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2013

https://doi.org/10.25595/2239

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

QJB Querelles. Jahrbuch für Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung

A Wandering Paradigm, or Is Cosmopolitanism Good for Women?

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Keywords: cosmopolitanism; cosmofeminism; solidarity; justice; global order

Submitted 2011-10-20

Accepted 2012-05-15

Published 2013-01-28

Abstract: This paper explores feminist contributions to contemporary cosmopolitan theory. It is argued that feminist cosmopolitanism presents a valuable critical perspective on how to make cosmopolitan ethics a basis for women's social action. However, feminist authors diverge in their epistemological perspectives, which may result in the problematics being too narrowly defined; this proves to be the case in arguments that overlook women's actual experiences and neglect the social relations of power which determine the conditions of women's solidarity. By comparing the cosmopolitan discourse of Kristeva and Nussbaum on the one hand, and cosmofeminism on the other, the author argues for a multiperspectival cosmopolitanism. The critical point of departure of multiperspectival cosmopolitanism is human rights (Benhabib), triangulated by a feminist ethics of care and mourning (Butler).

1 This paper addresses the question of the theoretical development of cosmopolitanism with regard to feminist writings. In recent years, cosmopolitanism—as both theory and social ethics—has made impressive progress in terms of its popularisation and public visibility. Either referred to as a not yet fully exhausted Enlightenment legacy or re-historicised as a leading candidate for providing the definition of the postmodern and postcolonial, globalised world, cosmopolitan thought has attracted wide scholarly interest as well as critical attention from the public. It is worth pointing out that, since the revival of interest in cosmopolitanism in the 1990s, women's voices have played an equal, if not leading part in the intellectual debate. Julija Kristeva, Martha Nussbaum, Seyla Benhabib, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Sandra Harding, Nira Yuval-Davis, Judith Butler, to name but the most prominent authors (and not all of whom might see themselves as cosmopolitanists), have given cosmopolitan thought a significant shape and substance, enriching the argument with a specific, feminist sensitivity. This sensitivity, I will argue, consists of two main strands: one is openly directed against modern nationalism and its patriarchal models of brotherly inclusions/exclusions from bonds of citizenship and belonging—the emphasis here is on the West and Western paths of modernity; the other encounters cosmopolitanism from the position of/identification with the oppressed of the non-Western world—here the emphasis is on the state of postcoloniality. The work of Kristeva, Nussbaum, Benhabib, can be listed tentatively under the first group: all three challenge the nationalist ideological heritage of the political categories of nations (Kristeva), patriotism (Nussbaum), and rights (Benhabib). Their main concern is to challenge the social contract which in Western democracies is based on territorialised citizenship but ignores the displaced, 'aliens' and all 'others' whose residence and home are 'undocumented'. In short, the discourse here is about the home that is still conceived as a national territory, while the borders of this 'home' are contested. The second group approaches the "philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial and feminist world"[1] from the point of view of the subaltern whose home is in a global setting, where borders are collapsing. Schematically, whereas the first group's concern is how to deconstruct and reorganise the centre that has been built and sustained by patriarchal rule, the second group asks how to move the centre, how to 'decenter the center' itself.

2 As mentioned, the line of separation between the two intellectual agendas can only be schematic. This is so not only because the cosmopolitan tradition by definition

transgresses boundaries of hegemonic geopolitical order of the 'West and the Rest', the local and the global, centre and periphery, but because any serious critique of the real and symbolic functioning of the (post-)modern nation-state and its oppressive regimes sooner or later runs into the category of the 'alien'—which is more likely to denote the non-Western within the West than the other way around. The category of the postcolonial stranger therefore pertains to both lines of argument. In this sense, their shared epistemological imperative is to assume the standpoint 'from elsewhere' in order to reveal the frameworks that structure our thought and action 'here' (Narayan/Harding 2000: viii). Moreover, only a perspective that is global, transnational and post-national—feminist or not—can expect to make significant progress in the present-day cosmopolitan discourse.

3 Notwithstanding this provisional divide of the intellectual field, these two feminist cosmopolitan streams of thought are brought together here in a comparative perspective, in order to ask whether, in their common concerns their perspective is already post-Western. While retaining their individual political and methodological capacity and compassion, is each of them developing an epistemological basis which enables the transgression of divisions between centres and peripheries? Through internationalisation and global intellectual marketing, do they contribute to de-Westernisation of the universal subject and—by forging alliances with non-Western and Third World women—create conditions for the de-hegemonisation of the knowledge that is produced by the privileged elites of female intellectuals? These, of course, are questions that cannot be answered within the limits of a single paper. Instead, I aim to show how a critical comparison between two groups of feminist intellectuals, as outlined above, may be productive in furthering the argument for feminist cosmopolitanism that can prove to be 'good for women'. The comparison focuses on specific theoretical contributions of each group to the question of cosmopolitan belonging and solidarity.

