Chapter 6

Feminisms

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Introduction

Until relatively recently, feminist and cultural geographies did not have much in the way of common interests. The descriptive accounts of cultural landscapes and regions of Carl Sauer (1963) and his intellectual legacy offered little to feminists who wished to explain the effects of patriarchy on the spaces through which women's roles were constrained and enabled, and the spatialities through which gender identities and relations were maintained and expressed. This changed with the "cultural turn," where "new" cultural geographies turned to the less material, observable facets of cultural production, in the geographies of landscape but also through a plethora of everyday practices and activities. Hence both feminist and cultural geographers study the power relations woven through the practices of everyday life to understand the production of identities, inclusions, exclusions, and cultures of domination and resistance. This chapter will examine where cultural and feminist geographies converge and where they diverge. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of possible areas of research in the future.

Feminist Geography and New Cultural Geography

The famous feminist call of "the personal is political" was important in academic analyses because it turned attention away from study of formal institutions of power and politics, to understanding the importance of beliefs and meaning systems and the common-sense values of culture in the construction of gender roles and identities. Rather than only examine the formal spaces of work, for instance, feminists turned to understand the processes which constructed separate spheres of work and home, and why these became gendered (McDowell 1983). Similarly, feminists have examined the construction of spheres of politics and nonpolitical spheres, this social division itself an operation of power (Enloe 1989; see also McDowell & Sharp 1997). And so, feminists have increasingly pointed to the importance of the everyday to the geographies of gender relations.

New cultural geography similarly moved on from its previous concentration on the formal processes and material expressions of culture – the culture region and culture area of Sauer (1963), the material expressions on the cultural landscape of Kniffen (1962) – to look at the processes through which cultural systems are produced and reproduced. Drawing on the work of cultural theorists, perhaps most significantly Said (1979), new cultural geographers have prioritized a politics of representation, and attempts to open up a space for those whose meanings are represented (and marginalized) by hegemonic assemblages, discourses, and practices. Feminist concerns are integral to new cultural geography which understands gender relations (and other facets of cultural identity) to be involved in the constant (re)production of culture, but also the signification of gender norms in cultural systems. There are three areas where feminist geographers have particularly important contributions to make to cultural geography: identity politics, landscape and the body. I will now examine each in turn.

Identity Politics

Feminist geography has understood the construction of gendered identities through a number of different conceptual frameworks. The "three waves" of feminism have each understood the construction of masculine and feminine in differing ways. The "first wave" of feminists believed that men and women were essentially the same. Thus, in a society which privileged men due to historical domination of men over women, all that is required for equality is that women be given the same opportunities as men: equal opportunities in the job market, in voting, and so on.

"Second wave" feminists saw gender as a much more pervasive element in the construction of social roles and opportunities, and so were more concerned with emancipation of women than with attaining equality with men. This meant that rather than try to deny differences between men and women, these feminists drew out the differences. Men and women *are* fundamentally different as far as second wave feminists are concerned. Whether as a result of nature (biological difference) or nurture (socialization), men and women have different understandings of the world, different ways of knowing it, and a different set of abilities, talents, characteristics and so on. Furthermore, because culture and society have been dominated by men for so long, they have taken on masculinist traits, most often explained as confident cultures of competitiveness and individualism, based around aggression, rationality, or objectivity (or some combination). Therefore, providing women with the same opportunities (access to the labor market or education, for example) will not result in equality because women will be struggling to compete with men within a culture which recognizes and rewards masculinist traits, rather than feminist traits (of compassion, support, and emotion). Those women who have been successful – female political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher are most often produced as an example here (see Enloe 1989) – have only achieved what they have, say second wave feminists, because of their expulsion of their female traits and adoption of a hypermasculine cultural identity.

