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# Why Orientalism still matters: Reading ‘casual forgetting’ and ‘active remembering’ as neoliberal forms of contestation in international politics

SHIERA S. el-MALIK\*

**Abstract.** In 2007, the *British Journal of Politics and International Relations (BJPIR)* devoted an issue to gendering International Relations. It opens with Cynthia Enloe addressing the ‘politics of casual forgetting’. I investigate this notion of casual forgetting using a framework informed by postcolonial and feminist scholarship. Working with ideas drawn from critiques of Orientalism and neoliberalism, I examine knowledge practices that centre binaries as forms of objectivity that disembody phenomena from context, and as forms of over-simplification that flatten the appearance of complexity. Together, these practices have a depoliticising effect; they obscure contestation, situate hierarchy as natural, and separate analysis from its embeddedness in historical and political conditions, even in work guided by critical agendas. I trace these depoliticising practices in a conversation in the 2007 Special Issue of *BJPIR* and show that Enloe’s comments present a push for critical analysis that was overlooked by the Special Issue’s editors in their attempt to more clearly delineate the subdiscipline of Gender and International Relations (IR) as distinct from feminist IR. This article suggests that Enloe’s plea is effectively one for ‘active remembering’ as a way to render visible the insidious forms of power that give a stable appearance to categories of social phenomena.

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[W]e are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity ... we should look for its external conditions of existence ...<sup>1</sup>

Systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions – mind-forg’d manacles – are all too easily made, applied, and guarded.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

In 2007, the *British Journal of Politics and International Relations (BJPIR)* devoted an issue to gendering International Relations (IR). It opens with Cynthia Enloe

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘The discourse on language’, in Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Rupert Swyer (New York: Vintage Books, 2010 [orig. pub. 1971]), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 328.

addressing the ‘politics of casual forgetting’.<sup>3</sup> She ponders the way that IR scholars avoid intellectual attentiveness to questions of gender, which for her necessarily include broadening the scope of analysis or problematizing that appears commonsensical, even in otherwise critical work. She characterises her explanation for why this happens as ‘comfortable masculinist forgetfulness’.<sup>4</sup> Enloe’s preface to the special issue frames the politics of casual forgetting as reliance on a narrow conception of politics or as the avoidance of the political – workings of power – altogether. Broadly, then, casual forgetting refers to an overlooking of otherwise visible workings of power to the extent that it can be understood as an implicit or even complicit acceptance of political spaces as seemingly apolitical or depoliticised spaces. Moreover, as Enloe’s phrase (*‘the politics of casual forgetting’*) belies, this forgetting is an act of power that not only works to hide the contestation behind that which appears ‘real’, ‘normal’, and ‘commonsensical’. It also works to limit the field of contestation itself. Thus, *casually forgetting the need to keep open spaces for imaginative contestation yields a narrow or foreclosed potential politics.*

Casual forgetting coincides with a general practice in IR of narrowly reading Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. In IR, *Orientalism* is most often understood as a set of representational practices.<sup>5</sup> A number of articles ‘apply’ Saidian Orientalism in order to show how sexist and racist tropes of Easterners function and facilitate or underpin contemporary politics. Some juxtapose those tropes with ‘occidental’ tropes of the Western subject.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars make the case that Said offers a contrapuntal reading of culture, which is a reading of culture that encompasses many voices.<sup>7</sup> *Orientalism* is considered useful despite the recognition that Said presents no systematic engagement with patriarchy<sup>8</sup> and that his intellectual *oeuvre* rests on a series of paradoxes, not least of which is his apparently conflictual use of discourse while attending to the position of the author.<sup>9</sup> I concur with arguments that Orientalism is a landmark text that exposed ‘the complicity of academic scholarship with colonial domination’.<sup>10</sup> I agree that Said offers a ‘profoundly political sensibility’<sup>11</sup> and a model for IR to be critical.<sup>12</sup> But, I suggest that one of the most insightful ‘gifts’ of *Orientalism* is a systematic critique of a set of knowledge practices that tend to foreclose potential politics. I call these practices, depoliticising knowledge practices. A broader reading finds that, along with Stuart Hall’s *Policing the Crisis* for example, Orientalism is a damning indictment of the discursively powerful, depoliticising knowledge practices that gathered political weight in the 1970s, corporatised power, and reconfigured

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Enloe, ‘Forward’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9:2 (2007), pp. 183–4.

<sup>4</sup> Enloe, ‘Forward’, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Meghana Nayak and Christopher Malone, ‘American Orientalism and American exceptionalism: a critical rethinking of US hegemony’, *International Studies Review*, 11 (2009), pp. 253–76.

<sup>6</sup> J. Ann Tickner, ‘Feminist perspectives on 9/11’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 3:4 (2002), pp. 333–50; Katherine Allison, ‘American Occidentalism and the agential Muslim woman’, *Review of International Studies*, available on: CJO 2012 doi:10.1017/S0260210512000289.

<sup>7</sup> Geeta Chowdry, ‘Edward Said and contrapuntal reading: Implications for critical interventions in International Relations’, *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, 36 (2007), pp. 101–16.

<sup>8</sup> L. H. M. Ling, ‘Said’s exile: Strategic insights for postcolonial feminists’, *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, 36 (2007), pp. 135–45.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Duvall and Latha Varadarajan, ‘Traveling in paradox: Edward Said and critical International Relations’, *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, 36 (2007), pp. 83–99.

<sup>10</sup> Shampa Biswas, ‘Empire and global public intellectuals: Reading Edward Said as an International Relations theorist’, *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, 36 (2007), pp. 117–33, 118.

<sup>11</sup> Biswas, ‘Empire and global public intellectuals’, p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> Duvall and Varadarajan, ‘Traveling in paradox’, p. 84.

what counts as knowledge.<sup>13</sup> This article uses critiques of Orientalist and neoliberal knowledge practices in order to interrogate other insidious knowledge practices such as those at which the notion of ‘casual forgetting’ seems directed.

In this article, I show that Enloe’s plea is effectively one for what I am calling an ‘active remembering’ as a way to render visible the insidious forms of power that give a stable appearance to categories of social phenomena that are emphatically precarious. As Enloe states,

there is ... a serious flaw in [the] analytical economy and in the research strategy that flows from it. It presumes *a priori* that margins, silences, and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that exactly how they are *kept* there could not possibly be of interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer. A consequence of this presumption is that the actual amount and the amazing variety of power that are required to keep the voices on the margins from having the right language and enough volume to be heard at the center in ways that might send shivers up and down the ladder are never fully tallied.<sup>14</sup>

Enloe is referring in this passage to people and groups marginalised in the global south. But, in this article I explore how casual forgetting facilitates an effective marginalisation and depoliticisation of potentially effective critique within the Academy with the consequence that such moves end up sustaining asymmetries of international power. I am curious to explore how casual forgetting manifests itself even in critical scholarship. However, rather than focusing on an agenda of inclusivity, this article has as its preliminary agenda a focus on the contours and enclosures of spaces for contestation, and even for what is conceivable. For Enloe, feminist questioning exposes even the closures that advertise themselves as emancipatory openings. Thus, pondering the notion of casual forgetting through a lens provided by critiques of Orientalism and neoliberalism reveals similarities in sites of contestation. From this vantage point, I suggest that Enloe’s comments regarding casual forgetting represent a push for critical analysis that was met by contributors to the *BJPIR* Special Issue, but overlooked by the editors in their attempts to more clearly delineate the sub-discipline of Gender and International Relations (GIR) as distinct from feminist IR. This article explores this process in four main sections.

The first section, ‘Foucauldian discourse and Enloeian active remembering’, lays out my approach in four points. Generally, Foucauldian discourse emphasises three aspects of hegemonic discourse: the way in which these narrow the conditions of possibility, legitimate certain speakers and their speech, and set the stage for future discourses. Said makes his argument in *Orientalism* in three chapters that correspond to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, an approach that I draw upon in the structure of this article.<sup>15</sup> The following three sections of the article treat each of these aspects of discourse in turn.

