"SEXING" GLOBALIZATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
Migrant sex and domestic workers in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey
Anna M. Agathangelou

The national bourgeoisie organizes centers of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry ... the little Brazilian and Mexican girls ... the ports of Acapulco and Copacabana — all these are the stigma of this deprivation of the national middle class ... (This class) will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of the manager of Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe.

(Moon 1997: 153-4)

It's a processing center for prostitutes ... Girls are brought here. They have no money and their passports are taken away. They become the property of the rings. Within a few years they are full-time prostitutes. They say they are "processed." And then they are sold to other rings in Europe or the Middle East.

(Lazos quoted in Murphy 1998: 2)

Sex work, prostitution, sex trade, sex trafficking, and domestic work are concepts that evoke both a sense of morality and criminalization in the global context. The global trade in women, a lucrative "shadow market," generates from 7 to 12 billion dollars annually (Hughes 2000). While these social relations suffuse international relations (IR) and constitute a lived experience, the field as an intellectual discipline continues to retain the (neo)realist fiction that IR is really only about competing states making rational choices independent of gender and sexual relations. Theoretical analysis of the sex trade remains underdeveloped in contemporary IR and international political economy (IPE), despite feminist critiques that have brought it to the forefront of policy and scholarly attention (Enloe 1990; Moon 1997). What would the disciplines of IR and IPE look like if we took seriously concepts such as desire economies and sex trade?

To date, no single study in IR has systematically examined the social organization and movement of sexual labor within the peripheries. Such studies of globalization typically focus on the upper circuits of capital relations, such as the increased level of international trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, and the promotion of commodity culture, thereby missing the significance of lower circuits such as tourism. The significance of the reproduction of labor, food preparation, janitorial, or custodial jobs, and the sex industry to tourism are thus also neglected in the conventional study of globalization. A prominent feature of globalizing social relations is the sexualization and commodification of female migrant labor within peripheral sites and the accelerating exchange of money for bodies (Ling 2001a). New global arrangements no longer depend solely on movements from the industrialized North to the developing South or from poor Third World countries to the First World. For the first time, these movements are occurring within and between developing nations and depend extensively on the migration of women. While it has been assumed that globalization is about the movement of the cosmopolitan class (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998), the constitution of the transnationalized cosmopolitan class is intimately intertwined with notions of women (and men) as the providers of service and sexual pleasure. Such services and pleasures are integrated into "desire" economies.

Differences across race, ethnicity, and nationality are crucial elements in sex and domestic work. These axes of power act as organizing principles that determine who will do what, when, and for whom in the desire economies. According to Fanon (1963), the national bourgeoisie in Third World contexts organizes sites of relaxation and pleasure to service the desires of an emerging transnational cosmopolitan class that includes both Western and Third World consumers. This desire economy is sexualized, racialized, and commodified. For example, those who offer the services are mostly foreign by culture, language, and race to the customer within the peripheries. Both the "otherness" and the affordability of sex and domestic work are sources of desire for clients. Moreover, the sexual labor and use of women's bodies for consumption in Third World sites cannot be viewed in isolation from the global political economy's generation of profits. Desire economies generate profits for some agents of the peripheries and much more for Western elites of the global economy. According to Kempadoo, "local and national economies, [and national industries, with help from their states' legislative and regulatory bodies] ... sustain global corporate capital, First World identities, and masculine hegemony" (1999: 18). Even when female labor migration is acknowledged as crucial in the restructuring of the world economy, the discourses surrounding the migration of sex and domestic workers within peripheral sites do little more than sensationalize the
phenomenon. US activists, Congressional leaders, and some scholars are speaking up, calling for a ban on sex trafficking, but most of these discourses end up arguing that the economic and political conditions of postcolonial countries push women into brothels and sex trafficking rather than explaining this phenomenon transnationally. Thus, these discourses once more constitute Third World peripheries as spectacle, a product of the First World’s gratuitous othering and its consumption of the “exotic,” “primitive,” and “degenerate.”

