ALTERNATE ROUTES

PRESENTATION AND EDITORIAL POLICY

ALTERNATE ROUTES is a refereed multi-disciplinary journal published annually by graduate students in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa. We hope to make AR a forum for debate and exchange among graduate students throughout the country and are therefore interested in receiving papers written by graduate students (or co-authored with faculty), regardless of their university affiliation.

The editorial emphasis is on the publication of critical and provocative analysis of theoretical and substantive issues which clearly have relevance for progressive political intervention. Although we welcome papers on a broad range of topics, members of the editorial board work within a feminist and/or marxist tradition. Therefore, we encourage submissions which advance or challenge questions and issues raised by these two broadly defined perspectives. We also welcome responses to and reviews of recent publications.

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A Journal of Critical Social Research

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The cultural studies approach was imported to Canada through the Birmingham school and more recently has been enriched by scholarship coming from France and the United States. Today the approach is even broader than the sum of these international traditions because Canadians have brought to cultural studies a unique historical perspective. This new generation of Canadian trained social scientists cut their teeth in English Canadian political economy. What results are syntheses of these two very different approaches. Class, along with gender and ethnicity remain important shapers of the lives of people and bring a richer and deeper understanding of Canadian social reality.

The articles in this issue are representative of the breadth of interests that contribute to our knowledge of Canadian social practices and institutions. The uniqueness of the Canadian historical experience is evident in the papers included in this volume.

Veronica Vazquez Garcia is a graduate student at the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University, Ottawa. Her research focuses on the impact of cattle and oil industries on Nahua communities in Veracruz, southeastern Mexico. Her article in this issue explores the potential contribution that the Marxism of Antonio Gramsci, and in particular his concepts of ideology, hegemony, civil society and the state can make to the Neo-Marxist current within feminist theory. The exploration of these concepts is located in the context of the absence of concepts of the sexual division of labour and of women's oppression in Gramsci's work. The paper concludes that Gramsci's innovative theoretical and political contributions can be reformulated to deal with the contemporary concerns of socialist feminism.

David Skinner is a graduate student at the department of Communications at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia. Focusing on the historical relations between the state and private capital, his paper argues that broadcasting regulations in Canada

have generally subordinated the interests of public broadcasting to those of private capital since the advent of these regulations.

Paul Shreenan is a graduate student at the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. His research is on the development of the Maritime Fhishermen's Union with specific focus on the impact of Acadian culture on the union in different sub-regions of the Maritimes. His article in this issue addresses the invisibility and undervaluation of women's labour among small boat fishers in Atlantic Canada. His basic contribution is the discussion of the role played by what the author terms "the ideological practice of independence" in reproducing the subordination of women in fisher households. This local ideological practice articulates with liberal, capitalist and patriarchal practices to legitimate the oppression of women.

David Hubka is a graduate student at the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. His area of interest is the construction of Canadian national identity through the media. In his paper in this issue, E.O. Wright's project is reviewed with respect to history and class structure. It is argued that Wright's treatment of historicity has been neglected within the debates generated by his project, and that, taken out of historical context, his conceptualization of class loses its explanatory power regarding Marxist theoretical integration and emancipatory strategies. Alternate formulations of Marxist theory and method for understanding class and history and offered, as well as directions for future research.

We hope that our readers will respond to this issue by sharing their ideas and critiques with the editorial collective.

GRAMSCI, WOMEN AND THE STATE

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INTRODUCTION

The "unhappy marriage" between Marxism and Feminism has given rise to an extensive debate. However, the feminist scholarship dealing with ideology and consciousness has not worked within a Marxist framework but rather has turned to psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theories to conceptualize consciousness, particularly the relationship of the body, sexuality and consciousness (Sandra Morgen, 1990). The purpose of this paper is to locate the feminist discussion of ideology within a Neo-Marxist framework by arguing the usefulness of some aspects of Gramscian theory to feminist theory and to consider its implications for feminist politics. The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section I discuss some key concepts of Gramscian thought. The second section involves an assessment of Gramsci's work and suggests that he failed to account for both the sexual division of labour and women's oppression. The third and fourth sections focus on the use of key concepts of Gramscian thought from a feminist theoretical perspective aiming to address this failure. Finally, I outline some suggestions for feminist cultural critique and feminist politics drawing on Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemony.

I will organize my discussion of Gramsci around his concept of hegemony as it relates to his conception of civil society. I will then seek to explore the implications of these two concepts for his political strategy in relation to the State. I will argue that Gramsci's project for the construction of socialism and the revolution in the West neglects gender issues and as such can be located within the mainstream of Marxist thought which leaves the sexual division of labour untouched. However, Gramsci's concern with ideology allows for the theorization of the reproduction of patriarchy through cultural and ideological processes. More importantly, he helps us to understand the structures underpinning

patriarchal ideology. Similarly, feminist political agenda can be read as counter-hegemonic practices facing the type of State that Gramsci had in mind. The focus of this paper is the reconceptualization of Gramscian tools of analysis from a feminist perspective.

