Prince helps with the technical steps involved – such as organizing the signing of contracts for grants – but also stays in touch afterwards, helping with networking and strategies, resolving conflicts and passing on skills. Prince obviously has respect and rapport with local women, a strong 'joking relationship' as Goswami puts it, knowing a great many by name, chatting freely with groups of women in kitchens, on buses and in the markets as he moves around the region. Prince also has great rapport with local children, cares about their health and education, and sees the children, indeed, as the long-term answer to the problem of mass poverty.

This NGO's work is not formally intended as a gender reform programme, as far as I can tell – its intentions are community development and poverty reduction. But to a striking degree it involves working across the gender boundary that is conventional in most parts of India, creating a cross-gender alliance that empowers women. Doing so has required sustained effort on Prince's part as well as trust and adventurousness on the part of local women. And perhaps, also, the story implies a level of acceptance and cooperation by local men that is worth celebrating.

Other notable studies might have been included in this chapter; more will be mentioned through the book. I hope these five are enough to show the diversity of gender dynamics, their complexity and their power. In talking about gender, we are not talking about simple differences or fixed categories. We are talking about relationships, boundaries, practices, identities and images that are actively created in social processes. They come into existence in particular historical circumstances, shape the lives of people in profound and often contradictory ways, and are subject to historical struggle and change. How the intellectuals of the world have tried to understand these processes will be the subject of the next chapter.

3

Gender theorists and gender theory

In the majority world, 1: Raden Ajeng Kartini

A little over a hundred years ago in Java, then part of the Dutch East Indies, a young woman in a ruling-class Muslim family decided to be a writer and teacher, and advertised for a pen-friend in the Netherlands. The young woman's name was Kartini and the pen-friend she found was Stella Zeehandelaar, a social democrat who helped to put her in touch with European progressive thought. Kartini and her two sisters were developing an agenda for reforming Javanese society and culture, especially the position of women. Kartini was vigorously opposed to the institution of polygamy, and critical of the seclusion of women and their lack of education. Therefore she proposed to remain unmarried herself, to launch a programme of action. She planned to set up a school for the daughters of the elite, on the idea that the aristocracy should provide a model for change; and she began publishing essays.

These activities by a woman, however, were thought damaging to the honour of her family. Though her father had provided a private education for Kartini, he would not send her to train as a teacher in Holland. Nor could she get government support for the planned school. Eventually the family, following custom, arranged a good marriage for her, and she bowed to pressure. It killed her: she died from complications of her first childbirth, aged twenty-four.

Kartini's letters to Stella, in which this story of hope and disappointment are told, were collected after her death, censored, and published in 1911, a little later translated into English under the sentimental title

Letters of a Javanese Princess. (For the tougher uncensored version, see Kartini 2005.) They became a classic of Dutch and colonial literature, and Raden Ajeng Kartini became a heroine of the Indonesian independence movement. I have never seen her work referred to in the English-language literature on gender, except for regional studies specifically about Indonesia.

Kartini was not trying to develop a 'theory of gender' – not many people at the time were. Yet her writing deals directly with a number of the questions that a theory of gender must address: the institution of the family, gender divisions of labour, ideologies of womanhood, and strategies of change in gender relations. And she does this in the context of colonial society, criticizing racism, and problematizing the relationship between global centre and periphery that is now a crucial issue in feminist thought.

To speak of theories of gender abstractly is to imply that all the theories have the same object of knowledge. This can be, at best, only approximately correct. Ideas are created in varying circumstances, by people with different backgrounds and different training. History throws different problems at them. It is not surprising that they formulate their intellectual projects, and understand their object of knowledge, in differing ways.

This sociology-of-knowledge principle was first applied to gender theories by Viola Klein in a now-forgotten classic, *The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology* (1946). In a later generation it was re-emphasized by feminist 'standpoint epistemology'. To understand theories of gender, then, it is necessary to consider the intellectuals who produced them and the situations they faced. I will try to do this historically. My main focus will be on the global metropole, since that is where today's dominant modes of thinking arose; but I will bear in mind the geopolitics of knowledge. I assume, as Kartini and Stella did, that the attempt at communication across different regions and situations is worthwhile.

In the metropole, 1: from Christine de Pizan to Simone de Beauvoir

The gender theories of the global metropole are products of a secular, rationalist and sceptical culture which took its modern shape, so far as the human sciences are concerned, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The gender theories that began to emerge then resulted from the gradual transformation of older discourses that were religious and moralistic, dating from times before modern imperialism.

Mediaeval Christianity inherited, from the saints and sages of the ancient Mediterranean world, a tradition of misogyny that to a modern reader is startling in its viciousness. The writings of Christian intellectuals are peppered with declarations of the inferiority of women in mind and body, and the danger they represent if men succumb to their wiles (Blamires 1992). There was, nevertheless, a counter-tradition defending women. In 1405 this was brought together in a great allegory, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, by Christine de Pizan in France. Christine refuted, point by point, the traditional abuse of women, building an allegorical 'city' in her text which would be a safe space for women. She made a claim, not to social or economic equality, but to equality of respect.

