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Isabel Milheiriço

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On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

Isabel Milheiriço

Abstract (English)

Power is at work through linked systems of oppression at the macro level, such as dual and rigid gender roles, which are connected with other artificial categories, like race and class. These artificial categories restrict and exclude agential micro-processes from influencing the structure. The repression of feminist narratives worldwide for the sake of the permanence of the legitimized “male-constructed reality” – namely the international system of sovereign states – has triggered various normative exercises. Among these, different feminist utopias have arisen. The instrumentality of utopia is at its optimum when it tessellates conceptualization with implementation, that is by stimulating and encouraging present agency in their micro-processes and practices toward a collective and inclusive idealization of the international system. The first step for delegitimizing the dominant patriarchal narrative is to construct a solid and genuine basis of collective solidarity. By presenting a possibility of a more prosperous future, where humankind is honoured in its entirety in the fluid (instead of rigid) structure of the new International Order, as well as by delineating the procedural path to reach it, agency will shift its imposed passive approach in the international arena to a vigorous and engaging one in that direction. Thus, this thesis aims at engineering a (re)ordering of the International Order toward an intersectional feminist utopia, by answering the normative research question of how an intersectional feminist International Order ought to be.

Keywords: gender, feminism, intersectionality, International Order, utopia.

Abstract (German)

Macht wirkt durch verknüpfte Unterdrückungssysteme auf der Makroebene, wie z.B. duale und starre Geschlechterrollen, die mit anderen künstlichen Kategorien wie Rasse und Klasse verbunden sind. Diese künstlichen Kategorien schränken agile Mikroprozesse ein und schließen sie von der Beeinflussung der Struktur aus. Die weltweite Unterdrückung feministischer Narrative im Interesse des Fortbestands der legitimierten "männlich konstruierten Realität" – nämlich des internationalen Systems souveräner Staaten – hat verschiedene normative Gedankenspiele ausgelöst. Unter diesen haben sich verschiedene feministische Utopien herausgebildet. Dabei ist die Instrumentalität der Utopie dann am besten, wenn sie die Konzeptualisierung mit der Umsetzung verknüpft, d.h. wenn sie die gegenwärtigen AkteurInnen in ihren Mikroprozessen und Praktiken zu einer kollektiven und inklusiven Idealisierung des internationalen Systems anregt und ermutigt. Der erste Schritt zur Delegitimierung der vorherrschenden patriarchalischen Narrative besteht darin, eine solide und echte Grundlage für kollektive Solidarität zu schaffen. Durch die Schaffung der Möglichkeit einer gedeihlicheren Zukunft, in der die Menschheit in ihrer Gesamtheit in der fließenden (und nicht in der starren) Struktur der neuen internationalen Ordnung gewürdigt wird, und deren Weg dorthin aufgezeigt wird, werden die AkteurInnen ihre auferlegte passive Haltung in der internationalen Arena in eine energische und engagierte Haltung in diese Richtung ändern. Folglich zielt diese Arbeit darauf ab, eine (Neu-)Ordnung der Internationalen Ordnung in Richtung einer intersektionalen feministischen Utopie zu entwickeln, indem sie die normative Forschungsfrage beantwortet, wie eine intersektionale feministische Internationale Ordnung sein sollte.

Stichworte: Gender, Feminismus, Intersektionalität, Internationale Ordnung, Utopie.

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Introduction

*“It was part of Women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally, there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth.”*¹ - **Marge Piercy**

Since the early days of humanity's existence, the assigning of rigid social roles to opposite biological sexes, i.e., the social construction of gender roles, was justified by a need for stability and security in a chaotic and uncertain system². Although oftentimes contradictory (and definitely incomplete), the patriarchal narratives that define the structure of how we think about our existence as humankind, and ultimately how we live it, have prevailed. As Thomas Piketty wrote in his book *Capital and Ideology*, “[e]very human society must justify its inequalities: unless reasons for them are found, the whole political and social edifice stands in danger of collapse”³. This widespread legitimization and internalization of the unequal use of power in every sphere of society never remained unchallenged; although ultimately, the justification of the dominant narrative has always been put forward and succeeded in overruling claims for justice, for the sake of avoiding an ‘existential crisis’ of the system as we know it.

Power is at work through linked systems of oppression at the macro level, such as dual and rigid gender roles, which are connected with other artificial categories like race and class that restrict and exclude some micro-processes from influencing the structure⁴. ‘Blanket’ categories simplify and numb our sensitivity to how the different forms of structure interlock in very specific types of systemic violence towards a diverse agency⁵. Inequality with regard to gender can be counteracted by paying attention to these micro-level processes and how they react at the macro level. The first step for delegitimizing the dominant patriarchal narrative is to construct a solid and genuine basis of collective solidarity. An intersectional basis is an essential tool for the construction of a feminist intersectional utopia, a vision that aims at empowering and assisting agency in achieving its highest potential regardless of gender, race

¹ Marge Piercy, *Women on the Edge of Time* (Fawcett Publications, 1985), chap. 5, 101, Adobe Digital Editions.

² Maja Zehfuss, ed., *Global Politics: A New Introduction* (Routledge, 2013): 72.

³ Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), 1.

⁴ Patricia Hill-Collins (1995) quoted in Paula Dressel, Meredith Minkler, and Irene Yen, “Gender, Race, Class, and Aging: Advances and Opportunities,” *International Journal of Health Services* 27, no. 4 (1997): 583.

⁵ Hill-Collins quoted in Dressel, Minkler, and Yen, “Gender, Race, Class, and Aging: Advances and Opportunities,” 583.

of class, by pushing for gradual revolutionary change with(in) the structure. It is known that conception, in a biological sense, requires duality: a male and a female. Also, the path towards utopia must not exclude any agent's duality of capabilities (feminine or masculine) – regardless of gender, class, or race – from its conceptualization nor from its implementation. A diverse agency in action is necessary for a structure that accommodates such diversity. The weaknesses of the dominant narrative of the structure we are embedded in as a society must be understood and overcome in cooperation and discussion.

As the above quote from Marge Piercy's novel well depicts (although in a literal manner within the context of her book), the path towards a gender-inclusive International Order, the intersectional feminist utopia, passes through shattering down these assigned gender roles and how we make sense of them, and not amplifying their strength by clinging to them, for that would only revert the power balance, not end it. The true revolution from the oppressive structures is the one in which women and other marginalized agents do not "monopolize" the power to "give birth", i.e., (metaphorically) the power of imagining and creating, nor the responsibility to take care of tomorrow's world. The true intersectional feminist utopia must, hence, materialize in genuine cooperation among a diverse agency. For only by including all agents oppressed by the patriarchal structure that constitutes the International Order can a consistent '(re)ordering' process commence towards the utopia, where both femininity and masculinity can be freely expressed, without it corresponding to a specifically assigned place in an artificial hierarchy.

It is not enough to emphasize the capacity inclusive feminist utopias have in empowering political agency, not only in matters of gender but also in matters of overall structural oppression. By presenting a possibility of a more prosperous future, where humankind is honoured in its entirety within the fluid (instead of rigid) structure of the new International Order, as well as by delineating the procedural path to reach it, agency will shift its imposed passive approach in the international arena to a vigorous and engaging one in that direction. Thus, this thesis aims at engineering a (re)ordering of the International Order toward an intersectional feminist utopia, by answering the normative research question of how an intersectional feminist International Order ought to be.

The path towards the purpose of this master's thesis – using an inclusive feminist utopian methodology to conceptualize a non-patriarchal International Order – will unfold the following way: firstly, it is essential to analyse and deconstruct the concept of utopia as well as utopian methods by presenting their main criticisms and proposed alternative ways of

conceiving it. Second, a framework to make sense of gender having the agent, instead of the structure, as a priority will be put forward. Third, comes the deconstruction of the concept of 'order' and further scrutiny of the Liberal International Order, of what constitutes it and makes it justifiable of its inequalities. The new gender framework will contribute to analysing and criticizing the gender unbalance existent in the structure (the deconstruction phase) and prepare the terrain for a utopian vision of the future International Order. The empirical case study of refugees as vital agents of change in the face of increasing changes in the system at its receding capacity to deal with them will be introduced. Fourth, a review of the history of the emergence of the state-centric International Order as a system of states, its recent challenges and social developments, and the recent arising dilemma between individual human rights and citizen rights will be presented. The fifth chapter introduces the reconstruction phase: the conception of the model of (re)ordering of the international system and the final utopian vision will be put forward. Furthermore, the empirical case of refugees as major agents of change will be further discussed in the context of this new model. Finally, this thesis will conclude with the main findings.

1. Scrutinizing Utopia as a Methodology

*“Understanding the imagination is no longer a pastime or even a duty, but a necessity; because increasingly if we can imagine it, we’ll be able to do it. Therefore, not farewell, dear reader/voyager, but fare forward.”*⁶ - **Margaret Atwood**

The repression of feminist narratives around the world for the sake of the permanence of the legitimized “male-constructed reality”⁷ has triggered various normative exercises that propose new gender-inclusive structures. Among these, different feminist utopias have arisen. On the one hand, this line of exclusion in which not only women but also all other marginalized agents that do not fit the established heterosexual hierarchy, where the ‘masculine’ occupies the superior layer, is propitious of such conceptualizations, as normative approaches require the subject to challenge the status quo from an “outsider” point of view⁸. On the other hand, the instrumentality of conceptualizing such utopias has been greatly debated, and that has to do, firstly, with an outdated definition of utopia, and secondly, with the challenge of achieving a truly intersectional feminist utopia.

We live in a society ruled by science and objectivity, and the exercise of imagination and subjectivity tends to have a *niche* assigned spot, which takes place usually in artistic contexts. This “privilege of ignorance”⁹ in which the proposed world views define the types of questions that can be answered, becomes a curse when it constrains us to a framework of thought that impedes us to see change, demanding it, and working towards it. Mainstream theories of IR are proof thereof since these not only fail at explaining change when it happens, they are especially bad at predicting it. The stability achieved with their theoretical assumptions supersedes the need to adapt them or make them fall for the sake of an accurate understanding of a dynamic and diverse system with even a more diverse agency, full of yet-to-unravel potential.

The instrumentality of utopia is at its *optimum* when it tessellates conceptualization with implementation, that is by stimulating and encouraging present agency in their micro-processes

⁶ Margaret Atwood, “The Handmaid’s Tale and Oryx and Crake in Context,” *PMLA* 119.3 (2004): 517.