This chapter explores the silences accompanying female sex and domestic labor migration in discourses of IR and mainstream perspectives on globalization. It further examines the implications of these silences for the theory and practice of IR, drawing on the desire economies in peripheries such as Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey to substantiate the above claims. I use “peripheral” instead of “Third World” here to permit the inclusion of Greece, whose tourist economy is one of its major income-generating industries. I also show how the discourses of IR frame how we read, understand, and intervene in transnational capitalist relations.

**Sexing, racializing, and colonizing the worker of globalization**

New global arrangements and movements, including the transfer of female workers from one location to another, characterize the current phase of the world economy. Transnational tourism, intimately related to the sex economy, is likely to become the largest industry in the world within a decade (Leheny 1995: 367). In addition to its financial power, this industry shapes the practices and identities of its producers and consumers, including the identities of nation-states within which it resides. Despite the growing significance of the tourist trade, the two major schools of thought in IPE, liberal internationalism and Gramscian political economy, by focusing on the upper circuits of the global economy, have ignored the movements of female workers and their relationship to international tourism.

The liberal internationalist discourse, a master discourse in IPE,3 argues that globalization comprises market responses to integrate “finance, production, telecommunications, and the media on a world-wide scale” (Chang and Ling 2000: 29). For these scholars globalization is different from internationalization or the “geographic spread of economic activities across nation boundaries” (Dicken 1992: 1). Moreover, they argue that the state’s role is reduced and should be focused on “educating the consuming public with better information” (Chang and Ling 2000: 29). The master liberal discourse sees labor movements in terms of transnational wage differentials, which encourages migration-for-employment. It suggests that migrants follow market forces for a better allocation of resources around a given economic space:

The conditions that incite people’s movement in specific directions represent market forces translated into the social realm (Straubhaar 1992). As *homo economicus*, migrants calculate the costs and benefits of each option, including emigrating, and decide accordingly. Liberal scholars debate whether economic factors affect the individual’s decision to migrate or if noneconomic factors such as emotions, politics, or ideologies are involved. Lim argues that in the end, the analysis remains the same insofar as these noneconomic factors are given a utility value and are thus counted as economic ones (Lim 1992: 133–49). But the *homo economicus* that neoclassical economists write about is the highly educated professional. This theory favors the highly educated professional’s activities to the exclusion of the women who typically service them (Mohanty 1997). It also renders invisible a major reason for this transnational migration-for-employment: that reproductive or sex labor (domestic and sexual) is central to the process of globalization and capital accumulation and is used toward the development of desire services of the global economy to meet the demands of the emerging capitalist class. It follows that states’ demands for foreign female workers stem from “enhanced personal purchasing powers during a period of declining supply” of local female workers (Chin 1998: 4). This focus on wage differentials and costs and benefits eclipses the process by which states become extensively involved in facilitating labor migration of both domestic and sex workers (Rosca 1995). For example, in southern Cyprus, each family who decides to buy the domestic labor of a woman applies to the state by depositing 600 Greek Cypriot pounds (approximately $1000). Both the Greek Cypriot state and other states like the Philippines work with each other to make possible the transfer of female labor to Cyprus into homes and businesses that can afford it. The Filipino state under President Ramos sent women abroad despite international protests over the treatment of Filipina domestic workers overseas. For him, they are “a vital export commodity [for] the Philippines’ own economic strategy” (Rosca 1993: 524).

A focus on the choices of the individual state and those of the *homo economicus* misses the politics behind such movements of sex and domestic workers. Their reproductive labor, for example nursing, child care, cooking, and cleaning, and the provision of sexual pleasure, are utilized by masculinized states and their agents to (re)colonize women. In other words, what is obscured is that reproductive labor is an extension of sexual relations between men and women, reestablishing domination and control over women’s lived bodies (Chin 1998). In the service of neoliberal utilitarianism, this state
power is not neutral, but sexualized and racialized: women are constructed as commodities or assets and the property of men within nation-states and within the geopolitical context of global capitalism. Many feminist critics have begun to challenge theories of IPE, claiming that they frequently privilege masculine notions of power. Feminists critique the choice to focus on the upper circuits of globalization and its agents, while devaluing the lower circuits such as tourism and (re)production as feminine, weak, and irrelevant in the study of transnational movements (Peterson 1996; Pettman 1996; Ling 2001a). Other feminists (Eviota 1992) argue that the social, political, and economic arrangements organizing reproduction are naturalized.