GRAMSCI: HEGEMONY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE STATE.

The nature of Gramsci's texts has given rise to numerous problems. The Prison Notebooks were produced under difficult physical and intellectual conditions, and Gramsci considered them "unfinished fragments, elements and indications for further study" (Anne Showstack Sassoon, 1980:12). He used the same terms in different ways and created a code to deal with censorship. The development of his thought has been difficult to trace in terms of its continuity and change. Consequently, there is a large variety of readings of Gramsci. Showstack Sassoon refers to two types of readings. The first one, the "textual reading", "can attempt to trace the history of a concept internal to Gramsci's theoretical work, examining gaps, contradictions, coherence, advances", while neglecting the historical context from which Gramsci's work emerged (Ibid:15). The second possible type of reading emphasises this context, namely, "the debates and the experiences of the Second International and of the working-class movement in post-First World War Europe" (Ibid:16). Showstack Sassoon believes that reference to this context is necessary to understand Gramsci's major theoretical concerns. Hence, Gramsci's work can be read as dealing with the construction of socialism in the USSR as well as in terms of the "revolution in the West", which had to take into account special conditions of advanced capitalist societies.

Gramsci's major contribution to Marxist theory is his departure from the economistic version of Marxism which sees the relationship between the material relations of production and the superstructure (ideological, legal, and political practices) as a mechanical one, where the latter are determined by the former. For Gramsci, "`popular beliefs' and similar ideas are themselves material forces" (Gramsci, 1971: 165). Ideas "are not spontaneously `born' in each individual brain", but rather have "a centre of formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion..."

(Ibid:192). Ideology "is the more general term for the ways in which certain sets of ideas and assumptions become dominant forces in society" (Tony Bennett et al, 1981:207). These ideas are contained in

> 1.-language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content; 2.-"common sense" and "good sense";3.-popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of `folklore' (Gramsci,1971:323).

The implication of Gramsci's conception of ideology is fivefold:

> Focus is shifted from the intellectual plane of philosophical systems to the formation of popular consciousness or common sense. Second there is less emphasis on ideology as "system", as integrated or coherent. Third ideological struggle is viewed, not as titanic struggles between rival Weltanschauung, but as practical engagements about shifts and modifications in "common sense" or popular consciousness. Fourth is the emphasis on ideologies as active processes which "`organize' human masses and create the terrain on which men (sic) move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." (1971:377). Fifth his conception of ideology is positive whilst Marx's was negative. For Marx ideology blocked and distorted, whilst for Gramsci it provided the very mechanisms through which any participation in social life was possible (Alan Hunt, 1990:5).

Gramsci's conception of ideology as a non-unitary bloc where the interests of subordinate classes are constantly negotiated, allows us to trace the constitution of a social class as

politically dominant in particular historical circumstances. Gramsci calls hegemony the mobilizing capacity of a social class to both dominate subaltern classes and lead allied ones. He suggests that a class must exercise "leadership before winning governmental power", and when it becomes dominant "it must continue to `lead' as well" (1971:58). A particular historical bloc emerges from the various processes of conflicts, negotiations and compromises among different classes and social groups. The hegemony that this historical bloc exercises "must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group [class] in the decisive nucleus of economic activity", but this nucleus is far from being the only determinant, since hegemony must also be "ethical-political" (Ibid:161). Hence, the political hegemony of a social class depends on its ability to generate "the `spontaneous' consent given by the great mass of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group [class]" (Ibid:12).

A new way of looking at the relationship between civil society and the State stems from Gramsci's conception of hegemony. For Gramsci, civil society is no longer the private realm of mere economic relations, as in Marx, but rather it is "the ensemble of organisms called `private'", where hegemony of the dominant class is exercised (Idem). In other words, civil society is the social space where consent is generated and resistance to dominant hegemony may be built upon. As Ralph Dahrendorf puts it, civil society is "the intermediate world" between the State and the individual (1990:18). Civil society is constituted by institutions whose degree of autonomy from the State vary from case to case.

Gramsci defines the State in modern societies as "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (1971:244). By insisting that "by `State' should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the `private' apparatus of `hegemony' or civil society" (Ibid:261), Gramsci avoids an overemphasis on either the coercive or consensual elements of the State. He conceives the State as having a possible historical existence between the two poles of coercion and consent, and the

relationship between civil society and the State takes a special form in every historical conjuncture. Therefore, the distinction between civil society as the realm for consent and political society or the State as the realm for coercion is for Gramsci a "methodological" rather than an "organic one".

The relationship between civil society and the State is the major difference between the "East" and the "West":

> In Russia the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only on outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks (Ibid:238).

