already a gendered subject in accordance with a masculine/feminine heteronormative binary.

In *Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint?* (2002) by R. Charli Carpenter, it is gender, rather than sex, that is advocated as the analytical instrument. But the article also argues for a separation between sex and gender. It suggests that feminist authors “confuse sex and gender”, and that this leads to “a great deal of descriptive research on sex-differentiated behavior, impacts, and issues [...] but little explanatory analysis of how *gender* (identities, beliefs, and discourse) constructs these outcomes” (Carpenter 2002:160, italics in original). Whereas this statement can be read as a recognition of the discursive production of the sexed body, a later statement in the article refutes this reading: “Goldstein’s work is groundbreaking as an example of how *gender as an explanatory instrument* may be combined with a conventional IR agenda using *empirical science* rather than interpretivism” (Carpenter 2002:161, emphasis added). The conceptualization of gender as an “explanatory instrument” (ibid) encourages an understanding of both gender and sex as fixed categories, one cultural, and the other natural. If one reads these statements as suggesting that gender be used as an instrument to explain differences between the sexes, the argument can be put forth that sexual inequality is constructed rather than natural, a view that has long been held by a variety of feminisms. We might speak here of an internalization of gender norms that affects the sexed subject in certain ways, but how this should be *empirically studied* remains unclear, at least outside of a heteronormative framework. For gender to function as an explanatory instrument, it has to be fixed in coherent categories. If gender is not conceptualized as a masculine/feminine binary, but instead recognized in its fluidity and open-endedness – its *différance* – how does one use it to explain e.g. “the social dynamics of warfare” as Carpenter (2002:161) suggests? For an explanatory instrument to work, the instrument has to be clearly defined and secured so that it can be deployed in various contexts and on various subject matters, in accordance with IR standards on hypothesis testing, validity, and replicability. Gender has to be categorized, but into what? The effect of Carpenter’s suggestion is that gender be fixed in dualistic heteronormative categories which reduce sex to an equally dualistic conceptualization of the naturally sexed man or woman: “It is an empirical fact that human beings are divided into roughly two categories based on biological roles and reproduction; this would still be true whether gender ideologies that assign social importance to

this distinction exist or not” (Carpenter 2002:164). Therefore, “the distinction between sex and gender remains important for operationalizing the two” (Carpenter 2002:161). Hence, according to Carpenter, humans are “divided into roughly two categories” (Carpenter 2002:164): men and women, and these categories exist independently of the meaning that is given them through gender. It is a logocentric understanding of the terms man and woman – and sex – where these terms are perceived as signifiers of a biological truth. Butler effectively disturbs this logocentric understanding of the pre-discursive sex:

And what is ‘sex’ anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such ‘facts’ for us? Does sex have a history? [...] Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as variable construction? [...] If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (Butler 2006:9f, quotation marks in original)

Separating sex and gender in the sense that both Carpenter (2002) and Caprioli (2004) does, implies that they have not asked the same questions as Butler. To further suggest the measurability of either of the two is to reproduce the unintelligibility of any subject that does not fit into the measurable data – i.e. any subject that does not conform to the heterosexual matrix of sex/gender coherence.

The purpose of the operational separation between sex and gender is to enforce an analysis of how “gender affects world politics” by investigating how gender identity, gender ideology, gender structure and gender norms “all constitute and reinforce a global (but changing) *gender regime*” (Carpenter 2002:165, italics in original). The difference between this analysis and an overtly feminist project is the abandonment of feminism’s normative commitment to women. On the surface, this seems like a convincing aspiration, but it requires an understanding of “gender per se [as] simply an analytical category” (Carpenter 2002:165), that can be used to explain sex hierarchies and oppression. This, in turn, requires that gender (as category) regulates sex (as subject): “to become subject to a regulation is also to become subjectivated by it, that is, to be brought into being as a subject precisely through being regulated” (Butler 2004:41). Hence, this notion of gender reproduces the intelligible human as a gendered human. Existing outside of these gender categories means not existing at all. Butler asks: “If ‘identity’ is an *effect* of discursive practices, to what extent is gender identity, construed as a relationship among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, the effect of a regulatory practice that can be identified as compulsory heterosexuality?” (Butler 2006:24, italics and quotation marks in original).

Explaining sexual inequality by reference to gender as an analytical instrument in effect produces the sexed subject; and understanding gender structures (or structures, institutions, economies etc. as gendered) as masculine/feminine hierarchies reproduces a heterosexual matrix.

In contrast to both Caprioli's and Carpenter's articles, Jones (1996) does not attempt any distinction between sex and gender. Rather, this text expresses a clear and undeniable correlation between the two where sex and gender is almost understood as same – man equals masculine and woman equals feminine – and where both sex and gender possess some foundational stability and meaning. For example,

If *women equal peace* and men war, then we are again looking at a project to *feminize* the political. (Jones 1996:418, emphasis added)

When constructivist leanings combine with post-positivism, the result is a deep suspicion even of *the basic labels of sex and gender*. (Jones 1996:409, emphasis added)

What if scholars of international political economy standardly factored in *women's contributions in the domestic/reproductive sphere*? (Jones 1996:412, emphasis added)

This last quotation is part of a discussion of feminist analyses of the public/private dichotomy: "Perhaps the most significant aspect of the feminist critique of the state – one that extends far beyond the boundaries of radical feminism – *is the project to reclaim the private*" (Jones 1996:412, italics in original). Jones' understanding of the domestic sphere is clearly informed by a discourse on heterosexuality where the domestic sphere is a sphere belonging to the family and women are reduced to the reproductive part of this conjunction. It is especially the equation of domestic with reproductive that suggest this reading: by making domestic and reproductive the same, the domestic becomes reduced to a heterosexual sphere, effectively excluding non-heterosexual unions from the domestic, leading to an analysis of the private that can only be conceptualized in heteronormative terms. Where does this leave sexual and/or love relations and kinships that are not heterosexual?