The tradition of the moral defence of womanhood continued through the Reformation and the early stages of imperialism, especially among groups like the Quakers who defended women's equal right to preach, i.e. to exercise religious authority. It was still available at the time of the French Revolution, and was drawn on by Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), produced in immediate response to the declaration of the 'Rights of Man'. The early suffrage movement in the United States was in large part a religious movement. The Seneca Falls convention in 1848, often seen as the moment when modern feminism appeared, borrowed the moralizing language of the Declaration of Independence for its message.

Already, however, religion was being displaced by science as the major frame of intellectual life. Nineteenth-century science was actively concerned with problems related to gender. Charles Darwin, the towering figure in evolutionary thought, in *The Origin of Species* (1859) made inheritance and biological selection into first-rank intellectual issues. Darwin's later work specifically addressed the choice of sexual partners and the evolutionary role of sex as a form of reproduction. This occurred at a moment when the gender division of labour, and symbolic divisions between women and men, were at an extreme. It is not surprising that in this milieu evolutionary thought – 'Darwinism' more than Darwin – produced the idea of a biological basis for all forms of social difference, including the racial hierarchies then being constructed by the expanding empires, and including gender division in the metropole.

Gender issues ran through early attempts by male intellectuals to formulate a science of society and a theory of social progress. The French philosopher Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism and a figure almost as influential as Darwin, gave close attention to the social function of women in the first-ever 'treatise of sociology', *System of Positive Polity* (1851). Women were, in his view, an important base for the coming utopian society – but only if they remained in their proper sphere as comforters and nurturers of men. His most distinguished follower, the

British philosopher John Stuart Mill, took a more radical view in the famous essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869), arguing the case for equality, and seeing the basic reason for inequality not in men's moral superiority but in physical force. When Lester Ward wrote the first major theoretical statement in American sociology, *Dynamic Sociology* (1883), he offered a long analysis of the 'reproductive forces' with a detailed critique of 'sexuo-social inequalities' such as unequal education for girls and boys. In 1879 the German labour leader August Bebel published a book, *Woman and Socialism*, which became a best-seller. Marx's colleague Friedrich Engels wrote a long essay, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), which drew on academic debates about the history of the family and the idea of 'matriarchy', as well as socialists' concerns about 'the woman question' as an issue of social reform.

Why did the men do this? Basically, because the woman question had been placed on the agenda by an emerging movement of women, which was strong in exactly those social groups from which the new social scientists came. The emancipation of women became a test of the 'progress' achieved by any society.

Women intellectuals in these generations were operating under such difficulties that they were unlikely to produce theoretical treatises themselves. (Among other things, women were then excluded from almost all universities.) One hardly finds a 'theory of gender' in the writings of feminist intellectuals like Harriet Martineau in Britain, Susan B. Anthony in the United States, or Maybanke Wolstenholme in Australia – though one finds many insights into the mechanisms of patriarchy. Their attention was more focused on the critique of prejudice among men, or on practical problems of organizing for the suffrage, law reform, and education for women.

When more theoretical writing by women developed, in texts such as Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911), it was closely connected with economic issues. Schreiner analysed the 'parasitism' of bourgeois women and the refusal of bourgeois society to recognize its exploitation of working women. At the same time, women in the labour movement asked how far working-class and bourgeois women had shared interests. Alexandra Kollontai's *The Social Basis of the Woman Question* (1909) argued vehemently that there was no general 'women's question', and that support by working-class women for socialism was the only path towards true equality. This did not prevent Kollontai arguing for separate organization of women within the labour movement, and opening debates about sexual freedom and the reform of marriage.

The intellectuals of Paris, London, St Petersburg and New York were living in the heartlands of the greatest wave of imperial expansion the world has ever known. Explorers, conquerors, missionaries and curious travellers gathered an immense fund of information about gender arrangements in the non-European world, which they often thought were survivals from the primitive days of mankind. Texts such as Engels' *Origin* testify to the fascination of this information for metropolitan intellectuals. Early social anthropology is full of it. Popular imperialism put many exotic images of gender into circulation: polygamy, marriage by conquest, concubinage, amazon women, primitive promiscuity. A serious comparative science of gender was slow to emerge; but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the news from the empire was already acting alongside feminism to destabilize belief in a fixed gender order. Already gender debates were dealing with a range of issues that we can recognize in modern gender research: power ('subjection'), sexuality ('phylogenetic forces', 'free love') and the division of labour ('parasitism').

Yet the way they were interpreted was very different from approaches a hundred years later. To the bourgeois and socialist intelligentsia alike, men and women were absolute categories and the main determinant of gender patterns was the dynamic of progress, whether gradual or revolutionary. From Mill to Schreiner it was progress – moral, economic and political – that was thought to be breaking the bonds of ancient custom and lifting gender relations onto a higher and more rational plane. The idea of a 'theory of gender' as an intellectual undertaking in its own right was alien to this way of thought. But such an idea was soon to come.