In contrast, Gramscians and Gramscian Marxists conceptualize globalization as the political project of a transnational historic bloc (Cox 1987; Gill 1993a; Rupert 1995). For Cox (1987), liberal capitalism constitutes a world hegemony that ensures the dominance of certain capitalist production processes and relations. This bloc embodies a set of ideologies that validate the supremacy of leading states, their power, and the dominant social classes. It is formed by cross-national, cross-cultural global classes, who “uphold mutual interests and ideological perspectives” that institutionalize “common criteria of interpretation...and common goals anchored in the idea of an open world economy” (Cox 1993: 254). The major focus of the historic bloc is the profits and privileges of capitalism, including its relations of production, rendering invisible the widening gaps between rich and poor. For this reason, Gramscians advocate the building of counter-hegemonic movements to address the contradictions engendered by a capitalist world economy. However, traditional social movements like labor will need to mobilize beyond their conventional base and build coalitions with feminists, environmentalists, and peace activists if such counter-hegemonies are to occur (Chang and Ling 1996). While Cox recognizes that a focus on “manual industrial workers” as the major agents of class struggle and social change is insufficient, he neglects how identities other than the manual industrial workers become included or affirmed as potential agents of class struggle. How should such affirmed identities strategize, and on what grounds should they intervene in transforming liberal capitalism?

Cox and other Gramscian Marxists raise a critical question about the coalitions and solidarities that must emerge if a social transformation is to take place. Their questions remain unanswered for several reasons. First, Gramscians fail to see that liberal capitalism’s restructuring of the global economy depends on a (re)colonization of peripheral sites and bodies that is made possible through a series of silences and invisibilities. Reflecting and drawing upon indigenous asymmetries, ideologies, and forms of exploitation, liberal capitalism racializes certain kinds of work and constructs workers within such industries as nonworkers. If, for example, the market constitutes reproduction as natural through particular ideologies, then workers doing that kind of work are not compensated because they are supposed to do that kind of work. Also, there is a lack of theorization regarding those labeled as nonworkers (lower classes, informal sectors, household) and the links among capitalism, colonialism, and the gendered and racialized nature of surplus extraction and exchange for cash bodies. This renders invisible the very close “connection between how these jobs are defined and who is sought after for the jobs” (Mohanty 1997: 11). Finally, (re)productive labor—a central process of globalization and capital accumulation through the constitution of desire economies—is not brought into the same analytical field as production. On the contrary, at times it is collapsed under production, and thus its relevance in the reorganization of global relations is missed. Cox is adamant about the common material basis that must be rendered visible if these affirmed identities are to be mobilized toward democracy and “people’s power” but he ignores the sexualized and racialized dimensions of such struggles. This chapter utilizes a postcolonial re-reading of globalization and IPE to expose the (re)colonizing strategies of liberal internationalism and the exclusions of critical international political economists regarding female sex and domestic migrant labor.

Postcolonial readings of globalization

The analysis in this chapter draws from various theoretical strands, including the Marxist or socialist perspectives of Mies (1986; Mies et al. 1988) and O’Brien (1987) and the postcolonial critiques of Alexander and Mohanty (1997), Grewal and Kaplan (1994), and Chang and Ling (2000), among others. These authors theorize individually or collectively about how international inequalities (colonizer/colonized, production/reproduction, feminine/masculine, worker/nonworker, global/local, center/periphery) are historically constructed by colonial and neocolonial practices.