Gramsci's new strategy for socialist revolution in the West stems from this distinction between the "East" and the "West". The fact that in the West there is a "sturdy structure of civil society", or a complex network of institutions, makes crucial the battle for hegemony. Gramsci refers to this battle as the war of position. The success of the working class in this battle is the pre-condition for securing its political power. As Anne Showstack Sassoon suggests, "the key phrase is Gramsci's specification that once the war of position is won, it is won definitively. Or, in other terms, only when the working class has won the battle of hegemony will it have triumphed definitively" (1980:196). This battle must continue during the building of socialism; it is never won once and for all.

The war of position is a battle for hegemony in which intellectuals play an essential role. Although Gramsci believes that "all men [sic] are intellectuals" (1971:9) in the sense that all individuals make sense of their world, he makes clear that only some of them "have in society the function of intellectuals" (Idem). This function is mainly on "organisational" and "connective" one. The intellectual's relationship with "the world of production" is "`mediated' by the whole fabric of society of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the `functionaries'"

(Ibid:12). Hence, intellectuals articulate social hegemony not only in the field of production, but also in that of culture and political administration (Ibid:97).

The degree of connection between intellectuals and "a fundamental social group" varies for each case, and Gramsci suggests that a whole range of "organicity" of intellectual strata can be established depending on this connection. Gramsci calls organic intellectuals those created together with a social class and responsible for giving this class

> homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc (Ibid:5).

Traditional intellectuals, by contrast, are those "already in existence" when a new social class emerges. Since they belong to a previous historical time, and have links with previous dominant classes, they remain unconnected with the emerging mode of production. Traditional intellectuals "represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms" (Gramsci quoted by Showstack Sassoon, 1980).

Since the nature of the relationship both between intellectuals themselves and between intellectuals and the various social classes affects the very nature of hegemony, it is essential that the working class creates its own organic intellectuals. It is within the party that these intellectuals are to be formed, since the party is the central organizer of the working class hegemony. Gramsci compares the political party to the state in its role of articulating an hegemonic project:

> The political party...is precisely the mechanism which carries out in civil society the same function as the State carries out, more synthetically and over a larger scale, in political society. In other words it is

> responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals of a given group -the dominant one- and the traditional intellectuals. The party carries out this function in strict dependence on its basic function, which is that of elaborating its own component parts - those elements of a social group which has been born and developed as an "economic" group- and of turning them into qualified intellectuals, leaders and organisers of all activities and functions inherent in the organic development of an integral society, both civil and political (Gramsci, 1971:15-16).

In order to turn the working class as an "economic group" into "qualified intellectuals, leaders and organizers", the party must exercise some leadership. This leadership must not be an "abstract" one but rather must apply

> itself to real men [sic], formed in specific historical relations, with specific feelings, outlooks, fragmentary conceptions of the world, etc., which [are] the result of `spontaneous' combinations of a given situation of material production with the `fortuitous' agglomeration within it of disparate social elements (Ibid:198).

The role of the party is to "educate", "direct", "purge of extraneous contaminations" this element of "spontaneity", in order to "bring it into line with modern theory -but in a living and historically effective manner" (Idem). Hence, the "unity between `spontaneity' and `conscious leadership' or `discipline' is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, insofar as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses" (Idem).

GRAMSCI: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE

Gramsci's originality is mainly due to his emphasis on the reproduction of forms of ideological domination through social practices at a daily level. From this conception of ideology, a paramount need is to look at civil society as a major site where dominant hegemony can be contested. However, the fact that Gramsci

wrote the Prison Notebooks thinking of a working class project somehow narrows the applicability of his categories to other kinds of analysis. Gramsci's starting point is the assumption that the working class is being oppressed by the place it occupies in the relations of production, and therefore the working class is its own agent of liberation in the sense that it is capable of "leading" other classes towards revolutionary change. In the organization of working class hegemony, other social groups and classes can only work as either allies or enemies, and Gramsci gives no indication about how to articulate the struggle against class oppression with other kinds of oppression other than under the working class and the party's leadership.

Hence, the whole set of categories of Gramsci emerges from the centrality that the working class has in his project for socialist revolution. For example, although dominant hegemony is articulated at different levels of the superstructure by organic intellectuals, "it must be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group [class] in the decisive nucleus of economic activity" (Ibid:161) and therefore is closely linked to material relations of production, or "the factory" (Ibid:285). This does not have to be a problem per se, except for the fact that Gramsci also assumes that all the members of the working class are male, and in doing so he obscures women's oppression not only as members of the working class but also as women.