A crucial step towards it was taken by the newly created depth psychology. When the Viennese nerve specialist Sigmund Freud became convinced that many of his patients' troubles were psychological, not physical, in origin, he explored their emotional lives for causes, and developed new interpretive methods to do so. His patients' talk, during long courses of therapy, gave him masses of evidence about the troubled emotional interior of the bourgeois family. This was documented in stunning case histories, the most famous being 'Dora' (1905) and the 'Wolf Man' (1918). They underpinned theoretical texts in which Freud expounded the concepts of unconscious motivation (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900), childhood sexuality, the oedipus complex and the transformations of desire and attachment in the course of growing up (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905), and the connections between depth psychology and culture (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930).

By the 1920s Freud's ideas had spread far beyond their first technical audience and had become a cultural force. It was clear that, whether right or wrong in detail, Freud had put his finger on problems which were both troubling and important for modern Western societies. Freud

was not directly a supporter of the women's movement, but doubtless was influenced by contemporary feminism in the problems he addressed. His first major follower, Alfred Adler, had close links to the social-democratic labour movement, and did explicitly support feminism. Adler (1927) made the critique of masculinity a centrepiece of his revision of psychoanalysis. These pioneers, and the next generation of psychoanalysts who debated sexuality, femininity and masculinity in the 1920s and early 1930s, showed that the gender divisions of adulthood were not fixed from the start of life. Rather, the adult patterns were constructed in a conflict-ridden process of development over the life-course. This was a decisive shift in ideas about gender. Nineteenth-century thought, even feminism, had taken the fixed characters of men and women more or less for granted.

The next step, to a fully social theory of gender, followed quickly. The landmark was Mathilde Vaerting's *The Dominant Sex*, first published in 1921. Vaerting, a reforming educator, was one of the first two women ever appointed at professorial level in a German university. She met with an extremely hostile reaction, was thrown out of her job when Hitler came to power, and never held a university chair again. Understandably, she had a lifelong interest in the sociology of power.

The Dominant Sex criticized the notion of a fixed masculine and feminine character on sociological grounds. Basing herself shakily on a speculative history of ancient Egypt and Sparta, and more firmly on an environmental view of character, Vaerting argued that masculinity and femininity basically reflected power relations. In societies where women held power, men showed the very characteristics which bourgeois society saw as quintessentially feminine. In developing this argument, Vaerting created the first extended inter-disciplinary theory of gender. Her argument linked psychological patterns with social structure, and distinguished law, the division of labour, and ideology as spheres of gender domination. She even offered an amazing prediction of Men's Liberation as a sequel of feminism. Her work was rapidly translated into English, and was a focus of controversy in the 1920s; but in the European upheavals that followed, her work faded into obscurity.

A better empirical base for gender theory was taking shape about the same time in social anthropology, with its newly developed technique of field study, 'ethnography'. The best-known ethnographers, from the Polish Bronislaw Malinowski to the American Margaret Mead, paid close attention to sex and gender. Malinowski used ethnographic information in a famous critique of psychoanalysis, arguing that the 'oedipus complex' as described by Freud was not universal. Mead's early research in Samoa reinforced the idea of cultural diversity in sexual conduct. Then, in a widely read book called *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), based on fieldwork in New Guinea, Mead – like Vaerting – rejected the idea of a fixed relationship between biological sex and gendered character. Ethnographers profoundly relativized the picture of gender. They gave credible and often sympathetic portraits of non-Western societies where gender arrangements functioned perfectly well, though along quite different lines from bourgeois life in the metropole.

Awareness of the relativity of gender helped to popularize the concept of 'sex roles' in the 1940s and 1950s. This was a simple application of the general notion that people's social conduct reflects conformity to cultural norms for the social positions they occupy. The most influential formulation was made by the most influential sociological theorist of the era, the Harvard University professor Talcott Parsons (Parsons and Bales 1956). Parsons's much-quoted characterization of the male role as 'instrumental' and the female role as 'expressive' defined a difference of social function. Other writers about sex roles simply parked the instrumental/expressive distinction on top of biological difference, and presumed that the role norms corresponded to the natural difference. But Parsons treated the whole gender process as a consequence of a social system's need for integration and stability.

The popularity of what amounted to a theory of social conformity in the repressive 1950s is not surprising. Yet sex role theory was concerned also with *changes* in sex roles, notable in wartime. Mirra Komarovsky (who many years later became president of the American Sociological Association, the second woman ever elected to that position) had good reason to theorize 'Cultural contradictions and sex roles', the title of a 1946 paper. Sex role change was also possible for men. Helen Hacker suggested this in a pioneering paper, 'The new burdens of masculinity' (1957). In consumer capitalism and suburban life, she argued, expressive functions were being added to instrumental, so that men were now expected to show interpersonal skills as well as being 'sturdy oaks'.