Due to this focus on the essential differences between men and women, most usually seen to be the result of the biological "facts" of sexual difference, cultural expectations of what women "should" look and act like have come under particular

criticism from second wave feminists.[1] 'No More Miss America' demonstrations and global women's protests against Miss World competitions represented this rejection of dominant norms, and at such rallies, there were 'Freedom Trash Cans' "into which were thrown bras, along with girdles, curlers, false eyelashes, wigs, copies of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Family Circle* etc." (Bordo 1993: 19, quoted in McDowell 1999: 244–5). Feminists were particularly critical of "the beauty myth" (Wolf 1991) which primarily reduced women to an aesthetic object of the male gaze rather than as active agents themselves. Feminist geographers have highlighted the spatially restraining effects of the beauty myth, whether the simple difficulties of walking quickly and assertively in narrow skirts and high-heeled shoes, or the reproduction of an image of women as frail and thus constrained from their independent use of social space (McDowell 1983; Valentine 1993). The feminist claim that 'the personal is political' has meant that campaigns around issues such as pregnancy, abortion, and maternity leave became an important part of feminist "body politics" (McDowell 1999).

There are other expressions of this difference between masculinist and feminist cultures. Ecofeminists for instance believe that because masculinist culture has dominated in Western society, the environment has been aggressively stripped of resources, mined for minerals and rendered an economic good. They believe that women have more in common with nature due to the common oppression under patriarchal power relations and so a female-dominated culture would be more likely to facilitate sustainable management of nature and a more equitable distribution of resources (e.g. Shiva 1989). The rise of capitalist modes of production, modern scientific practice and Enlightenment thought together changed conceptions of Nature as being a (divine) order to being disordered and in need of the controlling influence of man's intervention (Merchant 1980). By this time, "man" was no longer seen as part of Nature, as Haraway has argued in her genealogy of primatology, "it is the white man who has excluded himself from 'nature' by both history and a Greek-Judeo Christian myth system" (Haraway 1989: 159). Similar arguments are made for the inevitability of war and conflict in masculine-dominated societies (Enloe 1989, 1993; Seager 1993).

The second wave of feminism was incredibly powerful politically in that it drew up clear lines of opposition between men and women. In addition, it challenged the apparent universality of Western knowledge, claiming it to be an extension of masculinist ways of knowing and therefore partial. This opened the way for later, more fundamental epistemological challenges to dominant thought such as Haraway's (1988) insistence on the situatedness of knowledge claims, or relativist positions of postmodernist theorists such as Lyotard (1984).

However, more recently, a number of different groups of women have drawn attention to their alienation from the nature of "woman" used in many second wave claims in their name. Robin Morgan's "global sisterhood" was one such attempt to look at the commonality which was the "result of a *common condition* which, despite variations in degree, is experienced by all human beings who are born female" (Morgan 1984: 4). A number of Third World feminists have challenged Morgan's image of a global sisterhood arguing that it ignores all of the differences, inconsistencies, and histories which make up the notion of womanhood in different places. For Mohanty (1997: 83) this automatic alliance erases the agency of

women in particular historical struggles, and requires that "the categories of race and class have to become invisible for gender to become visible." For Third World feminists like Mohanty, the global sisterhood image silences the histories of colonialism, imperialism and racism from which Western feminists still benefit. Post-communist feminists have similarly critiqued Western feminism for its liberal, middle-class assumptions (Funk & Mueller 1993). Other groups of women have also started to be more vocal in their insistence that their experiences and identities be included into understandings of what it is to be female in different societies: lesbian and bisexual women have challenged the "compulsory heterosexuality" of much feminist politics, working class women have challenged the predominant idea in liberal notions of feminism that it is liberating to leave the house to find work (for them, this simply becomes yet another burden on their time), and disabled women critique the embodied assumptions underlying much feminist thought and politics (see Rich 1986; Nast 1999; Chouinard & Grant 1995).

Thus, in response to these critiques of earlier incarnations, "Third wave" feminism takes a more complex view of gender relations. Here gender is a central axis of power and identity, but one which cannot be understood in isolation of other elements of identity such as race, class, nationality and sexuality. Third-wave feminists have acknowledged the greater complexity of gender relations, not simply operating around a male–female binary, but cross-cut by issues of race, class, and sexuality. Such feminists have moved from the essentialist arguments of previous feminisms: gender identity is not defined as stable and bounded but instead as fluid. Rather than regard gender identities as having fixed boundaries – as male or female – this approach regards them as constantly in flux. In other words, a rejection of boundaries is, for some, epistemologically a feminist move. French and Italian feminists in particular have been resistant to attempts to delimit and name the feminine, arguing that femininity is constructed as "that which disrupts the security of the boundaries separating spaces and must therefore be controlled by a masculine force" (Deutsche 1996: 301). Feminists such as Cixous (see Shurmer-Smith 1994) and Irigaray (1985) regard the establishment of boundaries as a fundamentally masculinist move, a will to power through the defining and delimiting of an essence into something known. Instead, Cixous and Irigaray see feminism as always being in excess, always escaping categorization and limitation, always more than can be known and thus always subversive of accepted ways of knowing. Elements of recent developments in cultural geography have also embraced this fluidity of categories.