In a similar vein, Dibyesh Anand's article *Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence* (2007), is informed by a heteronormative discourse where sex and gender correlate in a heterosexual matrix, and 'gender qualities' (i.e. masculine/feminine) are used uncritically to describe behavior and subjects. The article deals with Hindu nationalism in India, and how notions of 'masculinity' affect national identity. Anand's article is clearly not feminist in that it almost exclusively deals with men and masculinities (assuming somehow that only men are informed by discourses on masculinity and nationalism). The

conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India that the article deals with thus become reduced to a conflict between (heterosexual) men: “Where do these representations of Muslim *men* leave Hindu *masculinity*? This dangerously virile Muslim masculinity is initially contrasted with docile, effeminate Hindu men, emasculated by the *feminine* principles of Hinduism” (Anand 2007:260, emphasis added). This article is a neo-feminist expansion of ‘gender’ to the realm of men and masculinity, but rather than destabilizing fixed gender categories, these categories are reinforced as hierarchical oppositions. The statement above, for example, clearly suggests a binary relationship between masculinity and femininity. Gender is here understood as a weapon in the conflict between Hindus and Muslims; masculinity and femininity is *used* by the parties in the conflict to either enforce a national identity or dehumanize the enemy. Hence, gender is understood as ontologically distinct from sex: a hierarchical opposition that signifies specific meanings but that in no way is productive of the body that these meanings are ‘given to’. A second implication of Anand’s article is a reproduction of a historical exclusion of women and non-heterosexual subjects. I would suggest that the focus on men and masculinities in Anand’s text is not so much an expansion of ‘gender’ as a maintenance of a historical narrative by and about men; a continuous de-subjectivation of woman. In effect, a hierarchical differentiation between men and women is reproduced within existing power structures. A conscious effect of feminist analysis is to reverse these hierarchical structures and write a history that recognizes women – and other historically excluded subjects – *as subjects*. This is not a matter of reinforcing a sexual differentiation, but to claim a voice from within prevailing discourses; a subversion of the norms that naturalize ‘man’ as universal.

### 5.3 Neo-Feminism or Post-Feminism?

The above discussed articles all suggest an understanding of sex and gender in heteronormative terms. They are informed by a heteronormative discourse and reproduce this very discourse through language. The emphasis on ‘expanding’ gender to include men and masculinities does not in any way disrupt gender binaries, sexual categorization or a conceptualization of the subject as heterosexual. To suggest that these critiques are not relevant in International Relations because of the focus on ‘high politics’ such as warfare, diplomacy, international law etc. is to mask the productive capacity of language and discourse, and the power structures that legitimize certain types of truth claims while discrediting others. Speaking of the unintelligible, as I do in this analysis, is to speak of the subjects that are not only excluded from these articles, but that are rendered non-existent by ways of this exclusion: “‘recognition’ names a reflective process in which *one comes to be only through being recognised [sic]*. This means that neither subjectivity nor human existence can be taken for granted in advance; the process of recognition (not contained or controlled by any single subject) makes human being possible” (Chambers and Carver 2008:125f, italics and

quotation marks in original). By understanding, studying, and creating international politics as heteronormative, those lives that are unrecognized remain ‘other than human’; non-existent; non-livable: “the power of intelligibility, i.e. the normalisation [*sic*] of visible subjects, operates with a stealthy silence. That is, normalisation [*sic*] does not just categorise [*sic*] human subjects; it produces the conditions of possibility for the ‘human’ in the first place” (Chambers and Carver 2008:126f, quotation marks in original). The articles analyzed above all suggest that the knowledge produced in IR can and should be ‘gender-neutral’, i.e. that gender analysis should be as much about men and masculinities as it is about women and femininities in feminist research. However, this suggestion, when it is presented in a heteronormative language, does far more than merely reject feminist knowledge production: it normalizes the coherent sexed/gendered subject, and in effect not only excludes, but renders unintelligible those lives that do not fit into this ‘gender-neutral’ analysis. Recognizing the discursive production of the subject through e.g. language is to recognize that the knowledge produced in IR is as constructive of human subjectivities as in any other academic field. Exposing the ways in which IR reproduces heteronormativity is thus not just a matter of theoretical critique; it should be understood as an attempt to destabilize the truth claims that produce certain humans as intelligible and others as unintelligible – for whom these truth claims have very immediate effects.

With this in mind I would suggest that the term neo-feminism is misleading for the project that these authors aspire for. ‘Mainstreaming’ gender in the ways suggested by neo-feminism is considered an effective means of bringing ‘gender’ into the analysis of international politics without disrupting the center of IR, or the epistemologies and methodologies that are established as legitimate and valid at this center. The idea is that this will lead to a gender-neutral analysis that is as concerned with femininity as it is with masculinity. This might be considered a ‘neo’ to liberal feminism<sup>5</sup>, but it is miles away from the poststructural and postmodern feminisms that are informed by Butlerian and Foucauldian understandings of discourse, power, language, and subjectivities. Furthermore, merely adding gender to mainstream IR methodologies only reinforces a heteronormative discourse that will continue to produce the intelligible human at the expense of the unintelligible: “Inclusion cannot solve the problem of unintelligibility, since (again, by definition) the unintelligible cannot be included given that *they do not even exist* as human” (Chambers and Carver 2008:128, italics in original). Hence, the effect of including gender as masculine and feminine reproduces an *understanding of the human as gendered*: “If there is no

---

<sup>5</sup> I here understand ‘neo’ in the sense that it is commonly understood in IR, e.g. in terms such as neo-realism and neo-liberalism, where the ‘neo’ refers to a development of the original theory, but where the new theory still remains faithful to the main conceptualizations in the theory from which it has developed. In this sense, neo-feminism is read as a theoretical development of ‘traditional’ IR-feminism.