⁷ Gillian Youngs, “Feminist International Relations: a contradiction in terms? Or: why women and gender are essential to understanding the world ‘we’ live in,” *International Affairs* 80, no. 1 (January, 2004): 77.

⁸ Zehfuss, *Global Politics*, 86.

⁹ Jennifer A Wagner-Lawlor, *Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 192.

and practices towards a collective and inclusive idealization of the international system. For such idealization to remain an inclusive collective cause, it is necessary to acknowledge that change and the fear thereof are “the only constant since the beginning of time”¹⁰. All the more, for such utopia to be plausible as a method, one needs to interpret the world and its deficient order as a flux that can target this future vision through an acknowledged and included agency. Thus, the conception of this utopia must remain open to criticism and be addressed as a procedural vision open to change and adjustments.

1.1. Criticisms to Utopias’ Instrumentality

The term ‘utopia’, coined by Thomas More in his book homonymous to the word, etymologically meaning a “no-place” (in the book portrayed as an island where access is difficulted¹¹), carries the prejudice of a static and unreachable vision. Such an understanding of utopia as a suitable method of normative theory building has instigated criticism by various authors. They criticize utopia’s tendencies to authoritarianism and unrealism, for such a theory cannot be tested nor can its implementation be ascertained.

Karl Popper claims that Utopianism is a “dangerous” methodological approach, although attractive, for it entices those who want to react against the course of history and/or are outside of it (the *underdogs*, as he named it)¹² – and also assuming this course of history to be impossible to change, neither by agents nor by individual sovereign states. According to him, any rational methodology must set a final goal to be achieved, which in this case would mean a static vision of an ideal state as well as intermediate steps to be followed; this imposition of a “blueprint of society as a whole” translated into a form of authoritarianism for Popper, since for the vision to be fully implemented, criticism must be silenced, and a strong centralized rule must be put in place¹³. Furthermore, he argues that the very process of reconstruction of society entails the fact that ideals would most certainly be moulded throughout time, hence considering this method “futile”¹⁴, as it denies the core of the scientific method, which is the “readiness to learn from mistakes”¹⁵. This criticism of utopias’ lack of realism and use by

¹⁰ Quote by Heraclitus. Complete quote: “One constant since the beginning of time might be change, however, the fear of change is also a constant. Since times immemorial, humans have liked routine. It makes us feel in control of our lives.”

¹¹ Thomas More, *Utopia* (Independently Published, 2021), 50.

¹² Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 158.

¹³ Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 159.

¹⁴ Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 162.

¹⁵ Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 163.

depicting an impossible idealization is shared by Ruth Levitas, who states that “utopias are not necessarily places that the reader would find appealing[. O]ne person’s utopia may be another person’s hell, and [...] many utopias are alarmingly authoritarian”¹⁶.

Most of these criticisms derive from the traditional definition of the term, whose origin dates back to 1516. Back then, the imagined island of Thomas More looked far from non-patriarchal: it was a projection of the capacity of one man of that time to “fantasize beyond [his] experience”¹⁷, into the fenced territory of the island of *Utopia* (raising doubts that the social structures in place would sustain if ever in contact with the outside world¹⁸). In fact, utopias after More tended to reproduce present structures – this type of exercise appeared in line with the beginning of European colonization across the Atlantic – and even though *Utopia* contained some liberal ideas for its time, such as pacifism¹⁹, and equal labour for women and men (for the most part)²⁰, the replication of a static patriarchal structure was as far as the imagination of a 16th-century man could go. Furthermore, presenting an intersectional utopian methodology appears indeed impossible, even hypocritical, when the vision of the future must remain rigid, just like the oppressive structures of the present world.

Judith Butler counterargues Popper’s authoritarianism critic of normative theories (in which utopias are inserted): his line of thought is that the “recourse to a position [(...) which] places itself beyond the play of power, and [...] seeks to establish the metapolitical basis for a negotiation of power relations”²¹ counts also as power instrumentalization. But is it the case that, if there is no structure mitigating the subject theorizing (the outsider), which allows discriminating between right or wrong, in or out, this equates automatically to a vacuum where power can be used in a denigrating way? Or is there space for the power of criticism, which can push for change? Butler argues that the imposition of power lays in, among others, the designation of the ‘universal’ within such frameworks, much in use in theory as well as in the political field. She wonders: “[h]ow is it that we might ground a theory or politics in a speech situation or subject position which is “universal,” when the very category of the universal has only begun to be exposed for its own highly ethnocentric biases?”²². In that sense, the

¹⁶ Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York: Philip Allan, 1990), 21.

¹⁷ Jiménez Almudena Machado, “On Utopus’ uterus: The colonisation of the body and the birth of patriarchal utopia in Thomas More’s *Utopia*,” *Coolabah* 31 (2021): 48.

¹⁸ Machado, “On Utopus’ uterus”: 54.

¹⁹ More, *Utopia*, 105.

²⁰ More, *Utopia*, 60.

²¹ Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism”” in *Feminists theorize the political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (Routledge, 1992), 6.

²² Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” 7.

normative/utopian project in question would be to leave categories thought to be set in stone, such as ‘universality’ or ‘gender’ “permanently open, permanently contested, permanently contingent, in order not to foreclose in advance future claims for inclusion”²³.

The project of challenging the authority of structure and contesting its apparent unchangeability can be a very politically radical one²⁴. Nevertheless, not all utopias need be necessarily radical in their entirety. In the next section (1.2.1.), two different types of utopias will be presented. Moreover, section 1.2. will introduce the answer to the question: how can utopian methodology be instrumental in awakening agency towards the process of change?

1.2. Utopia: Why is it a Suitable Alternative to Mainstream Methodology?

In fact, by taking a closer look at the main schools of thought of IR that make sense of the present International Order and their evolution, it becomes clear that ever since the 1516 *Utopia* “our understanding of key phenomena is only expanding very modestly, if at all”²⁵. Both in *Utopia* and in mainstream IR theories, there seems to be little or no interdependence between the nation-state and the individuals that compose it^{26,27}. In addition, what is common to *Utopia* and present IR theories is that they both impose static ordering principles governing abstract societies, whose agents and their interactions remain out of sight and research²⁸. Regarding this matter, Steve Smith brings a new insight afloat: observing world politics and main IR theories, he pointed out how positivism had restricted the ontological horizons of the international system’s dynamics²⁹. According to him, this ‘monopolization’ of the scientific method by IR researchers (also referred by Karl Popper), which requires an empiricist epistemology, denied the possibility of putting ontology over epistemology, of seeing the acquisition of knowledge as a powerful social practice, or even of allowing emancipation to be the drive of research³⁰. Smith poses the crucial ontological question: what is this knowledge we are acquiring of the

²³ Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” 8

²⁴ Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” 8.

²⁵ Marc A. Levy, Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, “The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (1988): 3.

²⁶ Machado, “On Utopus’ uterus”: 53.

²⁷ Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

²⁸ Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations*, 4.

²⁹ Stephen Murray Smith, et al., eds, *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press, 1996): 17.

³⁰ Smith, *International Theory*, 11.

international system? Are the outcomes we obtain constitutive of the system or are they only a codification of the structural forces that rule it?³¹. From this point of view, the reluctance towards the utopian method is understandable, for it breaks free from the tight restrictions that reign in scientific research to introduce new, unanalysed, and disregarded outcomes, through a more eclectic methodology.

The instrumentalization of this method, however, is imperative to exit this vicious cycle described by Smith. If research is closing ‘doors of possibility’ to agency, if it is numbing this agency to possible contemporary steps which would lead to a new ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ when it comes to the struggle for gender equality, then why are we researching for? As Gilbert Keith Chesterton has written, “[t]he function of the imagination is not to make strange things settled, so much as to make settled things strange”³². Adding not-yet-analysed input, which is part of every agent inhabiting the international structure, utopias, and especially the intersectional feminist utopia, put forward not only a sharp criticism of the status quo, but they present the possibility of discontinuity³³. This new proposed narrated possibility is one where current practices of dissidence or resistance cease to be seen as unproductive, since the so-called ‘outsiders’ that perform them, as well as their needs and unique characteristics, are included in the vision as an essential part of the constant relational process of change and amelioration. Utopias, hence, by depicting a direction with an open end, disclose revolutionary and creative potential, already in the here and now, grounding the ‘impossibility’ of imagination in the practical and relational world of active agency.

1.2.1. Two Types of Utopias

Ever since Thomas More, many scholars, who saw potential in newly formulated utopias, attempted to overcome the criticisms posed at its methodologies within the realm of both their epistemology and ontology. Among the various attempts, two main categories of utopian methods, with different implications can be noted: utopian methods that succumb to the established structures of IR theory and want to achieve change from within, and “radical” utopian methods, which aim at deviating from the bigger narrative’s focus and complete it.

³¹ Steve Smith, “The self-images of a discipline: a genealogy of international relations theory,” *International relations theory today* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995): 28.

³² Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Defendant, Part Four* (R. Brimley Johnson, 1901), 84.

³³ Mathias Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia: On Prefigurative and Testimonial Pacifism,” *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 4 (2019): 1007.

Regarding the former type, Mathias Thaler aims at a minor, grounded utopia. This utopia builds on the temporality of criticism and settles for a humbler and “partial renewal of the world”³⁴ by promoting emancipatory social change from within the structures of power³⁵. He is concerned, as well as Popper, with the possibility of utopias becoming “vehicles of domination”³⁶, as the International Order presents itself as a system where these violent [and rigid] patterns are already being exercised³⁷: a very common equivocation, which assumes that any method that aims at criticizing a present order must be “derived from a timeless authority or norm”³⁸. Thaler, however, ascertains that the exercise of social criticism can only be temporal – human beings can never “comprise the full or even a definite picture”³⁹ of what the ideal vision of the future ought to look like as this criticism is based on the *individuum*’s interests and aspirations, derived from its assessment of the present situation⁴⁰. He, thus, fails to comprise the possibility of the shaping of “actual practices, in the here and now”⁴¹ that lead to a long-term metamorphose of the structure, which must not be linear, neglecting also the power and the need of imagination in the process of change. Hence, although avoiding the criticism of the normative methodology, Thaler’s approach is not suitable as a method to conceive an intersectional feminist International Order, for it disregards the differences of agents’ struggles and their abilities to defy current practices and to introduce new ones; by restricting action within a “universalised”⁴² notion of lived experiences, which fail to encompass insights from a diversely gendered agency, this approach only reproduces oppression in its attempt of emancipation within an immobile structure⁴³. Hence, such an approach lacks the ability to be radical and to overcome structural oppression overall, especially with regard to gender.