1. Cosmopolitan Ethos

4 The word seems familiar but there is no single way to define 'cosmopolitanism' today (Voronkova 2010). The schools of cosmopolitan thought have grown fast and, with that growth, the notion of the cosmopolitan ethos has become more and more elusive (Beck 1998; Benhabib 2004, 2006; Delanty/Rumford 2005; Delanty 2010; Held 2003; Vertovec/Cohen 2002). While there is a consensus about the character of the ethos—humanism, global social justice, solidarity and embracing difference—, it is less certain how cosmopolitanism can be translated into a consistent system of collective cosmopolitan action, how the practice of "estrangement and dissidence could result (even if only eventually) in a community of any kind rather than a sum of fragmented subjects" (Varsamopoulou 2009: 33).

5 A defining character of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolite seems to be the state of alterity: for the cosmopolitan, it is the flux of identity that constitutes identity. This is often associated with the state of "up-rootedness" (Benhabib 2004, 2006; Delanty 2005, 2010; Held 2003; Marotta 2010; Ossewaarde 2007; Skrbiš/Kendall/Woodward 2004; Vertovec/Cohen 2002). In the past, the denial of territorial bonds usually amounted to the denial of citizenship. In ancient Greece, *metics* were non-citizens and, as the etymology of the word shows (*métoikos*, indicating change, and *oîkos*, dwelling), metics came from elsewhere to settle temporarily in the cities—as artisans, also participating in trade and education. In the period of Solon, foreigners were actually welcome and even offered citizenship. Before long, however, the promise amounted merely to carrying the burdens of citizenship without sharing in the privileges (cf. Kristeva 1993: 19). Homer attacked the early cosmopolitan figures as "clanless" and "heartless" (Vertovec/Cohen 2002). To this negative attitude towards the early immigrants, Vertovec and Cohen add the Homeric hero, Odysseus, who could be seen as a cosmopolitan. Of Odysseus, who sought adventure and valued the unfamiliar and the strange, they write: "We can see in this earliest of literary examples the powerful tension between the exciting, stimulating and even arousing attractions of the exotic, and the converse desire for the support, consolation and warmth of the local and familiar" (Vertovec/Cohen 2002: 5).

6 In refusing to be defined by "location, ancestry, citizenship or language" (Waldron 1992, quoted in Vertovec/Cohen 2002: 5f.), the wandering cosmopolite implies danger. Its crossing of borders provokes fears of transgression and disturbance of the social and political order in the receiving society. On the other hand, the rootless subject also provokes fascination. It is envied for its alleged freedom, which is fuelled by a detachment from the soil and evading the oppressive surveillance that is characteristic of the enclosed sedentary community. In short, cosmopolites embody the force of the uncanny, simultaneously eliciting fear and attraction; both seem to derive from an imagining of their power to disturb the social order.

7 In its capacity—real or imagined—to shake up the moral and cultural borders of the community, the cosmopolitan corresponds to the sociological category of the stranger. In the classic account of Schutz and Simmel, the stranger is defined by spatial movement:

the ‘alien’ is somebody who travels to come to ‘us’ and demands to stay. For cosmopolitan theory, however, bonding the stranger conceptually to the cosmopolite causes at least three problems. First, it simplifies the power relations that define the nature of travel and settlement (temporary or permanent). The stranger does not always and necessarily arrive in a community that asserts its dominance: for example, the colonial subject is a stranger who, upon arrival in the colony, subordinates the colonised. Present-day flows of immigrants, on the other hand, underscore the powerlessness of ‘aliens’ and their vulnerability to exploitation. Second, the stranger can be already ‘among us’: he can be steadily ‘invented’ in the imaginary of dominant national communities (a ready example being the Roma, permanent strangers in most societies from their arrival in Europe in the 15th century onwards) or fabricated at the level of small scale, local community life. “Identity narrations of origin and destiny”, Yuval-Davis writes, “are crucial in this regard, as are rules and regulations about who ‘belongs’ and who doesn’t” (Yuval-Davis 1997: 48). In this sense, the stranger is more a figure of modernity than postmodernity. This is especially so if we consider how in the world of global travel the ‘elsewhere’ that produces strangers is no longer a stable destination; nor is it a safe haven for the reproduction of the cultural differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Finally, because of the state of alterity, defined by up-rootedness, the stranger is often denied membership in the modern nation-state, where the organisation of society is territorially defined. With the establishment of nation-states, Kristeva writes, “we come to the only modern, acceptable, and clear definition of foreignness: the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality” (Kristeva 1991: 96). This can hardly be applied to the cosmopolite, whose principal comfort in being up-rooted derives from having a home. The present-day stranger, to reiterate Bauman, is someone who yearns for home, not someone who wishes to escape it.