In ‘Discourse and narrowing the conditions of possibility’, I claim that Orientalism and depoliticising knowledge structures are premised on the same closures that (Enloe warns against) give the appearance of detaching the materiality from the discursive,

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Said, *Orientalism*. In his first chapter, Said provides a sense of the scope of Orientalism. In his second chapter, he draws a picture of how Orientalism structures and restructures itself and its representational practices through legitimated speech and speakers. And, in the third chapter, Said depicts Orientalism as a discursive legacy underpinning contemporary politics.

that situate hierarchy as natural, and that separate analysis of the world from its embeddedness in historical and political conditions. I suggest that Orientalism permeates infrastructures of governance and public imaginations as a result of a set of knowledge practices that support the discursive closures: binary cognition, exteriority, flattened complexity, and a consequent depoliticisation. I study Enloe's comments regarding casual forgetting as a challenge to this narrowing of conditions of possibility for conceptualising research agendas while also viewing them as a call for scholars to recontextualise, to rehistoricise, and to recentre the potential politics in their work.

In 'Discourse and legitimate utterances', I suggest that forgetting becomes casual and produces effective forms of control that set the stage for their own reproduction. I use some key texts to illustrate how the arguments rely on knowledge practices that enable discursive closures. I have chosen texts by L. H. M. Ling, Christine Sylvester, and J. Ann Tickner to illustrate the challenges involved in Enloe's request, not to evaluate the state of the discipline. This article is not primarily an examination of their work. Instead, Enloe's term casual forgetting is under examination, not the expansive *oeuvre* of active thinkers. As such, I do not claim to do full justice to all of the issues raised in the few texts included here. Such readings are important to undertake as they illustrate how casual forgetting takes place. For example, my readings show how articulations of specific politics foreclose instead of open space to rupture the violences that belie international institutions, practices, and relations. I then show how Enloe's approach to social analysis incorporates Foucault's suggestion from the opening quote that scholars make the conditions of existence the focus of that analysis thereby circumventing some of the problems exhibited in this section.

In 'Discourse and future discourses', I analyse a conversation in the 2007 Special Issue of *BJPIR* in which Enloe throws down the casual forgetting gauntlet. My analysis is based on Judith Squires and Jutta Weldes' Introduction and the last article, written by Marysia Zalewski. Coming immediately after Enloe's preface, Squires and Weldes develop an argument for Gender and IR as distinct from feminist IR and offer a way to read Zalewski's article that I argue epitomises the casual forgetting that Enloe poses just pages earlier. On the face of it, readers of this issue witness acts of contestation regarding the future of 'gender' scholarship – a political struggle perhaps. But I suggest that what is at stake here is not the politics of gender, but rather the contours of (the field of) gender politics itself. In fact, Zalewski's article (as well as her later monograph *Feminist International Relations*) can be read as precisely an intervention against enclosing studies of gender off from other studies of politics and society including, but not limited to IR.<sup>16</sup>

### **Foucauldian discourse and Enloe's 'active remembering'**

This article uses Foucault's work on discourse to study Enloe's notion of casual forgetting. Here, I briefly outline my approach to this topic in four points.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Marysia Zalewski, *Feminist International Relations: Exquisite Corpse* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Foucault's discourse has been understood in a number of ways, and Foucault, himself, had many ways of discussing it. Here, I use a version adapted from Mills' *Discourse* and Foucault's 'The discourse on language'.

1. For Foucault, hegemonic discourses of power are an inevitable facet of structuring and restructuring social order. Given this, '[w]e must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or at all events as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity.'<sup>18</sup> Put simply, discourses work to effect closures that obscure contestation and create the illusion of stable meaning. Hegemonic discourses work to drown out subordinate discourses in a process of discursive violence.
2. Foucault's explication of discourse is as follows:

'[D]iscourse [is] rule-governed and internally structured. The study of discourse is not simply the analysis of utterances and statements; it is also a concern with the structures and rules of discourse.' In this, three main components emerge: a narrowing of perspective (or the 'conditions of possibility'), power (in the sense that any 'utterer' must be able to 'utter' and the 'utterances' must be socially recognisable) and within any discourse exists the seeds of future 'utterances'.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, discourse creates boundaries regarding what can be said and done, how it can be said and done, and how it can be understood; discourse creates legitimate speakers and discourse sets the stage for future discourses.

3. When one arrives at questions of social inequity from this angle, it helps to heed Foucault's note that,

we are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, our task, as it were, is not to 'dig deep' and seek the true meaning. Rather it is to ask: *how* is this possible?

4. Enloe's plea for 'active remembering' can be read as precisely a plea to move away from explaining the hidden truth of oppression in order to find potential emancipatory paths, a plea to move instead towards situating discourse itself, its patterns and its manifestations, as the object of study. This latter approach helps expose the contours of argumentative positions by exposing the conditions of their existence. And this approach leads Edward Said to expose the Orientalism inherent in the emergent neoliberal politics of the 1970s and later and to make an argument about the way powerful discourses narrow conditions of possibility.

## Discourse and narrowing the conditions of possibility

The first component of Foucault's notion of discourse holds that discourses narrow conditions of possibility. In this section, I argue that despite a number of specificities arising from their different historical conditions of possibility, orientalist, and neoliberal knowledge practices share a reliance on closures that give the appearance of detaching the materiality from the discursive, that naturalise hierarchy, and that

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The discourse on language', pp. 215–37, 229.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 51. Mills' text offers a clear and concise reading of Foucault, 'The discourse on language'.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, 'The discourse on language', p. 229.

separate analysis of the world from its embeddedness in historical and political conditions. Thus, this section focuses on the logics of Orientalism and neoliberalism and presents Enloe's comments regarding casual forgetting as a response to epistemic closures.

### *Orientalism and neoliberalism*

Edward Said wrote *Orientalism* in the 1970s at the same time that neoliberalism was gaining ground, and just prior to Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Helmut Kohl assuming government office. Far from being an historical text about colonialism, *Orientalism* is addressed to a contemporary (1978) audience in the context of growing American hegemony and expanding capitalist networks.<sup>21</sup> Said's agenda was geographically focused on the problems in Palestine and Israel, but his text can be read as a discursive critique of a group of knowledge practices that support and obscure the depoliticising practices of a neoliberal politics. That he examines Orientalism's three interconnected features: historical specificity, knowledge, and power is a core piece of his argument that many reviewers failed to read in the 1980s, and I would say the same is true today.<sup>22</sup>

For example, Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg argue that reviewers tended to reduce *Orientalism* to a cultural argument. They respond to a number of reviews, but one in particular is James Clifford's.<sup>23</sup> Clifford states that '*Orientalism* is one of the first attempts to use Foucault systematically in an extended cultural analysis' which makes it a text of critical importance despite a number of troubling inconsistencies and ambiguities.<sup>24</sup> In their response, Mani and Frankenberg note that even in his sympathetic critique of the book and his acknowledgement of the epistemological nature of Said's argument, 'Clifford fails to anchor his discussion of general political epistemological issues in the historic context which produced and maintains *Orientalism*'. It is here that one set of themes from *Orientalism* is privileged over others' themes of cultural difference.<sup>25</sup> Mani and Frankenberg's

[R]eading of Said defines Orientalism as an authoritative body of knowledge about Asia and parts of Africa that emerges alongside colonial expansion in these regions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Put another way, Orientalism is implicitly and from the beginning a discourse of power that characterized a particular set of social, economic, and political relations between Europe and its colonies.<sup>26</sup>

I approach Orientalism similarly as an argument about knowledge that uses colonialism in West Asia at a particular time to substantiate the central claim about power and knowledge in order to examine Enloe's idea about casual forgetting.

<sup>21</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg, 'The challenge of Orientalism', *Economy and Society*, 14:2 (1985), pp. 174–92, 182.

