POLITICS OF UN/RE/CLAIMING: CRITICAL FEMINIST INTERVENTIONS IN GLOBAL POLICY, RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Informed by intersectional feminist sensibilities, this compilation of four critical interventions weaves together existing and emergent threads of women's studies to interrogate one-dimensional framings of global policy, rights and development in hegemonic discourse. Attending to contemporary geopolitical issues as diverse as they are rich, what interconnects these seemingly disparate sites of complexity and contestation is a *politics of un/re/claiming*. 'Instrumental Women or Women-as-Instruments? Assessing Gender Mainstreaming and Claims to Microcredit' problematises the myriad ways in which economic (dis)empowerment, vis-à-vis the staking of microcredit claims, is constitutive of and constituted by neoliberal globalisation. 'Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Territorial Resource Claims and the Feminisation of Global Agricultural Production' navigates topographies of agricultural supply-chain management to tease out the textured intersections between global(ised) trade, natural resource claims and gendered labour divisions. Straddling the neoliberal epoch's hyper-precarious borders and boundaries, patient lifeworlds are multiply inflected by their in/capacity to articulate healthcare-based claims - 'Patienthood and its Dis/claimers: Embodied Citizenship Politics in Neoliberal Welfare Restructuring' invokes an anthropologically-attuned analytic frame to unearth such ambivalences. Finally, 'On Wendy Brown's "Suffering Rights as Paradoxes": Theorising the Im/possibility of Rights-Based Claims' offers an incisive, nuanced commentary on Wendy Brown's seminal scholarship in search of new political and epistemological possibilities for redressing rights-based claims.

Keywords: Feminism, Claims, Global Policy, Globalisation, Development, Rights, Neoliberalisation, Microcredit, Health, Trade

1. INSTRUMENTAL WOMEN OR WOMEN-AS-INSTRUMENTS? ASSESSING GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND CLAIMS TO MICROCREDIT

Despite scratching its densely-layered surface, women's empowerment as a global policy objective remains largely stifled by existing and emergent strands of oppression in the globalised epoch. Gendering the development agenda is ideationally strategised through instrumental frameworks, assuming bidirectional causality between empowerment and economic growth. However, actualising such gender equality projects for financial deepening can metastasise into apolitical conclusions that elide, rather than illuminate, the complexly gendered stakes of uneven

development. Navigating this contested terrain, this piece maps the textured interactions between feminism and developmentalism. This critical intervention takes shape by tracing the genealogy of economic essentialism within developmental thinking and praxis. Neoliberal-led shifts toward relentless capital accumulation have sparked great interest in Smart Economics - international development ventures to accelerate women's labour productivity in the Global South. The mechanisation of female bodies into desensitised, bankable assets constitutively disembeds market outcomes from their entrenched gendered realities. Instrumental arguments have materialised into poverty-alleviation interventions at the micro-level, producing ambivalent and paradoxic outcomes. Microcredit regulation, predicated upon women's perceived creditworthiness, instantiates new gendered frontiers of socio-economic exclusion. The bleak, instrumental rationality of Smart Economics is further illuminated through the prism of motherhood, giving rise to the devaluation of social reproduction. Dominant modes of neoliberal subjectivation refashion income- insecure mothers into responsibilised agents, released from the 'stranglehold' of domestic life. Concealing the unfreedoms of the free-market, ostensibly gender-neutral rhetorics of 'equal opportunity' and 'employment choice' incentivise competitive individualism in post-maternalist climates. However, institutional practices are too-often placed in diametric opposition to feminism, explaining away their practical utility. Instrumentalist advocacy need not be considered an end in itself, but rather one component of the gender governance toolkit. Feminist change-makers must strategically engage with bureaucratic elites to seize catalytic moments for transformative change - accordingly, feminist institutionalism speaks to a symbiotic interplay between feminist aspirations and instrumentalist measures. Foregrounding intersectional gender expertise in policymaking can repoliticise normative framings of female empowerment. Simultaneously, increased investment in communityled grassroots initiatives can stabilise the precarious footing of underfunded yet well-intentioned activists in exclusionary bureaucratic spaces. With multilateral restructuring and alliance formation, the 'antithetical' becomes the compatible.

This essay begins by critiquing the totalising economism of instrumental arguments, where the technocratic turn of neoliberal development has blunted the political edge of feminist knowledge. Add-women-and-stir approaches to gender inclusivity pander toward political correctness by coopting the rights-based vocabularies of feminism (Cornwall, 2010). Gender mainstreaming discourses collapse 'empowerment' and 'equality' into development fuzzwords - ill-defined, euphemistic terms with contested interpretations. "Sprinkled liberally" (Cornwall, 2010: 471) into glib mission statements, policymakers communicate with deliberate ambiguity to showcase performative gestures of allyship to liberal feminists. Carrying out a "policy post-mortem" (Bignall, 2010: 321), the 1970s Women in Development (WID) approach truncated gender inclusion missions into technocratic box-ticking exercises. Falling into the conceptual trap of essentialism, WID put forth a priori leitmotif of the impoverished Third World Woman - a spectacle of universal suffrage for the Western humanitarian gaze. The constitutively racialised character of this caricature, clothed in tokenistic slogans, recursively speaks to the 'Othering' of colonised subjects demarcated along raciological and heteropatriarchal axes of oppression. Ventriloquising the variegated voices of women, the universalist propensities of WID practitioners also marked a needless return to second-wave feminist conjecture. Presuming global female subordination, this normative vacuum suffocates the epistemic space for readdressing gender as an unstable and dynamic category, relationally bound to other identity constructs (Milward, 2015). Failing to move the enigmatic 'woman question' in a politically nuanced direction, contemporary development initiatives continue to reduce 'empowerment' to synecdoches of material access. These facile explanations geared toward economic efficiency fall short of conceptualising labour markets as microcosms of non-market social relations - this is epitomised by the advent of Smart Economics (Chant and Sweetman, 2012). A descendent of WID and its bureaucratic inertia, Smart Economics

projects aim to enlarge rural women's bankability vis-á-vis labour market activation. Byatt (2018) reconceptualises Smart Economics as "an instrument of neoliberal exploitation" (Byatt, 2018: 403), fetishising capitalist accumulation in Global South populations. Smart Economics instantiates the latest frontier of economic essentialism, prioritising the technical over the political, and the formal over the substantive, The moulding of 'unproductive' women into hyper-industrious agents immortalises the homo economicus (economic man) figure contrived by neoclassical theorists. Self-interested and monomaniacal, this canonical model of economic behaviour personifies the phallocentrism of orthodox economic thought (Hanappi-Egger, 2014; Morgan, 2006). The preservation of this long-standing archetype now sits alongside, whilst by no means redressing, earlier imaginations of Third World Women in perpetual indebtedness to the 'developed' world. Neoliberal gender agendas to unleash women's 'untapped' potential can also be interpreted through a feminist Foucauldian lens (Calkin, 2015). Smart Economics discourses legitimate biopolitical interventions to extract feminised modes of human capital from the body politic. Commoditising female bodies into "resources and corporeal sites of development" (Calkin, 2015: 622), these profitability strategies are tastefully repackaged and delivered to women as self-determination. Thus, heterodox feminist thinking probes the epistemic hegemony of orthodox development - paradoxically depoliticising feminist politics, instrumentalist measures lack sufficient ontological engagement with the multiple, slippery and entangled realities of women's embodied experiences.