2. Deterritorialisation and Belonging: Kristeva and Nussbaum

8 Kristeva’s discussion of the stranger is illustrative of the first model of cosmopolitan belonging, which I want to discuss. Her post-structural epistemology allows Kristeva to bring the stranger not only ‘to us’ but to see him ‘within us’. With Freud, she writes,

9 “Foreignness, an uncanny one, creeps into the tranquillity of reason itself, and, without being restricted to madness, beauty, or faith anymore than to ethnicity or race, irrigates our very speaking-being, estranged by other logics, including the heterogeneity of biology [...] Henceforth, we know that we are foreigners to ourselves, and it is with the help of that sole support that we can attempt to live with others” (Kristeva 1991: 170).

10 But what do we gain by politically integrating the other within the self? For Kristeva, the answer lies in acts of de-nationalising belonging and membership, in “nations without nationalism” (Kristeva 1993). Why do we need the myths of origin?, she asks. In her view, the cult of ancestry serves only the promulgation of hate. “Beyond the *origins* that have assigned to us biological identity papers and a linguistic, religious, social, political, historical place, the freedom of contemporary individuals may be gauged according to their ability to *choose* their membership, while the democratic capability of a nation and a social group is revealed by the right it affords individuals to exercise that choice” (Kristeva 1993: 16). Kristeva thus argues for the right to choose to belong, a choice she identifies with the cosmopolitan condition, which implies an anti-essentialism of identity, where ethnicity and cultural difference are seen as discursive fictions constituted by linguistic and social practices.

11 Two objections can be raised to Kristeva’s theorisation of cosmopolitanism through the figure of the stranger (see Vidmar-Horvat 2011). First, while one can accept the argument regarding the essentially anti-democratic nature of the myths of origin of the nation, the focus on the stranger as a figure with the power to transgress the oppressive discourses of ethno-national genealogy involves the risk of fetishising and idealising the ‘alien’. In Kristeva’s discourse, the stranger is a self-alienating subject who chooses alterity as a site of freedom. The implicit assumption is that the sedentary subject who lays claim to origins and territorial belonging is irrevocably reactionary in character and regressive in the face of modernity. Moreover, the focus on the stranger as the founding agent of the new community erases the presence of the ‘autochthonous’, often at the cost of also ignoring the acts of violence by means of which lands have been ‘emptied out’ to make way for immigrants. In “Europhilia, Europhobia”, Kristeva writes: “Whatever its ostracisms and difficulties with foreigners, on American soil I feel a foreigner just like all other foreigners. And I believe that together we can build something from this solidarity because we all belong to a future type of humanity which will be made entirely of foreigners/strangers who try to understand each other” (Kristeva 1998: 323, quoted in Varsamopoulou 2009: 38). To this idea of a ‘society of strangers’ Varsamopoulou replies: “The setting-up of North America as an ideal for the world to follow elides the thorny fact that this ‘homeland of foreigners’ was accomplished not on a tabula rasa, but at the cost of the physical and cultural annihilation, or suffocating oppression and persecution, of dozens of Amerindian peoples” (Varsamopoulou 2009: 38). Kristeva’s romantic gaze on

America also obliterates the memory of inter-racial violence in the United States. Finally, her invitation to identify with this community of strangers 'forgets' that strangeness does not entail eradication of difference. Indeed, the social registers of difference (class, race, ethnicity, religion) are the organising principles by means of which the foreigner is classified, clustered into classes of acceptable and unacceptable strangers.

12 Kristeva's philosophical stand also poorly grasps the reality of the antagonism between enforced and chosen strangeness. By idealising the political posture of nomadism and migration, Kristeva constructs a cosmopolitan citizen as a deterritorialised subject. The stranger always comes from somewhere but remains here, among 'us', unbounded and bondless. Thus, Kristeva fails to notice that "the most critical resistance strategy for disempowered groups is to occupy and defend a politics of social location rather than to vacate and destroy it" (Squires 2002: 241).