<sup>23</sup> James Clifford, review of *Orientalism, History and Theory*, 19:2 (1980), pp. 204–23. Clifford's well-known essay dismisses Orientalism as sweeping, as 'too broadly and abstractly pitched [and] ... as overly systematic' (p. 206) and as not critical enough of liberal humanism, a theory at odds with Foucault's thinking (p. 212).

<sup>24</sup> Clifford, *Orientalism*, p. 212.

<sup>25</sup> Mani and Frankenberg, 'The challenge of Orientalism', p. 181.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.



To this end, Said's discussion of Orientalism in West Asia yields the following generalisable conclusions. Orientalism is a discourse of power with a vast scope. Through Orientalist discourse, the Self invents the Other as subordinate. The subordinated Other views itself through Orientalist lenses in ways too complex to be called self-loathing.<sup>27</sup> Orientalism epistemologically reconfigures social order via notions of novelty and fear by creating its objects of knowledge to manage perceptions of threat.<sup>28</sup> The discursive spread of Orientalism, which is ongoing, has four main characteristics: (1) it is extensive in terms of both geography and the production of texts; (2) it is academically interdisciplinary; (3) it relies on a discursive flattening of complex social phenomena that permeate social experience; and (4) it yields highly rigid ordering practices.<sup>29</sup> Within the discourse of Orientalism, so-called 'experts' encode, package, and resubmit this knowledge to the public domain where it saturates public imaginations, including those of political decision-makers and academics and particularly those in the humanities and social sciences. Thus, Orientalism must be understood as a political project based on differences in power that 'elided the Orient's difference with its weakness'.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Orientalism presents and represents differences in culture as synonymous with subordination, such that hierarchical relations of domination and subordinations are embedded in the discourse of Orientalism. The embeddedness of this hierarchy in Orientalism's framework manifests in different ways.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, Orientalism is insidious in that it discursively bounds not only what is actually said, but also what it is possible to say. Its discursive structures slide into 'administrative, economic and even military' pursuits by various sets of practices that ensure their reproduction.<sup>32</sup> These structures rely on patterns of binary cognition, exteriority, flattened complexity, and depoliticisation.

The pattern of binary cognition supports a knowledge framework that makes transcending binary thinking nearly impossible. Many arguments for multiplicity and hybridity maintain the closures that are their point of departure. The pattern of exteriority places agents and phenomena outside of the conditions of their existence. These then appear disembedded thereby encouraging analyses of their hidden truths rather than their embeddedness in relational practices. The pattern of flattened complexity involves a process of over-simplification for the purposes of explanation that obscures the ideological underpinnings that give form to what gets exposed and simplified and what is shed. The patterns of binary cognition, exteriority, and flattened complexity work together to yield patterns of regularised depoliticisation whereby social phenomena appear divested of political contestation.

According to Said, Orientalism must be understood as precisely a discourse of power that works to obscure its own inner processes. Orientalism epitomises an uneven process that gained the appearance of hegemonic stability as a result of its

<sup>27</sup> Although this is indeed a component of the Other's construction of self within terms of a discourse that situated the Othered self as subordinate, as Fanon examines in *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116–19.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>31</sup> Said distinguishes between manifest and latent Orientalism (p. 206). The former composes 'various stated views about oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology and so forth' while the latter refers to the stable underpinnings of representations that might appear manifestly different (p. 206). These stable underpinnings '[keep] intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability' (p. 206).

<sup>32</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 210.

'slide' into various forms of colonial authority, governance, and representational practices. As with a pointillist painting, when viewed closely, the unevenness and variability of these practices is clear. But, when viewed from a distance, the stability and regularity of the discursive practices becomes visible. The same can be said for neoliberalism, that it too must be understood as a discourse of power that works to obscure its own inner processes and exhibits stability and regularity.

Neoliberalism is a scattered process that emerged as a response to the market instability of the 1970s.<sup>33</sup> The term describes elite control of financial markets that protects the processes of capital accumulation and concentration. It represents a disconnecting of markets from states by a process of legal and political restructuring of the decision-making capabilities of central government, and by a discursive process that divorces the idea of markets from the ideas of history and culture, and from any embeddedness in geographical, social, and historical context.<sup>34</sup> Scholars understand and define neoliberalism in different ways. For example, David Harvey draws a picture of neoliberalism as disembedded capitalism in opposition to the state-embedded capitalism of the post-WWII period.<sup>35</sup> Aihwa Ong suggests that a defining characteristic of neoliberalism is its drive for nonpolitical and nonideological technical problem solving.<sup>36</sup> Nancy Fraser argues that neoliberalism mainstreams difference in order to neutralise responses to economic and social marginalisation.<sup>37</sup> Wendy Larner 'refuses to privilege neoliberalism as a master category' and seeks to expose neoliberalism as inherently messy and contested from many sites and in multiple ways.<sup>38</sup> What comes through in these and other analyses of neoliberalism is that it is premised on extricating economics from sociopolitical phenomena and on flattening the complexity of its development. In other words, neoliberalism as a process relies on rigid and fixed enclosures that obscure connections and encourage casual forgetting.

Like colonialism, the emergence of neoliberalism occurred within a highly complicated nexus of political decision-making, historical context, and discursive constraints. In seeking to examine the 'how' of neoliberalism, Harvey writes that

The uneven geographical development of neoliberalism, its frequently partial and lop-sided application from one state and social formation to another, testifies to the tentativeness of neo-liberal solutions and the complex ways in which political forces, historical traditions and existing institutional arrangements all shaped why and how the process of neoliberalization actually occurred.<sup>39</sup>

This statement positions neoliberalism as an outcome of no single central apparatus, which complicates the question of how to approach it. A helpful approach to neoliberalism addresses its impact on the development of the individual subject. Siba Grovogui suggests that anthropology provides a way to flesh out the impact of

<sup>33</sup> Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'Feminism, capitalism, and the cunning of history', *New Left Review*, 56 (2009), pp. 97–117.

<sup>38</sup> Wendy Larner et al., 'New times, new spaces: Gendered transformations of governance, economy, and citizenship', *Social Politics*, 20:2 (2013), pp. 157–64, 158. See also, Wendy Larner, 'A brief history of neoliberalism', Review, *Economic Geography*, 82:4 (2006), pp. 449–51.

<sup>39</sup> Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 13.

David Harvey's analysis on a critical understanding of subjectivity. His argument holds that while neoliberal subjectivity – a subjectivity that internalises and reproduces in everyday ways the knowledge practices outlined above such that ethnicity, identity, consumer choices, for example, come to appear divested of ideology and politics – might appear to be new, it is not new at all. Rather, to the extent that neoliberal subjectivity can be a thing at all, it represents the return of the colonisers' tools of authority and governance to formerly 'metropolitan' spaces. Neoliberal subjectivity, then, is itself a postcolonial subjectivity.<sup>40</sup> Seemingly apolitical forms of *being* follow seemingly apolitical and technical forms of governance whereby the 'fact' of identity comes to be seen as an apolitical reality: everyone *has* an identity. From this angle, as with colonialism, 'neoliberalism can ... be conceptualized as a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions' using methodologies founded upon the same epistemological structures as is Orientalism.<sup>41</sup> So, while Orientalism and neoliberalism are not the same thing, to the extent that they both seem to work to appear consolidated entities, they rely on processes of enclosing spaces of potential contestation, of hiding politics in common sense, and of facilitating a forgetting.

All is not lost, however. The idea that neoliberalism reorders phenomena as non-ideological is evident in the way that challenges to hegemonic power often conceive of the problem at hand as an epistemological one. Consider V. Y. Mudimbe's comments on the form of epistemological resistance found in anticolonial arguments that often centre on colonialism's ideological foundations.<sup>42</sup> Understanding anticolonialism as an example of a discursive opening, he correctly suggests that paradoxically *the act of historicising ideologies works to keep open avenues that discourses of power try to close*.<sup>43</sup> By this logic, the very act of historicising is a crucial tool by which one can challenge the trend to divorce technologies of governance from the ideologies that create and maintain them. Yet, political contestation occupies an increasingly narrow platform that is conditioned by depoliticizing knowledge practices and the impetus for discursive closures.