There was a feminist colouring in some sex role discussions, including Hacker's. But the renewal of feminist gender theory in the mid-century was basically the work of Simone de Beauvoir in France. *The Second Sex* (1949), the most famous of all modern feminist texts, drew on psychoanalysis, literature and the activist philosophy worked out by de Beauvoir's partner Jean-Paul Sartre, to challenge gender categories and gender domination at the same time. Refusing to take the polarity of masculine and feminine for granted, de Beauvoir explored how women were constituted as 'other' in the consciousness of men. She went on, in a remarkable series of social portraits, to explore the variety of ways in which women could respond to this situation and constitute themselves – not escaping from gender, for that was impossible, but realizing gender

differently in different life projects. This work, too, was stimulated by the upheaval of war, and de Beauvoir's topics overlapped substantially with those of sex role research. But what she could see in these topics was different, because her approach stemmed from a political critique of the subordination of women.

By the mid-century this was exceptional. Psychoanalysis had mostly become a socially conservative branch of medicine, much more concerned to normalize people than to pursue an agenda of liberation. Sex role theory was also, in the main, a conservative approach – especially as it was applied in counselling, social work and schools. Simone de Beauvoir's cutting edge found many admirers, but no immediate popular response.

In the metropole, 2: from Women's Liberation to queer theory

It was this cultural situation in the mid-century, as well as the energy from young women in the radical social movements of the 1960s, that gave an explosive quality to the Women's Liberation movement. An extraordinarily rapid mobilization occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, across much of the advanced capitalist world. This movement produced a categorical approach to gender, emphasizing the solidarity of women as an oppressed group or a 'sex class' – which ran counter to the deconstructive trend of earlier gender theory. US feminism especially was sweepingly hostile to psychoanalysis.

The characteristic Women's Liberation view was based on a categorical theory of power. The term 'patriarchy' was fished up from an anthropological backwater and used to name systems of male power and oppression of women. Patriarchy had to be confronted by an autonomous women's movement, and the demand for the liberation of women was a revolutionary demand. This view was expounded in a torrent of pamphlets and a series of vivid books, from Sheila Rowbotham's *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* (1969) to Robin Morgan's famous anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970) and Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex* (1971). Even men influenced by the new feminism began to speak this language. Calls for 'male liberation', in solidarity with women's liberation rather than against it, soon appeared (Sawyer 1970).

The radical movements of the time in the USA, influenced by the Civil Rights struggle and the struggle against the neo-colonial war in Vietnam, shared a belief that all systems of oppression could and would be overthrown. This perspective was immediately shared by the first theorists

of Gay Liberation, who added sexual oppression to the agenda, in street politics and in texts such as Dennis Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1972) and Guy Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire* (1972).

By the later 1970s, however, a gender-specific view had come to prominence in the United States and Britain. This view sharply separated gender struggles from others, or saw the oppression of women as the root of all social inequality. This perspective was dramatically presented by the US theologian Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology* (1978). Daly tried to create a new conceptual and symbolic language to express women's consciousness and women's anger against men, as part of an effort to create a distinct women's culture. The social radicalism of early Women's Liberation was defined as an impure variant of feminism.

The impulse of Women's Liberation was so powerful, however, that it launched a whole spectrum of theories. A categorical theory that focused on the division of labour, emphasizing the economic exploitation of women within the family, was proposed in a famous essay 'The main enemy' by Christine Delphy (1970) in France. Debate ran through the 1970s on how to theorize women's domestic labour, and whether capitalists or husbands were the main beneficiaries of women's work (Malos 1980).

The familiar 'sex role' concept was radicalized. This was now treated as an account of the social controls that hampered women. In the United States there was a wave of enthusiasm for the attempt by the psychologist Sandra Bem (1974) to define and measure 'androgyny' as a goal of sex role reform. A debate about the 'male sex role' and how men could break out of it, or at least bend it, began in the United States and spilled into several other countries (Pleck and Sawyer 1974).

Other feminists used the techniques of structuralism, the most influential intellectual movement in the human sciences at the time. In a long essay called 'The traffic in women: notes on the "political economy" of sex', Gayle Rubin (1975) integrated feminism and anthropology in a sophisticated model of 'the sex/gender system'. This was perhaps the most ambitious theory of gender since Vaerting's. It was not isolated. A structural account of women's subordination had been proposed as early as 1966 by Juliet Mitchell in an essay 'Women: the longest revolution'. In 1974, in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Mitchell proposed a complex theory of the reproduction of class society and patriarchy over time.

Mitchell's book, along with the work of Nancy Chodorow (1978) in the United States, marked a striking reversal of the feminist coolness towards psychoanalysis in the English-speaking world. The power of Freudian concepts to explain people's acceptance of oppressive social relations was again recognized. In France the rejection of psychoanalysis

had not been so marked, and, in the wake of Women's Liberation, adaptations of Lacan's version of psychoanalysis were undertaken by a number of women. A key goal was to find a level of human reality which escaped the phallocentric structure of ordinary language and consciousness. Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) and Luce Irigaray's essay *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977) were perhaps the most influential.

A simpler feminist adaptation of psychoanalysis and developmental psychology, Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), captured popular attention in the English-speaking world and became a best-seller. This was a return to categorical theory at the level of 'voice'. It was widely read as proving that men and women had different moral senses, and fed into the acceptance of a milder version of feminism as a kind of organizational reform in the state and the corporate world.