This problem becomes relevant in Gramsci's discussion of Fordism, which deals with Gramsci's exposure of monogamy among the working class as functional for capitalist profit. Gramsci draws the link between a discipline of the instincts in the assembly-line and a regimentation of sexual life and in so doing he shows how capitalism has generated a civilta or a way of living beneficial to capitalist production. However, only the classes tied to production are subjected to puritanical morality, since the "`puritanical' initiatives simply have the purpose of preserving, outside of work, a certain psycho-physical equilibrium which prevents the physiological collapse of the worker, exhausted by the new method of production" (Gramsci quoted by Buci-Glucksmann, 1980:84). Concerning the morality of classes other than the working class, Gramsci argues that

> The most noteworthy fact in the American phenomenon in relation to these manifestations is the gap which has been formed and is likely to be increasingly accentuated, between the morality and way of life of the workers and those of other strata of the population (1971:304).

Thus, Gramsci's claim that "the new industrialism wants monogamy" (Idem) refers only to the working class' family where monogamy as a repression of sexual needs can be explained by the link of the worker to the relations of production. However, this repression applies only to male workers who cannot afford "a night of `excess'" after work because it affects their performance at work the following day. Gramsci does not speak about the repression of women's sexuality, and so we have to assume that there is not such thing, or that it is similar to that of their husbands (which, needless to say, is quite unlikely) if women are also working in the assembly line. Moreover, Gramsci leaves unproblematized the availability of women to meet men's sexual needs, when equating the (male) worker's impossibility "to dedicate himself to the pursuit of drink or to sport or evading the law" (Idem) to his lack of time for "womanizing", since all these activities demand too much leisure. Gramsci does not talk about the male worker's wife nor does he problematize the existence of prostitutes with whom working class men can have a "night of excess" whereas their wives cannot. The only type of prostitutes Gramsci speaks of are the wives of American millionaires who go to Europe to "contract `marriages' for a season" as a way of escaping boredom and a mere form of entertainment (Ibid:306).

Gramsci's discussion of puritanical morality precludes the possibility of analysis of the family as a realm where a different type of relations of subordination of women by men takes place. Gramsci does not examine the sexual division of labour and the power relations between men and women resulting from this division, and therefore the little insight that he sheds in the nature of women's oppression is an appendix of the relations of production, where women's situation is defined by their husbands' link to these relations. Women whose husbands are closely tied to these relations do not represent a problem (repression of sexuality in Gramsci refers only to male sexuality), while women whose husbands are

millionaires are "luxury mammals" and can afford behaving like prostitutes as a way of entertainment. What is even more striking is that Gramsci speaks of these millionaires as hardworking men whose wealth make their wives passive, and so the "loose" morality of upper classes is applicable only to women. Gramsci presents the "prostitution" of women of the upper classes as resulting from their own will ("the women, with nothing to do, travel" [Idem]) rather than from men's financial power, while the prostitution of women in the lower classes is not even dealt with.

Gramsci's assumption that all members of the working class are male translates into his agenda for cultural critique and therefore the scope of this critique is a limited one. The critique of culture involves for Gramsci "a critique of capitalist civilization" in order to form "the unified consciousness of the proletariat" (Gramsci quoted by Buci-Glucksmann, 1980:39); he refers to his own work in the cultural field as a battle for a culture that would be "an instrument and form needed for the political emancipation of a class" (Ibid:79). Accordingly, the intellectuals who organize a counter-hegemonic project "have to be oriented towards the revolutionary proletariat" (Ibid:28) and must work with the political party. When Gramsci talks about the role of the party as articulator of a new civilta he clearly refers to the working class as the generator of these new ways of life and calls them "proletarian culture". Hence, although it is true that there is great novelty in Gramsci's political strategy for social change, the new hegemony he refers to is a working class hegemony which leaves untouched other forms of oppression.

The key issue now is to examine the extent to which Gramsci's failure to account for women's oppression and his project of emancipation for the working class obscures gender inequality and precludes women's own emancipatory practices. In other words, the usefulness of Gramscian analysis for feminist politics has to established. I think that the possibility exists for a dialogue between Gramsci and feminist theory in order to expose women's oppression and explore how it interweaves with class oppression. However, this is not a matter of just "adding on" women to the Gramscian project in terms of political struggle, but rather of giving centrality to the relationships of oppression of women by

men in theoretical analysis. This kind of work has to be done if we want to create critical awareness and problematize works produced by progressive intellectuals, such as Paul Willis' Learning to Labour, (1977) where patriarchal attitudes and assumptions of working class "lads" are uncritically viewed as forms of resistance to dominant hegemony (Angela McRobbie, 1981).

WOMEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY

As pointed out in the previous section, Gramsci's assumption that all members of the working class are male leads to a failure to theorize women's oppression in the work place and in other spheres of their lives. In this section, I will discuss the socialist feminist approach to women's subordination in capitalist society in order to broaden the Gramscian project of counter-hegemony by incorporating into the analysis two points traditionally overlooked by Marxist class analysis: a)the notion of a gendered working class (and labour force) and b)the sphere of reproduction. I will mainly refer to Alison M. Jaggar's (1983) account of socialist feminist theory.