13 Martha Nussbaum's influential essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (1994), which can be linked to Kristeva's arguments, presents a further problem. Rejecting patriotism, Nussbaum writes that the ideals of justice and equality would be "better served by an ideal that is in any case more adequate to our situation in the contemporary world, namely the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world" (Nussbaum 1994: I). A response to Richard Rorty's call in "The New York Times" earlier in the same year for the revitalisation of patriotism and national pride in the US, Nussbaum's essay should of course be understood within the parameters of a specific polemical debate. However, the political context notwithstanding, Nussbaum's idea has left an imprint on the way the discussion of the relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism has been framed in public discourse. That is, cosmopolitanism is usually imagined to be a democratic alternative to the parochialism and narrow-mindedness of nationalism and is thus seen as nationalism's 'other'. However, by emphasising the shifting bond of belonging and the de-territorialisation of identity, cosmopolitan discourse is also easily seen as unpatriotic, as having no regard for the homeland or for the history and memory of the community which occupies the lands of the nation-state. In a way, cosmopolitanism and nationalism become opposing parties in the definition of patriotism and, with the cosmopolitans not being seriously concerned with the issues of national identification, the latter especially is deemed ineligible as legitimate agent in the formulation of public culture. By engaging in global politics of belonging and citizenship—the politics which re-examines the maps of civilisational and cultural constellations of modernity (Delanty 2005, 2010)—it (wrongly) appears as a party which arguments are irrelevant to local politics: cosmopolitans are both above and beyond the national concern. Or, to conclude with Varsamopolou, "suffice it to say that, if nationalism is an obstacle to cosmopolitanism, to regress into a new or nostalgic imperialism cannot be the answer" (Varsamopolou 2009: 27).

14 Because in the popular perception cosmopolitanism is associated mainly with the elites, it is easily regarded as alienated from the general public. It tends to have an aura of insensitivity to the real issues and problems of ordinary people. It becomes synonymous with an intellectual fashion and cultural trend which is reserved for the few, whose concerns do not resonate with those of the masses. By pointing to these general misperceptions, I am not seeking to downplay the structural links between cosmopolitanism and capitalism. As Amy Pason observes (drawing on the work of Emma Goldman), "it is the rich that benefit from notions of 'cosmopolitanism' and the poor die after being duped into believing in 'patriotism'" (Pason 2008: 16). In Goldman's words, "for surely it is not the rich who contribute to patriotism. They are cosmopolitans, perfectly at home in every land" (Goldman, quoted in Pason 2008: 17). In this sense, cosmopolitanism can be seen as a façade for the "interconnected systems of oppression" (ibid.) which reproduce themselves through wars, imperial violence and state terror. However, in its capacity to attract the negative stigma of privilege and leisure that is linked to self-preoccupied elites, the critical potentials of cosmopolitanism which are relevant to the public and to the everyday life of the national community, get lost from public sight. In other words, by creating associations between cosmopolitanism and elites as 'natural allies', the critique actually reinforces the hegemonic work of capitalism, which differentiates between the 'duped', to be governed as passive subjects at home, and the 'enlightened', who feel at home in structures of global governance.

3. Post-colonial Reconsiderations

15 For the feminist cosmopolitan, this last standpoint becomes especially problematic when projecting it on to the experiences of minority women, migrants, illegals and all the 'others' who have yet to be accorded the privilege of national recognition *qua* patriots. For the displaced, to be allowed to have a fixed and secure home is an important sign of recognition by the host community as well constituting a measure of social, cultural and political power in their new environment. The recognition may yield contradictory results, one of them being a reiteration of intra-group pressures to conform to the rule of the majority. As Yuval-Davis (1997) points out in relation to the politics of

multiculturalism, recognition of a minority as a new cultural group in the multicultural 'national home' may indeed be used as a source of internal repression by the leaders of the group and/or the community against all who desire to be unique and different from the majority cultural tradition. In either case, when one turns the lens on marginalised groups and groups without collective recognition as equals, the cosmopolitan ethos may not prove to be as appealing to them as it is to those groups at the opposite end of the power spectrum.