By the late 1970s, the new feminism in the rich countries had established a strong cultural presence and was establishing an organizational presence in government and in universities. It won resources to run programmes such as shelters for battered women, women's health centres, equal employment opportunity programmes, and school initiatives for girls. These programmes rapidly took hold where there were labour or social-democratic governments, in Scandinavia, Canada, Australia and (at regional level) Germany. This created sharp debate, given the Women's Liberation view of the state as part of the patriarchal system. The work of feminist bureaucrats posed new intellectual questions: how to understand the organizations in which they found themselves, as well as how to understand the policy problems which the programmes addressed.

Accordingly, new branches of theory and research developed. A number of theorists reconsidered the state, increasingly seen as a gendered institution of great complexity, with possibilities of internal change (see chapter 7). Research institutes and monitoring programmes were set up, such as the Norwegian Likestillingssenteret (Centre for Gender Equality). A whole genre of feminist or feminist-inspired policy studies began to appear. To take just one field, education: notable policy studies range from the pioneering Australian report *Girls, School and Society* (1975), sponsored by the national Schools Commission, to the very sophisticated British study *Closing the Gender Gap* by Madeleine Arnot and her colleagues (1999).

In metropolitan universities, the 1970s and 1980s saw a huge growth of feminist or feminist-inspired research in almost every discipline of the humanities and social sciences, and to a lesser extent in the natural sciences. In sociology, for instance, sex and gender – formerly a marginal field of low prestige – became the most active field of research in the whole discipline. Feminist historiography had become a large enterprise,

fuelled by the need to correct the massive biases of patriarchal history, and the recognition of gender as an important category of historical knowledge (Scott 1986). Feminist science studies flourished, casting new light on an area that once was thought a perfect proof of male superiority (Harding 1986).

Journals which published research about sex roles, gender, women and, eventually, men multiplied. Some became high-prestige academic journals – notably *Signs*, a US feminist journal launched in 1975. In the 1990s and 2000s women's studies mutated into 'gender studies' embracing lesbian, gay and transgender issues, amid controversy as to whether this would destroy its political edge, and continues to develop. In the 2000s, for instance, the Swedish government established a number of new gender studies chairs, and funded an inter-university 'Centre of Gender Excellence' programme to stimulate research.

At one level, all this was a startling success for feminism. The patriarchal monologue in universities was interrupted almost at once, and a new social base for feminist thought was established. Yet Women's Liberation movement activists looked on the early stages of this triumph with distrust, fearing that academic feminism would lose its political urgency, separate itself from grassroots campaigns, and become unintelligible to working-class women.

Everything that the activists feared has come to pass. A large part of gender theory in the English-speaking metropole has become abstract, contemplative or analytical in style, or focuses entirely on cultural subversions. A measure of the shift is this: when three English feminists wrote a survey of conceptual literature called *Theorizing Gender* (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002), their book made practically no reference to girls' education, domestic violence, women's health, gender mainstreaming, economic development or any other *policy* question that feminists had been grappling with – and did not have a single entry for the 'state' in the index. The kind of theory they were writing about had ceased to connect with such problems. But it dealt at great length with sexuality, personal identity, symbolism and difference.

The main points of reference for this kind of theorizing were intellectual developments among philosophers who worked on problems other than gender, notably Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida in France. The feminist application of Foucault's studies of discourse, subjectification, micro-politics and the regulation of bodies has been widespread. Derrida's influence has been more indirect, though possibly more profound. His argument on the indefinite deferral of meaning in language, and his technique of deconstruction, have been taken as warrant for questioning the stability of all concepts and all identities – including the categories on which feminist thought rested.

A book by a young US philosopher pursuing this theme, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), became by far the most influential text in academic feminism in the 1990s, was read beyond the academic world and is still the subject of extended debate (Lloyd 2007). Butler argued that there are no fixed foundations of gender categories and therefore of feminist strategy. Gender is performative, bringing identities into existence through action, rather than being the expression of some pre-existing reality. In Butler's treatment, gender radicalism consists not of mobilization around an identity (such as 'women'), but of actions that subvert identity, disrupt gender dichotomy and displace gender norms.

This book's enormous popularity in the metropole was not only due to post-structuralist fashion. It fed into a new kind of politics. By the 1980s the new left had fragmented, and Women's Liberation as a coherent movement was gone – split over issues of sexuality, race, and relations with the state. Externally, feminism was running into stiffer resistance. A strong religious-right mobilization campaigned against abortion rights and sexual freedoms. A broader political reaction stopped the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States, and brought the Reagan, Thatcher and Kohl administrations to power. In countries where centre-left governments were elected in the 1980s, including France and Australia, early openings towards feminism were squeezed by the rising influence of neoliberal market ideology.

There continued to be gains for gender reform, most spectacularly in Scandinavia, where women arrived en masse in party politics. In 1991, for instance, the leaders of all three major parties in Norway were women, including the prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. But open homophobia re-emerged in mainstream politics, particularly vicious around the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the most powerful states, a political oscillation in the 1990s and 2000s between centrist governments, hard neoliberalism and aggressive nationalism has meant limited space even for a mild official feminism, though that has continued to exist in the machinery of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU).