Instrumentalist interventions unfolding on a micro-level have deepened intersectional feminist concerns, where success stories of 'inclusive' growth in local economies must be re-read with a hermeneutics of suspicion. Deemed "the spearheads of Smart Economics" (Byatt, 2018: 403), microcredit refers to the distribution of small loans to acclimate income-insecure borrowers into the formal economy. This is touted by the World Bank as a cutting-edge tool which "makes dreams a reality" (World Bank, 2001) by transforming the financially illiterate into successful micro-entrepreneurs. Casted as the panacea for intergenerational poverty, such programs pride them-selves upon liberating women from the punitive interest rates of predatory bankers. However, feminist scholars interrogate dominant framings of microfinance institutions (MFIs) as supreme arbiters of gender equality. Whilst high repayment morale is often cited as evidence of poverty alleviation, Wicht Erich (2012) offers a sobering perspective on the deliberate targeting of rural South Indian women. Giving rise to the "feminisation of indebtedness" (Wichterich, 2012: 406), coercive collection practices manifest in culturally- inflected ways which diminish bureaucratic accountability. Driven by financial return, MFI officials in Adhra Pradsh exploit idealised constructs of South Indian female subjectivity. Performances of responsible borrowing form new ways of embodying the values of honour and nobility tethered to expected feminine decorum. Informed by these gendered social cues, debt accumulation is saturated with stigma-laden and pejorative messages that attach most pertinently to vulnerable female defaulters. Culturally-constructed modes of 'collateral', derived from the visceral fear of indebtedness itself, are relied upon by calculated lenders to regulate loan recovery. The inculcation of creditworthy behaviours, by discriminating between good and bad beneficiaries, is also prevalent in Latin America. Cook-son (2016) scrutinises the distributive politics of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) in the rural Peruvian Andes. The monopsony-like power of MFI officials is exercised through shadow conditionalities, which determine the relative deservingness of campesinas (village women). Devoid of "feminist ethic[s] of care" (Cookson, 2018: 24), Juntos recipients are prescribed unpaid, time-burdensome tasks alongside official programme requirements. On one hand, noncompliant women who transgress these responsibilities are threatened with expulsion by frontline bureaucrats. On the other, fulfilling these hyper-exploitive conditions has perverse effects on the phenomenologically real and viscerally lived experiences of campesinas rendered invisible, ignorable and unintelligible. A time-intensive and costly affair, pregnant women are compelled to

undergo hospital births to statistically improve service uptake in rural Peru. Bureaucratising the critical nuances of rural politics, health-professional absenteeism and discriminatory treatment from urban white male clinicians counterproductively sustain group-based inequalities. These "new moments of exclusion created by the CCT" (Cookson, 2016: 1197) remain undetectable by the quantitative nature of gender parity indexes. The coloniality of power and gender permeates hegemonic constellations of primitive accumulation and dispossession in the neoliberal capitalist epoch (Quijano, 2000). Normative wage-labour exploitations give rise to violent conditions of proletarianisation - the material-discursive expansion of a global working class ensues the "domination of women of colour" (Lugones, 2007: 188; Ferguson & NcNally, 2015). The relative disposability of gendered, racialised and classed bodies across (neo)imperial borders is rendered explicit in this context (Ferguson & McNally, 2015). Undermining feminist visions of redistributive justice, instrumental approaches to 'doing' inclusivity are therefore endlessly self-cancelling in their (re)production of exclusionary outcomes in everyday life.

In addition, the logical fallacy of instrumental arguments is rendered explicit by the identity politics of motherhood in the post-maternalist epoch. Pre-austerity, maternalist distributive policies embraced motherhood as a "basis for political mobilisation" (Mezey and Pillard, 2012: 234) by situating caregivers at the heart of public expenditure. However, neoliberal responsibilisation discourses (the promotion of responsibility-taking behaviour to disincentivize state dependency) have foreclosed these avenues of claim-making (Mezey and Pillard, 2012; Michel and Koen, 1990). The penetration of market discipline into the private sphere reconfigures economically inactive mothers into shock absorbers of labour-market volatility. The anomic conditions of welfare retrenchment not only dampen resistance against precarisation, but weaken civilian oversight against government paternalism. This "farewell to maternalism" (Orloff, 2006: 6), marked by the gutting of social provisioning, gives rise to new junctures of motherhood predicated upon labour-force participation. On one hand, working mothers are characteristically perceived as self-sovereign and extrinsically motivated agents, unencumbered by the paralysing pull of full-time mothering and its unprofitability. On the other hand, mothers who fail to exhibit job-seeking behaviour are deemed parasitical to economic prosperity. Orloff (2009) therefore evaluates occupational access as a tentatively double-edged sword, where "gendered welfare regimes" (Orloff, 2009: 9) hijack the glossary of liberal feminism to (re)brand dual-earner models by definition as women-friendly. The affective-discursive formation of responsibilised mothers has filtered into Smart Economics agendas to renovate the institution of motherhood into a profitable enterprise. Proposing that "microcredit policy is population policy" (Norwood, 2011: 174) with a decolonial ethic, Norwood (2011) exposes the neo-Malthusian logics underpinning the paradigmatic shift toward productive values in the neoliberal present. Malthus' population-development paradigm (1826) hypothesised that unrestrained reproduction stagnates the modernisation progress. Pathologizing maternal bodies as "diseased, corrupt, and in imminent danger of putrefaction" (Davenport, 1995: 415; Malthus, 1826), these moralising discourses disseminated victim-blaming theories of pauperism along markedly gendered lines. Selling individual solutions for deeply structural problems, the Malthusian trap has captured MFIs in their pursuit to eradicate the intergenerational breeding of deprivation. Under the palatable gloss of reproductive autonomy, microcredit borrowing functions as a biopolitical disciplinary tool to curb fertility desire in rural Ghana. Family planning vigilance manifests through the endorsement of contraceptive behaviours to preserve the economic usefulness of Abokobi villagers. Targeting "excessive reproductive habits" (Norwood, 2011: 173), these gendered sexual scripts can be read through a neocolonial frame. Cosquer's (2019) intersectional genealogy offer a powerful corrective to single-axis analyses of the colonial condition - as a medium of empire-building projects, imperial taxonomies transmogrified negatively racialised bodies into "receptacles of sexual saturation"