16 Alternatives to Nussbaum's and Kristeva's envisionings of the politics of belonging are provided by postcolonial feminist thought. The main focus of critique is the international regime (which is based on governance at the level of the nation-state) and its sovereignty over human rights. Although diverse in its epistemological and methodological framing of the cosmopolitan ethos, cosmofeminism (to use one of the terms indicating the theoretical alliance between feminism and cosmopolitanism) argues for the abolition of the state as a factor in negotiating peaceful world order. As Pason points out, it is states that lead us to wars, but it is the citizens who die, not the states. She goes on to observe that "cosmopolitanism as an ethic to hold states accountable makes it inevitably susceptible to being undermined and abandoned by those states so heavily implicated in its practice. To put it differently, thinking within the logics of state governance as the mediator of human relations, cosmopolitanism does not stand a chance" (Pason 2008: 4).

17 For Pason, the main concern of cosmopolitan feminism is how to prevent war. We go to war because of nationalism, as well as fear and ignorance of others, and their suffering, she maintains. It is the states that are in conflict, not the people, and it is in the interest of nation-states to perpetuate fears because this is the way they make sure they are perceived as necessary historical agents in assuring peace. This logic is derived from Kantian cosmopolitanism: Kant saw the state as the protector of universal norms as a means of deterrence, which would eventually "force states to give up standing armies so they do not have the means to go to war" (Pason 2008: 12). The Kantian notion of "a universal humanity [achieved] through reciprocal hospitality shown by nation-states to one another's citizens provides a tension-filled theoretical problematic", Pason observes, but it should be understood in the context in which Kant was writing (ibid. 10). (However, Kant himself was aware of the fragility of his proposed model of cosmopolitan order and was cynical regarding his own solution.) In Pason's view, the main problem besetting Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism, and which continues to thwart the cosmopolitan project today, is that cosmopolitanism is abused by the most powerful nation-states, which see the promotion of universal values (as defined by them) as a means of reproducing a "hidden universal of capitalism to remain the dominant world-ordering force" (ibid. 12).

18 Cosmofeminism counters the state-controlled cosmopolitan world order through the ethic of care (Sevenhuijsen 2003), which includes care for "ourselves, our bodies and our environment" (Tronto 1993, quoted in Sevehuijsen 2003: 20). As regards the feminist care of the body, Judith Butler's work provides one of the most direct theoretical bases to contest the history of state-provoked global violence. Writing in the context of the post-9/11 world, Butler views fear as the motor of violence, which she counters with the notion of mourning, derived from shared corporeal vulnerability and a collective sense of loss. As Pason formulates it: "The body must become the site for cosmopolitan connections because it is within the body that governance exists. It is [due to] manipulation from outside, or from the government, that we forget our obligations to others" (Pason 2008: 25). To undermine the power of (nationalistic) fear, it is thus necessary to turn to affection, empathy and care—to the feminine qualities of solidarity which lie in the recognition of our interdependence as human beings. This body politics, then, can serve as the basis for the formation of a new global political community which bypasses the rule of the state and, instead of violence and war, promotes the awareness of our shared vulnerability as the common ground to embrace peace. The world citizen is thus reformulated as a human subject constituted "through the bodily experience of mourning over and with others" (ibid.). An international, global community is established through our bodies that we share as human beings and it is this ethics of interdependency that can effectively protect cosmopolitanism from the abuses of nation-states, imperialist forces and/or democratic governments.

4. Cosmopolitanism for Women

19 The epistemological ground for cosmopolitanism derives from the subaltern and the vernacular (i.e., the local, the parochial), Pason maintains, and argues for a 'situated universalism' that is founded on the vulnerability of bodies. As Angela McRobbie argues, this corporeal vulnerability is conceptualised in direct confrontation with Ulrich Beck's cosmopolitanism. Although sharing many concerns with cosmofeminists, Beck fails to be fully attentive "to the wide range of forces whose seeking-out of world hegemony on the basis of a far-reaching, radically re-defined, and strongly neoliberalised version of contemporary democracy, have consequences which will see a proliferation rather than a

minimization of violence" (McRobbie 2006: 70). Like Butler, Beck is of course aware of the "imperialist abuse of the cosmopolitan mission" (Beck 2000: 86f.; quoted in McRobbie 2006: 71) but, as McRobbie concludes, the two authors diverge in paving the way for a post-national cosmopolitan ethos. For Beck, the project should, in McRobbie's reading, involve "a learning process, a practice of reflexivity based on awareness of inter-dependence" (McRobbie 2006: 72), conducted in the ordinary setting of everyday life-worlds, composed of "encounters between mutually respectful strangers" (McRobbie 2006: 72). For Butler, "cosmopolitics" entails resistance to state power through bio-political contestation of state control over memory, mourning and grief, as well as employing the ethical stand of bodily vulnerability as a means of countering political violence. In contrast to Beck's concept of reflexive modernity, Butler invokes a Levinasian concept of the "face" as a means of cosmopolitan intervention. According to McRobbie's reading, "[Butler] understands [the face] not only as a call or a demand in an encounter with one who is suffering and distressed, but also as an ethical demand. That this calling also makes us contemplate an act of violence or murder against the one who issues this demand, is an index of the inequitable relations of power and privilege which are made manifest in the encounter" (McRobbie 2006: 83).