Marit Böker, on the other hand, defends the instrumentality of inserting input in theory that is unbound by the “rules of the game” as it enriches the discipline with new, until then

³⁴ Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia”: 1007.

³⁵ Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia”: 1008.

³⁶ Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia”: 1007.

³⁷ Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia”: 1006.

³⁸ Jean Grondin, *Einführung In Die Philosophische Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt: WBG - Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 15-16.

³⁹ Marit Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia Ideal Theory as Critique,” *Constellations* 24, no. 1 (2015): 13.

⁴⁰ Maria C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for ‘the woman’s voice’,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 6, no. 6 (1983): 579.

⁴¹ Thaler, “Peace as A Minor, Grounded Utopia”: 1007.

⁴² Pieter Cannoot and Mattias Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination: An Interdisciplinary, Queer, Feminist And Human Rights Analysis,” *International Journal Of Gender, Sexuality And Law* 1, no. 1 (2020), 42.

⁴³ Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 42.

unthinkable perspectives, and brings political theory forward⁴⁴. Her attempt is to conceptualize a *realistic utopia* without limiting its “radical [ontological] terrain”⁴⁵, but avoiding the previous criticism that such radicality becomes rigid and, thus, authoritarian. To accomplish this, she suggests opening the utopian vision for discussion, in order to free it from possible perceptions of unchangeability, and imposition of unequal use of power⁴⁶. Her utopian methodological approach lies in a procedural and relational ontology by allowing a “meta-process of pluralistic utopian visioning”⁴⁷. This new component empowers agency to discuss and question structure and deconstruct the total validity deriving from the scientific method. With it, cooperation is fostered among agents of change taking into account the deep inequalities, cultures, and overlapping struggles of the participating voices in the construction of utopia, in a joint exercise of conceiving alternatives to the present International Order, which contributes to eliminating “distortion from any form of power”⁴⁸.

Key to this radical approach is the recognition of agents of change as active rather than passive victims of the circumstances, connected to the mainstream focus on the nation-state as the main actor in the international arena. In this line, feminist scholar Elina Penttinen introduced a new methodology of joy that aims at broadening these ontological boundaries inherent in IR theory. She noticed that IR research takes a problem-solving approach: it focuses mainly on what is wrong, on suffering, on war, with the goal to understand how to solve those ills, overlooking, hence, good practices from individuals that could contribute to “increase well-being, joy and self-healing in the world”⁴⁹. Noticing that we “are stuck in a worldview or a belief system of human beings as passive victims of circumstances”⁵⁰, and that this pre-assignment of roles harms recurrent attempts of feminist IR to prove its worthiness when its interventions are constrained to this emphasis on victimization and suffering⁵¹. Her contribution of joy as a method has the purpose of recognizing human agency and subjectivity as a form of vitality towards positive change⁵², and taking one step forward in the conception of a new, better intersectional international system.

According to her, looking at the successes enhances [positive] cooperation (through the sharing of good practices across IR camps, rather than dividing them) and, at the same time,

⁴⁴ Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia”: 3.

⁴⁵ Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia”: 2, 18.

⁴⁶ Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia”: 19.

⁴⁷ Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia”: 17.

⁴⁸ Böker, “The Concept of Realistic Utopia”: 19.

⁴⁹ Elina Penttinen, *Joy and International Relations* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁵⁰ Penttinen, *Joy and International Relations*, 3.

⁵¹ Penttinen, *Joy and International Relations*, 4-5.

⁵² Penttinen, *Joy and International Relations*, 4.

intersectionality because what is working can be more relatable to diverse agents than the specificity of the struggle, which is ‘polluted’ with static identities. Her approach does not reject the structure per se, but the way we make sense of it; according to Penttinen, the nature-culture divide must be eliminated to make space for forms of subjectivity and self-reflective agency that acknowledges its engagement in a continuously changing system. She advocates for a more profound and holistic change: to recognize the power of agency by making sense of it together with the structure, changing the narrative by allowing it to envision the totality of what reality is made of.

This radicality of the utopian methodology englobes a criticism of the structure and an increased focus on agency. However, this agency is analysed, not as ‘billiard balls’, but their subjectivity and diversity are observed while fostering their cooperation towards a gradual but revolutionary modification of a present exclusive and hegemonic structure.

1.3. Ordering: Between Critical Theory and Postmodernism/Post Structuralism

Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism are the three most prominent schools of thought, included in all syllabi of International Relations’ programmes. Such positivist theories are based on empirics, which follow scientific methods of hypothesis falsification, hence focusing on objectivity and certainty. As problem-solving approaches to international relations, these main paradigms, according to critical theorists, contain an inherent bias towards the maintenance and stability of the status quo, favouring structure and neglecting agency⁵³, assuming the adaptability of the latter to the former.

In fact, the reason why these schools of thought are so prominent is that they are successful in explaining the main phenomena taking place in the international arena, despite the excluded factors, namely the explanation and possibility of change. The consequence of it is the emergence of the belief that the given order, as it is explained by these positivist paradigms, is the natural order⁵⁴. The status quo, i.e., a rigid structure, neglects change and “subordinates all practice to an interest in control”⁵⁵; agents consent to an “ideal of a social

⁵³ Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of the Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Polity Press, 2004), 21-22.

⁵⁴ Richard K. Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 258.

⁵⁵ Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism,” 258.

power beyond [their own] responsibility”⁵⁶, and are, by consequence deprived of or undertrained in practical capacities that allow for creative change through political interaction. Hence, the rationalization of the International Order functions as its justification to exist and to prevail over agency’s subjective input.

This narrow understanding of the international arena has not been left unquestioned. More recent post-positivist schools of thought, like Postmodernism/Post Structuralism, Normative Theory, and Critical theory have commenced the endeavour to ‘escape’ the objectivity bias of main paradigms of IR and turned more towards what was being disregarded: the subjectivity, inherent to the humankind. Critical theory aims at achieving transformation through emancipatory politics, which departs from within the structure⁵⁷. Critical theorists claim that the first step towards transformation is to critically scrutinize how international politics are currently understood, in order to be able to explain the complex reality of international relations as it is. The second step would be to theorize their development and change throughout time; only by knowing the terrain that is in need of change can emancipatory action take place from within.

Although similar to Critical theory in the sense that it criticizes the “dominant narrative”, Postmodernism and Post Structuralism both distance themselves from empirics and deny the absolutism of the “truth”. Their purpose in IR is to challenge the rigidity of positivism by exposing “links between hegemonic forms of knowledge production and the reproduction of power relations”⁵⁸ as well as the restrictive roles these impose on agents. In addition, postmodernists and post-structuralists go a little further than critical theorists, for they have a normative commitment to unveil imposed “authoritative interpretations [of the truth] of international relations”⁵⁹, for instance, the state-centric ontology of IR. By exposing, through language, the existing hierarchy and the visceral violence that constitutes its formation, postmodernist and post-structuralist theorists aim at revealing latent and different imagined alternatives to the “paradigm of sovereignty”⁶⁰, in other words, what the International Order ought to be.

⁵⁶ Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism,” 258.

⁵⁷ Linklater, *The Transformation of the Political Community*, 5.

⁵⁸ Çalkıvık, Aslı. “Poststructuralism and Postmodernism in International Relations,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. November 20, 2017, 3.

⁵⁹ Richard Devetak, “Postmodernism,” in *Theories of international relations*, eds. S. Burchill, A. Linklater, R. Devetak, J. Donnelly, M. Paterson, C. Reus-Smit, & J. True (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 167.

⁶⁰ Aslı. “Poststructuralism and Postmodernism in International Relations,” 15.

While Critical theory aims at change from within through agent emancipation, Normative theory challenges the structure from the outside⁶¹: the scholar does not accept the status quo and is not interested in departing from it to theorize new ideals. It is rather informed by the (subjective) human experience, which these theorists believe to be intimately linked to historical practices of objectivity⁶², distancing itself drastically from the purely (objective) empirical theory. Utopian theory, on the other hand, differs slightly from Normative theory. The latter's assumptions are not as radical as the former's: Normative theory, for collecting "input" from human experience, does not manifestly defy what the agent considered unchangeable, for this agent has some practices or structures impregnated in its consciousness⁶³. Normative theorists attempt to improve the human experience beyond the current situation of affairs but never consider what the individual would find 'impossible'. In that sense, for its more restrictive span of analysis, Normative theory's reach is not as broad as that of Utopian theory; even though the observer is positioned outside of the structure, it still holds on to too much of the human perception of inevitability. Utopian theory, in turn, encompasses a broader scope of consideration by drawing input from various other disciplines.

The utopian methodology in use in this thesis aims at a "sweet spot" between Critical theory and Postmodernism/Post Structuralism. The intersectional feminist utopia is a project that will consist of two phases: a destruction phase – within the structure – and a reconstruction phase – compelling alternative visions, whose input ought to be given by a diversity of voices, already 'liberated', or partly liberated, by the structure⁶⁴, who can visualize the 'madness' of what was believed to be impossible. These two phases need to be intimately connected⁶⁵. The former phase builds on scrutinized conceptions of rationality and adds alternatives containing part of the excluded content in theory: the subjective. Linking these two worlds – the subjective and utopian, the objective and critical – serves us as an 'anchor' for a gradual entrance into the totality of the radicality of change. The latter phase presents the process of an open-ended conception of the utopian alternative, using the 'hybrid' and alternative pillars previously built over the destruction of the 'dominant narrative'.

⁶¹ Zehfuss, *Global Politics*, 86.

⁶² Molly Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 128.

⁶³ Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations*, 128.

⁶⁴ Carol Cohn, "Sex And Death In The Rational World Of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs: Journal Of Women In Culture And Society* 12, no. 4 (1987): 717.

⁶⁵ Cohn, "Sex And Death In The Rational World Of Defense Intellectuals," 717.

2. “Diverse Agency”: A Non-Rigid Approach to Gender

“The absolute priority must be the human being. Above that I don't recognize any other priority. It may sound idealistic, but without that I don't care about the universe⁶⁶” – José Saramago

José Saramago, a social critic, and fiction writer who considers himself a “pessimist that wants to change the world”⁶⁷ saw the necessity of utopias to bring the human being to the centre of analysis; the necessity of research to evaluate not only the possibilities brought by the technological structure that sustains our world, but most importantly, to re-evaluate of the course of humanity. The previously referred main criticisms against recent utopian thinking – its focus on agency, subjectivity, and sociability – revealed their seemingly recurrent incompatibility with and reaction to the ontological and epistemological boundaries existing in IR. Saramago once phrased that reason is most of the time used in irrational ways, to the point that it is used against itself, and not to defend life, dignify it, or respect it⁶⁸. To be sure, he argues that the human being is still not an absolute priority to science. The view that “science has the value of narrowing gaps by providing common standards to test beliefs, and therefore disciplining our minds, protecting us to some extent from bias”⁶⁹ is legitimate, but worrying in the sense that it confirms that it is more important for a field of studies to be coherent than to be accurate, comprehensive, and complete⁷⁰.