### *Enloe's preface and the politics of casual forgetting*

In her preface to the 2007 *BJPIR* Special Issue on gender, Enloe relates a story of critical scholars who routinely 'forget' gender. When they are reminded, she tells us they are embarrassed and 'scramble' to counter the masculinist forgetting that they are aware is part of their intellectual legacy.<sup>44</sup> Enloe charts this as an important

<sup>40</sup> Siba Grovogui, Participant, Global Development Working Group. International Studies Association Annual Conference, Mustapha Kamal Pasha and Giorgio Shani, convenors, San Diego, 5 April 2012. This would seem to accord with Wendy Larner's arguments about how shifting practices impact 'neoliberal' from multiple sites, from the global south to shifting types of daily practices of ordinary people. See Wendy Larner, 'Neoliberalism?', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21:5 (2003), pp. 509–12.

<sup>41</sup> Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>44</sup> Enloe, 'Forward', p. 183.

change and suggests that ‘none [of the authors in the present issue] underestimate the continued attentiveness it is taking to ensure that comfortable masculinist forgetfulness does not win the disciplinary day’.<sup>45</sup> As part of a way of remembering, Enloe prefigures Foucault in suggesting how this Special Issue should be read. She situates the scholars in a generation that benefitted from the contributions of early feminists. Perhaps, responding to the editors’ introduction, Enloe examines the Special Issue as depicting a uniquely British conversation on IR and gender. In other words, Enloe explores the conditions of possibility for the special issue itself and traces the discourses like masculinist forgetting that underpin the conversation in its pages. She, then, queries,

as one reads these smart essays, it might be worth pondering whether country-specific (not necessarily unique) factors are diluting the intellectual efforts of British International Relations, robbing this important 21st-century scholarly endeavor of its chance to be more analytically subtle and more politically realistic, or whether they interestingly facilitate and create spaces for new theoretical and empirical insights.<sup>46</sup>

Enloe is reminding readers to consider the way IR in Britain impacts the processes of scholarly work in ‘specific although not necessarily unique’ ways. What kinds of closures does it effect? What do approaches to active remembering look like? With queries like this, Enloe destabilises closures and consistently grounds her observations in concrete events, times, social, political, and economic spaces. One might say then that casual forgetting seems to occur at moments of discursive closure during which the political appears apolitical or depoliticised.

### **Discourse and legitimate utterances**

The second component of Foucault’s conception of discourse holds that discourse legitimates speakers and speech. I offer readings of a few select texts by three scholars – L. H. M. Ling, Christine Sylvester, and J. Ann Tickner in which they raise unwieldy questions of knowledge and gender that often yield more questions than answers. In this section, I am reading particularly for binary categories, exteriority, flattened complexity, and the way these work to depoliticise knowledge practices. Ultimately, I find that in her aim to expose the norm of hybridity, Ling reifies binaries. Sylvester is concerned with how identities can be meaningful, yet fluid, and uses a problematically dehistoricised concept of ‘homesteading’. Tickner reads gender as a fundamentally always embodied and political thing, but appears both to flatten the experience of Other women and to detach both her position and her analytical tool from their conditions of possibility.

### *Conceptual advancements and emancipatory projects*

L. H. M. Ling tackles the Eurocentric lens worn in studies of Asia.<sup>47</sup> She writes that ‘(neo)realism sets up an implicit knowledge dichotomy’, thus, arguing that the binary

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>47</sup> L. H. M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the Rest* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002).

is part of the epistemological foundations out of which (neo)realism sprouted.<sup>48</sup> She notes that postmodernism, feminism, and Gramscian globalism have all challenged neorealism, but were unsuccessful because they misunderstood the problem, which is liberal capitalism as a world hegemony.<sup>49</sup> Her central success lies in raising the problem of the need for IR scholars to theorise subjectivity as theorists do in other disciplines and, importantly, alongside a critique of neoliberalism.<sup>50</sup>

Ling addresses three important points. First, IR in the form of (neo)realism is inadequate. In fact, she shows that binary concepts lead to binary processes and binary outcomes; she has exposed a significant methodological gap in theorising about international relations. As the binary is an example of the discursive narrowing encapsulated in our working definition of discourse, Ling emphasises the relevance of the concepts to the effects of processes that theorists attempt to analyse. Second, she exposes a norm of hybridity. With this claim, Ling draws on the *ad hoc* realities of identity categories – or the practices ‘on the ground’. Third, Ling argues that constructivism can be used to ground postcolonial theory and provide methodological roots.

Alongside these important contributions, Ling falls into some theoretical quagmires, such as the idea that a postcolonial IR could emerge from using a reformed postcolonial (neo)realism. Realism is a specifically rational-actor-based, explanatory, theoretical framework. Postcolonialism’s aim, meaning, and purpose remain highly contested, but it appears to have the wide aims of becoming a structure *and* agent based, constitutive *and* explanatory theoretical framework.<sup>51</sup> Drawing from Gayatri Spivak, I posit that the aim and advantage of postcolonialism is that it does not attempt to simply incorporate both binary perspectives in order to find the hybrid. It allows the shades of grey, the varying middle ground to rise to the surface by releasing any fixed perspective. Yet, it is also invested in attempting to theorise the inevitability of identities for social political engagement. Instead of theorising this complexity, Ling adds identity to the analysis, which is as problematic as adding Third World women to feminism.

Ling’s approach proceeds in several stages. First, she recognises that (neo)realism works in tandem with binaries. Second, she argues that relations between binary opposites inevitably result in hybridity. Third, she postulates that there must be a way of analysing the ‘norm of hybridity’ instead of depending on analytical tools that require simplistic and self-contained entities like West versus East. She is attempting to rethink identity as difference, or as unstable and her solution is to apply a hybrid approach. ‘A postcolonial reformulation of (neo)realis[t]’ constructivism is the answer.<sup>52</sup> Postcolonial subjectivity is hybrid and therefore exists outside the binary,<sup>53</sup> while constructivism ‘traces the DNA of social life’.<sup>54</sup> Thus, ‘constructivism [i]s a method of studying international relations, [and] . . . [postcolonialism is an]

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Gayatri Spivak, ‘Gender and international studies’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27:4 (2005), pp. 809–931.

<sup>51</sup> Gayatri Spivak, ‘Scattered speculations on the subaltern and the popular’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 8:4 (2005), pp. 475–86.

<sup>52</sup> Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

interpretation of world politics'.<sup>55</sup> She concludes that the union of postcolonialism and constructivism can create a postcolonial IR that could look at agent-structure interactions.

According to Ling, analyses of agent-structure relations require an analytical tool that will allow for dialogic thinking. Dialogic thinking can re-pose questions in more complex ways, which hybridises solutions and democratically includes other knowledges.<sup>56</sup> It can incorporate race and gender and expose multiple subjectivities. As a conceptual tool, 'multiple subjectivities' can facilitate analyses of the way individuals develop into complex, hybrid subjects. The goal of this is to learn from the Other in a way that democratises knowledge and power, an alternative to 'including' the Other for the sake of inclusiveness.<sup>57</sup> However, as Ling uses it, 'multiple subjectivities' expresses a number of homogeneous subjectivities that inhabit one person rather than the unpredictable nexus of multiplicity that emerges from complex social practices. Her idea of 'multiple subjectivities' assumes *a priori* gender categories. If the goal is to expose specific ways of being in relation to liberal capitalism then those very categories must be problematised. For example, while the concept of gender is important in her analysis of Asia in the West and the West in Asia, Ling does not problematise that gender divide in terms of what it *means* to be masculine or feminine or to use those labels in the context of the liberal capitalism that she (I think rightly) takes issue with. In fact, she is only superficially critical of the inside-outside binary inherent in IR even as she argues against binary thinking.<sup>58</sup>

Categorical homogeneity underpins this analysis and guides Ling to her conception of hybridity. While privileging geopolitical binaries (West vs Asia), Ling argues that the poles are united – the West is part of Asia in the same way that Asia is part of the West. This move renders the West and Asia as intelligible and essentially similar entities. Therefore, even though Ling carefully argues that the West is part of Asia and *vice versa* in her attempt to break down the binary, she has conceptually boxed herself into a corner on this account. Her two main conceptual advancements, multiple subjectivities and hybridity, are limited because of a lack of attention to how they are themselves embedded in the liberal capitalism that is the central problem.