(Cosquer, 2019: 14). Coloniality continues to serve as the constituting crux of material capitalist exploitation and primitive accumulation, creating a "fractured locus of colonised women" (Lugones, 2010: 753) that envelopes its subjects in an uninterrupted continuum of coloniality/modernity. Extended presently by neoliberalism, the persistence of this hyper-sexual trope reifies raciological, sexological and class-based markers of difference across spatial-temporal dimensions. The leveraging of market power through prescriptions of 'good' mothering is cross-nationally salient in the Philippines (Parmanand, 2021). The self-help culture of microfinancing compels female borrowers to lift their households above the poverty line to validate their "virtue as a mother" (Parmanand, 2021: 39). Straddling the public/private divide, maternal identities in climates of austerity are refracted through conflicting subjectivities - the risk-taking entrepreneur and the risk-averse homemaker. Parmanand's compelling exposition of professionalised Filipino mothers aligns with Kabeer's choice constraint thesis (2005). Making motherhood beyond the labour force intolerable, fashionable rhetorics of equal opportunity doubly burden women with the drudgeries of both waged and unwaged labour. The boundaries of employment choice are demarcated by power-laden gendered norms, incapacitating "the ability to have chosen differently" (Kabeer, 2005: 14). The so-called 'free' market, and its unfettered economic opportunism, minimises or maximises traditional gendered labour divisions as it sees fit. Interrogating instrumental forms of advocacy, feminist economists incisively expose the cumulative disadvantages attached to unequivocally performing the caricatured role of the 'good' mother.

Whilst the critiques above are valid on analytical grounds, it would be deeply reductionistic to portray instrumentalism as an anti-feminist tool that solely reinforces the hegemonic, heteropatriarchal masculinity of bureaucratic elites. This piece proposes that this unfairly designated antithesis has ultimately suspended women's movement-building in a state of political paralysis. Beyond problem identification, how can latent epistemological tensions between feminism and developmentalism materialise into productive modes of gender governance that are both meaningful and actionable? Overcoming hurdles besetting the labyrinthine path toward equality requires moving beyond simplistic, paralysing binaries which pit the technocratic against the transformative. A self-imposed barrier to (re)imagining feminist futures, state bureaucracies are too-often caricatured as unchanging monoliths by deterministic theorists. In a similar vein, female bureaucrats are pigeonholed as opportunistic 'sell-outs' for succumbing to "the institutional arm of male dominance" (Ashcraft, 2006: 61). However, institutional processes are not immutable nor immortalising - rather, they are receptive to the shifting alliances and rationalities of today's fraught geopolitical stage. Cynical scholars must acknowledge the practical limitations of grassroots-level advocacy in the same breath as scrutinising the epistemic blindspots of instrumentalism. Constrained by underinvestment and technical deficits, the goals of grassroots activism may only be achieved incrementally, or may fail to materialise altogether (Sen, 2019; Milward, 2015). Given women's enduring precarisation in today's increasingly globalised yet fragmented geopolitical conjuncture, working against the grain of institutional efforts can equally produce 'antithetical' outcomes. As bridging the theory-practice gap necessitates "deconstructing inappropriate hierarchical, dichotomous, and linear thinking" (Jun, 2018: 311), disregarding instrumentalist logics as anti-feminist may be self-defeating in itself. Resisting the totalising thrust of critical scholarship, buying-into institutional processes could form more expeditious routes to transformatory action. Fluent in both feminist dialect and economist-speak, femocrats may be productively reframed as bilingual interlocutors that can diversify meaning-making in development dialogues. Prying open the bolted doors of patriarchal spaces by "talking to the boys" (Elson, 1998: 155) can elicit seismic discursive shifts to knowledge-production hierarchies. Sandler and Goetz (2020) identify UN institutions as global knowledge-brokers, mediating constructive conversations between (often oppositional) constituencies on feminist foreign policies. In particular, the

Commission on the Status of Women enhances the international visibility of gender-based rights violations in the public advocacy sphere, where interventions are "debated nationally, tested internationally" (Sandler and Goetz, 2020: 255). However, the institutional presence of feminist elites alone is simply not enough to radically level the playing field - root-and-branch reforms are needed to develop democratised arenas for multilateral contestation and experimentation. An international feminist pushback, to formulate embodied policy responses in real-world politics, necessitates triangulating the unique expertises of development practitioners, policymakers and local stake-holders. Situating the "gendered, socially embedded agent of feminist political science" (Kenny and Mackay, 2009: 273) at decision-making tables, feminist institutionalism calls for the radical rethinking of hierarchical macro-micro dichotomies beyond the textbook. In theory, development discourse must be supplemented with substantive guidance from the political grammar of reflexive feminist pedagogies to advance a context-laden, holistic analysis of equality. In practice, transforming gender mainstreaming into a viable political project necessitates venturing further than pandering tokenistic gestures and one-size-fits-all affirmative actions. A truly intersectional course of action, which "bubbles up rather than trickles down" (Devaki and Elson, 2011: 38), calls for the leveraging of partnerships with grassroots innovators to connect seemingly disparate sites of knowledge. The growth potential of "sorely underfunded" (Sandler and Goetz, 2020: 257) community programmes is hinged upon reorganising funding modalities to capacitate gender-responsive budgeting. Robust accountability mechanisms must also be instituted to incubate feminist ambitions from being stymied by (un)democratic backsliding in populist landscapes (Sandler and Goetz, 2020: 250). Reem bedding the economic back into the political, institutional tinkering brings forth a reciprocal interaction between feminist and instrumentalist approaches alike to reify the possibilities of being, becoming and belonging.

In conclusion, this inquiry has sought to capture the tensions and uncertainties which underlay the global governance of gender equality projects. Instrumental logics pose vexing challenges for intersectional feminist thinkers - normative economic analyses rooted in the coloniality/modernity matrix of power pervades wage-labour relations in the globalised epoch. Flattening the intersubjective and experiential dimensions of women's issues into an excessively stripped-down logic, Smart Economics agendas conflate empowerment with productive self-employment to obscure the nuances of gender as a fluid, contextually-situated category. Upholding an untarnished image of 'doing' inclusivity, microcredit schemes incentivise competitive individualism by privileging female borrowers that co-opt neoliberal agentic subjectivities. Market discipline functions as an ontological marker of respectable motherhood in fiscally-conservative climates, where relative deservingness is predetermined by embodied performances of credible entrepreneurship. Disregarding reproductive care as unprofitable, mothers' choices are circumscribed by ostensibly 'women-friendly' employment policies which valorise trade liberalisation at the expense of women's bodily integrity. Whilst such scholarly criticisms are provocative, disregarding instrumentalism as 'antithetical' without acknowledging its usefulness propagates a reductive straw-man argument - gaining traction for women's movement-building requires theorists to resist these totalising modes of thought. Disassembling the edifice of masculinist institutions, developmental thinking must be reconstructed from the bottom-up to build rights-based understandings of 'doing' equality. Alongside feminist knowledge transfer, gender-responsive financing at the uppermost institutional levels can expedite wide-scale transformative change. Thus, smoothing out the deep-seated frictions between instrumental arguments and feminist politics can pave promising paths toward gender-equitable development.

2. MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANTS: TERRITORIAL RESOURCE CLAIMS AND THE FEMINISATION OF GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

In the globalised biomedical arena, the complex unfolding of global supply-chains both disarticulate and renegotiate flows of goods, services, people, ideas and capital. The growing commoditisation of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) is marked by conceptual and practical entanglements that warrant further investigation through a critically gendered lens. Synthesising feminist geographic and ethnopharmacological insights, this intervention maps the encounter of MAPs with globalisation's ever-shifting temporalities and spatialities. The hybridisation of biomedical knowledge in a doubly expanding and shrinking world has accelerated patient-consumer demands for alternative healthcare. The unmaking and remaking of socio-spatial relations has reorganised MAP production along markedly gendered lines. Labour-force profiles in the agricultural sector are becoming increasingly feminised, producing cross-culturally variegated outcomes for rural female smallholders. Competitive moves and countermoves between local, domestic and international stakeholders are rendered explicit in the value-addition of agricultural products. Manufacturing processes are therefore deeply imbricated with uneven distributional consequences, privileging some at the expense of others. Increasing interdependence and interconnectivity in the globalised economy have experientially shrunk the world and its pharmacological landscape (Rosaldo and Inda, 2008; Harvey, 1989). Time-space compression, vis-à-vis innovations in trade, transport, technology and communication, has enabled the market evolution of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs). Trade liberalisation and export-led industrialisation have collapsed socio-spatial contours, integrating MAPs into primary webs of capital accumulation. Existing and emergent epidemiological challenges have dramatically increased production and manufacturing in the MAP industry, with a projected growth of 15-25% by 2050 (Volenzo & Odiyo, 2020). Opening new sites of contestation, inequitable vaccine distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the need for affordable healthcare beyond conventional pharmaceuticals (Timoshyna et al, 2020). Medicinal value-chains experienced rising consumer demands for alternative plant-based remedies to treat respiratory ailments. Alongside spatiotemporal compression, the stretching-out of sociality has constitutively disembedded indigenous knowledge systems from their traditional containerised spaces (Giddens, 1990; Leonti and Casu, 2013). Via the far-reaching mediascape, cross-cultural exchanges project new imagined realities to a transnational public audience. Medical norms travel in a multidirectional dialectical fashion between the global, national and local, "render[ing] any strictly bounded sense of locality obsolete" (Zwingel, 2012). Traversing therapeutic boundaries, medical pluralism therefore affords patient-consumers access to the healing traditions of geographically distanciated locales (Hampshire and Owusu, 2013).

The temperamental character of globalisation as an unstoppable power has engendered the growing feminisation of international labour forces. The acclimation of female workers into flexibilised modes of agricultural labour has "weakened the dualistic segmentation of employment" between men and women (Standing, 1999: 584). Ever-shifting market outcomes are often tied to the relative cheapness and disposability of women that practice subsistence agriculture. MAP harvesting is a labour-intensive and low-value mode of export production that is predominated by rural female smallholders. SEZs capitalise on low-income women's perceived willingness to 'labour for less' to sharpen their cost-cutting competitive edge. In eastern Nepal's rural mills, commercial raw-material sourcing has been restructured along markedly gendered lines (Gartaula, Niehof and Visser, 2010). Increased female entrepreneurship in local cash crop cultivation has filled the job vacuum left by male outmigration (the seeking out of full-time formal employment in urban in-dustrial hubs). Affording greater financial independence and upward social mobility to rural Nepalese women, the feminisation of agropastoralism in the absence of male breadwinners gives rise to de-facto matriarchal households. The augmented intrahousehold bargaining power of women is cross-nationally salient in Kalat city, Iran (Alizadeh, 2021). Creating novel frontiers of

economic empowerment at both the individual and regional scale, the influx of women in black cumin plantations strengthens personal financial control whilst diversifying rural and peri urban development.

However, the widespread restructuring of gendered labour divisions brings into sharp relief intersecting inequalities writ large into agricultural workforces. Women in sub-Saharan Africa disproportionately bear a "triple work burden in the productive, reproductive and social spheres" of rural life (Grassi, Landberg & Huyer, 2018: VI). Cultural norms circumscribe gender-specific time use patterns, positioning women into the double-bind subjectivities of the marginal farmer and domestic caregiver. As explicated by Vickery (1977), conditions of time poverty materialise via the layering of wild plant cultivation onto unpaid household responsibilities. Emergent technology advancements, brought forth by globalisation, have sought to dampen work burdens by mechanising national agriculture input. However, the introduction of agri-tech infrastructures produce ambivalent, complexly gendered outcomes (Cecchini and Scott, 2003). Women's low literacy rates in remote Indian settlements inhibit technological uptake, where access to specialist knowledge remains within the purview of educated male entrepreneurs. In the context of precarious female employment, rural women remain weary of the comparative economic advantages offered by agri-technology. Enhancing product development and cost efficiency, increased reliance on harvest automation in northwestern Syria is perceived as a direct threat to women's income security (Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck, 2014). Thus, the mechanisation of agriculture production is labour-displacing - set to define the contours of modern-day farming, standardised technologies have the capacity to reconfigure the internal structures of export-oriented cash crop industries.

From collection to consumption, value-chain mapping serves as a proxy for the uneven geographies that condition its possibility. As outlined previously, the commercialisation of MAPs is in-deed a driver of economic diversification in rural landscapes, widening the scope for agricultural entrepreneurship. The forging of market channels between local farmers, domestic wholesalers and top global companies has the potential to stimulate aggregate growth multilaterally (Smith-Hall, Larrsen and Pouliot, 2012). However, the commercialisation of raw materials into value-added specialty crops has produced lopsided outcomes for structurally differentiated groups in South Asia. Excluded from post-harvest manufacturing, nomadic gatherers in Pakistan's Swat District lack the managerial training to maximise profit margins beyond short- term financial gain (Sher, Barkworth and de Boer, 2017). Domestic and international marketplaces exploit this fragmented knowledge base to acquire raw biotic resources at a competitive rate. Unable to realise the bio-economic value of their laboured goods, Pakistani mountain dwellers remain living in impoverished conditions. Major trade blocs have also become implicated in the value-addition process of MAP trade. Urban consumer preferences for certified and hygienic products have placed Indian manufacturers under harsher scrutiny by EU regulatory norms (Banerjee, 2004) The harmonisation of traditional medicines into scientifically-tested goods at the European level expands the international customer base of Ayurvedic industries. As the reach of alternative medicine broadens vis-à-vis Global North markets, socio-spatial disparities in healthcare access are also rendered explicit. The price-markup practices of pharmaceutical companies favour affluent customers in commercial hubs whilst (re)producing exclusionary outcomes for the rural poor. As prized MAPs inflate in their saleability, subsistence farmers responsible for their very existence are paradoxically alienated from consumption.