This section will take the first step on an “ontological revisionism”⁷¹ of the ‘seemingly unproblematic’ predominantly male influence and action in the international arena, starting at the categorization of agency. The destruction phase will commence in the refutation of the idea of passive *individuum*, substituting it with a new framework for the concept of gender, which will grant agents space for self-reflection as well as their tailor-made identities and contribution within the structure, stimulating thereby a renewed and energetic engagement of agency that feels included and, hence, an essential part in the conception of a new International Order.

⁶⁶ José Saramago, *A Estátua e a Pedra* (Fundação José Saramago, 2013), 36. Translation: “A prioridade absoluta tem de ser o ser humano. Acima dessa não reconheço nenhuma outra prioridade. Pode parecer idealista, mas sem isso quero lá saber do universo.”

⁶⁷ Daniela Maduro, “Circunvoluções: José Saramago e Ficção Científica”, *José Saramago. 20 anos com o Prémio Nobel* (2020): 166.

⁶⁸ Carlos Reis e José Saramago, *Diálogos com José Saramago* (Porto: Porto Editora, 2015), 157-158.

⁶⁹ Robert O. Keohane, “International Relations Theory: Contributions of A Feminist Standpoint,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 18, no. 2 (1989): 246.

⁷⁰ Annick T.R. Wibben, “Feminist International Relations: Old Debates and New Directions,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2004):102.

⁷¹ Youngs, “Feminist International Relations,” 80.

2.1. The Concept of Sex/Gender in the International System: The Deconstruction Phase

The Western binary “cultural system of gender”⁷² as a recognizable basis of the International Order and how it functions is proof of how structure fails to consider human beings as its ‘absolute priority’. Such order was built on the foundations of a sharp and rigid opposition ingrained in gender and its conceptual separation as well as a hierarchization between the elements of this artificial duality: a gender-biased hierarchy in which femininity and all that deviated from heterosexuality were “placed either at the bottom half of [this] artificial hierarchy, or [in some functional areas] not placed at all”⁷³.

This “hegemonic nature”⁷⁴ entails various forms of unequal power dynamics, from material to discursive violence⁷⁵. One form of this oppressive hierarchy is the lately spotted attempt of a ‘biased’ gender abolition, which tried to flatten biological asymmetries among bodies and minds, measuring the ideal type for the relevant agency at the top of this hierarchy: masculinity⁷⁶. Such measurement not only represents a “futile war with nature”⁷⁷; it also backfires the purpose of an international system where gender becomes unimportant, where this structure will already englobe and explore the full potential of a diverse agency.

Moreover, ‘sex’ is a social construct that regulates how subjects should perceive themselves and, consequently, act in a way to live up to these dual, heterosexual predefined gendered identities⁷⁸. As Wilchins puts it, “sex is what culture makes when it genders my body”⁷⁹; or even, as Wittig argues, [sex is] “the political category that founds society as heterosexual”⁸⁰. Indeed, when sex becomes a political category, it institutionalizes naturality to this duality of genders that violently excludes all other subjects whose body and psychological

⁷² Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 26.

⁷³ R. Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1997), 15.

⁷⁴ Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 26.

⁷⁵ Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 26.

⁷⁶ Louise Perry, “Feminists must abandon their delusions about the sexual revolution,” *The New Statesman*, May 31, 2022, 4.

⁷⁷ Louise Perry, “Feminists must abandon their delusions about the sexual revolution,” 4.

⁷⁸ Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 43.

⁷⁹ R. Wilchins, *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender* (Riverdale (NY): Riverdale Avenue Books, 1997), 58.

⁸⁰ M. Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 5.

features hinder their identification with one of the two genders belonging to this ‘tailored normality’.

How this gendered hierarchy develops is, nevertheless, a more horizontal process: it happens through the spread of socially internalized visceral meaning of “things” as the “counterposition of differing elements whose definition lies precisely in their difference from each other”⁸¹. Butler as well as Adler theorizes that the base of the diffusion and reproduction of such internalized structure is on practice and performativity, and not on self-reflection over own physical and psychological characteristics. Butler separates the concept of gender from the physical and psychological characteristics and argues that “bodies (having learned to recognise themselves as sexed, hence categorized) incessantly reproduce and thereby produce – that is, perform – by rendering determinate or concrete predefined or socially constructed ways of being feminine or masculine in the present”⁸².

Adler, not focusing specifically on gender, states that practices cannot be separated from previously established rules and/or norms – the pillars that organize social orders⁸³. His cognitive evolution theory explains how the order is accepted by the agents and reproduced by them in a collective process of learning, which reflects in their practice⁸⁴. Because the process is ruled by learning and not by a conscious and/or needed adaptation, the resulting structural order is not questioned and/or modified to suit the agency⁸⁵. The “communities of practice”⁸⁶ influence each other in the sharing of their background knowledge, which itself is also biased by the structure. The social power that propels the evolving of the International Order is, hence, never purely an agential mechanism. For that reason, bearing in mind this process of “becoming”, it is necessary to be able to critically assess the structure and reorder it to fit agential needs and to allow all agents to achieve their highest potential.

As long as agents continue to unreflectively perform the “epistemological and ontological limitations”⁸⁷ of the categorization of gender, where they themselves are shallowly defined and restricted in their action, this process of “becoming” will be doomed to miss the full potential of an engaged society towards an intersectional feminist utopia. To overcome such

⁸¹ Michèle Barrett, *Imagination In Theory* (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1999), 20.

⁸² Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 44.

⁸³ Reus-Smit (1999, 2013a, 2013b) quoted in Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 140.

⁸⁴ Adler, *World Ordering*, 165.

⁸⁵ Adler, *World Ordering*, 165.

⁸⁶ Adler, *World Ordering*, 165.

⁸⁷ Youngs, “Feminist International Relations,” 78.

a ‘curse’ of a ‘vicious cycle’ in the positive development of humanity, background knowledge must be questioned, and in some cases, destructed. In the measure that this duality is charged with meaning, which implies the unequal use of power that is shared and reproduced by the performance of communities of practice, the *individuum* has no vital space to position itself in such a strict dual system of gender, nor to reinvent it. Thus, a new theorization of gender within the system is necessary, for it adversely affects “consciously or unconsciously”⁸⁸ all people, by differently restricting the content of masculinity and femininity over space, time, and context⁸⁹. For new, energetic, critical, and constructive practices to arise, new ‘pillars’ must be created out of the ‘ashes’ of this non-reflected internalized and established gender structure.

2.2. Adapting Language: The Spectrum of Gender

Several general associations come to mind when thinking about femininity and masculinity with their respective negative and positive connotations⁹⁰. Masculinity tends to be associated with the public sphere, whilst femininity’s characteristics tend to be found acceptable only within the private realm. Masculinity is linked with stereotypes of rationality, assertiveness, common sense, ripe and calm wisdom, power, and the assumption of autonomy and leadership, to name a few⁹¹. On the other hand, femininity is restricted to the exact opposite of all these traits: lack of reflectivity, dependence, sensitivity, emotionality, lack of logic, and waywardness⁹². It is noticeable in this non-exhaustive list that writers tend to connotate all that is masculine with characteristics that remind one of order, or what makes order work; and order is something that is desirable at the systemic level, as opposed to the expected anarchy/chaos or even hysteria of including femininity, which expression that should be kept in the private realm. Moreover, feminist scholars have noticed that this “multiplicity in masculinities”⁹³ is what constitutes the expected political (and gendered) agency in the international arena⁹⁴. Such desired ‘masculinized’ agency (individual form) matches the collective institutionalized masculine dominance of patriarchal state sovereignty. Hence, in this ontological revision it is

⁸⁸ Cannoot and Decoster, “The Abolition Of Sex/Gender Registration In The Age Of Gender Self-Determination,” 42.

⁸⁹ Paul Kirby and Marsha Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity And Practices Of Violence In Conflict Settings,” *International Feminist Journal Of Politics* 14, no. 4 (2012): 445.

⁹⁰ Frank Costigliola, “The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance,” *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 2 (April, 1997): 180-181.

⁹¹ Costigliola, “The Nuclear Family,” 173-181.

⁹² Costigliola, “The Nuclear Family,” 173-181.

⁹³ Kirby and Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity And Practices Of Violence In Conflict Settings,” 445.

⁹⁴ Kirby and Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity And Practices Of Violence In Conflict Settings,” 445.

important to go to the core of what constitutes masculinity in its abstract form and its connections internationally as well as what is understood as feminine or ‘feminized’, and how this relational hierarchical opposition of definitions works as an internalized mechanism for oppression based on racial, colonial and class factors⁹⁵ so that it can be used for cooperative progress.

This thesis proposes a new framework on the category of gender that shall contribute to reproducing the existing diversity of agency when it comes to their identification with their bodily and psychological characteristics and their culture, and consequently, to their repositioning towards the structure that they are criticizing. This entails tackling the duality of femininity and masculinity as part of the same unit of common humanity, rather than two repelling ones that must be mutually exclusive. This unit is fluid rather than rigid – since both masculinity and femininity will always remain incomplete, although in “constant dialectic”⁹⁶ throughout time and space – and subjective, as it requires self-reflection of agency.

Although duality is still present in this framework, it displays itself in a spectrum of more abstract ‘anchors’ of femininity and masculinity that can be reflected in agents of any gender and of any culture in the proportion they find themselves in throughout time. When agents acknowledge the potential present in the mastery of masculine and feminine characteristics in their own actions, they will cooperate with equally diverse agents towards an order created “to their image” of themselves as fellow humans.

2.2.1. Demystifying the Core of Femininity and Masculinity at the Individual Level

Breaking down the above non-exhaustive list, it is important to, first, neutralize the weight of stereotypes for order and for anarchy, respectively associated with masculinity and femininity. Second, to not monopolize the attribution of each of these characteristics to the two socially constructed genders: female and male.