Liberal feminism is a feminism that sprung out of the liberal tradition of the Enlightenment: “Liberal feminism is centrally concerned with equal rights. Liberals hold a view of human nature which stresses the capacity of human beings for rational thought” (Steans 1998:16). Hence, it is a feminism that is concerned with the *inclusion* of women.

subject position in which to appear, then one cannot inhabit the human” (ibid). Feminisms belonging to the poststructural and postmodern are to a large extent informed by this, and attempts analyses that disturb, rather than reinforce, heteronormativity in order to expand what is considered human. In this respect, the articles discussed above are more ‘post’ than ‘neo’ to feminism, since there is not much left of any feminist agenda except for the concept ‘gender’, which is also often conceptualized differently than in poststructural and postmodern feminisms.<sup>6</sup> Reconceptualizing neo-feminism as post-feminism is, hence, a way to understand this theoretical approach as one that is critical towards feminist projects, rather than as one that is developing feminist arguments.

If the power relations that through discourse produces the subject produces it as gendered, then to ‘de-gender’ the subject would be to make rid of the subject position completely. As long as mainstream IR epistemology is informed by a heteronormative discourse that requires a stable sex/gender matrix, any comprehension of a knowledge that disrupts this order will be marginalized, if not completely excluded. Furthermore, the heteronormative naturalization of the gendered subject and the sexed body effectively hides the power relations that need to be disrupted if heteronormativity is ever to be subverted: heteronormativity simultaneously *normalizes* gendered knowledge and *presents this knowledge as regulatory rather than productive*. Neo-feminism, in its attempts to centralize gender, is a part of the process that masks the power/discourse relations that produce and naturalize heteronormative subject positions. I would propose that this is due to an internalization of a knowledge that stipulates what constitutes *valid research* and legitimate truth claims. Hence, the issue of labeling this approach as neo- or post-feminism is of significance because *neo-feminism* suggests a critical commitment that I argue has been abandoned. The claim that gender can be mainstreamed into conventional IR theories and methodologies reproduces an inside/outside dichotomy that works to legitimize certain types of truth claims and knowledges while effectively excluding others. In effect, IR remains a coherent field of research where epistemologies and methodologies are hierarchically ordered according to their presumed ability to present ‘accurate’ results, and feminist knowledge production remains discredited as ‘biased’ towards women rather than being recognized as a legitimate approach to international relations.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> ‘Post’ is here understood as a term that describes a critical reconceptualization of the theory that it is ‘post’ to; post-positivist approaches, for example, “share a common objective of breaking down the positivist ‘orthodoxy’” (Stears 1998:36, quotation marks in original). Similarly, *postmodernism* “can be seen as growing out of a critique of the Enlightenment project” (Stears 1998:25), and ideas about the modern, the rational, the universal etc.

<sup>7</sup> For the sake of coherence and comprehensibility, I will continue to refer to this approach as neo-feminism throughout this thesis. This is to avoid any insecurity about which body of texts in the debate I refer to. However, I maintain that the term post-feminism is more expressive of the type of knowledge that this approach offers.

## 6 IR-Feminism

In *Gendering World Politics* (2001), Tickner states that the “key concern for feminist theory is to explain women’s subordination, or the unjustified asymmetry between women’s and men’s social and economic positions, and to seek prescriptions for ending it” (Tickner 2001:11). According to Cynthia Weber, “[f]eminists have politically chosen to take a self-consciously ‘biased’ view of the world to compensate and hopefully transform traditional ways of seeing the world that occlude women and femininities as well as non-normative men and masculinities” (Weber 2001:98, quotation marks in original). These quotes are from two prominent feminist authors in International Relations, authors who argue for the need of a feminist theoretical approach to international politics. Zalewski understands the current debate about feminism (and gender) in IR as one where neo-feminism is “representing an attempt to recuperate [Gender and International Relations] into the discipline, while leaving the mainstream unaltered, and counterposes this to a more transformatory feminist engagement that seeks to unsettle the discipline” (Squires and Weldes 2007:190). Hence, what differentiates IR-feminism from neo-feminism is a normative commitment to a feminist agenda, and a desire to challenge mainstream IR epistemologies and methodologies.

### 6.1 Performing Gender

In *The Gendered Reproduction of the State in International Relations* (2007), Johanna Kantola offers an “approach [that] challenges the unity of the state, power and gender, and [where] the state becomes the gendered effect of discursive and structural processes” (Kantola 2007:270). This implies an understanding of the gendered state (i.e. the state as masculine) as an *effect* of gender discourse, as opposed to an understanding of the state as *producer* of gender hierarchies. This not only reverses the cause/effect relationship, but also – and more importantly – questions assumptions about the state as central and foundational in International Relations. If the state is a product of discourse, then it is discursive processes – and not the state – that shapes international politics, and that simultaneously creates the state as gendered. According to Kantola, simply recognizing that the state reproduces “a certain gender system and gender power orders” where “states construct gender [and] gender constitutes the state” (Kantola 2007:271) is not enough. Rather, what is needed is an implementation of Foucauldian power to the feminist analysis of the state: “Instead of being repressive, power in this view is productive in that power relations constitute



subjects” (Kantola 2007:278). This expands the analysis to deal with power and the production of both states and gender, as opposed to an analysis of the state as a site for the hierarchical ordering of gender and sex, i.e. where the men hold the power and the women are oppressed and excluded; and where masculinity is valued higher than femininity. Hence, Kantola proposes that “particular discourses construct state boundaries, identities and agency and the state is a *discursive effect* of these processes” (Kantola 2007:278, italics in original). Understanding the state in this sense opens up for the possibility of subversive performances that may disrupt the boundaries of the state; foundational national and gendered identities; and state-centric international politics. It is a destabilization of the sovereign state that suggests that *the state can be performed otherwise*. In effect, gender and sexuality can be performed otherwise since the state no longer has to be conceptualized in heteronormative terms; the state is no longer fixed as masculine in a hierarchical opposition to the feminine anarchy.<sup>8</sup> The state is only ‘masculine’ in as far as it is *performed as masculine*, a performance that is disguised by a discourse that establishes the state as natural and foundational – as the necessary social alternative to ‘a state of nature’.