Expropriating traditional knowledge in pursuit of scientific discovery, the political ecology of bioprospecting poses ethical and environmental dilemmas for forest-dependent communities (Schwindt, 2011). In the private interests of multinational corporations, the unsustainable logging of medicinal bark threatens indigenous- managed landscapes in eastern Amazonia (Shanley and

Luz, 2003). Transgressing planetary boundaries, human encroachment into endangered tropics destabilises the equilibrium of socio-ecological systems. Conservation practices are intimately tied to the rich cultural heritage of Amazonian tribal healers - loss of biosphere integrity undermines agricultural-based livelihoods and ancestral traditions. Declining resource availability and species diversity also foreclose the only affordable healthcare route for many of Brazil's rural poor. Applying a critical decolonial lens, Western bioprospecting ventures in 'developing' nation-states revive settler-colonial legacies of territorial claim-staking, extraction and erasure (Posey, 2002). Accumulation by dispossession in the hands of bioprospectors falls squarely within the acquisitive traditions of colonial botanists in the age of Empire. Pharmaceutical knowledge-making today is therefore imbued with explosive territorial politics, giving rise to new frontiers of environmental racism in a postcolonial context.

In conclusion, this essay has dissected the multi-layered interactions between MAPs and global marketplaces. Attention to the commoditisation of plant-based resources captures the simultaneously enabling and disabling effects of globalisation. Diversifying rural economic activities in commodity-producing countries, the feminisation of agricultural production paves paths toward economic empowerment and upward mobility. In the same breath, multitiered supply chains drive a deeper wedge between hierarchically stratified groups in today's volatile geopolitical landscape. The acquisition of local pharmacopoeia by transnational corporate elites exacerbates socio-economic and ecologic injustices. However, the fickleness of global flows reminds us that constellations of winners and losers remain only tentatively sketched.

3. PATIENTHOOD AND ITS DIS/CLAIMERS: EMBODIED CITIZENSHIP POLITICS IN NEOLIBERAL WELFARE RE-STRUCTURING

The "socio-viral pathogenesis of neoliberal disease" (Sparke & Williams, 2021:1) and its unevenly embodied sequelae of bio-inequality in the global body politic poses an enigma for epidemiologists, political anthropologists and policy stakeholders alike. Tying ethnography to structural analysis, this critical intervention dedicates an interdisciplinary space for reconstituting health as a complexly negotiated realm of (un)entitlement and (un)belonging. The restructuring of welfare access in the neoliberal epoch has paved participatory paths for the rights-based advocacy of medical inclusion. Healthcare lawsuits function as accountability-seeking mechanisms for patientplaintiffs to scrutinise administrative unresponsiveness and public apathy. Leveraging the constitutional right-to-health against the violences of austerity, disenfranchised citizens metamorphose into quasi-judicial activists within the affective material-discursive domain of the courtroom. In a similar vein, humanitarian NGOs operationalise terminological vocabularies of right-to-health universality and distributive justice to pursue socio-medical- legal claims for undocumented immigrants. Further interrogating retrenchment, biological citizenship projects unlock transformative avenues of self-constitution and claim-staking vis-à-vis the intersubjective sharing of biomedical classifications. Recasting impairment-disability as a performative identity category rewrites counter-hegemonic narratives of agency and subjectivation for non-able bodied actors. The ever-shifting landscape of disabled representation additionally births fertile ground for biosocial community-building, against milieus of systematic exclusion and stigma. Whilst opportunities for agentive possibility foreground the elasticity of state-citizen dynamics, subjectivities are grappled with and restructured along lines inscribed by state power. Exclusively unidirectional and idealistic discourses of bottom-up empowerment efface the nuanced experiential realities of structural disempowerment in climates of precarisation. Excavating such nuance calls for a thorough dissection of the increasingly contested and multi-sited character of citizen-subject formation from below and above. Expanding Foucauldian paradigms of biopolitical governmentality, the therapeutic welfare-state and its ethos of responsibilisation ensues the

discursive construction of medicalised patient-citizen identities. Modulated through necropolitical logics of therapeutic citizenship and triaging, the normative inscription of differential values to bodies reifies biomedical authority in resource-scarce therapeutic economies.

This essay critically examines the instrumentarian power of rights-based claims for welfare equity by non-state actors, against neoliberal restructuring and its political economy of austerity. Articulating demands for substantive equality and dignified healthcare in extra-state avenues of public participation, mobilisation of the universal 'right-to- health' reconstitutes disadvantaged citizen-subjects as autonomous bearers of rights. Through the prism of judicialisation, Biehl (2013) investigates the tentative friction between the constitutional right-to-health and neoliberal leitmotifs of precarisation in Brazil. Working-class Brazilians at the "patient-citizen-consumer" nexus (Biehl, 2013: 430) arbitrate right-to-health lawsuits, for the procurement of high-cost pharmaceutical treatment against state institutions and their bureaucratic functionaries. Undercutting the commodification of material resources, the judiciary is refashioned into an interstitial sphere of biopolitical experimentation for aggravated Brazilians who "refuse to be stratified out of existence" (Biehl, 2013: 432). The metamorphosis of class-based struggles into class action, through the rule of law, births fertile ground for generative forms of political subjectivation in states tarnished by constitutional abuses. This quest for state accountability for resource paucity is a cross-cultural phenomenon - in Sierra Leone, marginalised Ebola survivors utilise right-to-health lawsuits as accountability-seeking tools to leverage post-Ebola biomedical and psychosocial rehabilitation (Boating, 2022). Whilst judicial activism is an individually driven project for distributive justice in Brazil, the Sierra Leone Association of Ebola Survivors (SLAES) group pursue collectivised legal action at the ECOWAS Court of Justice by reframing endemic corruption (steeped in institutional deficits and colonialist antiquities) as a human rights violation. Syndemic connections are forged between structurally defunded health systems and chronic health complications through vocabularies of fundamental privileges, "transforming [SLAES members] from marginalised objects of policy to partners in governance" (Boateng, 2022: 2). The plasticity of right-to-health jurisprudence in "litigation hotspots" (Boateng, 2022: 3) like Sierra Leone and Brazil consolidates counter-hegemonic juridicopolitical orders, where citizens evolve into rights bearing plaintiffs to demand answerability for thorny questions of governmental accountability. In the absence of formal citizenship, humanitarian NGOs operationalise these rights-based discourses on behalf of undocumented immigrants unable to exercise self-advocacy for recognition in public health governance. Similar to the courtroom's multidimensionality as a makeshift material discursive domain for right-to-health advocacy, NGOs transform into alternative healthcare purveyors to doubly confront the political failures and moral inertia of established welfare institutions. The dialectical interplay between post-industrial globalisation and healthcare retrenchments in the United States has engendered the production of hyper-precarious immigrant bodies, liminally straddling between exclusionary policies and international human rights frameworks of right-to-health universality (Lewis, 2014). At this critical junction of migration, health and human rights, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Free Clinic (OLGFC) in southern Minnesota provides socio-medical-legal aid to uninsured Mexican, Guatemalan and Honduran immigrants (Tiedje & Plevak, 2014). OLGFC's faith-based humanitarian vocation combines Catholic dogmas of spirituality with egalitarian notions of distributive justice, displacing nationalist hierarchies of deservingness in US identity politics. Volunteers reconfigure themselves as empowered advocates for the universal rights of the undocumented - this is epitomised by OLFGC board member Bob declaring "I think [advocacy] is part of what we are doing. The healthcare system is broken in this country. We have to come up with a model [so] that everyone can get coverage" (Tiedje & Plevak, 2014: 365). The prying open of participatory spaces for rights-based claim-making throws into sharp relief the increasingly ambivalent boundaries, possibilities and politics of healthcare. Giving