The focus of this spectrum will not be on bodily or physical characteristics. Although there is a substantial difference and asymmetry between bodies of different genders – sexual

⁹⁵ Youngs, “Feminist International Relations,” 79.

⁹⁶ Kirby and Henry, “Rethinking Masculinity And Practices Of Violence In Conflict Settings,” 447.

organs, size, and strength – these can be counteracted and/or softened by technology⁹⁷. For instance, contraceptives or guns can help to flatten such asymmetries of the ‘special’ bodily characteristics and capabilities between different types of bodies. However, psychological differences persist and can have a ‘clean effect’ in the international, domestic, and private realms. Furthermore, the goal of an intersectional feminist utopia is not to repeat the patchwork of past policies that aimed at pushing biological boundaries to the limit; but to organically work through complementarities. For this reason, the conceptualization of a new gender category will concentrate on psychological characteristics and capacities.

To begin the conception of the gender spectrum, it is necessary to withdraw the negative/positive connotations in the initial formulation of masculine and feminine characteristics to reach the substance thereof. Recapping the above referred masculine characteristics – *rationality, assertiveness, common sense, ripe and calm wisdom, power, autonomy, and leadership* – and ‘unpeeling’ them, the following masculine substance was deduced: *focus/purpose-driven, logical, stable, assertive, confident, protective, autonomous*. Respectively, these characteristics must be perceived without any sort of connotation. If the reader observes closely, stability, which is often positively connotated, contains, on the one hand, the reverse of the coin (instability) as well as the possibility to be associated with the lingering of a stable state of violence and oppression. Identically, confidence can lead to confrontation, control, and dominance. Turning now to the feminine characteristics above referred – *lack of reflectivity, sensitivity/emotionality, lack of logic, waywardness, dependence* – where the negative connotation of opposition is obvious, a new formulation of the feminine substance is proposed: *intuitive, creative, collaborative, receptive, nurturing, flowing*. Just as from the above masculine substance it was possible to elaborate immediately opposite psychological characteristics, the same applies to the substance of femininity. The extreme of collaboration is co-dependency, and receptiveness alone can lead to victimization if there is no return to equilibrate the circle of interaction.

The *optimum* of this spectrum is not to possess a 50/50 ratio of feminine and masculine characteristics. Each of these characteristics is an ‘anchor’ which allows agents to self-reflect on how they can differently contribute to (and on the collective level, cooperate in) the process of ordering towards the intersectional feminist utopia. This new formulation of gender as a spectrum of psychologic characteristics is inclusive in the measure that it does not enclave agents within a rigid socially constructed course of action and being; it also vitalizes this agency

⁹⁷ Louise Perry, “Feminists must abandon their delusions about the sexual revolution,” 3.

into productive action, by harnessing all their previously self-reflected capabilities without discrimination.

Finally, it is important to note that this spectrum, just like the international system, is not static in its ratio femininity-masculinity throughout time. By ‘categorizing’ (or rather de-categorizing) gender with change as an inherent constant thereof, making it more in tune with the agency diversity and innate fluctuation, change in the system will become more natural to agents that acknowledge it in themselves first. Inclusive self-awareness and recognition of potential without judgment is, hence, the beginning of the process of revolutionary action. Because when we cease to view productive action as a way of reinforcing and reproducing “larger, total, forms of inequality of power”⁹⁸, we recognize previously denominated anarchic action (or outside of the Order), as an essential part of human interaction that holds infinite possibilities for progress.

2.2.2. Demystifying the Core of Femininity and Masculinity at the Collective Level

The effect of changing the categorization of gender to a fluctuating spectrum of psychological characteristics in the collective level introduces “unprecedented forms of dialogue”⁹⁹ that are sensitive to difference as a necessary departing point to progress. The acknowledgement of one’s own capabilities and characteristics and the recognition of the complementarity of the Other’s fosters simultaneously a drive towards *collaboration* (femininity) and grounds one’s *autonomous confidence* (masculinity), in the sense that one’s ration within the gender-spectrum is equally productive and necessary within the structure. Here, productive power lays not in the accumulation of capabilities (as argued in the realist paradigm), but in the interaction and cooperation among diverse agents: the introduction to a relational ontology, coupled with a procedural ontology in the medium/long-run.

In addition, whilst applying this new spectrum to the collective level, notions of division between the domestic world and international politics fade, radically delegitimizing the imperfect male-dominated narrative of the International Order and of the construction of the patriarchal sovereign state¹⁰⁰. Through the transformation of the “political community” as a

⁹⁸ David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 76.

⁹⁹ Linklater, *The Transformation of the Political Community*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Linklater, *The Transformation of the Political Community*, 3.

whole, commencing by the reformulation of their individual perception of gender, a new understanding of order arises: an order in which the individual has a strong connection to the collective formations it belongs to. In the face of the prevailing and incomplete understanding of the world as purely structural forces, this new framework is truly a radical new theorization of a new possible International Order, less hierarchical, more communicative, and with the human being as its main priority, where the individual recognizes in the Other its common humanity in the different ratios of their masculine and feminine characteristics.

3. Making Sense of The International Order

We may have to interpret the world and the established concept of order again to see the possibility of change presented by the intersectional feminist utopia. Taking a closer look at the present International Order, and different theorizations thereof, what constitutes it as well as socially constructed perceptions of it, especially with regards to gender, and building on the above-created framework of “gender-spectrum”, rather than gender role, this chapter is aiming at reinterpreting order (destruction phase) to spot the possibility of change (reconstruction phase).

Many authors have already put forward their own definitions and explanations of order, among them Hedley Bull, Emmanuel Adler, and John J. Mearsheimer. On the one hand, Bull states that International Order is “a pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains [the goals of a society of states, which are] elementary, primary or universal”¹⁰¹. The first of these goals is the preservation of this “society of states”¹⁰² as the “prevailing form of universal political organization”¹⁰³. Hence, for this order to be maintained, state sovereignty must be assured: the capacity of a state to assert authority over a piece of territory and a segment of the human population¹⁰⁴. Secondly, this sovereignty must also be assured externally: the capacity of a state to preserve its supremacy while being interdependent on outside authorities¹⁰⁵. For this group of states to exist together and to constitute order in their interaction, it is essential that, through the establishment of common institutions, common values and norms are able to guide sustainable and, up to a point predictable, dynamics among the sovereign states¹⁰⁶. Thirdly, peace must be the normal status between sovereign states, for it is the biggest threat to their individual supremacy¹⁰⁷. Fourth and last, societies of states should limit physical violence within their borders, be reliable towards their citizens and stabilize rules of property, for the sake of their inner stability¹⁰⁸.

Bull defines order as being kept by sovereign states, its ‘guardians’, who must sustain certain patterned behaviours within their territory, which requires control and protection of

¹⁰¹ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 16.

¹⁰² Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 8.

¹⁰³ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 18.

‘whatever is inside it’, as well as reproduce (un-reflected) institutionalized practices deemed ‘universal’ among other political creations – other sovereign states. If we think about it, these institutions assume the absence of social solidarity; plus, they neglect the importance of fostering the potential and development of human beings within the borders of these supreme entities. The bottom line of this International Order is stability (not human progress) which is achieved by standardizing procedures in the international arena, and by overlooking agency. This results in a ‘sticky’ change of the system, which accompanies the practice of state entities whose purpose is to maintain control over a homogenized population. Bull’s definition of order is based on common interests among states, regardless of the diverging interests of the people that inhabit these states.

Looking at the four goals – deemed universal – sustained by ‘patterned practice’, it becomes evident how gendered this order is: the masculine substance described in the above section can be identified in all the principles of this order. It is *focus/purpose-driven*, for it aims at the attainment of four main goals, goals which ensure that this order is *stable, assertive, confident* of its legitimacy towards the citizens it wants to *protect*. From a structural perspective, the sovereign state is a patriarchal creation in the measure that it is unwavering masculine in its substance¹⁰⁹. By denying symmetry between masculinity and femininity in the International Order’s core, state sovereignty and everything that arises from this creation assert a leadership that is oppressive, monolithic, and hierarchical¹¹⁰, denominating it as the only solution to maintain order internationally. For example, *collaboration*, a feminine characteristic of the gender spectrum could be argued to exist in the interdependence of states internationally. However, while looking closely at the interaction among states, no real collaboration exists, since this interaction is based on common interests and the expected profit.

After all, the most important principle in the order is the maintenance of supremacy and power of the statal entity. Another example of lack of femininity is *receptiveness*, which is also not guaranteed: the alleged protection offered by the state does not correspond to a consented reception by the citizens thereof, but rather an assumption of this receptiveness. As we can see, this order does not englobe the two sides of the gender spectrum. Nevertheless, this thesis does not defend that patriarchy represents the domination of men, for these men are not seizing their full potential. Also, they lack their feminine characteristics (even if few within their own individual agential spectrum), which are not honoured within the order.

¹⁰⁹ John Hoffman, *Gender and Sovereignty: Feminism, the State and International Relations* (Palgrave, 2001), 9.

¹¹⁰ Hoffman, *Gender and Sovereignty*, 9.

On the other hand, Emmanuel Adler, with his cognitive evolution theory of practices, introduces a flux-order, rather than a static one, accommodating more to the ‘eruption’ of the Liberal International Order in the Cold War period. In fact, Adler argues that what constitutes ‘order’ are practices, which circumvent (and are inseparable from) certain fundamental rules that define international social orders¹¹¹. Despite being processes rather than entities (as defended by Bull) the main proponents of such social orders, these are still “socially limited and relatively static”¹¹², meaning that they can remain in a “metastable state”¹¹³ while the knowledge and practices within them can oscillate continually but ‘epicentrically’ (here he addresses this ‘sticky structural change’ mentioned in the paragraph before). In addition, there is politics, which according to Adler is an extra factor of stability (or metastability) instead of evolutionary change¹¹⁴. And politics are mainly controlled by these powerful entities that ‘set the tone’ of affairs. Again, in this definition we see that ‘order’, even when based on values of liberty and equality, has no space for radicality, that is a revolutionary change towards an intersectional feminist utopia. With this fluid definition of order, communities of practice, – which could approximate the *flowing* component of the feminine substance – are ‘tight and flat’, in the sense that they do not allow for agential self-reflection, nor for creative input to be introduced in a myriad of functional areas.