Marxist feminists provide insights about how class and gender identities are produced and acknowledge that the struggles over the construction of hegemony are informed by class and gender politics. They critique traditional Marxism’s focus on production and the universal proletariat and argue that hegemony’s formation depends on ideological assumptions that naturalize men as universal productive beings and women as nature. Further, Marxist feminists reformulate Gramsci’s notion that the working-class consciousness was based on economic reality, and that this reality, mediated through civil society, was nonhomogeneous and contradictory (O’Brien 1987: 255).¹ The concept of hegemony, O’Brien argues, is not a byproduct of culture depicting the flexibility of class hegemony, but rather it depicts patriarchal hegemony, a relation in which the reproduction of labor power is subsumed under the mode of production. Within that relation, women’s productive labor is collapsed into general labor, and women’s work is constituted without value (Mies 1986: 48). The two infrastructures of history that O’Brien addresses are the daily reproduction of individuals (economic...
activity) and the daily reproduction of the species (the birth and sustenance of the new generation). Civil society is thus the site where specific forms of contradiction are mediated that emerge from three sources: the economic substructure where contradiction emerges as class struggle, the reproductive substructure where contradiction emerges concretely as gender struggle, and the tension between an individual worker's survival and the survival of her household. However, O'Brien's critique still misses the effect of recolonization practices in the construction of power relations, both in production and (re)production processes. Direct colonization and subordination of postcolonial societies in the international system precipitate substantially different expressions of sexual, racial, and class relations, both transnationally and nationally.

O'Brien's retheorization of the relations of production and reproduction is further complicated through the work of Mies (1986) and Mies et al. (1988). These feminists contest the "narrow, capitalist concept of 'productive labor'" or the wage labor production of surplus for capital, arguing instead for a more general concept of the productivity of labor.

In contrast to Marx, I consider the capitalist production process as one which comprises both: the superexploitation of non-wage laborers (women, colonies, peasants) upon which wage labor exploitation then is possible ...? It is not compensated for by a wage ... but is mainly determined by force or coercive institutions. This is the main reason for the growing poverty and starvation of Third World producers.

(Mies 1986: 48)

Mies et al. (1988) provide a framework to analyze the oppression and exploitation of women, workers, and colonized people across various modes of production and historical social formations. Through their work, we are able to explain the construction of social differences in relation to colonization and the development of asymmetrical divisions and appropriation of both (re)productive and surplus labor as part of an integrated world system. Sexual and racial differences are not seen as epiphenomenal or purely ideological. On the contrary, these different forms of productivity (wage, subsistence, colonization, (re)productive labor) are all mutually imbricated and the subject occupies multiple and contradictory places within them. However, like critical IR theorists such as Cox, their work remains within the political economy of the world systems and structural approach. They do not typically disassemble putative categories such as West, Third World, race, sexuality, and class. Further, Marxist feminists have not systematically engaged postcolonial intellectual skepticism and understanding of the transnational economic, cultural, and social forces that have shaped these received categories.

"SEXING" GLOBALIZATION IN IR

The work of Marxist feminists does several things for postcolonial feminism. First, it challenges the idea that the major agents of production are masculine proletarian workers. Second, it claims that (re)production is a process that liberal capitalism uses as a colonizing strategy to exploit women's labor. Thus, (re)productive labor (broadly defined) is central to the process of capital accumulation. Third, they suggest that social differences such as sexual and racial ones are not separated from the economic sphere as ideological differences. On the contrary, these differences are informed by the asymmetrical relations of power among different people, and different countries within the broader context of global capitalism. Their insights are useful for centering a materialist analysis within postcolonial feminism, one that accounts for the integration of sex, race, and class differences as relational, interlocking, and socially constructed systems of the same process of labor exploitation. In making explicit the gendered and class nature of production and (re)production processes, their agents and the material structures that inform these relations, Marxist feminism intersects with the postcolonial project.

Postcolonial theorists argue that the imperialist project shapes the postcolonial world, its relations with the West, the production of postcolonial and western identities, and the struggles over identity in national communities. In addition, these theorists pay special attention to representational issues and the production of meanings around culture, gender, race, and sexuality. They venture beyond the dichotomies of self/other and masculine/feminine, and deconstruct categories such as Europe, West, Third World, and race. An example of this move is given in Tensions of Empire (Cooper and Stoler 1997) where an attempt to bring colonies and metropoles into the same analytical field is made, thus highlighting that strategies for generating and managing notions of racial, national, gender, and sexual differences in the colonies run parallel to processes occurring simultaneously in the metropoles. Their work calls for methods that consider how nations, gender, race, and movements emerge within a transnational context of hegemony building.