rise to the unique evolution of advocacy and subjectivation in affective domains beyond the confines of the bureaucratic red-tape, the negotiation of welfare access through expansive right-to-health dialogues illuminates the agentive capacities of non-state actors.

In addition to extra-state avenues of claim-staking for medical inclusion, intra-state power dynamics between welfare-state institutions and physically impaired citizens illuminate how novel frontiers of subjectivation emerge through the identity politics of 'biological citizenship'. Fostering "a political economy of hope [...] under conditions of suffering, privation and inequity" (Rose and Novas, 2005: 452), biological citizenships entail the performative (re)configuration of identities around diagnostic and biomedical characteristics, effectuating claims for healthcare entitlements and social membership. Petryna (2004) underpins how contemporary political subjectivities in post- socialist Ukraine are constructed through (re)articulations of disability narratives by non-able-bodied groups. In spite of privatisation and its asymmetric embodiment as bio-inequality, biological citizenships empower post-Chernobyl communities to manoeuvre within the collapsing Ukrainian compensation system. In the unchartered terrain of austerity, radiation sufferers express their physiological injuries by co-opting the clinical label 'disabled' to creatively bargain entitlement packages. The staking of compensatory claims to withstand welfare roll-backs maps onto the marked increase "in 1991 of zone workers, resettled persons and inhabitants of contaminated territories registering their disability" (Petryna, 2004: 260). Vis-à-vis performances of disability, biologically injured actors manipulate webs of benefits to bridge the chasm between inclusion and exclusion - bio-citizens becoming conversant in the language of disability opens an epistemic space for reconceptualising illness narratives as new political cleavages in the neoliberal moment. Phillips (2011) similarly explores impairment-disability as a transformative identity category, against the grain of exclusion in contemporary Ukraine. Sketching the phenomenological complexities of disabled corporeality within the post-Soviet political-aesthetic project, the immobile bodies of spinal'niki (spinally injured) groups juxtapose the self-enterprising "New Soviet Man" archetype (Phillips, 2011: 23). To endure the productivist normativity of neoliberal ideologies, visibly disabled citizens paradoxically validate demands for greater wheelchair accessibility by manipulating ableist vocabularies of proactivity designed to invalidate their citizenry. The can-do entrepreneurial spirit in claims like "the state should [...] provide me with a car, which would allow me to secure employment and contribute to country's economy" (Phillips 2011: 7) enables the spinal'niki to capitalise on neoliberal buzzwords of responsibilisation for physical mobility claims taking. Social mobility claims unfold through the repositioning of alienated wheelchair users in hyper-visible public spaces. For accomplished disabled athlete and NGO director Dmitrii, participation in competitive wheelchair sports and street performances with disabled musicians afforded new opportunities to rebuild his diminished self-confidence and "lost masculinity" (Phillips 2011: 188). The carving of imaginative discursive spaces for disabled representation in Ukraine demonstrates how biological citizenships not only function as tools of leverage to renegotiate post Milošević politics of redistribution, but a coinage to foreground the empowerment of the physically impaired. These conditions of agentive possibility are conducive to both self-empowerment and collective empowerment through the creation of 'biosocial' communities, where shared biological characteristics constitute loci for relationality (Rabinow, 1996). Friedner (2010) illuminates how biomedical classifications of deafness serve as calling cards that signal claims to a communal 'Deaf' culture, giving rise to biosociality and medicalised intersubjectivities which transcend "crude binaries of submission and resistance" (Friedner, 2010: 341). This pluralisation of power operating from below exemplifies the shifting boundaries of social landscapes, where instantiations of community-building and solidarity disrupt "dominant techniques of governmentality" (Friedner, 2010: 340). Friedner's analytic insights into 'Deaf' community micro-politics are brought to life in her succeeding ethnographic exposition of deaf development in

market-oriented Indian cityscapes (Friedner, 2014). Through the acclimation of deaf actors in international multi-level businesses like Silver Venture, disability forms a pluralistic arena for destigmatisation and biosociality, where corporeal deformities are reinscribed into biomarkers of inclusion. The translation of "cohesive deaf sociality" (Friedner, 2014: 506) into financial capital not only forefronts deafness as a valued condition against cultural dialectics between bodily perfectibility and inclusion, but gives rise to aspirations of deaf future-making. In maintaining "the government does not help deaf people" (Friedner, 2014: 511), team member Kishore optimistically dreams of travelling with alike deaf entrepreneurs to establish deaf-run institutions and retirement homes for elderly citizens. In opening up the experiential epistemology of disability, the (re)shaping of disability narratives transforms the habitus of daily life by establishing moral economies of community-building and hope for a self-determined future. Thus, biological citizenships offer subversive counter-discourses of empowerment which not only legitimate the reclamation of stigmatised differences, but instantiate transformative realms of possibility within the body politic of hegemonic neoliberalism.