At the end of the Cold War, the United States (the only great power left in the system) set the fundamental rules by which the order would form itself around, rules which were ideologically liberal, and obviously suited this country’s own interests. For John J. Mearsheimer, ‘order’, or to be specific the Liberal International Order, means institutions, which help govern the interactions between their member states¹¹⁵, according to the “open rules” that define this kind of order. In this definition, sovereignty is implied for member states, but it does not necessarily include all sovereign states in the international system¹¹⁶. It goes without saying that this definition of ‘order’ was imposed by the West on the international community, which does not mind excluding a couple of states and non-state actors, and hence, also their interests and inputs. By not having other regions of the world represented or their interests, this definition of order is far away from the intersectionality required by this thesis’ utopia.

¹¹¹ Adler, *World Ordering*, 140.

¹¹² Adler, *World Ordering*, 138.

¹¹³ Adler, *World Ordering*, 144.

¹¹⁴ Adler, *World Ordering*, 21.

¹¹⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order,” *International Security* 43, no. 4 (Spring 2019): 9.

¹¹⁶ Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail”: 9.

3.1. Order and Anarchy: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

It is a common assumption to put ‘order’ in opposition to ‘anarchy’. But while looking closely at the present Liberal International Order, many similarities can be recognized between the two seemingly oxymoronic concepts, especially in their own contradictions.

Hoffman proposes the following: the ideology of this order assumes the individuals to be free and equal. However, this premise contradicts itself when its concretization requires the patriarchal sovereign state¹¹⁷. Furthermore, as shown in the above section, such liberal order entails also international inequalities in terms of representation of interests and of freedom of choice for less powerful states and their inhabitants¹¹⁸. Similarly, anarchy presents the same struggle. Its definition also promises freedom of choice and action as well as equality, once there exists no authority before which individuals may be subject to hierarchization and/or discrimination. Nevertheless, anarchists cannot guarantee that freedom will not be blocked by fellow citizens, nor that violence and authoritarianism will ‘sneak into’ the system through the “back door”¹¹⁹. We can say that both scenarios are imagined realities: the state-based international system as an “imaginary totality”¹²⁰ and the anarchical system as an imaginary void. Thus, here the difference is not between order and disorder, but between a model of total control and a model of total absence thereof. And, actually, ‘order’ does not seem to be indeed happening in either of the opposite systems, since the perseverance of both systems comes at the cost of (some) humans sacrifice, for none of these systems is made with the human being at its centre (as an absolute priority).

Moreover, it is paradoxical that inequalities are an integrant part of what we call ‘International Order’, be it liberal or not. They are visible in the capacity of states to adapt to the imposed fundamental rules of the system (like the reduction of domestic carbon emissions, for example), in their response to their national inequalities, and in the extent to that they can have influence (if any) in international affairs. In fact, it seems that structures of governance “both reflect and reinforce the broader patterns of inequality that mark the global system”¹²¹. On the other hand, in the past years, the legitimacy of a hierarchical system of power that reinforces deepens inequalities in the face of an increasingly globalized and interdependent

¹¹⁷ Hoffman, *Gender and Sovereignty*, 10.

¹¹⁸ Hoffman, *Gender and Sovereignty*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Hoffman, *Gender and Sovereignty*, 10.

¹²⁰ Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 65.

¹²¹ Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

world has been very often challenged¹²². This has erupted the understanding of ‘order’ as something entirely different from the International Order composed of sovereign states: an order among humankind¹²³. Such order is primordial and morally prior to the imagined order of sovereign states. An order which goes back to the “ultimate units”¹²⁴ of the world society: human beings. Starting to conceptualize this primordial order comes about from the realization that the prosperity of this ‘one world’ requires us to also consider and acknowledge the voices and needs of the marginalized¹²⁵, be this marginalization in terms of race, gender, social class, or identity.

3.1.1. Globalization and the Apparent Decadence of the Liberal International Order: Introducing the Case of Refugees as Agents of Vital Change

Globalization, a phenomenon that accompanied the rise of the Liberal International Order, has raised the interconnectedness globally among actors of this system. The way actors of the international arena pursue these connections varies immensely; such interconnectedness is “multifaceted”¹²⁶ as well as it covers a broad field of functional areas, which soften the rigidity of the bond citizen-state¹²⁷, upon which the concept of territorial order lays, as described above. At the same time, processes of deglobalization and dissidence forewarn the unsuitability of this order to the regions of the world in which the ‘order’ was imposed and bring afloat the necessity of measuring order by its lowest common denominator: common humanity, which would be the most distinct representation of the gender-spectrum in action in a systemic level.

The truth is that globalization continues to push back and forward in waves, posing new challenges to the Liberal International Order’s capacity to maintain stability in the system, a capacity which is notably receding¹²⁸. The emergence of nationalist political movements (such as populism) and shifts in the nature of security challenges to the system (such as ‘the refugee

¹²² Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 11.

¹²³ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 21.

¹²⁴ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 21.

¹²⁵ Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 11.

¹²⁶ Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. vi.

¹²⁷ John Agnew, “The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of International Relations theory,” *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 77.

¹²⁸ Markus Kornprobst and T. V. Paul, “Globalization, deglobalization and the liberal international order,” *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021): 1312.

crisis’ in 2015, and recently the ‘non-refugee-crisis’ after Russia invaded Ukraine) made scholars and the public imagine new possible structures “outside the framework of territorial states”¹²⁹ which would safeguard order, and hence, a more just and equilibrated order.

Focusing now on the subject of refugees, this thesis will make the point that refugees and their allies – for instance, NGOs’ workers and volunteers - are “accidental” agents of disruption of the status quo¹³⁰, and hence, vital (rather than passive) agents of progress towards a feminist intersectional utopia. How can the concept of ‘order’ justify the mistreatments, the drownings, and the pushbacks of migrants just because of the fear of disturbing sovereignty? How can an ideological order, such as our liberal one, bar access to people who flee countries where this ideology seems impossible to be implemented, to live free and peaceful lives? Are these lives less important than the livelihood of a state, or a region of states, and the permanence of a strict line (the physical and psychological border) that divides unimportant and far away wars from a much more important local peace? And what does gender have to do with all this? Let us first focus on the concept of ‘border’ for refugees¹³¹.

Borders are margins, no-places, where multiple identities, cultures, languages, and races come together from all or most social classes. These are places where authority and protection are inexistent, places of anarchy, but also places of collaboration, nurturing, and creativity. Borders are also the ‘home’ of millions of people, who are denied entrance into great powers’ territorial protection. Let us be clear: borders are also “unnatural boundar[ies]”¹³² between two ‘gendered worlds’: the patriarchal sovereign state of ‘order’ and the ‘hysterical’ (and feminine associated) no-state of ‘anarchy’. Here, the point of gendering the traditional definitions of order and anarchy is to be able to make clear that gender inequality is a problem that is transversal to the personal, the national, and the global levels; and that the existence of a patriarchal state is far from only disadvantaging or harming women. It purposely causes the suffering of non-nationals, which are not meant to be under the state’s ‘roof’ of protection.

Refugees, in the micro-level of oppression that is the Serbian-Hungarian border, defy the traditional order. They are the *trigger* and also the proof of the need to revolutionize the

¹²⁹ Agnew, “The territorial trap”: 53.

¹³⁰ Beverly Crawford Ames, “Refugees and their Allies as Agents of Progress – Knowledge and Power in Forbidden Boundary Regions,” in *Theorizing World Orders: Cognitive Evolution and Beyond*, ed. Piki Ish-Shalom, Markus Kornprobst and Vincent Pouliot (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 175.

¹³¹ *The following description and analysis are based on my personal experience and observation at the border between Serbia and Hungary in the summer of 2021 while working as a volunteer for the NGO Collective Aid for two months. More about the work of this organization in the following website:*

²³<https://www.collectiveaidngo.org/>.

¹³² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987), 3.

concept of ‘order’. Together with NGOs, they acknowledge their own humanity even in the face of their ‘alien’ denomination by states and part of their nationals. They cross borders illegally because they believe that for their humanity, which is no different than from that of the nationals of the country in question, they deserve to live in a safer place: *“To be able to endure in the dangerous space between borders and on foreign soil, they had to embrace their own worth as human beings while those around them refused to acknowledge it”*¹³³. But not all those around them refused to acknowledge this. Their allies, NGO workers, and volunteers recognize this common humanity and overcome the usual political denominations they are given (‘terrorists’, ‘stateless people’), which shadow and oversimplify these peoples’ essence, and call them ‘People on the Move’. The only recognized difference between these workers/volunteers, who are national of a particular state, and refugees is the fact that the latter needed to move from a place of war and conflict towards a peaceful and liveable location. This is a subtle but strong reformulation.

The next steps in the process of making refugees (and their allies) agents of revolutionary change are to create a community of practice (refugees and NGOs) from this acknowledged common humanity and expand its boundaries to other levels of practice and governance. The role and practice of Collective Aid (NGO) are to fill in the gaps of national and international governance, which do not apply to refugees and displaced people, for lack of jurisdiction and excess bureaucracy to do so. Nevertheless, Collective Aid is not alone in this process. In Northern Serbia there are several other institutions that cooperated with the former, sharing the same recognition of common humanity in people on the move, and making a difference in nurturing and feeding the needs of fellow humans. In this micro-community of practice, where the suffering of migrants is alleviated and the concept of ‘alien’ is erased, fertile ground and progress towards a feminist intersectional International Order are in position.

More on this exact process is going to be developed in the last chapter of this thesis. The next chapter is going to assess the history of the artificial and non-permanent structures of the international system that aimed at addressing the great society of humankind as a whole but failed. It will also cover the last utopia of human rights, criticize it, and derive from this history the potential and the existing ‘seeds’ in social orders which make future ordering towards an intersectional feminist utopia possible and achievable.

¹³³ Ames, “Refugees and their Allies as Agents of Progress”: 175.

4. Human Rights as a Promising Utopia

“History emerges in an unintended shape as a result of practices directed to immediate practical ends. To watch these practices establish selective principles that highlight some kind of events and obscure others is to inspect the social order operating on individual minds.”¹³⁴

Mary Douglas

Since history is the product of short/medium-term *goal-oriented* and un-reflected collective practices, it is important to understand how the patriarchal state sovereignty became so prominent and how this framework of order coexists with human rights, when individuals keep being oppressed by the “predation of states”¹³⁵. The modernist society’s culture in the post-colonialist epoch has partly incentivized the spread of the nation-state model of imperial powers unto these powers’ respective newly decolonized dependencies¹³⁶. But, as a matter of fact, systems of sovereign states have been rare: the predominant form of political organization throughout history has been heteronomous systems like empires¹³⁷, and not monocultural entities like nation-states. Furthermore, for the colonial as well as the post-colonial peoples social, economic and group rights have always been prioritized over civil and individual rights¹³⁸. Looking back in time, this project of Human Rights is indeed a recent one, which arose out of specific motivations (already lingering in the system for a while) combined with the relativization of territoriality among nation-states with globalization deepening interdependence and exchanges between countries, and people in diverse areas of life. Transformative events in recent history have permitted this long-in-preparation aspiration to come to life.