Cultural geographers influenced by poststructuralism have also challenged coherent and bounded notions of the subject. Most influential is the work of Michel Foucault (see especially Foucault 1977; 1978). For Foucault, "subjectivity is an epiphenomenon of discourse: there is no ontological self, but rather a sense of selfhood is an effect of discourse, and a location within networks of power/knowledge" (Sharp 1999: 267). There is no subject prior to knowledge, power, and discourse. In his earlier work on the subject (Foucault 1977), he focuses on attempts to "produce" docile subjects through the construction of particular spaces through practices of disciplining and surveillance (for example, schools, hospitals, and prisons). In the later *History of Sexuality* volumes, Foucault (1978) looks at the "technologies of the self" through which individuals are taught to assume – but

more importantly they choose to assume – certain subjectivities (his example is of sexed selves).

Feminist theorist Judith Butler (1990) has been key in understanding gender identities from this more fluid perspective. She considers the ways in which gendered identities are reproduced through the repetition of mundane activities rather than there being any essentialist biological definition of gender, or any stable identity established through social construction. It is the deed and not the doer that is of significance. The notion of a coherent and independent identity – or "the subject" – is the effect of constant performance. On the whole, she argues, repetition works to reinforce the norm of heterosexuality. It is only through the constant repetition of heterosexualized actions that the illusion of a heterosexual norm can emerge. Everyday practices such as looking at advertising images, following soap opera storylines, placing pictures of families on office desks, unselfconsciously reproduce heterosexuality as the norm (see also Valentine 1993). Butler (1990) argues that queer politics resists these practices through a reversal. From a mass of possible sexual performances emerges a conceptual map on which clear and distinct lines can be drawn dividing "straight" from "gay," "normal" from "deviant." However, Butler's is not such a monolithic theory. There is always the possibility of resistance and transgression in this model which is so dependent on correct repetition. Alternative practices – whether consciously or unconsciously performed – can destabilize and ultimately undermine these fragile assemblages. Feminist geographers have embraced Butler's ideas, particularly the importance she gives to the historical and geographical specificity of each performance. As a result, there have been studies of the geographies of sexual performance, with feminist geographers considering the role of both private spaces in the construction of gay identities (e.g. Rothenberg 1995; Johnston & Valentine 1995), performances of gender in spaces of work (e.g. McDowell 1997), the importance of challenges to the heterosexism of public space (e.g. Knopp 1995), and the significance of transgressions known only to the individual(s) involved in the act (e.g. Bell & Valentine 1995). Some feminists have argued that space itself should be seen as performatively enacted (Rose 1993), or have suggested that it is important to resist images of space and place that are fixed and quotidian – in a binary gender system, feminine – in comparison to the transformative masculinism of time (see Massey 1993).

Performance and fluidity have also recently been embraced in cultural geography. The figure of the hybrid or mobile subject has become central to much cultural theory and cultural geography, from Clifford's (1992) "traveling culture" to celebrations of the nomad as the rootless subject that is freely able to traverse global space and resist dominant codings (Doel 1995; Routledge & Simons 1995). For the latter cultural geographers, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987), the state apparatus is part of a cultural drive towards immobility and fixity. Nomadism is a fluid positionality which blurs boundaries and subverts stable definitions, whether this mobility is actual movement across space, or a metaphorical state of being. The figure of the nomad resists settled patterns of thought and as such has been held up as the decentered or fragmented subject of postmodernism and poststructuralism, or the figure of resistance in critical theory (see Routledge & Simons 1995). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) hold up the nomad as the figure resisting that paranoiac desire emanating from the territorializing and repressive effect of insti-

tutions (such as the state, family and school). They hold up schizophrenic desire as the nomadic subversion of these fixed and bounded identities.[2] This desire deterritorializes: transcending borders and resisting any attempts to contain or discipline. These desires also have spatial expressions: territorialization produces "striated spaces" of control and limitation, while deterritorialization produces "smooth spaces" of movement.