Socialist feminists believe that "a full understanding of the capitalist system requires a recognition of the way in which it is structured by male dominance and, conversely, that a full understanding of contemporary male dominance requires a recognition of the way it is organized by the capitalist division of labour" (Alison M. Jaggar, 1983:125). Hence, the socialist feminist approach utilizes the method of historical materialism to explore "the social relations that constitute humans not only as workers and capitalists but also as women and men" (Ibid:132). In order to achieve this, socialist feminist theory attempts to reconceptualize both the private sphere of human reproduction and the public sphere of human production. Socialist feminists argue that human reproduction is a form of labour and that the prevailing system of organizing reproduction is alienating and exploitative for women. This theory provides a way of understanding the segregation by sex of the labour force as well as sexuality, childbearing and personal maintenance in political and economic terms.

Socialist feminists' major divergency with traditional Marxism is their conception of what sets of relationships constitute the economic base of a mode of production.

> They claim that the economic foundation of society includes a characteristic system of organizing procreation [reproduction] which, in historical times, has been defined in part by a characteristic sexual division of labour. This system of procreation is among the most pervasive influences on the culture of a society, understood in the sense of its "legal, political, religious, aesthetic and philosophic...forms" and is important in setting limits to what forms can ultimately exist in that society. Much feminist theory consist precisely in tracing connections between the sexual division of labour and procreation, the sexual division of labour in the market and the ideological sexism embodied in law, politics, religion, aesthetics and philosophy (Ibid:142).

Thus, socialist feminists believe it is misleading to think of the public and private as two distinct spheres:

> "production" and "reproduction", work and the family, far from being separate territories like the moon and the sun of the kitchen and the shop, are really intimately related modes that reverberate upon one another and frequently occur in the same social, physical, and even psychic spaces...Not only reproduction and kinship, or the family, have their own, historically determined, products, material techniques, modes or organization and power relationships, but reproduction and kinship are themselves integrally related to the social relations of production and the state, they reshape these relations all the time (Rosalind Petchesky quoted by Alison M. Jaggar, Ibid:146).

Similarly, Joan Kelly believes that

> We can no longer focus upon productive relations of class, suppressing those of consumption (sexuality/family) as Marx did, or focus on sex and family arrangements (Freud, and Juliet Mitchell in Psychoanalysis and Feminism) without those of class, any more than we can place one sex in the category of sexuality/family and the other in that of society. To do so violates our social experience and the new consciousness that is emerging out of it. A more complex pattern of sociosexual arrangements is called for - and is appearing in feminist social thought. Feminist thought regards the sexual/familial organization of society as integral to any conception of social structure or social change. And conversely, it sees the relation of the sexes as formed by both socioeconomic and sexual-familial structures in their systematic interconnectedness (Ibid:147).

By including childbearing and sexual activities into the socio-economic foundation of society, socialist feminist theory broadens the set of institutions that shape civil society. From a socialist feminist perspective, civil society is not, as in Marx, the realm of mere relations of production. Nor is it "the ensemble of organisms called `private'", as in Gramsci, since he did not see the specificity of relations of subordination of women by men in some institutions of civil society. As pointed out by Mary O'Brien:

> Gramsci's notion of civil society is ... circumscribed by his fixation on education and his neglect of family relations. He speaks of civil society as local culture centred on school and family but ... has little to say about family. He is more interested in the birth of organic intellectuals than in the birth of real babies (1984:92).

By contrast, socialist feminist theory demonstrates that sexuality and reproduction are organized through institutions such as

marriage and the family, which have a historical development, are subject to state regulation and are closely interconnected with the relations of production. Sexuality and reproduction are a part of the socio-economic foundation of society or the public sphere, and civil society is constituted by institutions that channel women into motherhood and childbearing and the sex-segregated job market.

Accordingly, the conception of dominant hegemony implies not only class domination but also male supremacy. An analysis of dominant hegemony must explore the relationship between, on the one hand, women's lack of access to resources and economic as well as political power and, on the other hand, the social constructions of motherhood and "women's work". The conception of dominant hegemony can illuminate the processes through which male supremacy is accepted as common sense and as part of the natural order in order to explore women's consent to patriarchal practices or, in Jaggar's words, women's "internalization" of their oppressive "external" reality. Finally, Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony allows us to see patriarchal ideology as a non-unitary bloc where women may constantly open up spaces for negotiation.

WOMEN AND THE STATE

A feminist approach to the state must explore the processes through which the whole set of interconnections between the division of labour in the domestic sphere, the labour market and state policy reproduce male supremacy and capitalist relations of production while also creating new contradictions in people's lives and hence new spaces for negotiation. This analysis is essential because the fact that today most women combine formal paid work with full adult domestic responsibilities or (as in the Third World) perform several activities as a source for extra income (i.e. the informal sector) coupled with domestic work at home has generated a whole new set of policies which directly affect women. State policies have the power to construct categories of women as workers and mothers. State legislation sets the limits within which women control their own sexuality in terms of birth control, abortion law, maternity leaves and child care services. It also establishes the legal means and implications of forming or dissolving a family unit. In other words, the state has a lot of

say in the organization of reproduction, in the sense that it reinforces existing familial forms where women are responsible for taking care of the family needs. This fact creates constant contradictions in women's lives and opens up new spaces for negotiation.