20 In sum, feminist cosmopolitanism relies on the ethics of care (Robinson 2004), conceived as a political value which is reconceptualised (at least by Butler) as body politics. Care stands at the centre of a moral and political order which "recognizes 'others' beyond existing borders and boundaries". As Robinson argues, ethics should not be understood as purely theoretical; on the contrary, "it should be used as both a lens to analyse public and social policy at both the domestic and international levels, as well as an ethical basis from which to construct such policy" (Robinson 2004: 2). In contrast to Pason and Butler, Robinson also includes corporations and states in the chorus of moral agents. This feminist ethics of care should recognise that in the post-Westphalian world, responsibility is wider than the confines of one's state. Robinson calls her feminist cosmopolitanism a cautious one: it "seeks to avoid ethnocentric or imperialist meta-narratives, and which takes seriously the idea of cosmopolis as the embodiment of diversity" (Robinson 2004: 5).

21 This last point brings us to the title of my paper, namely, is cosmopolitanism good for women? I am obviously referring to Susan Okin's essay (1999), in which she asks the question with regard to multiculturalism. Her answer is a definite no: multiculturalism is not good for women because it forces them into the confining zone of cultural identity, whereby culture becomes an operative agent in both defining and defending women's social experiences (including those of male violence and aggression). By the same token, one can ask whether cosmopolitanism is good for women, and more precisely, is cosmofeminism, that is, the model of feminism which relies on the 'feminine ethics of care' good for women across borders and boundaries? In other words, does it provide an adequate epistemological basis to create conditions for moral inter-connectedness among women beyond boundaries of nation, class and gender?

22 A number of major obstacles to feminist cosmopolitanism as a good alternative are to be found in the writings of the authors I have referred to in my paper. In these closing paragraphs, I shall briefly summarise three main obstacles implicit in cosmofeminist argument.

23 First, cosmofeminism sits uncomfortably between identity discourse and the multicultural paradigm. Thus, for Nussbaum, cosmopolitanism means "an attitude of openness" towards others, primarily other cultures; in practice it signifies a social and moral conduct which breeds respect and tolerance of difference (Nussbaum 1994). The focus on identities is problematic with respect to ensuring moral conduct, which is expected to result from cosmofeminism. Even though Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism sees identities as internally multiplied and diversified, unstable and situated, the emphasis on this liberalism of identity formations is not in itself a guarantee of moral conduct, nor a marker of a cosmopolitan stand. As Robinson argues, the focus on identities tells us "very little about the nature of moral responsiveness between persons and peoples" (Robinson 2004: 8). In other words, the recognition of diversity as a shared human bond implies that—within the contexts of an academic environment—one's conduct will necessarily be tolerant and respectful. However, there is little evidence that emphasising the discourse of diversity breeds respect and moral conduct in the broader public. To give just one example: the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008 and the Dosta! Campaign to increase awareness of the Roma as Europeans in 2009 did not (in any measurable way, at least) contribute to a more tolerant European society. On the contrary, the expulsion of Roma from France in 2010 and the continuous terrorising of Roma in Italy and in Central Eastern Europe made the entire effort invested in disseminating the discourse of openness and respect seem suspect of merely serving as an agent of capitalist transnational and trans-European order.

24 Second, cautious cosmofeminism should be vigilant in seeking out and eliminating evidence of ethnocentrism. Is this the case in the writings discussed above? Pason, who makes a powerful argument for cosmofeminist ethics, relies in her argument on three

pioneer ‘cosmofeminists’, namely Emma Goldman, Emily Greene Balch and Judith Butler. Limiting her discussion to North American female writers can be justified by the position from which Pason speaks, a position already evident, for example, in the opening sentence of her text: “America, much like the rest of the developed world, is a paradoxical place. We recognise violence is reprehensible, yet we easily justify and glorify war” (Pason 2008: 3). Is this also a post-national, post-Western, post-ethnocentric cosmopolitan discourse? One can of course appreciate critical voices that expose the abuses of the nation-state ‘here’, with ‘us’; in this regard, references to the critique coming from within the nation-state make the argument even more powerful. But how can this be relevant to the women ‘there’, ‘elsewhere’? For one thing, women of the colonised world are already familiar with the hypocrisy of the cosmopolitan elites from the West. Reading Western authors may confirm their knowledge but this knowledge has little relevance for the construction of ‘their’ moral conduct—unless, of course, they are to take the discourse as a model when searching for cosmopolitan hypocrites in their life-world—but this, of course, already assumes that cosmopolitanism speaks with a single voice and is universal!