As Reus-Smit states in his book *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, the main reason for “discomfort with the [present] system/society distinction is not conceptual, it is historical”¹³⁹. In fact, our current system of sovereign states does not resemble at all a global society, nor like a global inclusive order. In the sixteenth century, long after the disruption of the Holy Roman Empire, some states started to emerge, increasingly asserting

¹³⁴ Douglas (1986, 69–70) in Adler, *World Ordering*, 165.

¹³⁵ Christian Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

¹³⁶ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 3-4.

¹³⁷ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 15.

¹³⁸ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 9.

¹³⁹ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 17.

their sovereign territoriality¹⁴⁰. Politics of recognition followed, not without its conflicts and wars, which culminated in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which established which types of polities could be considered legitimate. Reus-Smit argues in his book that the formation of the international system has witnessed simultaneously the development of a socially dynamic international society¹⁴¹, which has un-reflectedly conferred their consent to the authority and protection of their respective sovereign state and further polities. Nevertheless, a society with lively social dynamics is shaped not only by the material gains it can extract from the system of protection but also by the intersubjective meanings and agential practices that either maintain or contest these meanings¹⁴².

Before the nineteenth century, there was still no “political system that spanned the world as a whole”¹⁴³. Such a global order (the first one to exist) has only begun to arise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the form of a system whose main actors were sovereign states¹⁴⁴, due to the expansion of colonial powers but also private individuals: migrants, mercenaries, missionaries, etc¹⁴⁵. However, sovereignty was not a fundamental and organizing principle in the newly formed global order until the decolonization period after 1945, when subject peoples in colonies and in recent post-colonial states introduced struggles for self-determination¹⁴⁶. These early demands for rights in the ex-colonies moulded the meaning of individual rights¹⁴⁷, in a first phase, which were understood as a subversive tool against colonialist rule, and for the sake of creating new state communities around the world¹⁴⁸. This meaning corresponded to the belonging to a local political community, to the politics of citizenship, an attempt of the weak to ‘fight’ the strong’ in their dominance, which in the case of these post-colonialism arisen countries, left them “peripheral on the world stage”¹⁴⁹. For their newly independent state was not strong enough to ensure their lives were protected and honoured, as the lives of the peoples in the Global North: to have rights as nationals of weak states, implied they would suffer from a comparatively global perspective¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁰ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 18.

¹⁴² Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 18.

¹⁴³ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 20.

¹⁴⁵ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*, 23.

¹⁴⁷ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁴⁸ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 212.

¹⁴⁹ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 12.

The 1970s were, according to Samuel Moyn, the critical juncture for the advancement and expansion of human rights on the global scene. This decade, with its broad transformations in the international arena (economical, ideological, political) created a propitious environment for the advancement of human rights¹⁵¹. Nevertheless, this advancement would not have been possible would this utopia not had already been latent in the minds and ambitions of the international community: on the 10th of December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in Paris, over the still warm debris of the Second World War. This, back then, was a ‘failed’ attempt to balance the overwhelming amount of power and relevance of the nation-state as opposed to the individual¹⁵², after the latter was completely marginalized, considering the amount of suffering this world war brought to citizens of specific states. Thus, the post-war human rights endeavour was also an attempt to stimulate the global civil society by ensuring individual rights that were not dependent on a nation-state to be safeguarded. In the 1970s, several transnational patterns, as well as impulses from activists and national governments, came together recognizing the human rights cause as being the “profoundly moral yet multifunctional way of revitalizing politics, both as an ideal and as a practice”¹⁵³.

The end of the Cold War has brought the establishment of a Liberal International Order and also a quickly increasing globalization, which presented a sufficient push for the project of human rights – a “recognizably utopian program”¹⁵⁴ – to start showing humble successes on replacing state authority as a legitimate international instrument that acknowledges common humanity. Plus, Cold War politics, superpowers’ ideological tenets, and excessive methods of confrontation were something that many felt was increasingly threatening to human existence¹⁵⁵. However, the newly unravelling human rights utopia posed yet another challenge to the International Order: it forced a dilemma between state rights, which citizens enjoy by being nationals of the nation in question, and human rights, which people are eligible to have for the simple reason that they are moral human beings.

Mervyn Frost presents the dilemma of the ‘double anarchy’, between two global practices, the practice of sovereign states and the practice of the global civil society, through constitutive theory¹⁵⁶. He believes these two practices to be complementary: whenever a citizen experiences alienation in civil society, this can be overcome by the membership in a sovereign

¹⁵¹ Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, ed., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 252.

¹⁵² Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 212.

¹⁵³ Eckel and Moyn, ed., *The Breakthrough*, 252.

¹⁵⁴ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Eckel and Moyn, ed., *The Breakthrough*, 255.

¹⁵⁶ Mervyn Frost, *Global Ethics: Anarchy, Freedom and International Relations* (Routledge, 2009), 104.

state, which has the power to remedy problems found in civil society¹⁵⁷ and offer protection. This complementarity is valued by many states who wish to be participants in the global civil society and in the system of sovereign states; membership in the United Nations is a good way to achieve that. The UN, however, is committed to the protection of human rights worldwide, and while most states do not see this commitment as a threat to their sovereignty¹⁵⁸, the ‘refugee crisis’ has become an accurate case of how this membership at the UN can lead sovereign states to an internal dilemma.

Refugees flee their countries because these are or became weak or failed states, which cannot provide enough protection for their civilian rights or their individual rights. In the act of illegally migrating to another (more stable and prosperous) sovereign state, refugees put this sovereign state under pressure: what is more important? To protect their own civilians against an external threat or to protect these foreigners’ rights to a safe life under the United Nations Charter? What these states end up doing is reinforcing the security of their borders, fearing that these migrants will challenge their capabilities as a patriarchal state to ensure domestic civil rights, while simultaneously ferociously breaking their international commitments in relation to human rights¹⁵⁹. Frost proposes an ethical perspective on this dilemma: “the society of states should consider to what extent their actions or inactions have brought about the failure of the [failed/weak state in question]”¹⁶⁰. For the failure of a specific state can be credited to the failure of cooperation of the international community to help this state by, for instance, imposing sanctions on its respective enemy state. Hence, when these people illegally try to enter another state, they are in fact endorsing the core values the global civil society and the society of states are committed to¹⁶¹.

Crucial is to understand the trends of response to this dilemma and how to counteract it. In the face of a possible loss of control, states committed to an International Order of cooperation towards the accomplishment of human rights for all, respond with a replacement of civil society action by increased protection and action of the society of states within themselves. But practice in the field shows that we need to pay more attention to the emerging “intensification and continued operation of a highly successful global civil society within which

¹⁵⁷ Frost, *Global Ethics*, 106.

¹⁵⁸ Frost, *Global Ethics*, 108.

¹⁵⁹ *Some of these atrocities have been put into writing on the Border Violence Monitoring Network website (consult website here: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/>). This network’s reports work on a testimony base on site. These testimonies are collected by volunteers of the following NGOs: No Name Kitchen, Collective Aid, Re:Ports Sarajevo, Josoor, and Blindspots as well as independent persons, in the Balkan route.*

¹⁶⁰ Frost, *Global Ethics*, 119.

¹⁶¹ Frost, *Global Ethics*, 117.

we are constituted as participating rights holders”¹⁶². There are new active agents in the pursuance of the human rights utopia, among them NGOs and refugees themselves, that by defying institutionalized rules of ‘insecure states’ are reaffirming the core values of both civil societies and of sovereign states as well as criticizing the unnecessary increment of control from the patriarchal nation-states.

This “discomfort” that Reus-Smit referred to can maybe be overcome by empowering a global civil society to become the international society and main defender of human rights worldwide as a means to counteract the unbalanced *masculinity* of the society of states. Witnessing the current war in Ukraine, where the overarching power of a state elite is causing terrible material and human damage in betrayal of human rights commitments, we have seen an eruption of civil society movements in the attempt of rebalancing the system with some feminine substance: *cooperation, nurturing, care*. Analysing the development of the human rights utopia in the last decades, this thesis argues that the current developments in the movement of civil society towards a regime where human life and a common humanity are the major priority are proof of the commencement of the process of ordering the International Order into a feminist intersectional one.

The next section will propose a model of (re)ordering toward the open-ended feminist and intersectional utopian vision, applying the new framework of a gender spectrum. The case study of refugees as vital agents of change will be further scrutinized and discussed in the reconstruction phase of a new conception of ‘International Order’ that is free from the unproductive weight of an excess of masculinity in the system.

¹⁶² Frost, *Global Ethics*, 131.

5. Ordering towards Utopia: The Reconstruction Phase

"Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said. 'One can't believe impossible things.'

'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast'." - **Lewis Carroll**¹⁶³

Modernity came about with the advancement of science, which quickly made the distinction between what was natural and what was cultural/social. It created an opposition between objectivity and subjectivity and built a rigid concept of order with assigned roles and prejudices over intentional ignorance. Native Americans live without this divide, and hence, have a more eclectic (and productive) view on gender. For them, "intersex, androgynous people, feminine males, and masculine females"¹⁶⁴ are "doubly blessed [and gifted] people"¹⁶⁵ and of incremental value to the community¹⁶⁶, not only for the fact that they have 'two spirits' but also for the practical advantages of their mixture of masculine and feminine traits. Moreover, they socially accept marriages among all genders and saw it as a way of ensuring complementary of feminine and masculine capabilities for the sake of economic survival¹⁶⁷. Native Americans seem to understand the concept of the gender spectrum and the power of inclusivity. Moreover, in the recognition of differential traits and capabilities of femininity and masculinity, they are able to combine this diversity into productive work.

The point being made here is not that our international society needs to regress to a pre-modern age, or that all scientific progress must be abandoned. The point is that the new concept of 'order' must mend the separation between the social/subjective and the natural/objective. For by fusing these two universes, diversity can be incorporated into the structure of the International Order. How is this new concept of order defined? And how ought the International Order to be in the future feminist intersectional utopia? And is it that 'impossible' as Alice fears, or does it only require a little bit of practice? This chapter will, first, present the open-

¹⁶³ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass: And what Alice Found There* (Macmillan Children's, 1872), 100.