The expansion of the welfare state aiming to respond to emerging women's needs is a process that can be traced from a Gramscian perspective. Concomitantly, possibilities for social change can be explored in the articulation of these new needs which the state decides to either act or not act upon. Gramsci helps to see pieces of legislation on women's needs as resulting from pressures that the women's movement puts on a capitalist state and at the same time as an attempt of this state to intervene into a new area of civil society in order to avoid possible social explosion and reorganize a social base of consent. Thus, Gramsci is useful to see the changes of state practices as a positive "sign of ideological change in the wider society and a measure of the strength of women's mobilizations", while keeping in mind that "the ideological consensus into which feminist demands are integrated is not only one that balances gender oppression, but is fundamentally conservative, part of managing a society by a capitalist state" (Heather Jon Maroney, 29).

Gramsci then offers the theoretical guidelines for a "third way" in feminist politics. His notion of historical bloc highlights the relationship between women and the state, an overlooked area of study in feminist literature (Jane Jenson, 1986; Drude Dahlerup, 1987). From a Gramscian perspective, women's needs can be seen as partially represented in the dominant hegemony in a particular historical conjuncture. This representation can be viewed as resulting from processes of negotiation between different social groups and interests, among them women's organizations. The notion of historic bloc allows us to escape from an instrumental view of the state (i.e. men control the state and use it to keep women in a subordinate position) or a functionalist one (i.e. the state is a patriarchal state and in all ways contributes to women's oppression). Since the historic bloc is not reducible to a ruling class or group (i.e. men), it allows to see the state as a structure where various groups and interests are unevenly organized

rather than as an entity with its own will (i.e. "the state is at present looking for new forms of patriarchal control", Zillah Eisenstein quoted by Dahlerup, 1987). Consequently, the state becomes an arena of negotiation where some battles can be "won" by subordinate groups, in this case women. However, Gramsci's emphasis on both sides of domination (coercion and consent) keeps us away from the danger of overestimating these triumphs. Indeed, Gramsci's war of position allows us to overcome the difficulty of considering the same state action as either oppressive of women or liberating, if we place it within a context of constant negotiation. More importantly, Gramsci reminds us of the importance of civil society as a major arena where consensus occurs and a counter-hegemonic project must be built upon.

In her analysis of women's dual role and the British welfare state, Anne Showstack Sassoon argues that there is a contradiction between the domestic sphere, the world of work and the welfare state, in that

> the institutions and practices of the welfare state are organized around the same traditional model of work and domestic life, where women remain the backbone of domestic labour, and the world of work is organized round a "male model" which assumes one human being at work for, say, forty hours a week (plus commuting and possible overtime) with a partner available fulltime for domestic tasks (1987:160).

Showstack Sassoon describes these conflicts as "part of a long-term development, what Gramsci would have called an organic crisis" (Idem). Accordingly, she points out that "a battle on all fronts, a war of position in Gramsci's terms, a strategy of reforms" (Ibid:174) is the solution to the problem. Hence, she suggests that the struggle should involve not only the negotiation over "caring and servicing responsibilities" between civil society and the state, but also the emergence of "post-male models of work", that is, a structural change in the organization of people's time. This change would imply the abolition of particular conceptions of male work and female work, both in the labour market and the family, as well as a total restructuration of the sexual division of labour at

all levels of society. In order to do so, Showstack Sassoon states that a "cultural revolution" both in the part of women and men is needed. In other words, state legislation favouring child care and parental leaves are a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve equality between women and men. Civil society as a whole should be involved in the implementation of changes in the organization of all spheres of work. The logic of work in the productive sphere as well as that of state provided services should be transformed in order to meet the social needs of concrete individuals.

The socialist feminism's goal of human emancipation involves not only the full development of human potentialities through free productive labour, but also "for free sexual expression, for freely bearing children and for freely rearing them" (Alison M. Jaggar, 1983:131). This ideal of human well-being also calls for change in all institutions in civil society:

> To restructure how we come to know self and others in our birthing, growing up, loving and working, feminist politics must reach the institutions that fatefully bear upon sexuality, family, and community. Schools and all socializing agencies will have to be rid of sex and sexual bias. Work and welfare will have to be placed in the humane context of the basic right to all to live, work, and love in dignity. And there will have to be a genuine participation by all in shaping the modes and purposes of our labour and distributing its returns. A feminist politics that aims at abolishing all forms of hierarchy so as to restructure personal relations as well as relations among peers has to reach and transform the social organization of work, property and power (Joan Kelly quoted by Alison M. Jaggar, Ibid:147)

Socialist feminism's conception of social change underpin the necessity of new types of organizations to bring about this change. Showstack Sassoon suggests that organizations such as trade unions should be concerned not only with the protection of people's work but also with the organization of their domestic needs in relation

to their paid work and vice versa, and break with the assumption "that people should adjust their lives to the job and not the other way around" (1987:176). Analogously, Jaggar argues that the organizations advocated by socialist feminists are not only dedicated to overthrow the capitalist mode of production but also to struggle against the way through which men perpetuate their dominance: rape, sexual harassment, domestic assault, refusal to take equal share of household responsibilities and sexism within the organizations themselves (1983:331-332).