This understanding of the mobile subject has been critiqued by Kaplan (1987) who argues that such mobility is only available to privileged white males (see also Braidotti 1994; Massey 2000). Certain women (and minorities) do not have access to the technologies of mobility, and are often very much situated in place. Various images of a shrinking and fluid globe are, argues Massey (2000), a geographical imagination situation in the West, particularly in the imaginations of white men, rather than being a newly emerging and resistant global sense of place. For those who have the economic and cultural capital, the world is indeed becoming a smaller place linked by jet travel and the electronic communities of the internet. For others however, the globe is as much a "striated space" as it ever was, marked as it is by spaces of danger, barriers of nation-state borders, the cost of travel and the perpetuation of colonial discourses of race. Although recognizing the extralocal nature of definitions of place, Massey (1993) argues that global space is nevertheless subject to the laws of a set of "power geometries" based in wealth, patriarchy, and Western-centrism. Global space is thus constructed to ensure that mobility is not available to all, that certain groups are still subject to the constraints of place, to be exploited by the power of capital which is mobile across the globe. This issue is of particular importance to feminists in that global poverty is increasingly a gendered condition with women now estimated to comprise the majority of the world's poor.

Furthermore feminists have been anxious about embracing fluid notions of subjectivity and identity for fear that they will lose the ability to define boundaries of identity and as a result lose the power of fighting for the cause of female emancipation. As Linda Alcoff suggests, Foucault ignores the fact that, sometimes, "thinking of ourselves as subjects can have, and has had, positive effects contributing to our ability effectively to resist structures of domination" (Alcoff 1990: 73). Although postmodernist versions of relativism are in some ways allied with feminism in their challenge to any universalist claims by Western knowledge, and for fragmenting the unified (masculinist) subject, they also challenge the efficacy of feminist politics. Some feminists have suggested that, despite the radical propositions of relativism, it is in actuality a politically conservative position. As Fox-Genovese (1986: 121) has remarked,

> Surely it is no coincidence that the western white male elite proclaimed the death of the subject at precisely the moment at which it might have had to share that status with women and peoples of other races and classes who were beginning to challenge its supremacy. (See also Mascia-Lees et al. 1989)

A number of feminists have taken up Gayatri Spivak's suggestion of a "strategic essentialism" from which women can fight patriarchal oppression (Mohanty 1988; Fuss 1989). In this sense, in addition to being a cultural identity, strategic essentialism is a political concept. Mohanty (1988) argues that coalitions are formed not

because they are necessarily enjoyable but because they are required for survival. This offers the possibility of retaining the idea of a "feminist politics" and the desire to make things better without the necessity of a belief in biological essentialism or universalism. For others, feminist knowledge is much more ambivalent (Rose 1991) – both accepting the necessity of the identity of woman despite the limitations that this sets, and acknowledging that the experiences of women will always be in excess of this one identifier.

Feminists have striven to facilitate the entry of women's voices into the exclusively masculinist institutions of academia, but notions of inclusion are also methodologically important for feminist geographers. Feminist methodology has always stressed the importance of listening to the voices of others so that research is a collaborative process rather than the product of an expert "analysis" or "reading" of the world (see Moss 2002). The inclusion of the voices of those who have experience of different situations and those who have different and marginalized viewpoints is central to much feminist methodology (see Moss 2002). Cultural geography has followed and developed this trend with many turning attention from the production of official or dominant cultures to those subcultures of marginal groups (see Duncan 1993). While embracing this widening challenge to academic authority, feminist geographers have been wary of what can appear to be a constant search for a new marginal group to study, something which might be considered to be "fetishizing" the "other." There is also a danger that by regarding all marginal groups as equally valid and important – merely by dint of their marginality – complex power relations might be missed. Some feminist geographers have written of their fear that they could become voyeuristic regarding various groups they might be involved in researching: by being enticed by the exoticism of the other, or choosing a difference to study for its difference rather than any particular commitment to the group in question (see England 1994; Katz 1994). For example, Cindy Katz uses a comparative approach, not only to foreground her relationship to those involved in the research, but also to allow the research to reflect upon larger-scale processes:

> By displacing the field and addressing the issue in rural Sudan and East Harlem, New York – settings that on the surface appear to have little in common – I am able to tell a story not of marginalization alone where "those poor people" might be the key narrative theme, but of the systemic predations of global economic restructuring. (Katz 1994: 68)

Here feminist geographers can achieve an understanding of the specifics of particular situations, can find space for the voices and concerns of the people participating in the research, without simply regarding them as "different." The comparative dimension facilitates an understanding of regional and global connections, placing the researcher and researched in the same cultural landscape, and teasing out relationships of power and knowledge that link the two.

Landscape

Cultural geography has, of course, long been interested in the role of landscape in the reproduction of cultural geographies. New cultural geographers look to the land-

scape as a "signifying system" (Duncan 1990) through which meanings are made and remade. Some feminist geographers have looked to the landscape to provide information on how gendered identities are constructed. The imagery of nation is particularly important in the landscape and reinforces the gendered expectations of national citizens: that men are the active agents of national liberation as soldiers and statesmen, while women are metaphorical images of the nation to be protected by their menfolk (see McClintock 1993; Sharp 1996). Warner (1985) has shown the constant use of such images in the reproduction of national landscapes, while Johnson (1995) has studied the role of public statuary in Dublin for the reproduction of masculinist images of the nation and prescriptive models of "good" womanhood. Other work on dominant and resistant landscape imagery shows how performance around the landscape, in telling stories and singing songs, can both reinforce and challenge inherited gender identities (Dowler 1998).

However some feminist geographers have been wary of adopting the landscape approach altogether. Geography is, by tradition, a highly visual discipline concerned with such issues as cartographic representation, the problems of the description of landscapes and regions. Drawing on the pioneering work of John Berger (1972), cultural geographers such as Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) have argued that landscape should be regarded as a "way of seeing," which emerges from historically and geographically specific "visual ideologies." Rose (1993) has critiqued them, however, for omitting a discussion of the gendered and sexed taint to the landscape gaze, and, drawing on Mulvey's (1989) characterization of "the gaze" as an element of the "uneasy pleasures of power," she suggests that this form of cultural geography is therefore complicit in the reproduction of the gendering of the gaze (Rose 1993: 86).

Rose (1993) goes further to argue that gazing on the landscape inevitably casts it as feminine giving the viewer pleasure in his (*sic*) seeing, knowing, and unveiling of its secrets. Rose (1993) warns of the objectifying and voyeuristic position adopted by the expert cultural geographer decoding the landscape (see also Gregory 1996 for a discussion of the elitism of the gaze on the landscape). For instance, Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 95) suggest that the "thrill that Harvey gets at playing the voyeur is all too obvious in his recent books, whilst Soja's penchant for monumentalism has not gone unnoticed." In the social context of patriarchy, the concept of the gaze represents the split between the active male surveyor and the passive female who is being surveyed. Cultural and feminist theorists argue that dominant constructions of femininity are established through the gaze (Berger 1972; Mulvey 1989), thus making it a contradictory position for female geographers to adopt. Some feminists have presented the figure of the *flâneur* – who walks through the modern metropolis unseen but seeing everything – as the voyeur of the landscape, arguing it to be an inherently masculinist position as women must always be the object of the gaze. However, Wilson (1992) seeks to challenge this representation arguing that it depends upon too simplistic an image of gender. While the city does represent a space of masculinist order and control, it also encapsulates movement, disruption and decentering – traditionally feminine characteristics – certainly offering all sorts of challenges and opportunities to women, rather than rendering them little more than disempowered objects of the male gaze.