This understanding of states as produced through discursive performances is further developed in *Victims, Perpetrators and Actors’ Revisited: Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence* (Shepherd 2007). Here, Laura Shepherd explicitly argues that the state is indeed *performed* – a performance that is restricted by prevailing discourses on violence and security: “within this conceptualisation [*sic*] it is possible to say that states, acting as unitary authoritative entities, perform violences, but also that violences, in the name of security, perform states” (Shepherd 2007:249). In effect, violence becomes “constitutive of subjectivity” rather than something that is done to already sovereign individuals (Shepherd 2007:240, 244) and security can be rethought “as a set of discourses rather than as something that can be achieved either in absolute or relative terms” (Shepherd 2007:249). As long as the state is conceptualized in absolute terms – as an end in itself – the discursive reproduction of the state will remain hidden, as will the violent reproduction of heteronormativity; in effect, the state-centric approaches of e.g. (neo)realism can be revealed as part of this violent reproduction. This is a form of normative violence understood not as “a type of violence that is somehow ‘normative’, but [as] the *violence of norms*” (Chambers and Carver 2008:76, quotation marks in original, emphasis added); it is a “violence done *within* the formation of subjectivity” (Chambers and Carver 2008:78, italics in original). What this means is that gender norms establish the conditions whereby the ontological human is recognized – these norms are both violently imposed on the subject (since the individual has to comply with these

---

<sup>8</sup> The conceptualization of the state as masculine versus the anarchic international space as feminine is a gendered understanding of international politics imbedded in ‘orthodox’ IR theory, a conceptualization that has been criticized and deconstructed by feminist IR-scholars (see e.g. Steans 1998).

norms in order to be recognized as a subject) and violently excluding those subjectivities that does not conform:

Gender norms produce viable and unviable genders prior to any choice we might make about ‘doing’ our gender. The agency of gender is both enabled and constrained by gender norms. And it should be stressed that the ‘choice’ to do gender right or wrong may not be available to some. It becomes easy to do normative violence to gender deviants, precisely because they are dehumanised [*sic*] through their non-normative gender or sexuality. (Chambers and Carver 2008:89, quotation marks in original)

Another way of understanding this normative violence is as discursive violence, where “discourse [is understood] as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them” (Foucault 1984:127). The discursive reproduction of heteronormativity is thus a violence done to those subjects that are rendered unintelligible by the heterosexual matrix, and this violence is imbedded in the language of IR.

By making visible the logocentrism inherent in IR, the violent reproduction of both the state and the subject can be disrupted. In *Gender and International Relations* (Carver et. al. 2003), Helen Kinsella exposes the logocentric understanding of the word as signifier: “a gender constructivism that claims to broaden the focus from ‘women’ to ‘political outcomes in *general*’ [...] reproduces a presumption of women as ‘particular’ and ‘marginal’ that is set against the study of some putative neutral ‘universal’ or ‘generality’” (Kinsella, in Carver et. al. 2003:295, italics and quotation marks and in original). Revealing the *production* of hierarchies such as universal/particular and generality/marginal reverses these oppositions by destabilizing their presumed natural foundation. Reversing hierarchical oppositions is a means to make visible the productive capacity of power and the ways in which language performs, rather than represents, e.g. gender and sex: “Power thus operates at this conjunction between human activity and meaning, and it ‘produces’ in language what the language ‘claims merely to represent’ (Chambers and Carver 2008:36, quotation marks in original). R. Charli Carpenter’s understanding of gender as representative naturalizes both gender and sex as binary categories that signifies what humans *are* (Carpenter 2002). Kinsella’s reversal of these binaries, however, can be read as an initiative to understand gender and sex as something that humans *do*; as *performative* (Chambers and Carver 2008:39). Performing gender in ways that normalizes heterosexuality, naturalizes sex, and in this process denies its own performance, is (re)productive of an economy that needs to be disrupted in order to expand what is recognized as ontologically human. Butler states:

If I am someone who cannot *be* without *doing*, then the conditions of my doing are, in part, the conditions of my

existence. If my doing is dependent on what is done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an 'I' depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me. (Butler 2004:3, italics and quotation marks in original)

Committing to feminist epistemologies and methodologies is one way to performatively disturb the norms that regulate what is 'doable' and what is recognized as intelligible subject positions.

## 6.2 Heteronormativity

In a forum discussion entitled *Gender and International Relations* (Carver et. al. 2003) Terrell Carver, Marysia Zalewski, Helen Kinsella, and R. Charli Carpenter, discusses feminism in IR in response to Carpenter's article *Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Non-Feminist Standpoint?* (2002). Zalewski (Carver et. al. 2003) here makes explicit the continuing hierarchical division between the "'purely explanatory work' in IR" and the "'merely normative' work of feminism" in the IR discipline (Zalewski, in Carver et. al. 2003:292, italics and quotation marks in original). This clearly expresses the strong hold that classical Enlightenment ideals have on IR scholars; hierarchical oppositions such as rational/irrational, objectivity/subjectivity, and order/anarchy are reproduced as representative of a *good social science*. The effect of this reproduction is a reinforcement of logocentrism, where all knowledge claims are measured against assumptions about neutrality and 'the rational man', and where the word is given a signifying, rather than a productive, status. Carpenter's response in this Forum is expressively informed by a logocentric discourse: "beyond being useful as critique or in theorizing everyday practice, gender is also an important explanatory tool in the merely 'problem-solving' project of understanding and explaining *the world as it is*" (Carpenter, in Carver et. al. 2003:297, quotation marks in original, emphasis added). *Gender*, when deployed as an "explanatory tool" that can explain the "world as it is" (ibid) in this sense, is understood as *representative of a meaning that is pre-discursive*. Locked in this logocentric opposition, gender will never be more than a masculine/feminine order that describes the world and the subjects that inhabit this world.