Christine Sylvester also attempts a conversation with IR in terms of multiple subjectivities and hybridity.<sup>59</sup> She argues that 'to have meaningful identities and to query them too situates us as appreciators of the ways we stand in one space and regard another space with an empathetic-critical gaze that defies ready colonization'.<sup>60</sup> 'Woman', she shows in her analysis of second wave feminism, can no longer be white, Western, middle-class. The 'woman' for whom feminists work must be articulated as a vibrant, multicultural, multifaceted, multi-identified 'woman', inclusive of all women. Thus, it appears that one way to do this is to unfix identity and theorise a fluid identity, a culturally-unbounded woman.

Sylvester resurrects the notion of homesteading as a theoretically emancipatory technique that can potentially unfix allegiances to identity insofar as homesteading

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>58</sup> Nalini Persram, 'Book Review: Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and desire between Asia and the West', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5:1 (2003), pp. 145–7.

<sup>59</sup> Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

is a process of becoming 'creatively homeless'.<sup>61</sup> She aims to rejuvenate it as an analytical tool that makes visible the power dynamics that yielded the exclusive, alienating, gendered, and migratory practice of homesteading.<sup>62</sup> For her, 'recuperating "homesteading" as a means of expanding knowledge and potential requires that homesteaders from the past and those looking to the future show willingness to cooperate in revealing the stories, identities, variables, and perceptions that were rooted out and evacuated so that some could roost where others were refused homes'.<sup>63</sup> This displays a recognition that homesteading is a response to a structural power dynamic supporting capitalist labour formation and urban living.<sup>64</sup> As a concept, homesteading is part and parcel of a dynamic of frontier domination and cultural infiltration. It is premised on ideas of agency and self-sufficiency and evinces the imperialist assumption that 'the land' is open and empty and does not require a power dynamic of displacement in order to stake a claim. Yet, Sylvester distinguishes 'empathetic cooperative homesteadings [from the former version by positing that it does] not leave the farm, the neighborhood, the old and new inhabitants or the theories undisturbed'.<sup>65</sup>

Grounding homesteading in its historical conditions of possibility yields an awareness of 'the farm' that highlights the contingency of privilege and importantly the selective blindness of privilege. In order to homestead, one must already be in a position to insist on being heard. Sylvester acknowledges another 'paradox: one does not want to vaporize the experiences of people who cannot afford to distance themselves from their assigned homes or who ... draw inspiration for transformed identity and practice from gender identity and solidarity; but at the same time, one cannot revel in gender homes because they may not really exist as meaningful foundations for the future.'<sup>66</sup> This is insightful, but the very notion of 'gender homes' implies an illusory stability. Similarly, the process of becoming 'creatively homeless' assumes a 'home', a stable place, from which to make decisions.<sup>67</sup> Sylvester is not articulating the homelessness of the 'human condition' as much as the multiplicity of 'woman'; woman exists in many forms. Acknowledging the multiplicity of woman is different than acknowledging that a woman is a complex of (sometimes) contradictory forms, perhaps many of them in the very same moment. Homesteading is, then, not about subjectivity or about problematising the very typologising of identity as much as it is about the politics of identity categories – binary or multiple.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 2–3, and ch. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>67</sup> Compounding this, the practice of homesteading is simultaneously a practice in which one seizes power and excludes others from that power. With the idea that feminists should homestead IR, the danger is that differences between not just feminists, but all women are flattened in depoliticised categories of difference and multiplicity. See also Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005). Massey argues against just such a conception of place. For her, place such that it ever appears as a thing is an outcome of meetings of complex trajectories and relational interactivity (and contestation).

<sup>68</sup> Sylvester's recent work on experiencing war transcends these problems as does her work that analyses the role of emotion in feminist scholarship. Christine Sylvester, 'The Forum: Emotion and the feminist IR researcher', *International Studies Review*, 13 (2011), pp. 687–708; Christine Sylvester, 'Experiencing war: an introduction', in Christine Sylvester (ed.), *Experiencing War* (London: Routledge, 2011); Christine Sylvester, 'War experiences/war practices/war theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 483–503. In grounding her analyses in bodies, places, historical, political

For Sylvester in this text, as for Ling, the penalty for not addressing the conditions of possibility for the fixity of identity is a debate wherein positions and counter positions have a binary relationship. For example, Sylvester argues that as a result of liberal feminist arguments,

[A]n African feminist like Filomina Chioma Steady finds it reasonable to posit a profound difference between 'the frameworks of dichotomy, individualism, competition, and opposition, which Western feminism fosters', and African 'values stressing human totality, parallel autonomy, cooperation, self-reliance, adaptation, survival, and liberation'. Her voice is a powerful reminder that sisterhood is not necessarily global, but at the same time it is ironic that to make this point entails accepting received categories of 'scientific' analysis – western/non-western and white/black – as true.<sup>69</sup>

Sylvester suggests that the notion of fluid hybridity helps to avoid presenting the Western woman the norm and the Eastern woman exotic. It helps to unseat the norm/exotic (or outside norm) binary distinction. However, Sylvester seems to explain Steady's articulation of an alternative position within an east/west binary as, at least partially, the fault of liberal feminism.<sup>70</sup> Suffice it to say, Steady is responding to a real problem but her stance is premised on the binary thinking and discursive flattening of neoliberal knowledge practices. Instead of addressing the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge, Steady, at least in the passage Sylvester cites, reifies African-ness in an oppositional frame. In citing her, Sylvester is attempting to highlight the power of positionality:

To articulate observations about nature and social relations that start from the location of women's lives but that do not fetishize those received lives, we must bear in mind that stand-points of the subjugated are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow *denial* of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge.<sup>71</sup>

This boils down to an identity politics that divorces power from discourse, from the knowledge that frames our very gaze. Sylvester is wondering: 'Can we have meaningful identities and question them too, or must we chose [*sic*] between identity and resistance to identity?'<sup>72</sup> It appears that Sylvester is speaking to the first world feminist from the premise that if one knows domination firsthand, one will be capable of resisting it. This 'standpoint' argument is not easily reconciled with the casual forgetting that Enloe observes.

In the last of these three examples, J. Ann Tickner understands feminism to offer an epistemological platform from which she urges the discipline to include gender as a category of analysis. By gender, Tickner suggests that the discursive categories of masculinity and femininity can be useful in moving away from accounts that equate gender with women (as subordinated by men).<sup>73</sup> Further, she notes that 'including gender as a central category of analysis transforms knowledge in ways that go beyond adding women; importantly, but frequently misunderstood, this means that

economic contexts, and war, Sylvester has moved to incorporate an analysis of the conditions of possibility for the everyday in complex ways. This complexity emerges clearly in a recent article in which she argues for approaches to studying war that address it as an experience of social relations which, moves away from the idea of multiplicity as a challenge to binary constructions of social phenomena Sylvester, 'War experiences', p. 484.