25 Third, the focus on bodily wounds, torture, suffering and mourning as a ground on which to build global cosmopolitan interconnectedness may prove to be an effective epistemological turn which ‘steals’ back from the state the regimes of governance and control over bio-politics. It is especially important to note that the feminist “ethics of care” is derived from political philosophy and placed at the very centre of “political judgement and collective action” (Sevenhuijsen 2003: 19). This means a very direct conceptualisation of care as a moral ground for active citizenship and the pluralist formation of the public sphere. The latter is envisioned as a “place where we develop the capacity of acting together with others, from whom we differ in a variety of ways” (ibid. 15). The ethics of care therefore implies an active stand and, moreover, demands that this attitude be embraced by both the givers and receivers of care. This way, the public sphere is constructed, in the words of Iris Young, as an “interpersonal space” which facilitates co-existence within the same place rather than “taking each other’s place” (Young, quoted in Sevenhuijsen 2003: 24). Last but not least, given the ‘relocation’ of care, which has developed from the modern family model of the male as the breadwinner and the female as the provider of care towards the sexually neutral “task-combiner”, the ethics of care addresses the prototypical citizen of the “new-look welfare state”, who is either male or female (cf. Sevenhuijsen 2003: 15).

26 However, the conceptual opposition between (male) state power and (female) care entails the risk of simplifying ethics through gender and reducing the public sphere to the territories of the nation-states. With regard to the former, is female care universal and universally distributed, with equal passion and commitment, regardless of social position, levels of suffering and degrees of violence? With regard to the latter, can a Bosnian mother whose daughter was a victim of mass rape concern herself with the suffering of a black mother with a similar experience in the US, but whose agony is governed by other forces of violence and oppression? Is it fair (and just) to expect women who are victims of different kinds and forces of violent abuse, to put their individual and heavily localised biographies of trauma aside, in order to act in contexts of cosmopolitan, global, ‘asymmetric reciprocity’, caring for others in need? Moreover, is this solidarity historically restricted to our own time, and thus, in the name of care, contributing to the proliferation of the amnesia that is a factor in the violence perpetrated against human beings?

27 These questions are, of course, intentionally formulated in a simplified way, but one cannot escape the feeling that the cosmofeminist discourse continues to speak to Western women and deals with the bio-politics of their (ethno) centre of the globe. This brings us to some concluding thoughts and, based on the comparative readings of the texts of cosmofeminism, some critical suggestions for furthering its democratic and human potential.

28 I have already pointed to some problematic conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism in Kristeva’s work: my main critique centres on her claims for the land of strangers as a transversal, post-national commitment of nationless subjects, which is based on the omission of both the power position from which she speaks and the privilege of her voluntary exile. In Nussbaum’s argument, I exposed the problem of the conflict between cosmopolitanism and patriotism. To this, I can add that if cosmofeminism is honest in its commitment to value the everyday and the popular, more serious attention should be paid to the fact that people choose to love their country not only by force, but also by choice (see Viroli 1995). Patriotic sentiment constitutes an important aspect in the formulation of collective action and can be both reactionary as well as emancipatory. To assume the position of the academic who knows beforehand that patriotism can only be constructed as a xenophobic desire to control one’s territorial, economic and cultural privileges is misleading, if not unfair to the popular imagination.

29 So far, I have only mentioned the work of Seyla Benhabib in passing. Arguably, however, her cosmopolitan theory can provide a bridge between the two groups of

feminist arguments. Feminist cosmopolitanism (or cosmopolitan feminism), Niamh Reilly writes, “rejects the Western-centric, falsely universalised, and undemocratic imposition of narrowly defined understandings of human rights. At the same time, it contests relativist and communitarian claims over individually held human rights when they are used to conceal violations against women in the name of the cultural and religious integrity of the community. In doing so, cosmopolitan feminism retains a commitment to critically reinterpreted universal human rights in the context of democratically grounded, emancipatory political projects” (Reilley 2007: 1).

30 The quote points to a fundamental element missing in the cosmofeminism presented in this paper, namely the discourse of human rights. For Benhabib (2004), the question of the “rights to have rights” composes the key problematic of her writing.