However, an exclusive focus on the agentive and performative (self-)construction of citizenry identity addresses merely one side of the political coin; a holistic investigation of citizenship entails broadening the investigative scope of anthropological enquiry, beyond one-dimensional idealisations of subjectivation. Achieving such nuance and grittiness begs the question - is "a political economy of hope [...] under conditions of suffering, privation and inequity" (Rose and Novas, 2005: 452) truly feasible, or is this metaphor a naïvely optimistic imagination of society which loses sight of formidable bio-inequalities in climates of precarisation? With Foucault (1977) as the guiding thread of her oeuvre, Ong's (1996) reflexive insights on civic enculturation in multi-cultural nation-states reveal the dialectic modalities of citizenship as a "dual process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states" (Ong, 1996: 737). With intersecting vectors of subjectivation and subjection, calculations of citizenship on the national stage are fractured by internal asymmetries between self-determination and state-building. Owing to Ong's contemplations on the double-sidedness of citizen-making, this essay shifts its attention to the latter phenomenon of "being-made [...] through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration" (Ong, 1996: 737) in Sub-Saharan Africa. Opening alternative avenues of ethnographic foray, Nguyen (2010) details the fashioning of 'therapeutic citizenship' amidst the HIV-AIDs epidemic in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. In skeletal welfare-states starved by resource scarcity, therapeutic citizenships function as modalities of "thin citizenship" (Nguyen, 2010: 109) which arbitrate the ontological boundaries between life and death. Couched in Western individualistic idioms of self-help, the ability to "tell a good story" (Nguyen, 2010: 99) creates a conduit for the selective distribution of donor-funded antiretroviral treatment in performance-based aid economies. Public testimonies of seropositivity, contradictory to forming biosociality (Rabinow, 1996), dis-proportionately privilege those most adept at construing themselves as 'most needing' of immediate clinical attention. The dissolution of solidarity ties translates into asymmetric clinical trajectories for different categories of HIV-positive actors - for instance, the first "vanguard of [HIV-positive] activists" (Nguyen, 2007: 33) being well-versed in confessional storytelling to leverage multilateral aid juxtaposes the disqualification of newly-diagnosed Ivorians from clinical trials. Nguyen problematises the necropolitical underpinnings of brutalist triaging structures, in prognostically categorising who gains privileged access into (and who must consequently remain peripheral from) the republic of HIV therapy. Under the differential calculus of existential worth, the patient body is fleshed-out into a receptacle for normative inscriptions of biomedical values. Accordingly, the utopian vision of a "political economy of hope" (Rose and Novas 2005: 452) collapses into a necropolitical economy of survival in Francophone West Africa. In a comparable participant observation in East Africa, bureaucratic praxes of triage and healthcare

referral are indexical of the biopolitical dimensions of therapeutic citizenship. In the context of refugee camps, macro-politics of state sovereignty cross-cut with micro-politics of therapeutic sovereignty to establish conditions of 'therapeutic refugeehood' in Kigoma, Tanzania (Enumah, 2022). Simultaneously curtailing the freedom of movement and right-to-health beyond the spatial parameters of the camp, political economies of referral classify refugee patients as either 'not sick enough' or 'too sick' for state-level medical attention. Hierarchies of treatment possibility are accentuated by the denied referral of 74-year-old Kiza, where the Medical Referral Committee predetermined his chronic back pain as undeserving of specialist care outside the camp walls (Enumah, 2022: 3). Unable to seek second opinions to validate their suffering, the prognostic fates of structurally con-strained refugees are sculpted in the hands of frontline physicians, akin to "street level bureaucrats [...] enacting biopower" (Enumah, 2022: 5; Foucault, 1998: 139). Similarly drawing upon Foucauldian notions of biopolitical governmentality (Foucault, 1977), Mattes' (2011) fieldwork with HIV-positive patients in north-east Tanzania uncovers the construction of essentialised medicalised identities via the hyper-extension of biopower. Moderated by the "authoritarian self-positioning" (Mattes, 2011: 167) of nurses, the exclusive allocation of antiretroviral pharmaceuticals endorses the prognostic privileging of adherent patients over others. The therapeutic state in urban Tanga, a microcosm of the surveillance state, is upheld by emancipatory facades of self-responsibilisation and agency conjured by adherence panels which paradoxically "favour their disempowerment" (Mattes, 2011: 177). The individualising medical gaze penetrating the innermost life-spheres of sexuality and domesticity, like the tracking of seropositive patients in their homes, incites the anatomo-political production of "docile bodies" (Mattes, 2011: 160; Foucault, 1997: 135). The far-reaching medicalisation of everyday life cannot be underestimated as an innocently administrative operation - it is a covert biopolitical endeavour whereby citizen-patients become intelligible or unintelligible through nosological containers of biomedical 'truths' (Hacking, 1982). "Being-made" (Ong 1996: 737) by the controlling arm of welfare institutions, the vertical formation of citizen-subjects in resource-scarce therapeutic economies thus introduces shades of subtlety to idealistic academic discourses of citizen (self-)construction.

In conclusion, the apotheosis of neoliberal rationality and its aftermath of retrenchment has pro-found impacts on claim-staking and identity constructs of citizenship. Firstly, political subjectivities are contested in extra-state avenues of judicialisation; bridging the gap between the clinic and the courtroom, structurally disadvantaged citizens demand welfare access through the arbitration of healthcare lawsuits. The operationalisation of the universal right-to-health is additionally pursued by humanitarian NGOs, on behalf of vulnerable immigrants at the interface between immigration, healthcare and market fundamentalism. Ethnographic vignettes of biological citizenship situate the phenomenologies of physical impairment at the heart of anthropological inquiry. In their complex negotiations of belonging, the collectivisation of patients around shared biological markers creates ties of biosociality, reintegrating disabled communities into social consciousness. The fashioning of biological citizenships as empowering illness identities thus supplements a counter-hegemonic narrative to that of the disempowered subject, moving beyond determinism and cynicism. However, an exclusively unidirectional focus on subjectivation from below suffocates the epistemic space for examining the paradoxical affirmation of citizenship as doubly empowering and disempowering. Exposing this double-sided quality of identity formation, with its entangled discursive threads of subjectivation and subjection, is a pedagogical imperative. Indeed, losing grasp of far-reaching medicalisation under the sway of neoliberalism risks anthropologists straying further away from appreciating the multidimensionalities of citizen-making. Biopolitical projects of therapeutic citizenship and medical triage demonstrate how ill-health is not simply an epidemiological dilemma, but an epistemological conundrum,

biopsychosocial challenge and the root of existential suffering for disenfranchised patients. Counter-hegemonic ethnographic framings of both vertical and horizontal forces of state-citizen interactions ultimately illuminate how subjectivities are not unitary nor fixed - rather, they are continually receptive to renegotiation and reconstitution in fickle climates of global health insecurity.

4. ON WENDY BROWN'S "SUFFERING RIGHTS AS PARADOXES": THEORISING THE IM/POSSIBILITY OF RIGHTS-BASED CLAIMS

A persistent preoccupation of political theorist Wendy Brown's critical scholarship (2000), liberal constitutional regimes pose challenging debates for contemporary gender studies. Accordingly, this critical review dedicates politico-legal-ethical space for grappling with the ambivalences, contradictions and tensions of liberal rights-based discourses. Unravelling Brown's line of enquiry in "Suffering Rights as Paradoxes" (Brown, 2000), a "fatality of paradox" (Brown, 2000: 329) manifests at the marked disjunctures between the universal and the particular, and the formal and the substantive. Synthesising Brown and Farris' theses (Farris, 2017), the paradoxical trappings of rights-based language and practice are rendered explicit in the politically volatile context of femonationalism. Brown's feminist problematisation of liberal rights also brings into sharp relief the heteronormative frame through which exclusionary nationalist imaginaries are projected. The ab-jection of non-normative sexual identities on the constitutive outside of hegemonic sense-making is enacted vis-à-vis the criminal justice panoply. However, I argue that contemporary scholars must remain cautious against absolutist disavowals of rights; at the definitional level, the dynamic, temperamental conditions of paradox itself allow for logical fallacies to be recursively undone and redone. Accordingly, a politically nuanced approach to rights - one that is receptive to ever-shifting realignments between hegemony and resistance - deliberates a picture of greater complexity and possibility. Drawing on provocative critiques of Brown's piece, articulating demands for fundamental human rights at the international level paves extra-state participatory paths for structurally disadvantaged groups.