Socialist feminists advocate the need for a cultural revolution and believe that the creation of a women's culture is an important way in which women can develop political self-consciousness. Jaggar argues that a socialist feminist culture is part of a wide range of political activity which has not clearcut priorities; socialist feminists struggle on all fronts and constantly pursue to create alternative institutions. However, they are aware of the limits that the larger society imposes on the possibilities of alternative ways for living and working. There is a great similarity between Gramsci's idea that the working class has to ensure hegemony before winning political power and the socialist feminist approach to social change:

> Socialist feminists expect that there will be a distinctive revolutionary period, characterized by acute social turmoil, but they also expect that the outcome of this turmoil will be determined by the kind and quality of the pre-revolutionary activity that preceded it. To this extent, they see themselves not so much as living the revolution as preparing for it and attempting in limited ways to prefigure it (Ibid:340).

Before the social turmoil reaches us, I shall give an example of the type of institutional change socialist feminists are aiming for. In her study on the effects that the work of feminist teachers has for social change, Kathleen Weiler combines three major themes of feminist methodology with some of the premises of what she calls critical educational theory, of which Gramsci is considered an essential contribution. The first theme is that "feminist researchers begin their investigation of the social world from a

grounded position in their own subjective oppression", what "leads them to a sensitivity to power that comes from being subordinate". Second, "feminist research is characterized by an emphasis on lived experience and the significance of everyday life". Finally, "feminist research is politically committed". These two last themes imply that feminist research has to shed light in women's personal experiences of subjugation within a male dominated society and that this research is committed to search for ways to change women's situation (1988: 58-59). From critical educational theory Weiler retains Gramsci's "analysis of the power of hegemonic ideas to shape consciousness coupled with his unshakable belief in the power of critique and political activism" (Ibid:17). Accordingly, Weiler argues that the Gramscian concept of counter-hegemony has to be applied to feminist work, because counter-hegemony "implies a more critical theoretical understanding and is expressed in organized and active political opposition" (Ibid:54). Weiler concludes that the in the school, which she considers an "institution for social control", the attitudes of feminist teachers can be viewed as counter-hegemonic in that they encourage students to explore the forces acting upon their own lives and to understand their own history and culture:

> In their work, these feminist teachers raise issues of sexism and racism directly in texts, but also in classroom relationships with students. As feminists they make the gendered subjectivities of themselves and their students part of the texts they teach. And at the same time, they ground a critical inquiry in a deep respect for their student's lives and cultural values (Ibid:149).

The points of intersection between Gramsci and feminism can be clearly drawn upon in this last paragraph: both Gramsci and feminism stress the importance of daily lives and cultural values (or, in Gramsci's words, "popular beliefs"); both of them believe that these values reproduce power relations (or, in Gramsci's words, dominant hegemony) and therefore they require critical inquiry (or, in Gramsci's words, the struggle between "common sense" and "good sense" has to be carried out), which in turn opens up spaces for negotiation. And finally, the work of inquiry is undertaken both at the level of texts, and at the level of social

relationships between teachers and students and the students themselves. In Gramsci's words, ideology is not a set of ideas but rather a set of material practices and social relations.

Once the central role of a male working class in instigating social change has been problematized, the question still remains of which social group or class is more likely to bring about social change, or where is it going to come from. Evidently, the socialist feminist answer to this question is that women must play an essential role in bringing about social change. In fact, it can be argued that there has been an increasing role of women's participation in socialist revolutions, with Nicaragua as the best example of a crucial women's involvement in the revolutionary as well as in the post-revolutionary period (Maxine Molyneux, 1985, 1989). It is clear now that, after Nicaragua, there cannot be a socialist revolution without women, or in other words, a real revolution must be not only a socialist but rather a socialist feminist one. Interestingly, women's involvement has been determined not only by their concern to protect specific women's interests, but also to defend popular-democratic or national interests, like in Nicaragua, where a long anti-American tradition rooted in a popular movement existed long time before the Sandinistas took power in 1979. In that particular case, women were struggling not only against their subordinate status in society but also against a dictatorship backed up by American intervention. Correspondingly, women were benefited by post-revolutionary policies not only as women but also as members of a particular class, since these "policies were targeted in favour of the poorest sections of the population and focused on basic needs in the areas of health, housing, education and food subsidies" (Maxine Molyneux, 1985:248). Obviously, poor women benefited more than other women, although needless to say, women formed more than 60 percent of the poorest Nicaraguans (Idem).