<sup>69</sup> Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations*, p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> J. Ann Tickner, 'You just don't understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:4 (1997), pp. 611–32, 614.



women cannot be studied in isolation from men'.<sup>74</sup> Tickner suggests that the conversational impasse in IR is a result of epistemological differences when she says: 'You just don't understand'.<sup>75</sup> Marianne Marchand responds that Tickner is working under the following set of 'assumptions about the nature of feminist scholarship and the nature of the IR community'.<sup>76</sup> For one, Tickner assumes that all feminists share ontological and epistemological positions.<sup>77</sup> Two, Tickner assumes that the IR community is American and that the borders of the discipline are American patrolled.<sup>78</sup> Three, Tickner assumes shared ontological and epistemological positions between feminist IR and other peripheral areas of IR.<sup>79</sup> Marchand argues alternatively that the way to increase acceptance of feminist IR is to recognise 'that there is a variety of conversational encounters among feminist, conventional and critical IR scholars ... The importance is to realize that the encounters are contingent upon and embedded in different realities', encounters that Enloe would arguably understand as open to imaginative politics.<sup>80</sup> Yet, for Tickner, feminism has a different trajectory than other IR approaches. Critical perspectives are similar, but as they do not use 'gender as a tool of analysis', she thinks 'it is a mistake to place feminist approaches with other critical approaches; they need to have a separate voice as well as separate paths'.<sup>81</sup> An example of Tickner's use of gender 'as a tool of analysis' can be found in a 2002 article 'Feminist perspectives on 9/11', which shows that the events of 9/11 were framed in gendered language.<sup>82</sup>

Tickner aims to address the oppositional thinking of neoliberal knowledge practices although she later<sup>83</sup> refers to them as neoimperial rather than neoliberal. For Tickner, this oppositional thinking is prevalent in what she calls Occidental thinking that appears as anti-Westernism.<sup>84</sup> She juxtaposes it with American-style, Orientalist thinking and claims a sort of equivalent fundamentalism in both the East and the West that she characterises as composed of 'discourses associated with Orientalism and Occidentalism'.<sup>85</sup> Thus, she suggests that 'in the Muslim world, women's struggles are frequently undermined by the idea of one homogeneous Muslim world [which is] a deliberate myth fostered by both Occidentalism and Orientalism'.<sup>86</sup> Yet, conversations such as the one Tickner is engaged in above do not take place amongst equals; these are conversations imbued with Orientalist renderings of colonised societies and their 'traditions'; and these conversations share an ideological disposition towards woman-ness that often subordinates women's voices. This last commonality is impor-

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Marianne Marchand, 'Different communities/different realities/different encounters: a reply to Ann Tickner', *International Studies Quarterly*, 42:1 (1998), pp. 199–204, 200.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>81</sup> J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 126.

<sup>82</sup> J. Ann Tickner, 'Feminist perspectives on 9/11'.

<sup>83</sup> J. Ann Tickner, 'On the frontlines or sidelines of knowledge and power? Feminist practices of responsible scholarship', *International Studies Review*, 8:3 (2006), pp. 383–95.

<sup>84</sup> Tickner, 'Feminist perspectives on 9/11', p. 338.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

tant insofar as it often appears without the previous two, thereby facilitating the illusion that revealing women's voices resolves the problem of women's oppression.<sup>87</sup>

Tickner builds the picture of America under attack using 'Occidentalism', an argument that supports neoliberal frameworks more ferociously than Said critiques them particularly because insofar as the authors, Avishai Margalit and Ian Buruma, responded to Said's text, they present a reading of it as an anti-Western culturalist argument.<sup>88</sup> Among a series of similar statements, 'Occidentalism' explains that female sexuality is anathema to Islamists. As an example of the irrationally enraging markers of 'free female sexuality', the authors point to 'pictures of partly naked Western women advertising Hollywood movies or soft drinks, or whatever'.<sup>89</sup> The focus on what other men are doing with other women has a long and problematic history. Tickner cites an essay that *exactly* replicates the exclusions and binaries she claims to oppose. In addition, her use of an Orientalism/Occidentalism binary is a discursively problematic one in light of the argument that Orientalism is a discourse of power, which means that 'Occidentalism' if it can even be considered a 'thing' is Orientalist.<sup>90</sup>

Tickner also belies her own positionality when she hails a problematic 'we' in saying 'we feel safer when "*our men*" are protecting us (against other men) and our way of life'.<sup>91</sup> This statement appears ironic until the next one: speaking of Occidentalism, 'the ideational and material consequences of *this misogynist discourse was brought home to us* through the post 9/11 media focus on the plight of women in Afghanistan'.<sup>92</sup> And the next one: 'given the massive sense of insecurity generated by the first foreign terrorist attack on American civilians at home, *there is something reassuring about "our men" protecting us from "other men"*'.<sup>93</sup> And four years later: 'At times of uncertainty and crisis, we look to male heroes to protect us, and *we feel safer when our men are protecting us against other dangerous (often nonwhite) men*'.<sup>94</sup> Leaving aside the power involved in interpellating a 'we' from the US academy given the multitudes of women and men outside of the US (both inside and outside of the academy), I question instead what gets swept away in these reiterated utterances regarding our men (of the state) protecting us women (of the nation). Who are the 'our men', who are protecting us, from nonwhite men, and who is the 'us' being interpellated? I hazard a guess that Tickner is referring to specific women, not those who (if we are to continue with the problematic metaphor of protection) might feel distinctly less safe when 'being protected' from their 'nonwhite' (to use Tickner's term) brothers, partners, sons, and fathers. That different communities of people in the US have different relationships to the state and to imperial power is a contingency that Tickner's statements elide.

In these examples, Ling and Sylvester both attempt to destabilise categories of identity using an idea of multiplicity and hybridity. The idea of the instability and the constructedness of categories underpins their arguments. Tickner also attempts to include multiplicity in her understanding of feminism and of the subjects of

<sup>87</sup> This binary framing frequently emerges in colonial debates regarding the role of women, from the nineteenth-century Egyptian debate on the veil alongside British colonial control (Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), to British women's suffrage and arguments regarding their imperial responsibilities (Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Shiera el-Malik, 'Rattling the binary: Symbolic power, gender, and embodied colonial legacies', *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 2:1 (2014), pp. 1–16), to the Indian debate on widow immolation and colonial discourse on tradition versus modernity (Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

feminism. If the stability and power of identity appears as the problem, then destabilising it is a logical approach. The preliminary question might be posed like this: How can we counter the epistemological machinations of the concept of identity? The answer appears to be: to make the singularity of identity appear multiple. What happens if the question is posed differently: what are the conditions of possibility for the epistemological machinations of identity? Or, what work does the idea of identity accomplish? These latter two questions underpin Enloe's approach in my reading of her work.

### *Enloe's 'closure-interrupting' feminist scholarship*

The first thing Enloe does is to expand what we consider 'international'. Whether one takes a narrow or a broad view of the international, it is possible to say that the boundaries of 'the international' are to some degree conceptual. It is possible to say that it includes states and state actors, the military, diplomatic missions, inter-governmental organisations, nongovernmental organisations, and some forms of civil society groups. While these groups may comprise international economic elements, private enterprise such as transnational companies and multinational corporate conglomerations can also be included in a broader definition of the 'international'. In addition, the international can consist of foreign policy experts and those in the Academy that, at times, influence them although, according to some, this influence seems to be waning.<sup>95</sup> Like others, Enloe notes that many observable actors are men. In searching for the women, then, Enloe is able to expand on this picture of the international. Women can be found in hierarchical locations (positions), which are simultaneously raced, sexed, and classed. Women are situated as state actors (for example, Margaret Thatcher), as citizens and travellers (interpreters of the world), as victims of war-time rape, as prostitutes in brothels serving military bases, as diplomatic wives, in domestic services (domestic workers are an international business, a gendered immigration politics as they are exports that become a large part of the GDP), in specific types of globalised, mainly low-skilled, low-paid factory work, and as eroticised symbols of fruit and other products.<sup>96</sup> In other words, Enloe is able

<sup>88</sup> Tickner, 'Feminist perspectives on 9/11'; Avishai Margalit and Ian Buruma, 'Occidentalism', *New York Review of Books*, 49:1 (2002). The article 'Occidentalism' and the subsequent book of the same title have been solidly critiqued. My aim here is not to repeat this critique, but to address how work such as this operates at cross-purposes with the aims of feminist politics. See Akeel Bilgrami, 'Occidentalism, the very idea: an essay on enlightenment and enchantment', *Critical Inquiry*, 32 (2006), pp. 381–411.