Brown problematises how structural inequalities are rendered imperceptible by liberal jurisprudence and its dearth of intersectionality. Enshrouded in "sunny formulations of freedom and equality" (Brown, 2000: 230), the paradoxical character of rights-based discourses unravels in insidious ways upon closer investigation. Formalist schemas of freedom are grounded in the abstract universality of Western political thought, envisioning the liberal individualist actor as paradigmatically male. The neutralising impulse of masculinist rights discourses constitutes a frontier of epistemic violence, compressing "complex, compound, and internally diverse subjects" (Brown, 2000: 237) into monolithic singularities. Akin to Brown's anti-universalism, Butler (2000) exposes how the celebratory arc of universally distributed human rights is "necessarily undone by the exclusion of particularity on which it rests" (Butler, 2000: 24). Butler conceptualises legal formalism as an empty discursive space - one that is constitutively filled with hegemonic dogma by Eurocentric patriarchal imaginaries. Exemplifying and exacerbating conditions of paradox, 'progressive' gender discourses are instrumentalised by femonationalists as a vehicle for fascist political agendas (Farris, 2017). Racialised migrant populations are (re)positioned vis-à-vis discourses of Eurocentered gender exceptionalism. Muslim women are essentialised into a spectral of collective suffrage, stripped of agency and political self-determination by their regressive male counterparts (Abu-Lughod, 2002). Femonationalist narratives of victimhood and terrorism are tastefully repackaged and delivered in the name of women's rights. The critical nuances of gender politics are thus collapsed to an ideological tug-of-war between the 'civilised' West and 'sexually barbaric' rest, bringing into sharp relief the "fatality of paradox" (Brown, 2000: 239). Cloaked with

unassailable, univocal and universal 'truths', liberal rights discourses are inevitably self-defeated by the exact unfreedoms which condition its possibility.

This "fatality of paradox" (Brown, 2000: 239) is also hinged upon the violent expulsion of nonnormative sexualities from the national fabric. Brown examines the legal fetishism of heteronormative values, where fantasies of compulsory heterosexuality have been projected through the "fictional singularity of sexual acts [...] in sexually repressive legislation" (Brown, 2000: 237-238). The ontological disavowal of sodomitical acts throughout history entrenched hetero/homosexual binaries, deepening structural inequalities for lives already infracted by racialised, gendered and classed hierarchies. The abjection of sexually minoritised subjects on the constitutive outside of orthodoxy is also illustrated by Alexander (1994). Drawing on her own liminality between US and Caribbean juridic-political systems, Alexander reconceptualises the body as a palimpsestic space embossed by hegemonic sexual scripts. An appendage of the heteromascu-linist state, the criminalisation of lesbianism in postcolonial Trinidad functions as a modicum of control to propagate heterosexist ideals. Family meaning-making in the contemporary Caribbean is refracted through imperial imaginings, necessitating the economic efficiencies of procreative sex. Nationalist state authority encroaches upon intimate spheres of life, forcing queer identities into tight containers of (hetero)normativity. Extending Brown's critical inquiry beyond heteronormativity, the "fatality of paradox" (Brown, 2000: 239) is further illuminated through the prism of homonationalism (Puar, 2007). Rodriguez (2022) teases out the textured intersections between corrective violence and regulatory queerness in Brooklyn. Radical queer liberals (namely white, cisgendered, able-bodied elites) are privileged by their close proximity to heteronormative aesthetics. In contrast, the "multi-dimensional queer" (Rodriguez, 2022: 8) is relegated to the low-est rung of the queer continuum - the carceral habitus. The harrowing specter of gentrification both physically and metaphorically evicts non-homonormative identities from the body politic. These phenomenological examples are illustrative of Brown's line of argument - heteropatriarchal states weaponise sexual normativity "as a form of social power [which injures] differently marked identities" (Brown, 2000: 235-236). The liberatory potential of rights-based discourses is thus handicapped by its own paradoxes.

Whilst the necessary bluntness of Brown's thesis is refreshing, unquestionably accepting the "im-possibility of justice in the present" (Brown, 2000: 240) has politico-legal-ethical stakes which must equally be problematised. Although Brown self-purportedly "does not take a stand for or against rights" (Brown, 2000: 230), her unapologetic assertions have invoked some criticism from contemporary gender scholars. For Lever (2008), the sharpness of Brown's critical edge is blunted by her disinclination to explore both the enabling and disabling effects of rights language. Her absolutist representation of rights as fundamentally paradoxical "seems senseless seriously to debate [...] until we find some solution to this problem" (Lever, 2008: 22). Caricaturing liberal constitutional regimes as brutish architectures forecloses "avenues for both personal and collective forms of choice, self-expression and representation" (Lever, 2008: 7). Lever's response to Brown thus begs the question to contemporary gender studies - how can one rework these problematic paradoxes in imaginative ways to emancipate the self from monolithic thought? Exploring the un/remaking of power at the critical junctures of everyday life in Turkey, Barras (2009) illuminates the liberatory capacities of rights-based discourses. The militaristic vision of Turkish secularists to "purge Islam from the public sphere" (Barras, 2009: 1241) can be contested through subversive modes of claim-staking. Muslim groups are increasingly mobilising legal paradoxes to forge connections with transnational human rights actors. The fundamental right to religious freedom at the international level transcends nationalist limits to self-determination. The prying open of new pluralistic spaces highlights the ever shifting boundaries, possibilities and politics of rights

dialogues. Thus, these reflections offers gender scholars and activists a wider theoretical ground to strategise how to live meaningfully within this paradox.

In conclusion, Brown's text offers contemporary gender studies a toolbox of conceptual instruments - some more productive than others. The paradoxic nature of liberal rights is foregrounded by regimes of femonationalism, bringing Brown's skepticisms to light. The violent co-optation of universal rights discourses to pursue alternative political ends counterproductively unravels its own celebratory arc. The self-defeatism of rights language is also brought into relief by Brown's exposition of hegemonic heteronormativity. Indeed, Brown's theoretical framework for conceptualising the inherent contradictions of rights is enticing to contemplate. However, entrapping minoritised subjects in a static state of suffering with no scope for emancipation would be an unproductive contribution to the transformative feminist project. Insofar as they politically disempower its subjects, unfreedoms can be undone by the self-cancelling conditions of paradoxes themselves. Within the ambivalence, ambiguities and contradictions of liberal rights, counter-hegemonic spaces of resistance are continually (re)negotiated. Thus, the enigmatic conditions of paradox evoke thought-provoking and seminal questions for contemporary gender scholarship to demystify.

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