This course of events provoked many re-examinations of feminism and gender theory. One move was led by Black feminists in North America, who argued that uncritical use of the category 'women' in feminism concealed the realities of racism. For some American Black feminists, including bell hooks (1984), that argument led back to the inclusive radicalism of early Women's Liberation and a renewed concern with integrating class, race and gender struggles. But the main effect was a growth of identity politics within feminism and a kind of standpoint theory, illustrated in Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* (1991). This produced multiple positions representing the outlook of particular groups of women, especially those who were marginalized within the society of the metropole: Black feminism, Latina feminism and lesbian feminism. New literatures emerged, even in the rich countries, of research and testimony from cultural backgrounds beyond the establishment. Lourdes Torres (1991), for instance, notes the growth of Latina writing in the United States, especially a new genre of autobiography. Some difficult re-thinking began. White feminists had mainly seen the family as a site of women's oppression – much as Kartini had. But in a context of metropolitan racism, the family (especially the extended family) might be a crucial asset for Black women, and for women in recent immigrant communities.

The most widely influential body of theory, however, was work that re-examined the founding categories of feminism as such. Feminist sociologists, in the United States particularly, explored the micro-foundations of the gender order, looking closely at the way gender categorization was achieved in everyday interaction. A paper called 'Doing Gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987) crystallized this approach and had a wide influence. Feminist philosophers re-considered the relationship of the body to gender categories. Some of them returned to an emphasis on the unbridgeable difference between women's and men's bodies, seeing gender always as embodied experience in which the supposed gap between 'sex' and 'gender' is reduced to nothing (Grosz 1994).

Particularly influential was cultural and philosophical writing that emphasized the fragility of all identity categories, and saw gender as, in principle, fluid rather than fixed. A new wave in lesbian and gay thought, which came to be known as queer theory, took this for granted and criticized the cultural constraints, summed up in the word 'heteronormativity', that pushed people into fixed identities within gender binaries. This was energized by new forms of political and cultural activism, especially from a younger generation, that defied conventional categories, played radical games with gender meanings, and set about 'queering' everything in sight – troubling older forms of lesbian and gay activism as well (for a wry and perceptive account see Reynolds 2002). Butler's *Gender Trouble* became an icon for this whole cultural movement.

More bread-and-butter research continued, particularly in the social sciences, which pushed beyond the beginnings made by women's studies. A feminist organization theory emerged, as sociologists such as Joan Acker in the United States and Peta Tancred in Canada analysed the gender regimes of bureaucracies and corporations (Mills and Tancred 1992). The exhaustion of sex role theory had left the discussion of 'Men's Liberation' stranded. New beginnings of research on masculinity were made in the mid-1980s, linking gay theory and feminist gender analysis. In the 1990s, research on the social construction of masculinity multiplied in the rich countries, and a theorization of multiple masculinities

and the relations among them emerged (Connell 1995). Research on masculinities rapidly internationalized and is now found in all parts of the world.

At much the same time, the difficulty of understanding gender on a world scale began to concern theorists in the metropole. Women's Liberation had produced a theory of patriarchy which, in its more sophisticated forms, had historical depth and worldwide reach (Reiter 1977). Later texts such as Maria Mies' *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) and Spike Peterson's *Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy* (2003) turned the focus on colonialism and world capitalism as gendered systems, where gender was dynamic not static. Feminist analyses of international relations, such as Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1990), showed the gender dimension in relations between states and in international trade. The interplay of gender relations, ethnicity and modern nationalisms emerged as an important theme in Nira Yuval-Davis' *Gender and Nation* (1997). This work has had a growing impact as 'globalization' has become a central issue in politics and popular consciousness.

In the majority world, 2: from the Decade for Women on

During the 1980s, partly as a result of the UN Decade for Women, 1975–85, metropolitan feminists' interest in women and feminism in other parts of the world rose sharply. Conferences multiplied, book series appeared, and Robin Morgan, editor of the classic US Women's Liberation anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful*, edited a sequel, *Sisterhood is Global* (1984).

Some years later Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a diasporic Indian intellectual working in the United States, published a brilliant critique of this literature in an essay 'Under Western eyes'. Its main tendency, she argued, was to homogenize 'third world women' into a single category of victimhood, representing the extremity of gender oppression:

> This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.) . . . in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. (Mohanty 1991: 56)

Metropolitan feminists were making the same kind of error that White male ethnographers often made. As Diane Bell shows in *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1983), central desert Aboriginal societies in Australia had been persistently painted as male-centred, because the ethnographers failed to collect information from Aboriginal women. Starting from the indigenous women's perspective yielded a very different picture of their traditional authority and agency. But women's situation deteriorated sharply with colonization.