<sup>89</sup> Margalit and Buruma, 'Occidentalism', section 5.

<sup>90</sup> Bilgrami, 'Occidentalism, the very idea'.

<sup>91</sup> Tickner, 'Feminist perspectives on 9/11', p. 335, emphasis added.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339, emphasis added.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

<sup>94</sup> Tickner, 'On the frontlines or sidelines of knowledge and power?', p. 389, added.

<sup>95</sup> David Featherman and Maris Vinovskis, 'The growth and use of social and behavioural science in the federal government since WWII', in David Featherman and Maris Vinovskis (eds), *Social Science and Policy-making: A Search for Relevance in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 40–82.

<sup>96</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Cynthia Enloe, *Manoeuvres: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

to include all people as relational actors in global politics, certainly in terms of where they are situated politically and the roles they play in the global economy without centring inclusivity as a goal. Enloe analyses the conditions of possibility for how *ideas* of gender – of masculinity and femininity – structure global politics.<sup>97</sup>

Enloe contributes to the narrative of gendered social structures within which actors scramble for positionality; she studies discourses of power in a Foucauldian sense, which leads her to depict these discursive interactions as inherently political. For example, she characterises the division of acts into categories of ‘cultural’ and ‘political’ as the development of categories that are themselves political: ‘if we act as though the manipulation of ideas about femininity and masculinity are not political, but merely “cultural”, we risk ... underestimating how much of our lives are indeed political’.<sup>98</sup> It is noteworthy that Enloe was a comparativist at a time when comparative politics drew a clear distinction between the political and the cultural. But to claim that cultural categories are political categories is no longer itself a revolutionary statement, not even in 1989, when *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* was first published. Enloe takes things further however, arguing that cultural categories produce forms of social order, thus making cultural categories an outcome of contestation. At the same time, cultural categories comprise gender relations, among other institutional categories like forms of social relations and practices, and epistemological perspectives. While gender relations have been (and to a large extent still are) seen as part and parcel of the personal/domestic arena, and given that this arena is governed/structured by cultural categories, Enloe notes that ‘the most simple and disturbing feminist insight is that “the personal is the political”’.<sup>99</sup> Forms of social order, such as marriage, faith and labour, are personal and political categories delimiting an agent’s behaviour and gendered practices, even in global politics, so her argument goes, and can be quite casually forgotten.

For Enloe, feminist theorising precisely challenged this forgetting. It has ‘shown [how] behaviors and ideas that are passed off as natural and uncontested have in reality been fought over; that there have been debates and power struggles which, if now invisible, have been swept offstage in a deliberate attempt to make the victor’s stance appear more natural than it ever was’.<sup>100</sup> She gathers empirical data that contradicts common sense notions and she therefore shows *how* much of what appears as social or cultural phenomena is in fact political, even second order phenomena.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> As part of this thick description, Enloe demonstrates that the teaching of appropriate gender relations was seen to be important for both the colonised and the colonisers. Enloe explains how this impacted the domestic arena with reference to British masculinity and the Boy Scouts. Robert Baden-Powell, the father of the Boy Scouts (he, along with his wife also pioneered the girl scouts), had a vision of the appropriate masculinity and femininity necessary to the continuation of British imperial hegemony (*Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, pp. 49–51).

<sup>98</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, p. xiv.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58. In fact when asked if she would study the effects of gender on men, Enloe responds with the comment that men do figure into her work and that the empirical referent is more complex than the question indicates: ‘Women and ideas about femininity are manipulated usually by political actors intent upon persuading men to behave in certain ways. Just think of all you learn about states’ anxieties about masculinity from paying attention to military wives!’ See ‘Interview with Professor Cynthia Enloe’, *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 649–66, 663.

<sup>101</sup> And she does this by looking at the silences: in this case, the women. Studying silences is different than attempting to open spaces for people to speak. It requires listening to them where they are. The scholar’s responsibility is different in both cases. In the first instance, she controls spaces. In the second, she listens for what is said and what is not said, how a thing is said or not said and to whom. Enloe is preoccupied with the development of active criticism when she notes that ‘paying attention to consequences alone is useful, but too timid’ (Enloe, *Morning After*, p. 47).

Enloe's feminist practice is a way of seeing the world and challenging hegemonic impetuses for discursive closure by persistently interrupting and/or exposing those closures. While Enloe has not foregrounded theory, her empirical arguments entail a consistent and powerful theoretical approach that foregrounds critique of capitalism alongside awareness of the relationship between complex subjectivity and decision-making processes. She privileges an approach that centres power – a diffuse, discursive power – emancipation from which becomes moot without attending to historical context. And, Enloe actively remembers agency and contextual specificities in her work.<sup>102</sup>

### Discourse and future discourses

The third component of Foucault's notion of discourse holds that discourses set the stage for future discourses. This section focuses on a conversation between two articles in the *BJPIR* Special Issue: 'Beyond being marginal: gender and International Relations in Britain', by Judith Squires and Jutta Weldes and 'Do we understand each other yet: troubling engagements with(in) International Relations', by Marysia Zalewski. According to my reading, Squires and Weldes misread both Zalewski's concerns regarding the incorporation of a politically neutral notion of gender in scholarly work and Enloe's comments regarding casual forgetting.

#### *The politics of casual forgetting*

Squires and Weldes correctly suggest that 'gendered analysis fundamentally alters the empirical and theoretical boundaries of IR, thus irrevocably transforming its legitimate purview'.<sup>103</sup> But, they distinguish between gendered analysis (Gender and IR = GIR) and feminist analysis (feminist IR): feminist IR paved the way for GIR and GIR now encompasses it. According to them, rather than understanding gender as a conceptual component of feminist IR, the latter has become a sub-area of GIR.<sup>104</sup> A main reason for this is that, 'feminism has always been explicitly political' whereas GIR is more inclusive of diverse approaches.<sup>105</sup> For Squires and Weldes, the benefit of GIR is that insofar as it is more inclusive, it can lead to a fuller picture of the international and it can address oppression more broadly, that is, race and class, alongside gender.<sup>106</sup> Importantly, then, they suggest GIR has a neutral relationship with feminism. 'GIR as its own space for interrogating things international ... encompasses theories like neo-feminism, that are expressly anti-feminist ... leaves considerable space for analyses that are ... afeminist rather than anti-feminist', where afeminist implies 'nonfeminist' work or work that has a neutral relationship

<sup>102</sup> Enloe devises an anti-imperial approach that incorporates capital, gender, and race. Her approach to empiricism relies on an ethics of listening in order to hear others working within the nexus of what we might consider the political economy of life and in order to challenge the empiricism that speaks for or over actors in perceptibly weaker positions.

<sup>103</sup> Judith Squires and Jutta Weldes, 'Beyond being marginal: gender and International Relations in Britain', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9 (2007), pp. 185–203, 190.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

with feminism.<sup>107</sup> GIR, then, is constituted as a 'fixed space' with 'inclusive' contours for gendered analyses.

Interestingly, Squires and Weldes speak directly to Zalewski in their introductory article.<sup>108</sup> For her part, Zalewski makes a carefully articulated, but simple argument: GIR obscures dynamics of power; it is a response to hegemonic disciplinary constraints that seeks to avoid overtly political commitments in favour of a democratic approach to gender ('men are "a gender", too').<sup>109</sup> Neofeminism is a category of scholarship on gender and IR that is divested of specific feminist commitments to interrupting closures, commitments that underpin Enloe's work, for example. The predominance of GIR over feminist IR can be read as an example of hegemonic norms re-establishing equilibrium. For Zalewski, neofeminism is exactly such a 'pursuit of gender and IR from nonfeminist perspectives [that] manifests the intractable power of conventional social norms'.<sup>110</sup> The process of establishing equilibrium requires enacting closures and limiting the space for creative forms of contestation. Thus, the accusation that feminism is explicitly political appears ironic. On one hand, liberal feminism focuses on a liberal emancipatory agenda with an end goal of equality. On the other hand, an alternative feminism centres the inherently (contested/contesting/contestable) political nature of social interaction and practice (as does Enloe in her careful discussion of the politics of casual forgetting) and thereby centres the need for critical analysis. From this vantage point, given that feminism is focused on an end goal of equality or critique, the idea that such scholarship can ever be apolitical indicates that Zalewski's concerns are on point. Yet, Squires and Weldes seem to overlook the workings of discursive power and neutralize the power inherent in gendered dynamics when they, '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'.<sup>111</sup> Further, academic career mobility requires doing work that is understood according to prevailing norms, which is to consequently leave the dominant discourse unchallenged. In fact, Zalewski charges, 'why would scholars inspired and informed by feminism grant (any) power to *critical thinking produced through the academy*. . .?'<sup>112</sup> Certainly, an academy-legitimated neutral concept of gender appears suspicious.