These feminist and postcolonial critiques highlight several issues that are critical to the analysis of globalization and desire economies. I argue that a political economy of desire is a significant aspect of globalization and transnational relations, but that it has been made invisible by the strategies of conventional and critical IPE analyses. I therefore explore the recolonizing strategies of global capital, rethink the category "worker" in her productive and (re)productive roles, and suggest the possibilities for social change.

First, I suggest that the way the worker is identified in the transnational context and the literature on globalization is informed by a colonialist logic that focuses on irreconcilable oppositions such as "history-making capitalist economies vs. history-lagging non-capitalist ones; wealthy centers vs. exploited peripheries; transnational firms vs. territorially bound states; globe-straddling
cosmopolitans vs. locally bound parochials" (Chang and Ling 2000: 32). This dichotomous categorization of the relations between local and global, West and the rest, tends to privilege an emphasis on macro-corporate processes such as finance, production, trade, telecommunications, and the subjects and agents who populate this global economy—the abstracted consumers and producers such as professional workers, citizens, and cosmopolitans (Chang and Ling 2000). However, I suggest that the concept of the worker is historically, socially, and politically constructed. The construction and naturalization of this concept in IPE makes invisible the different colonial practices through which this worker becomes racialized and sexualized. These workers are not "disembodied persons who traverse across time and space, but corporeal women and men whose choices and movements reflect their gendered, racialized, and class-based identities in the worlds they inhabit" (Chang and Ling 2000: 33).

Second, the globalization literature in IR and IPE also focuses narrowly on the structural production and implementation of ideology rather than its social embeddedness. However, attention needs to be paid to the "circulation of meaning" and the discursive economy that informs globalization. Thus, power must be understood as ideologically produced in institutions and consciously articulated into cultural or social practices. For example, discourses about the bodies of Eastern European female workers in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey revolve around how the "blondes of Russia and Rumania" come to these countries because their own nation-states are poor. They are the women who "lead astray" indigenous men. A Turkish Cypriot woman said the following about Rumanian croupiers in northern Cyprus:

Imagine you are a man, single. Of course you look at women, and try and talk to them. If you are a terbiyeli [decent] woman you look away, you don’t talk back, or you just return their merhaba [hello].

But if you say: [in English] ‘Hello, you are very nice,’ and invite them to your house, of course the young man will go.

(Scott 1995: 399)

Naturalizing male and female sexuality, this story affirms a liberal capitalist order that is sustained by racialized and gendered hierarchies. This narrative privileges the "good" Cypriot men and women over the "bad" women of other ethnic backgrounds who tempt Cypriot men. Men are susceptible to "other" women’s charms because it is their nature to be sexual, and thus it is natural for them to desire them and accept their invitations. In contrast, there is a corresponding vigilance about the presence of Rumanian women in Cyprus because these women threaten to "modernize," and therefore destroy traditional values. These understandings about women’s and men’s sexuality are rooted in transnationalized, racialized, and sexualized discourses, affirming that men can involve themselves sexually any time they want without any social consequences, whereas women cannot. Emphasizing the commodification of women’s and men’s sexuality, these discourses are not fully explained by the politics of nationalism and state policies. They are structurally produced, share similarities to parallel narratives produced in other social contexts, and take a very local and nationalized form. What informs the circulation of this discourse?

Both the social context and these discourses impact the asymmetrical (re)production of power for men and women. For example, circulating discourses about the Rumanian woman’s morality in relation to the Cypriot woman’s seem to suggest that Rumanian women should not be protected by the state or the authorities in Cyprus if they are sexually harassed or assaulted. Their indigence is what leads them to this condition. Similar discourses are available transnationally in other local contexts. Questions about the politics of an invitation by a Rumanian woman to a Cypriot man become reduced to questions of culture. For example, sex workers are conceptualized as "international whores" (Jumilla 1993) for the consumption of men who enact and choose "whiteness." Racial and sexual discourses circulating transnationally about sex workers are used locally in decisions to hire and purchase the services of sex and domestic workers. In Cyprus, many imply that Rumanian women are here to be consumed because they are beautiful and sexy, unlike women from Sri Lanka and the Philippines who are hired to do domestic work. However, these stereotypes are used to marginalize sex workers’ claims about sexual violations committed upon their bodies and their narratives which rightfully demand a secure place within the national community in which they work. These stereotypes further minimize the complexity of life choices for sex workers and marginalize their agency. Obscured is the fact that these women come to Cyprus to find work in response to the demands of consumers of the desire economy. While these discourses constitute a shared notion of ideal "whiteness," and its prescriptions for white normality, they also affirm the power of the people who abide by such discourses, like the Cypriot women, albeit asymmetrically.