Mohanty's essay was published in a collection called *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Mohanty, Russo and Torres 1991). This book had a considerable impact, both by documenting the global diversity of women's politics, and as a statement of another kind of theory. In a long introduction called 'Cartographies of struggle', and in later essays collected in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003), Mohanty spelled out an approach to gender that started with the historical experience of imperialism. The making and re-making of gender is interwoven with the making of race and the dynamic of global capitalism. Mohanty agrees with deconstructionism that there is no pre-given universal category of 'woman', but for another reason: because the all-too-real practices of domination constantly divide people. Capitalism uses local gender ideologies to incorporate 'women's work' into strategies of profit-making. This approach allows Mohanty to go a step further, to emphasize the practices of solidarity, the possibilities of common struggle, that can link the poor and the marginalized across differences.

Even better known than Mohanty's, and closer to metropolitan deconstructionism, was the work of another Indian expatriate feminist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 1999). Spivak's writings on feminism are in a variety of genres and defy short summary. She would not think of herself as producing a 'theory of gender', indeed she seems to show the limits of any such project. Her most famous essay, 'Can the subaltern speak?', builds on the work of the Indian historians who founded *Subaltern Studies*, but takes apart their project of rediscovering subaltern consciousness. Her most famous concept, 'strategic essentialism', adopts the deconstructionist critique of identity categories but then sees a point to those categories in practice. In the essay where this idea emerged, Spivak performed the classic feminist action of pointing to the absences of women from a system of interpretation constructed by men.

As one of the most famous figures in post-colonial studies, Spivak commands international attention, yet constantly limits her claims. I think her work intends to be educational, rather than to state definitive positions. She wants her readers to think for themselves, to learn deconstructive methods, and at the same time to be politically engaged. She consistently calls attention to women in poverty, in extremely

marginalized situations; but emphasizes the dangers of intellectuals setting themselves up to speak on behalf of dominated groups. Like Mohanty, she sees global capitalism as the connector between a variety of dominated groups. Yet it isn't easy to see how Spivak's style of work would generate political strategies commensurate with the problem.

Spivak's virtuosity with the technique of deconstruction raises a consistently difficult question – the tension between location (or origin) in the global periphery, and concepts from the metropole. Paulin Hountondji, a philosopher from Benin, has explored this issue in depth. In a key essay called 'Recentring Africa', Hountondji (1997) speaks of the 'extraversion' that is characteristic of knowledge production in the global periphery. In a global division of scientific labour, set up under colonialism but persisting in the post-colonial world, data collection and practical applications of knowledge may occur in the periphery, but the crucial step of *theorizing* occurs overwhelmingly in the metropole. Following the logic of extraversion, intellectuals in the periphery look outward to the metropole as the source of their concepts, methods, equipment, training and recognition.

A polarity thus arises between modernity, science and development, on the one hand, and traditional knowledge on the other. This cannot be overcome by simply affirming an indigenous world-view as an uncorrupted alternative to Western thought. As Hountondji and others had shown earlier, the very attempt to formulate an indigenous philosophy out of local folkways reproduced the colonizers' gaze on indigenous society, supporting nativist ideologies that could be, and are, manipulated by power-holders in the periphery. The only way out of the trap is a new relationship of critical validation between endogenous knowledge and globally circulating knowledge systems, in which both are open to critique.

What Hountondji says about the extraversion of science in the global periphery is strikingly true of gender analysis. Most research and debate on gender questions draws on gender theory from the metropole and tries to combine it with local data or experience. This was, for instance, the structure of knowledge when the All-China Federation of Women sponsored a week-long symposium on 'theoretical studies on women' in 1984, in the early days of the Chinese government's economic reforms. The idea of women's studies was borrowed from the United States, local statistics about the situation of women were compiled, and the result was an agenda for 'women's studies the Chinese way' – with a focus on women's relationship to the new economic policies (Shen 1987).

Since I have been talking about Mohanty and Spivak, I will also give an example from India. In a paper called 'Problems for a contemporary theory of gender', published in *Subaltern Studies*, Susie Tharu and

Tejaswini Niranjana (1996) discuss women's role in Indian right-wing politics, the use of women's empowerment rhetoric by contraceptive manufacturers, and a village women's temperance campaign. The theoretical problem the authors see in these cases is feminism's complicity with the universal humanist subject. That is a formulation from postmodernist feminism in the metropole. It is difficult to see as a central problem about Indian feminism, which had been grappling with communalism, class, region, rural/urban and other forms of difference for decades (Menon 1999).

The issue of extraversion and what to do about it has concerned many gender researchers in the majority world. When gender research was launched in post-colonial Africa in the 1970s, there was an attempt to locate it within African perspectives, though ideas and methods were adapted from the metropole (Arnfred 2003). There has been recent debate about whether the concept of gender itself can be applied in Africa. A major example concerns Yoruba culture in Nigeria: Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí's *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997). Oyěwùmí argues that Western gender concepts are based on dichotomizing people on the basis of the body, and that this was not done in pre-colonial Oyo-Yoruba society. The language itself was gender-free, and there was no social category corresponding to the Western category of 'women'. The major organizing principle of Oyo society, she argues, was seniority, i.e. authority accorded on the basis of age, without respect to anatomical sex. Western gender categories are an intrusion, imposed on local people under colonialism. Oyěwùmí gives considerable detail of the impact of missions, the colonial state and new industries such as railways in producing a colonial version of Western gender relations. Contemporary feminism, and its gender theory, continues this cultural imperialism.