31 Benhabib sees the corrective to national citizenship as a necessary gesture if we are to build a just global order. She derives the corrective from the principle of global justice which includes a) the recognition of the moral demand for the acceptance of asylum seekers and immigrants, b) the prohibition on revoking citizenship and c), with Hannah Arendt, the protection of every human being’s right to have rights. This, Benhabib argues, stems from the fact that traditional territorial sovereignty is collapsing while the control over immigration and the politics of citizenship remain the last remnants of the nation-state’s monopoly over territory. The rights of the other are therefore a litmus test for the commitment of humanity to universal respect.

32 Benhabib situates her call to global justice within the contexts of nation-states but her cosmopolitanism is far from nationalistic. On the contrary, it is predicated on discourse theory which constructs social justice on the principle of “democratic reiterations”. These include discursive repetitions and revaluations of arguments which are illuminated from the perspective of both those who defend the rights and those who are their subjects. This provides the platform for the project of post-national solidarity which operates within the state while transgressing its membership borders.

33 Benhabib’s argument is valuable in two ways. First, the negation of the nation-state as the protector of human rights risks creating new injustice and systems of exclusion. This is an especially relevant point when thinking of cosmofeminist ethics of care as the ground for construction of the public sphere. Consider again the case of the Roma. In the changed trans-European contexts, the Roma have found their fates determined by two opposing agencies, the European institutions on the one hand, and the local majority communities on the other. Whereas the first display a commitment to observe the human rights of Roma and put pressure on the states that violate them, local governments are more willing to comply with the demands of the majority (even if this implies a direct violation of documents signed by the state, meant to protect the Roma). In this circuit of opposing pressures, the Roma can count more on the nation-state than on the EU or local authorities; the former is too far away and the latter too close. Considering these tensions in the protection of the de-privileged, cosmofeminist care based on the principle of active citizenship and participatory democracy should therefore be pursued at a transnational level as well as in a dialogue with the state.

34 In other words, at least in present day contexts, the state still plays a role in controlling ‘banal’, everyday violence against the de-privileged; the same kind of commitment cannot be expected either from local communities (who often experience only the consequences of oppression and capitalist exploitation embodied in the marginalised subject, but not the cause of the problem) or from far-off bureaucrats in international institutions, who deal with major issues only. This of course is not to dismiss the ethics of care and cross-border (class, gender, ethnicity, geography) solidarity. However, it does mean that before excluding the nation-state as a partner in dialogue for a cosmopolitan world, one should consider the uneven effects of the shift in bio-politics for different groups of people. International cooperation among feminist cosmopolitanists is crucial in disciplining the state and its terror machines; but to fully appreciate the consequences of the ethics of care as a non-violent instrument in contesting war and fear, the methods should first be tested at home, where bodies suffer and fear under Western domestic rule.

35 Second, Benhabib’s theoretical intervention in social justice through the notion of democratic reiteration opens up a space for the cosmofeminist discourse of care which confronts reflexive and rational state action with a public politics of mourning, grief and identification through pain. This provides another angle on the democratic reiterations and the spaces in which the de-privileged participate in the discussion on rights and membership. If this becomes an actual platform on which identification with vulnerable bodies unfolds, then it can also be envisioned how cosmofeminism can act as a ‘corrective’ to existing social policies and serve as an ethical base on which to construct policies that are more just. Through focusing on global suffering, cosmofeminists can also play a leading role in translating the model of national citizenship and belonging into a post-Western, transnational and transversal public sphere.

5. Conclusion

36 In this paper, I have compared two kinds of feminist solidarity which form the discursive base of contemporary cosmopolitan feminism. Through a comparative reading of selected authors and their arguments, I have pointed to the pitfalls which risk turning cosmopolitanism into an academic endeavour with no practical and/or political effect. The result of my comparison is that cosmopolitanism, as conceptualised by feminists, may have no impact on the actual lives of women who suffer the consequences of either national or postcolonial violence. Therefore, it is important to think of cosmopolitism in a multi-perspectival way. I have tried to suggest one such trajectory for cosmopolitan discourses, which may yield a fresh perspective on both sides of the feminist argument. Most importantly, the multi-perspectival cosmopolitan ethos stands a better chance of embodying the social vulnerability of the world's most deprived. This, after all, is the desired outcome of the effort to reconstruct cosmopolitan politics and its hegemonic Western reiterations.

Notes

1. This is the subtitle of the book edited by Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Narayan/Harding 2000).

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