Thus, the case of Nicaragua is useful to see how factors of class, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality intersect in a particular historical conjuncture, so that it becomes difficult to establish the role of a particular class or group to "lead" the revolution. My suggestion here is that, rather than establishing a priori the revolutionary agent, we have to emphasize the idea that

counter-hegemony involves the articulation of the interests of various classes and groups, and that this articulation depends on the visibility of these classes and groups in a particular historical moment. Again, the gestation of counter-hegemony has to be looked at as an ongoing process of negotiation. However, this is not to say that class or group interests are indistinguishable from one another or equally valid, or that the articulation is an easy one and goes without struggle between and within the groups. Rather, the case of Nicaragua demonstrates that women must constantly put pressure on the revolutionary government to defend women's interests and, more importantly, that women must have their own independent organizations. In this sense, a distinction between different levels within a counter-hegemonic project regarding women's interests can be established, similar to the different stages that Alan Hunt describes for the "incorporative hegemony" of the working class (1990:7-10). Molyneux's distinction between strategic gender interests and practical gender interests is an useful one for this purpose.

Molyneux grounds her distinction on the recognition that "there is no theoretically adequate and universally applicable causal explanation of women's oppression from which a general account of women's interests can be derived" (231). Hence, "a theory of interests that has an application to the debate about women's capacity to struggle for and benefit from social change must begin by recognizing difference rather than by assuming homogeneity" (232). Molyneux's distinction helps us to explain how the intersection among different factors other than gender that affect women -class, ethnicity, nationality and so on- produce different ways of defining women's interests.

According to Molyneux, strategic gender interests are those

> derived in the first instance deductively, that is, from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist ... such as the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare, the removal of institutionalized forms of

> discrimination, the attainment of political equality, the establishment of freedom of choice over childbearing, and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women ... The demands that are formulated on this basis are usually termed "feminist" as is the level of consciousness required to struggle effectively for them (Ibid:232-233).

In contrast,

> practical gender interests are given inductively and arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour...[they] are formulated by the women who are themselves within these positions rather than through external interventions. Practical interests are usually a response to an immediate perceived need, and they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality (Ibid:233)

Hence, women's special interest in domestic provision and public welfare is a practical gender interest which does not necessarily promote gender equality, since it may eventually strengthen women's role as the primary responsible for the household daily welfare.

The two levels of gender interests can be articulated differently into what Alan Hunt refers to as "incorporative hegemony". According to him "for a hegemony to be dominant it must address and incorporate, if only partially, some aspects of the aspirations, interests and ideology of subordinate groups" (1990:6). Just as the working class has to give up some of its interests when articulating this "incorporative hegemony" in order to transcend the "economic-corporate" stage and reach that of "hegemonic consciousness", women may also have to give up temporarily the final goal of complete abolition of gender inequality (a strategic gender interest) whilst still struggling for gender practical interests. However, this is not to say that women should substitute the male working class or any other group in the leadership of a counter-hegemonic project; rather, the complexity of social reality and the intersection of different factors influencing social change call for a more pluralistic

conception of agency, where, as stated before, different social groups have more or less weight and say in a counter-hegemonic historical bloc depending on their visibility at a particular moment in history. In this sense, it is essential to stress again the necessity of women's own independent organizations whose final goal must be to overcome women's subordination; needless to say, the initiative to achieve this goal must come primarily from women.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have argued that Gramsci's assumption that all members of the working class are male leads to a failure to theorize women's oppression in the work place and other spheres of their lives. Consequently, Gramsci's working class hegemony is a male hegemony and his project for socialist revolution does not include per se women's emancipation. The socialist feminist approach to women's subordination brings the organization of reproduction into the agenda and inserts the significance of gender into the labour process. This allows us to explain not only the constitution of people as capitalists and workers but also as women and men. Thus, Gramsci's project of counter-hegemony should include changes in the sexual division of labour at all levels of society. In this sense, Gramsci is useful to grasp the processes of articulation of women needs within a historical bloc as well as women's responses to the existing contradictions in their own lives through the negotiation with the state over servicing and caring responsibilities, which are deeply shaped by the sexual division of labour. Finally, I discussed some similarities between Gramsci's suggestion to organize a new alternative hegemony at the level of civil society before gaining political power and the feminist claims that "the personal is political" and "a woman's place is everywhere". Gramsci's conception of the relationship between civil society and the state and his notion of war of position over civil society provide the theoretical guidelines for feminist politics in order to keep on thinking of the personal as political and seek to change people's ideas of a socially constructed femininity which is oppressive for women, search for alliances in the process of gestation of counter-hegemony and dismiss as irrelevant the dilemma to struggle either "within or outside the State".

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