¹⁶⁴ Walter L Williams, "The 'two-spirit' people of indigenous North Americans," *The Guardian*, October 11, 2010, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Williams, "The 'two-spirit' people of indigenous North Americans," 2.

¹⁶⁶ Williams, "The 'two-spirit' people of indigenous North Americans," 2.

¹⁶⁷ Williams, "The 'two-spirit' people of indigenous North Americans," 3.

ended vision of the intersectional feminist utopia. Second, the procedure of how to achieve this utopia will be described.

To start with the vision, at the bottom lays the acceptance of change as the only constant in the system. This new utopian order ought to be the order of humankind, its primordial units, not nation-states. For humankind to be at the centre of the order, it is necessary for agents to acknowledge each other's common humanity as well as complementarities in terms of feminine and masculine capabilities, according to the gender spectrum framework. Acknowledging each other's common humanity entails the consideration of the voices of all people in the governance of international affairs, regardless of gender, race, or social class. Secondly, since there will be no sovereign states, there shall also be no borders, neither physical nor metaphorical, in the sense of discrimination. Thirdly, the order of the people requires an active rather than a passive agency; humans shall be involved in the local and international affairs because they concern them directly. Fourthly, international governance will be in the multiple hands of global civil society in the international field, while smaller and local civil societies will oversee local affairs. Important is that a relational approach exists between the international and the local level, rather than a hierarchical one. Both the local and the international civil societies will be distributed among functional areas in which specialists in the area in question will cooperate with the population working in that specific field.

Regarding the process toward the utopia, it will unfold the following way: the failures of the Liberal International Order and the system of sovereign states in maintaining stability and their commitments to human rights will push members of the civil and of the 'uncivil' society to react against the lack of action and ethics in the international human affairs. The future increasing processes of globalization and deglobalization will contribute to the turmoil and the aspirations for changes in the international structure. In their interactions, civil and uncivil society will share their subjective meanings of the structure, its oppression, their healing from it, and good practices for a prosperous future. In this relational process, they will acknowledge each other's common humanity and diverse capabilities and will initiate practices of filling the gaps in the system of states as far as the progress and well-being of human beings at all levels (emotional, physical, and psychological) is concerned.

Cooperation and collaboration of active agents against the patriarchal and unjust practices of states will begin to spread and create communities of practice under this dialogical and reflected base whose priority is the respect for human rights, and non-discrimination. The expansion of the active, and in some level anarchical practices, of the civil and the uncivil

society and its results in human well-being and productivity will begin to be recognized by the rest of the population and then legitimized in the international arena. As a consequence, the uncivil societies' practices will cease to be categorized as 'uncivil', and this group will unite with the previously denominated civil society. In contrast, the rigid and artificial construction of the nation-state in the face of such a vigorous, diverse, and ethical community will seem insufficient for the agency's aspirations, and its oppressions upon it will no longer be tolerated. In addition, the collaboration among a diverse global civil society and the creation of a flux of communities of practice, which reflect this diversity as well as protect humanity, will dismiss the need for borders, because they no longer tolerate the marginalization that comes with it. Such practices will evolve into sectors to cover various functional areas. For each area, the right combination of feminine and masculine capabilities will be chosen, so as to achieve the greatest potential and well-being for all, both at the local and the international level.

This (re)ordering process is never a rigid one, for ethical and normative concerns are constantly addressed by the diverse and active agency. The future, in fact, need not be seen as a dangerous totalitarian project of change, although its premises are radical. Radicality is in line with revolutionary change that aims at breaking with an old and oppressive normality. In the next subsection, the case of refugees as agents of change will demonstrate the power of civil and uncivil society at work, indicating early signs of movement towards a feminist intersectional utopia.

5.1. The Beginning of the Ordering: An Emotional Case Study

The beginning of a long metamorphosis is difficult. It can even be hurtful and unfair to some. Disobedience or revolution has tended to reinforce the control and legitimized power of the state. When refugees began to travel to Europe in high numbers some years ago, this has certainly been the case: border police control strengthened, diversification of operations of border protection, more resources allocated, more violence; an overload of *masculinity* in the system. However, at this point in time, several non-profit organizations, international organizations, and private individuals proceeded to act in favour of those, whose humanity was being negated: a *femininity* countermove.

At the Serbian-Hungarian border, I have witnessed not only the nurturing and the care of these organizations towards 'People on the Move' but also their complicity with these

People's anarchic actions. I have seen them discussing with local authorities about the necessity to comply with human rights, collecting evidence of violence and publishing it, protecting these individuals from systemic attacks, and demanding hospital care for the wounded, attacked by border police of local residents. There was much local and regional cooperation among NGOs, and with UNHCR, although collaboration with the latter falls short of the expectations of change since this agency is ruled by the society of states at the United Nations. These are all actions within the spectrum of civil society, which can only contribute as much to the process of revolutionary change.

But the complicity of some members of these organizations in uncivil actions, according to the state sovereignty perspective, has also taken place. One example was the continuance of service provided after local authorities have prohibited it. Another, a bit more radical, was a couple of members of an NGO giving their own passports away or strategically helping refugees to cross the border to the European Union. For the latter example, I have no record of continued action, but for the former, I have information on practice expansion. Several volunteers of different organizations have expanded this uncivil practice and are currently or will soon suffer legal consequences for acting against the authorities' will. However, many movements and petitions have been also arisen to stop such legal consequences to unfold, because saving lives of fellow vulnerable humans speaks louder "ethics" for a growing amount of people than following rigid regulations of border protection. The priority of having sovereignty as the bottom-line principle in the International Order is shaken in such situations; a demonstration of the understanding that human beings are, in fact, the primordial unit to be defended in the international system is here suggested.

On the other hand, the inflow of Ukrainian refugees into the European Union in 2022 and their incredibly fast hosting in EU member states have shown some possible progress in the direction of the utopia, which has been built on previous civil and uncivil practices in this more ethical direction. In the past few months, civil society together with the government authorities of the concerned receiving countries has moved various resources in the inclusion of war refugees in a way not witnessed in the past decade with other people fleeing conflict and war in their home countries in the Middle East and Africa. The recognition of common humanity seemed to be much easier among refugees from a European country, but maybe this is setting a good precedent for future dealings with refugees from the Global South.

The lack of uncivil society's actions in cooperation with the *trigger* (refugees, main agents of change) so far in the case of Ukrainian refugees does not show less potential towards

utopia, if we see the advances made by uncivil and civil society cooperation in the case of refugees at the Serbian-Hungarian border (and other borders which face the so-called ‘illegal migration’) as a push that contributed to the expansion of a community of practice. This time around, authorities collaborated with the aims for ethical change in this matter, hence ‘trespassing’ of laws and regulations not being needed.

Such humble but symbolic progress in the direction of a less discriminatory, more inclusive, and balanced use of masculine and feminine capabilities shows that there is, indeed, the potential for change when communities of practice are able to switch mentalities horizontally and vertically and can ultimately re-modulate oppressive and inhumane patterns of the structure, even if only on certain practices in the beginning.

An intersectional feminist utopia is a normative vision for the future which gives humankind hope in the face of repetitive injustice and damaging violence. The work I have performed with Collective Aid was rewarding and painful. Cleaning wounds from fence-hopping, from dog bites, from aggressive beatings of police that are blind to their own structural ignorance, accompanying ‘People of the Move’ to hospitals, warning them of further dangers, listening to them, and making their stories public. Such a project did not feel at all like a totalitarian one. It felt like gradual progress, an awakening towards the urgent need of humanity, with its full diversity, to rise together as an ultimate priority of the international system and steadily rebuilt it on the basis of complementarity, diversity, and ethics.

Conclusion

To put the human being in the centre of research and to use reason and imagination to ensure that humanity progresses might seem like too much of an idealistic project. But an instrumental utopia is not a complete break with past structures, it uncovers the potential of change in the interstices of a patriarchal structure, through the creation of an intersectional basis of solidarity. From this basis, the true revolution happens when cooperation among a diverse agency, bounded by their acknowledged common humanity, takes place.

The ‘radicality’ of utopian methods lies in their utilization of a span of disciplines and consideration of both subjective and objective inputs. It is such radicality or rather eclecticism that permits a vision of the future, which defies and challenges the established rigidities of authority and of power. Its instrumentality is grounded in its ability to empower agency in its essence. The destruction of the category of gender is a crucial step in this process: the reformulation from a rigid categorization to a fluid ‘gender spectrum’ allows agency of all genders to reflect on their contributions to the Order and see the totality of their capabilities recognized. Without the shift of a passive to an active agency, utopia loses its instrumentality and goes back to Thomas More’s Island: a decontextualized utopia lost at sea.

The gender spectrum is not only contributory to agency empowerment but also exposes the notorious unbalance between femininity and masculinity in the International patriarchal Order: an order composed of states instead of people, decorated with institutions that are under its control; an order from which some states’ contributions are excluded, and by consequence of their population, a ‘non-ergonomic’ order that is socially limited and survives out of an outrageous use of control and violence. From the deconstruction phase of this thesis, a new concept of order arose: the Order of Common Humanity, where individuals in their totality are the primordial units of the international system: this shall be the first tenet of the feminist intersectional utopian vision.

The latest developments in the international arena have disappointed civil society more and more. The structural domination of states has not done justice to the principles on which the Liberal International Order was supposed to be built. Moreover, humankind finds itself in a dilemma: citizen and individual human rights do not seem to be positioned on the same level; they are subject to the structural hierarchy of the state system. Sovereign states prioritize citizen rights and harm a possible complementarity between the two, for fearing their conceivable

existential crisis. This harms the primordial units of the system, delineated in the intersectional feminist utopia: human beings.

Refugees incorporate agency empowerment in the radicality of their actions against the system as part of an uncivil global society. In turn, the global civil society, depicted in this thesis' empirics by NGOs working at the borders, where refugees try to cross to the 'prohibited land', through its civil and anarchic actions in support of the refugee's cause, attempt to compensate the extreme masculinity of the system with its dual: femininity. The contrast is not the aim, but the dialogical interaction between old and new mentalities, antique and innovative fluid structures for the International Order. Communities of practice shall expand and form gradually an Order of Common Humanity, where borders are removed to give space to relations, collaboration, complementarity, and a prosperous and diverse humankind.

The power of imagination is not so out of place in the field of International Relations after all. And the *impossible* is merely a construction of fear.

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