But other scholars do see gender patterns in pre-colonial Yoruba culture. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2003) points to misogynist Yoruba proverbs, and other cultural evidence that points to gendered patterns of power. Oyěwùmí, she argues, misinterpreted the situation by looking only at the formal properties of language, missing how language is inscribed in social practices, and how experience is embodied. The language of seniority, for instance, can mask the marginalization of many women and the abuse of youth. Colonialism certainly changed gender patterns, but it did so by building on distinctions that already existed in Yoruba culture. Bakare-Yusuf also takes a different stand on the relation of indigenous to metropolitan knowledge systems. It is a mistake, she argues, to try to reconstruct a hermetically sealed indigenous cultural system, and reject everything other as an intrusion. African cultures have always been plural, and open to otherness and change. In contemporary Africa,

complex gender systems certainly do exist and have major consequences. Among them are the patterns of economic inequality, gendered violence and sexuality that shape the HIV/AIDS crisis (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi and Osirim 2004).

The significance of gender as a structuring principle has not been in much doubt in Latin America, where debates about 'machismo' were running long before the contemporary women's movement emerged. The Mexican sociologist Teresita de Barbieri is one feminist who has tried to work out a systematic account. In an essay 'On the category of gender: a theoretical–methodological introduction' (1992), de Barbieri offers a relational model of gender, based on the central idea of social control over women's reproductive power, but involving a wide range of processes: 'practices, symbols, representations, values, collective norms'. She emphasizes that, though the figures of the woman as mother and the man as head of household are the nucleus of gender definitions in Latin America, gender is *not* a simple dichotomy. The gender system involves male/male and female/female relations as well as male/female – for instance, inequalities among women involving domestic service – as well as life-cycle shifts in gender differentiation, and conflicts of interest within gender categories, such as men who support feminist demands. Building on Black feminist thought in Brazil, de Barbieri also emphasizes how gender relations are implicated with race relations, and class divisions, in a stratified plural society.

This is not presented as a finished theory; de Barbieri is clear that gender analysis is a field open to development and debate. And of course there are many other perspectives across Latin America, some of them especially interested in how gender changes under structural adjustment and contemporary globalization. De Barbieri argued that gender research needed to include men, and this has indeed become one of the distinctive features of Latin American gender analysis. Most focused in Chile and Mexico, but also spread across the continent and the Caribbean, there is now a wealth of research and debate about masculine identity, class and race differences among men, changes in fatherhood, work and sexuality (Gutmann and Viveros Vigoya 2005).

This work has generally assumed well-formed, well-integrated gender orders – de Barbieri has no hesitation in speaking of 'gender systems' – even if they are complex and cross-cut by other social structures. Yet a focus on the societies of the global periphery raises the question of how local gender orders might be dis-integrated, by the processes of colonization, decolonization, and the pressure of a globally dominant economy and culture. Mai Ghoussoub (2000), for instance, speaks of a great cultural disturbance in the contemporary Arab world around the position and identities of men – not a settled system but 'a chaotic quest for a definition of modern masculinity'.

The Indian anthropologist Veena Das (1995) poses the question in the context of a social tragedy. When leaving India, the British colonizers divided it. Partition in 1947 was accompanied by enormous relocations of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh populations, and a great deal of communal violence. Women were targeted for rape, abduction and murder, in order to stain the opposing community – men fought each other via the bodies of women. Looking at the experience of the women caught up in this, Das observes that what happened to particular women often followed no logic at all, whether they escaped or suffered seemed random; social order as such broke down. Social analysis reaches a limit in thinking about such a situation.

In this section of the chapter I haven't tried to write a history of gender theory beyond the global metropole – only to point to some key issues that have been raised, and to suggest the richness of ideas from the global South. There is a great variety of perspectives, and there are different ways of interacting with the gender theories of the metropole. It is a little tempting to settle for the idea of multiple perspectives on gender issues, admit there are multiple truths, and leave it at that.

Reality demands more. As Latin American thinkers especially emphasize, the societies of the global periphery are constantly impacted and re-positioned by the economic and military centre. We do not live in a mosaic world where each culture is separate. Yet we are not being simply homogenized, as popular theories of globalization suppose. We need ways of talking to each other across boundaries, and that is abundantly true of gender analysis.

In *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Post-colonial World* (1998), the Australian sociologist Chilla Bulbeck describes this problem and considers what is involved in moving beyond the Euro-centrism still common in feminist thought in the metropole. To respond adequately to world-wide diversity is not just a matter of tacking 'anti-racism' onto an existing agenda. The issue is deeper, concerning ways of knowing and methods of action. It is a matter of learning to see oneself as others see one, learning to respect other experiences as genuinely other, and learning to work in coalition modes. Bulbeck calls this a 'world-traveller perspective', and, provided we recognize that for the poorest nine-tenths of the world's population the world travel has to be done in the mind, that is a good image for the kind of gender theory we now need.