Furthermore, Nash (1996) challenges Rose's account of the cultural geographers' gaze because she see Rose's argument as equating visual representations directly

with "generalized notions of masculinism, imperialism and oppression" (Nash 1996: 151). Through her reading of women's depictions of male bodies as landscapes, Nash (1996) suggests that there is nothing inherently oppressive in either the landscape or the gaze, and offers the possibility of female heterosexual pleasure as well as homoerotic gazes (see also the discussion in Mitchell 2000: 223–9). Similarly, photographer Ingrid Pollard uses representations of the English landscape to challenge the viewer's gaze for its inherent assumptions about nation, gender, and race (Pollard 1993).

Embodiment

Since the establishment of second-wave ideas, feminists have been concerned both with the material body and the body as represented in medical, philosophical, and cultural texts (Pringle 1999: 17–20). This interest has become more intense with many geographers' fear of the overly abstract nature of much geography in the wake of the cultural turn which emphasized texts and representations. Philo expresses his concern,

> about this dematerializing of human geography: this preoccupation with immaterial cultural processes, with the constitution of intersubjective meaning systems, with the play of identity politics through the less-than-tangible, often-fleeting spaces of texts, signs, symbols, psyches, desires, fears and imaginings. I am concerned that, in the rush to elevate such spaces in our human geographical studies, we have ended up being less attentive to the more 'thingy,' bump-into-able, stubbornly there-in-the-world kinds of matter (the material) with which earlier geographers tended to be more familiar. (Philo 2000: 33)

Thus many feminist geographers have turned to the body as a method of re-establishing the material. This is not a naive antitheoretical turn but an attempt to unite the discursive elements of cultural production with the emotions, pains, joys, passions, and requirements of various bodies. Foucault's work on the effects of power, surveillance and discipline has again been influential here. His research demonstrated the ways in which different bodies emerged from different discursive power/knowledge regimes. Although Foucault did not focus on gender as a significant element in the construction of bodies, his work has been an important point of departure for a number of feminist theorists (see Butler 1993; Nast and Pile 1998). This position argues for the need to think of bodies as sites of performance in their own right rather than simply simple surfaces for discursive inscription. Bodies are the "sites and expressions of power relations" (McDowell 1995: 79). Discourses do not simply write themselves directly onto the surface of bodies as if these bodies offered blank surfaces of equal topography. Furthermore, the spaces through which bodies move, and in which they are made and remade through various practices, are integral to the form the bodies take, making this a significant interest of cultural geographers. For example, McDowell (1997) looks at the ways in which discourses of appropriate work behavior materialize in the space of merchant banks through various embodied performances, while Longhurst (1995, 1996) has examined the specific geographies of pregnant bodies.

Methodologically, this is important as a focus on bodies can ground understandings of cultures in everyday practices, and, perhaps even more importantly,

ground the researcher in the cultural processes which are being examined. Despite its associations with the masculinist exploits of empire (see the exchange between Stoddart [1991] and Domosh [1991]), feminist geographers have a commitment to fieldwork for the possibility it offers for the inclusion of other voices into various parts of the research process, and for the genuine collaboration which this type of work can facilitate (see the *Professional Geographer* special issue, 1994). This means that, on the whole, feminist geography has largely resisted the discursive dominance of cultural geography, and instead examined the material effects of different discursive regimes. Commentators have noticed a shift to "research 'on the ground' " in recent geographical conferences, and on struggles with what could be done to make things better, with prominent sessions on activist politics (see Dowler & Sharp 2001).

Conclusions

There are many common points of interest between feminist and cultural geographies but also places where many feminists are wary of the direction cultural geography might take them. More recent developments into nonrepresentational theory and actor-network theory have, for example, offered feminists an important critique of the sometimes over-determining discursive analyses that have come to dominate cultural geography (see Bingham & Thrift 2000). However, these approaches, while interesting in examining the effects of micropractices of everyday life, are perhaps too descriptive for the overtly political aims of much feminist geography which seeks not only to describe how it is that women and men are guided towards particular identities, roles, and practices, but also how to intervene to change them.

NOTES

1. This work has predominantly examined Western cultural expectations.
2. The romanticization of homelessness and psychological disorders in the ideas of nomadism has faced critique, however, by those who argue that the metaphorical use of these terms denies the pain of their physical reality (see Parr & Philo 1995).

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