Marysia Zalewski's article *Do We Understand Each Other Yet? Troubling Feminist Encounters With(in) International Relations* (2007) is a direct input in the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism regarding the adoption of the 'gender variable' by mainstream IR theories and methodologies. First and foremost this article is a critique of attempts to compartmentalize feminism as "inevitably aspirational and normative" (Halley, quoted in Zalewski 2007:304) and of the neo-feminist project to separate the 'gender variable' from a feminist agenda. Zalewski recognizes that power is an integral part of the marginalization of feminist knowledge in IR since it "pervades the very

conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms” (Zalewski 2007:307). Hence, power is by Zalewski recognized in its multiplicity, and as productive of the discourses it purports to constrain. Feminism, in its attempts to contest and reverse the power hierarchies of International Relations, is not *outside* of that power; rather it is a *consequence* of power/discourse relations which require the ‘outside’ – the ‘Other’ – in order to present the ‘inside’ as natural, coherent, and stable. In relation to sexuality, Butler writes:

If sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is ‘before’, ‘outside’, or ‘beyond’ power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the term of power itself. (Butler 2006:42, quotation marks in original)

Subversion, by necessity, always takes place *within* the norms that it sets out to subvert; it is the repetitive acts of destabilizing these norms that in the end will overthrow them. Conforming to these norms, however, is to continue to mask the power that produces them: neo-feminism’s attempts on ‘gender-neutrality’ by adding the ‘gender variable’ to non-feminist epistemologies and methodologies is, in effect, a reproduction of heteronormativity and a reinforcement of *power as juridical* – or regulatory: “Power simply does not really act as a ‘differential’ [...], or as something one can grasp hold of, if only we tried hard enough and constructively enough, or if only those in power would behave more responsibly or more benignly” (Zalewski 2007:307). Heteronormativity has to be understood as productive of the sexed and gendered subject in order for the power relations that remain hidden behind its presumed naturalness to be exposed. *Power is not that which merely regulates the heterosexual subject; it is that which produces the thinkability of sexuality in the first place.* The separation of sex and gender that is suggested by neo-feminism denies power as productive by reference to a logocentrism where gender/sex is ordered in accordance with a culture/nature dichotomy. Kinsella (2003) makes visible – and disrupts – this economy:

Gender is frequently operationalized as if it were the social construction of sex difference, that is, as if sex were a referent of gender. For instance, one recent definition involves ‘usefully’ distinguishing sex from gender as a brute from a social fact [...]. Accordingly, sex exists independently of (that is, external and prior to) our representations of it whereas gender requires social (that is, collective) representation for its existence. (Kinsella, in Carver et. al. 2003:296, quotation marks in original)

In effect, sex becomes pre-discursive, whereas gender becomes the social representation of this foundational sex in a gender/sex/desire matrix that is required by – and reproduces – heteronormativity. Remaining committed to a feminist epistemology is one way to reject the heteronormative assumptions that are uncritically deployed by mainstream epistemologies and methodologies; it is a self-conscious way of *performing IR otherwise*; of exposing the power relations that establish a hierarchical ordering of knowledge and showing how IR *produces* the ‘reality’ it claims to merely represent. In this sense, there is no such thing as *gender-neutral knowledge*: “If we consider this relation of knowledge and power in relation to gender, we are compelled to ask how the organization of gender comes to function as a presupposition about how the world is structured” (Butler 2004:215).

### 6.3 Subversive Possibilities

As stated in chapter 2.2.1 of this thesis, subversive acts are “challenging, calling into question and/or undermining *the presumption of heterosexuality*.” (Chambers and Carver 2008:155, italics in original). Rethinking the state as performative while remaining within the norms that establish the state as an analytical concept in international politics, is one way of exposing and destabilizing these norms. In this sense, Kantola’s and Shepherd’s articles open up *possibilities* for subverting heteronormativity, but what is needed is a process of repetition whereby the limits of what is considered knowledge in IR are disrupted. This entails a continued commitment to epistemologies and methodologies that critically destabilize the center rather than adapt to it. What is revealed by the texts discussed above is that IR is *not* neutral, and that the discursive production of the sexed/gendered subject will remain hidden so long as language is understood as descriptive, and knowledge is legitimized in terms of its objective ‘scientific’ validity. IR-feminism is to a large extent informed by postmodern and poststructural understandings of sex and gender, and recognizes that the discursive production of the subject cannot be excluded from an analysis of international politics since knowledge is always productive but never descriptive. The task is thus not merely to subvert heteronormativity, but to subvert the limits of IR. My suggestion here is that this be done through a repetitive disturbance of these limits; a continuous production of ‘alternative’ knowledge; a rejection of adaptation, even if this means a continued ‘exclusion’ from the mainstream: “There are advantages of remaining less than intelligible, if intelligibility is understood as that which is produced as a consequence of recognition according to prevailing social norms” (Butler 2004:3). The subversion of both heteronormativity and the perceived coherence of International Relations is not just about claiming space for feminist knowledge production; it is also a highly conscious and political project of expanding the ontological human; the intelligible; the livable. It is a matter of recognition of those lives that is made unintelligible by the current dominant discourses, and of rejecting fixed subject categories of any kind.