The central contestation is twofold. First, Squires and Weldes and Zalewski differ over how to understand the work of the 'younger' scholars. Squires and Weldes see the new work as diverse and not always feminist, while Zalewski characterises it 'as a body of work that addresses political problems of international significance through feminism'.<sup>113</sup> Second, Squires and Weldes are concerned with the politics of 'bemoaning' marginalisation, while maintaining it.<sup>114</sup> In addition to Zalewski, they cite Jill Steans who says that 'mainstream scholars have engaged selectively with feminist IR, ignoring . . . the research of scholars who deploy unsettled notions of gender and gendered subjectivities, while selectively engaging with scholars who seemingly work

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>108</sup> Squires and Weldes do not specifically engage with the other articles in the issue.

<sup>109</sup> Zalewski, 'Do we understand each other yet?', p. 308.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>111</sup> Squires and Weldes, 'Beyond being marginal', p. 191.

<sup>112</sup> Zalewski, 'Do we understand each other yet?', p. 305, emphasis in original.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>114</sup> Squires and Weldes, 'Beyond being marginal', p. 192.

with stable and unproblematic gender categories.<sup>115</sup> In other words, those established in the discipline choose work that reproduces the comforting discursive closures. Yet, Squires and Weldes suggest that young scholars have moved past the stigma of marginality and are simply doing gender analysis (that can be feminist or afeminist). They are rightly concerned with the idea that complaints about marginality have a tendency to reproduce orthodoxy.<sup>116</sup> However, this is not simply an account of marginality.

The unavoidable problems in the political economic field of the academy include constraints that are a function of bureaucratic and discursive practices. Squires and Weldes comment that the repetitive citing of disciplinary icons reinscribes their authority as the mainstream has set the agenda. Therefore, the burden of proof is on feminist IR which yields a 'practice of marginal self-positioning' and which in turn 'undermines ... the claim that it ought to be taken seriously'.<sup>117</sup> Thus, their narrative goes like this: first, feminist IR laid the groundwork for GIR (that is, it opened up a space for gender concerns to be addressed); second, young scholars have confidence in taking for granted that these concerns are legitimate; and third, this confidence brings with it a different form of scholarship, one that is less willing and, indeed, less interested in engaging with mainstream IR. This is a narrative of generational comfort. 'The self-assurance with which these young scholars engage with things international from diverse gendered perspectives shows that it is entirely possible to create the conditions in which such work can be pursued, and for those engaging in gendered scholarship subsequently to develop successful academic careers'.<sup>118</sup> However, returning to the central contestation, young confident scholars who refuse to focus on marginalisation and instead carry on working on international politics through feminism are not necessarily neutralising gender. In cases where they are, questions must be asked about the conditions of possibility for (and the imaginative limits of) this position. Enloe and Zalewski are consistent in urging this sort of 'active remembering'.

## Conclusion

Knowledge practices such as those examined in these pages situate feminist IR squarely within a geopolitical framework that engenders depoliticisation. Furthermore, the challenge posed by the impetus towards depoliticisation takes on critical dimensions when one thinks about these arguments through the lenses provided by the earlier discussion of Orientalism and neoliberalism. I imagine that Enloe, Zalewski, Squires and Weldes would all agree that the degree to which 'younger' scholars have a confidence born out of earlier struggles can be considered a collective good. But, Zalewski seems to be suggesting that a 'feminist neutral' form of gender analysis, if it were logically possible (which it is not without dehistoricising 'gender' as an analytical tool), can only be a condition of possibility of discursive closures and a dangerous compromise for avoiding marginality. Enloe posits a potential historicised reading of the contemporaneous stresses on British IR:

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

what cultural forces are especially at work in the British 'world' of scholarly International Relations that may or may not be so influential in another country's research field? Several possibilities came to mind: firstly, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), with its budgetary and careerist rewards and punishments, its centralized ledgers of the journals that 'count' and those that 'don't count' and its apparent discouragement of interdisciplinary research and publication. Then there is the British state's ongoing ambivalence towards Europe and the US, out of which may flow particular notions of what 'security studies' encompasses and which foreign policy topics 'matter'. Finally, there is the apparent institutional withdrawal of support from academic women's studies in Britain. ... This cannot help undercutting its scholarly credibility in the British IR community.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, in evidence here is a struggle to get gender on the agenda coupled with the struggle to maintain a critical stance in theorising. It seems fair to tie Squires and Weldes' excitement regarding a new GIR to the fact that feminist scholars have been working to normalise gender analyses for many years. Squires and Weldes are absolutely correct, feminism has always been explicitly political and when it stops being political, it stops being feminism. But, it seems to me they misread Enloe whose comments, placed directly before their article, frame their argument and the issue itself. Enloe points to a broader problem when she writes that, '[a]s the casual forgetting that infected the military bases and the militarization investigatory networks shows, some of the intellectual dynamics at work in Britain today can also be witnessed in other countries.'<sup>120</sup> I am reading the politics of casual forgetting as an avoidance of contestation – both the contestation that went in to the development of our intellectual work and the contestation in which that work is involved, but Enloe does not say this directly. She writes of masculinist forgetting, of broadening the scope of analysis and of asking feminist questions. A familiarity with her work would indicate that she is addressing the need to – actively remember – the need to centre the political, and that she could find gender analyses by women scholars to be masculinist, but never apolitical, or even afeminist – that is, they are never not implicated by feminism.

In these pages, I grapple with Enloe's notion of casual forgetting. Her preface is barely two pages long. Two analytical frames, critiques of Orientalism and neoliberalism, illuminate a set of knowledge practices that centre the use of binaries as a form of objectivity that disembled phenomena from context, and a form of oversimplification that flattens the appearance of complexity or messiness. Together, these practices have a depoliticising effect and they condition responses that keep hidden their mechanisms even in work guided by critical agendas. Enloe systematically unsettles knowledge practices that yield discursive closures. Consequently, I suggest that the notion of casual forgetting pinpoints an overlooking of power that facilitates enclosures that marginalize and depoliticise (contested) phenomena in feminist work as it does in Orientalism and neoliberalism. This is important because processes of casual forgetting get internalised and subjects reproduce in everyday ways knowledge practices such that ethnicity, identity, consumer choices, for example, come to appear divested of ideology and politics. If apparently apolitical forms of *being* support and facilitate technocratic forms of governance then political contestation occupies an increasingly narrow platform that is conditioned by casual forgetting

<sup>119</sup> Enloe, 'Forward', p. 194.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.



and the impetus for discursive closures. In this light, casual forgetting can be understood as an implicit or complicit acceptance of seemingly apolitical spaces, and ‘systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions – mind-forg’d manacles – are all too easily made, applied, and guarded’.<sup>121</sup> Thus, unless knowledge practices and the way they order possibilities are part of the analysis, critical interventions can conceivably be ‘barking up the wrong tree’. It will not be easy. Enloe says, ‘[b]eing curious takes energy. It may ... be a distorted form of “energy conservation” that makes certain ideas so alluring’.<sup>122</sup> But at stake, here, is the intelligibility of forms of contestation.

<sup>121</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 328.

<sup>122</sup> Enloe, *The Curious Feminist*, p. 1.