This is the juncture from which critique emerges, where critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living; in other words, not to celebrate difference as such but to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation. (Butler 2004:4)

In rejecting conventional methodology and research agendas, and established ontological and epistemological assumptions, IR-feminism can, through a self-positioning at the margins of what is considered International Relations, perform this subversive critique and disturb the inside/outside distinction that produces IR as a coherent academic discipline. As opposed to neo-feminism, I would argue that entering the hegemonic discourse is *not* productive for a feminist agenda. There is a strength in working at the margins. And I want to stress here that this margin is a discursive limit; the border which constitutes the field; the space between inside and outside. It is not the same as an unwanted marginalization, or as the exclusion of the unintelligible from the ontological reality; rather it is a rejection of the limits of ontology and knowledge. Speaking from the margins can be as much a self-positioning and a way to disrupt the center and the inside/outside distinction as a denial to be a part of that center. It can also be a way of creating a new center, which in effect challenges the hegemonic position of the center which one is rejected from. As Audre Lorde so famously declared with the title *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (1984), one must adopt methods that are developed outside of the inside in order to positively change structures of oppression and resist politics of dehumanization. I maintain that the borders surrounding the inside can be disrupted through a performative positioning at the margins – at the space between inside and outside – and from here, a way of speaking can be developed that subverts the distinctions, the hegemonic center, and heteronormativity.

### 6.3.1 Normative Critique

In an article called “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue” (2004*b*), Butler, following Foucault’s reasoning in his 1978 lecture “What is Critique?”, argues for a normatively committed critique, one that is not dependent on the object which it criticizes. Rather, the critique that Butler speaks of is a *critical attitude* (Butler 2004*b*), related to the creation of the self as a site of resistance; a self-stylization that exposes the limits of knowledge and discourse. This notion of critique is linked to both ontological and epistemological questions concerning what counts as truths and knowledge, and the creation of the subject within the given limits of what one can know. This *critical attitude* is one that could serve IR-feminism well as a means for disrupting the limits of IR and claiming a place

as legitimate producers of knowledge. It may also be a self-conscious *performance* of an IR that subverts, rather than reproduces heteronormativity.

Butlerian critique is concerned with exposing the limits that keeps any discourse or field coherent and effectively separated from its outside: “critique will be that perspective on established and ordering ways of knowing which is not immediately assimilated into that ordering function” (Butler 2004b:308). Critique, in Foucault’s sense, is related to morals and the way that the subject is formed by moral obedience and prohibitions. According to Butler, he tries to envision a morality that is not based on prohibitions, but rather on an active formation of the subject, a critical attitude towards the laws we are told to abide by. This is a form of self-transformation where the moral categories that are given to us are being questioned and the limits of epistemologies are exposed; and new – and yet unimagined – forms of knowledge can be produced (Butler 2004b:310, 315). This means questioning the ontological foundation of the self and rejecting the truth on which the own subjectivity is based; it is through this practice and process that the self-transformation takes place (Butler 2004b:310f).

A self-positioning at the margins – at the space between inside and outside – is one way to expose these epistemological limits, and to propose a rejection of the inside/outside dichotomy. As Butler states: “One of the first tasks of critique is to discern the relation ‘between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge.’ Here again we seem confronted with the limits of what is knowable, limits which exercise a certain force without being grounded in any necessity” (Butler 2004b:316, quotation marks in original). Where the construction of the inside is given a foundation of naturalness or necessity, a critical analysis of its presumed fixed borders exposes the unnaturalness of these borders and the elements of coercion that is implicit in the establishment of the borders. Power and knowledge works together to legitimize certain ontological and epistemological worldviews, and the undertaking of normative criticism is hence to “show how knowledge and power work to constitute a more or less systematic way of ordering the world” according to certain rules of acceptability (Butler 2004b:316). Remaining committed to a feminist (poststructural) agenda would effectively disturb these rules as it takes away their normalizing effect through the exposition of the discourses which establishes them as true.

## 7 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how and why certain forms of gendered knowledge and heteronormativity is (re)produced in the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism in International Relations. Hence, I conducted an internal discourse analysis of this debate with the intention to make explicit how heteronormative discourses produce, and are (re)produced within, feminism in particular, and IR in general, as well as to explore the subversive possibilities that are present in the debate. I wanted to refute the idea that IR as an academic field is 'objective' and 'neutral' in the analysis of international politics. I wanted to disturb assumptions about 'gender-neutral' knowledge claims, and show how language is *always* productive, but *never* representative. Any claims of IR being 'outside' of the discursive production of subjects, identities – and the human – are reproductive of a knowledge that continues to exclude non-heteronormative lives from the ontological reality. In *Gender Trouble* (2006), Judith Butler states: “One might wonder what use “open up possibilities” finally is, but no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is “impossible”, illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate is likely to pose that question” (Butler 2006:viii, quotation marks in original). The writings of Judith Butler have been as much a source of personal inspiration as a theoretical framework for this thesis. Theoretically and methodologically, this thesis developed out of a desire to understand this so called reality that is studied in International Relations and to think it differently. The theories and methods in my analysis of the feminist debate in IR is a reflection of this desire. It is also a way of normative critique; a self-conscious placement at the margins and a rejection of conventional understandings of what constitutes 'science'. I have never claimed to perform an objective analysis; rather, I have critiqued any possibility of objectivity, neutrality, and representability in line with a feminist poststructural conceptualization of research. It is my alignment with this theoretical approach that led me to suggest that neo-feminism should rather be conceptualized as *post-feminism*. If feminism is understood as a way of critique and of opening up for rethinking 'reality', then there is nothing feminist about neo-feminism. Advocating a mainstreaming of gender, as this approach does, is more of a rejection of feminism than a development. Feminism, especially when aligned with poststructuralism and postmodernism, is much more than just gender-analysis and to reduce it to a matter of gender is to discredit it as a legitimate theory. Feminism's focus on women and gender is a way of reversing the patriarchal structures that have excluded women and non-heteronormative subjects from IR in particular, and history in general. Accusing feminism of being biased is thus to maintain this historical exclusion rather than reversing the hierarchical



oppositions that reproduces it as a natural order. The kind of analysis that is proposed by neo-feminism does clearly not have the same objective and in effect serves to legitimate both a historical exclusion and current hierarchical structures.

As became clear in the analysis of the debate, neo-feminism reproduces an understanding of IR as a coherent academic field with ‘valid’ methods and theories that adequately measures and narrates ‘reality’. In line with authors such as Marysia Zalewski, Helen Kinsella, and Laura Shepherd, I argue that this understanding of IR is actually *productive* of a reality that conceptualizes the human in terms of heterosexual gender/sex/desire coherence. The recognition of IR as *productive* rather than *representative* is a much needed development in a field that has a history of excluding one of the *recognized* sexes – women – completely from the research agenda. Feminisms, as theoretical approaches that simultaneously exposes IR as androcentric and makes knowledge claims that include – and focus on – women, is a very accessible site for subverting the heteronormative discourses that inform, and are (re)produced within IR, and thus allows for a more inclusive analysis and opens up possibilities of *performing international politics otherwise*.

With a grounding in feminist poststructuralism, and with a focus on three theoretical concepts – performativity, heteronormativity, and power – I began my analysis of the feminist debate in IR by posing three questions: (1) How do discourses on gender and heteronormativity inform the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism, and how is heteronormativity (re)produced in this debate?; (2) What forms of (gendered) knowledge are produced in neo-feminist and IR-feminist texts, and what are the effects of these knowledges on the subject?; and (3) Why is heteronormativity and certain forms of gender subjectivities (re)produced in the debate between neo-feminism and IR-feminism, and why do these two approaches conceptualize gender and heteronormativity differently? I will however not present any clear cut answers to these questions for the simple reason that I do not believe that there are any. The purpose of my analysis was to make explicit the *false promise of gender-neutrality* that is given by neo-feminism and that is commonly recognized in IR, as well as to show that IR is not ‘outside’ of discourse but is very much productive of the ontological assumptions that is taken for granted within this academic field. These questions worked as a guide in the discourse analysis of the feminist debate in IR: an analytical focus and a means for exposing the (re)production of heteronormativity in neo-feminism and highlight the subversive possibilities present in IR-feminism. However, some final remarks can be made, with the intention of opening up for further debate and ‘disturbance’. Firstly, throughout the analysis of neo-feminism it became clear that this understanding of feminism is not really feminist at all. Rather, it is a rejection of feminist epistemologies and methodologies that works to reinforce the center of IR as a coherent field with a clear inside/outside differentiation. It also became clear that neo-feminism to a large extent is informed by a heteronormative discourse that simultaneously produces the ontological human as a coherent sexed/gendered subject and effectively masks this production through an establishment of language as descriptive. IR-feminism,

on the other hand, is concerned with creating epistemologies and methodologies that disrupt, rather than reproduce, heteronormativity and the limits of what constitutes knowledge in IR. This approach deploys *performativity* as a concept that is of great relevance for international politics and in effect opens up for a rethinking of how international relations can and should be studied.

Secondly, in reproducing heteronormativity, neo-feminism remains within a heterosexual matrix that renders unintelligible those lives that do not fit into this matrix. The separation of sex and gender into measurable categories reproduces positivistic notions of what constitutes 'valid research'; it also establishes the ontological human as a sexed/gendered subject, and in effect makes invisible the lives that are not measurable in accordance with these categories. The logocentric understanding of language implicit in neo-feminism validates a knowledge based on hierarchical oppositions as foundational of a reality that can be measured, explained, and objectively narrated – a reality consisting of sexed bodies and of genders that can be read on the surface as representative of an 'inner' truth. In effect, binaries such as masculine/feminine, rational/irrational, order/anarchy, nature/culture, and inside/outside are stabilized and naturalized. Furthermore, any understanding of gender as a noun denies the possibility of performativity and thus naturalizes sex as stable and foundational of the gendered subject. In effect, the thinkability of *performing states* is marginalized as it is incompatible with these 'truths' about research and reality. The center of IR – and the limits of knowledge – is thus kept intact. In an attempt to disturb this center and these limits, IR-feminism rejects the hierarchical oppositions that legitimize the maintenance of an inside/outside distinction between mainstream IR and feminist epistemologies and methodologies. By arguing for an analysis of states as performative, any assumption about the state as foundational – or central – to international politics becomes disrupted. Instead, the discourses that produce the state become the focus of analysis. This is an important recognition, not only because it allows for a completely new understanding of international politics that does not assume stable, pre-discursive entities; but also because if the state can be recognized as discursively produced – as performative – then so can other aspects of the ontological reality. In effect, the presumed stable link between sex, gender, and desire can be subverted, which opens up possibilities of performing the subject in ways that are not recognized by prevailing heterosexual norms.

Lastly, IR-feminism's conceptualization of the state as performative is clearly informed by a poststructural denial of pre-discursive laws that govern behaviors and outcomes and by a recognition of power as productive rather than regulatory. IR is a field that is known for its androcentrism and suspicion towards any feminist knowledge production; and for its strong affiliation with positivistic research methods. Demands have long been put on feminist scholars within International Relations to adapt to the recognized epistemologies and methodologies. But rather than accepting the coherence of IR and its presumed natural center, IR-feminist writers make truth claims that critically question this coherence and they demand recognition without adaptation. I would suggest that

this is a form of normative critique that serves to expose the limits of IR knowledge production and open up for new ways of producing knowledge through a performative self-positioning at the margins. Approaching IR quite differently, neo-feminism suggests an alignment with mainstream IR theories and methodologies, arguing that gender can be more efficiently and productively analyzed at the center than at the margins. Accordingly, neo-feminism is much more relying on traditional research discourses that legitimize certain modes of analysis while effectively discrediting others. One might argue that neo-feminism is largely made up of a body of research that is created in line with existing power relations that work to maintain a hierarchically ordered scientific structure. These power relations normalize gendered knowledge and heteronormativity by masking its productive capacities. Hence, power becomes recognized only in its regulatory disguise and the subversion of power relations becomes reduced to a question of claiming power and inclusion into already established structures and institutions. In effect, limits of knowledge and subjectivity – and the borders of IR and international politics – remain intact. As stated earlier, power is not that which merely regulates the heterosexual subject; it is that which produces the thinkability of sexuality in the first place. The same goes for thinking international politics, states, and IR; *power produces states as central to international relations and the discourses that normalize the state simultaneously performs it*. As long as IR remains intact any attempt to expose the state as performative and to open up the possibility of subversion will be dismissed.

The point of asking the questions that has guided this analysis was to challenge the limits of what is knowable; the limits of what is recognized as human; as real. The international ‘sphere’ is produced by the same gender norms that regulate the sexed/gendered subject; it is not ‘beyond’ or ‘outside’ of the discursive production of the gender/sex/desire matrix – hence, *heteronormativity needs to be disturbed at all levels* in order to make the unintelligible life recognized and livable. IR is *not* objective, and gender is *never* neutral. The aim of feminism is to challenge these assumptions of objectivity and neutrality; to challenge the borders of IR and the truth claims made within the confines of ‘academic research’. IR-feminism’s self-marginalization should in this light be understood as a critical attitude intended to open up possibilities of subversion – to make life livable for the unrecognized; the unintelligible.

The implications of what is suggested in this thesis can be immense for the future development of International Relations, but what may come out of this critique remains unknown. Adopting a critical attitude means open up for an unwritten future; for knowledges that are not yet conceivable. Subversion is not a fast-track process to change; it is a means for exposing the assumptions that are currently taken for granted, and for revealing the norms that are considered natural as fictitious. It is also a matter of understanding power as productive rather than repressive and of recognizing that whatever truths we claim about ‘reality’ simultaneously creates that ‘reality’. Hence, feminism will have to continue to place itself at the margins – and be placed there – in order to disturb the borders of IR and the limits of what is knowable. In doing so, our knowledge of what

constitutes international politics can be expanded; previously excluded lives can be recognized; and 'research' can become a matter of understanding why we know what we know, rather than a narrative of recognized truths. With this in mind, I do not want to give any suggestions on what feminist scholars can and should study, nor how IR should develop. For now, it is enough to say that remaining committed to feminist epistemologies and methodologies is one way to perform I/international R/relations otherwise, and to give the unrecognized access to the ontological reality.

## 8 Bibliography

- Anand, Dibyesh. 2007. "Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Second edition. New York and London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing Gender*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 2004a. "Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig, Foucault". In Butler, Judith. *The Judith Butler Reader*; edited by Sara Salih with Judith Butler. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Butler, Judith. 2004b. "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue". In Butler, Judith. *The Judith Butler Reader*; edited by Sara Salih with Judith Butler. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Caprioli, Mary. 2004. "Feminist IR Theory and Quantitative Methodology: A Critical Analysis". *International Studies Review*, vol. 6, no. 2.
- Carpenter, R. Charli. 2002. "Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Nonfeminist Standpoint?". *International Studies Review*, vol. 4, no. 3.
- Carver, Terrell, et. al. 2003. "Gender and International Relations". *International Studies Review*, vol. 5, no. 2.
- Chambers, Samuel A. and Terrell Carver. 2008. *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Coleman, Lara. 2007. "The Gendered Violence of Development: Imaginative Geographies of Exclusion in the Imposition of Neo-liberal Capitalism". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.
- Culler, Jonathan. 1983. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco. 2004. "Politics of Difference". In Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco. *For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue*; translated by Jeff Fort. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984. "The order of the Discourse". In Shapiro, Michael J. (ed.). *Language and Politics*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hansen, Lene. 2006. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jones, Adam. 1996. "Does "Gender" Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations". *Review of International Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4.

- Kantola, Johanna. 2007. "The Gendered Reproduction of the State in International Relations". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House". In *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches / by Audre Lorde*. Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press.
- Ramazanoglu, Caroline and Janet Holland. 2002. *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Schmidt, Brian C. 1998. *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Shepherd, Laura. 2007. "'Victims, Perpetrators and Actors' Revisited: Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.
- Squires, Judith and Jutta Weldes. 2007. "Beyond Being Marginal: Gender and International Relations in Britain". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.
- Steans, Jill. 1998. *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Sylvester, Christine. 1994. *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tickner, J. Ann. 1997. "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists". *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 4.
- Tickner, J. Ann. 2001. *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Weber, Cynthia. 2001. *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Weedon, Chris. 1987. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wright, Elizabeth (ed.). 1992. *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Zalewski, Marysia. 2006. "Distracted Reflections on the Production, Narration, and Refusal of Feminist Knowledge in International Relation". In Ackerly, Brooke A., Maria Stern and Jacqui True (eds.). *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zalewski, Marysia. 2007. "Do We Understand Each Other Yet? Troubling Feminist Encounters With(in) International Relations". *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2.