When deconstructed these discourses seem to support particular industrial and other policies that reinforce the subordination of women, whereby surplus created by the former is siphoned into men’s and some women’s hands through various direct and indirect mechanisms. Both the sending and receiving states actively structure, facilitate, and sustain a globalized, gendered economy. For example, the Cypriot state, via the Department of Labor and Foreign Affairs, supervises the import of these female workers by deciding who can and cannot afford them. Sending states like the Philippines marketed "overseas contract work as part of a national development policy" (Rosca in Chang and Ling 2000: 524). These gendered processes, practices, and meaning structures assign and reflect historically constructed notions of masculinity and femininity that are also class-based,
racially specific, and culturally defined (Chang and Ling 2000). For example, many of the professional women in Cyprus do not challenge the patriarchal rules that demand that women do household work and the relegation of women to feminine servicing work, such as nursing, teaching, domestic services, and prostitution. On the contrary, they hire domestics to do their (re)productive work, such as cooking, taking care of the children, and cleaning house, claiming that they pay them "enough money to buy the world back home." For men of all classes, paying Rumanian women for sexual pleasure is a favorable choice because it is, in a sense, cheaper than sexual relations with Cypriot women. Typically, this gendering process reflects a patriarchal power structure that glorifies men, masculinity, and manhood and denigrates women, femininity, and womanhood and assigns women to certain occupations in the global political economy. However, these processes are also racialized.

The social structure of accumulation is actually configured around race. The relations of production, in other words, cannot be separated from the racial relations of subordination. Further, the reproduction of the objective conditions necessary for the expansion and consolidation of capitalist modes of social relations, ipso facto demanded a deepening of the "moundadity" of racism. Colonial racism, therefore, should not be seen as (superstructural) consequence of economic imperialism, but as the organizing principle through which specific forms of surplus-value extraction took place.

(Persaud 1997: 174)

Citing Fanon, Persaud claims that "class domination was over-determined by structural racism, 'sexism' and a relatively permanent state of violence" (1997: 174). In light of this critique, it is possible to envision the racialized nature of the desire economy where black bodies are hired to do domestic work and white bodies are eroticized in the sex industries of Cyprus, Turkey, and Greece. The following section utilizes the insights of postcolonial materialist feminism to analyze the racialized and gendered transnational movement of female workers in these countries. What are the processes of domination and exploitation upon which the formation of desire economies depends, and what are the politics informing such processes?

Sexing and racializing desire economies: Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey

Three processes constitute the desire economies of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey: (1) the construction of women's (re)productive labor as a natural resource, (2) the commodification and (re)colonization of reproductive labor, and (3) the criminalization of the working class. Viewing these processes through a postcolonial, materialist lens problematizes the ways in which workers, (re)production, and agency are constituted, and makes visible that (re)colonization is integral to the creation of desire economies.

(Sexualized, gendered, cross-cultural bodies ... have histories of production in the United States [and Western Europe] at the nexus of academic and nonacademic discourses. These histories are histories of tourism and exploitation. They are histories that simultaneously seek and produce commodities as queerified fetishes, feminized fetishes and nativized fetishes.

(Patel in Alexander 1998: 281)

In trying to analyze how desire economies constitute themselves, Patel foregrounds the imperial, which allows us to see both the interdependence and competition between what are currently referred to as "peripheral" and "metapole" capital. A discourse pervasively employed by the media and IR theorists is the peripheral as spectacle, and this discourse represents women in the sex trade as victims of backward, peripheral economic patriarchies that are struggling to survive against all odds. Simultaneously, these narratives universalize the peripheries as regions where violence and abuse of women is commonplace. This kind of aberration occurs in relation to a First World that is seldom included as violating its women. The First World, imperialist, militaristic, violent, and exploitative, is rarely present in this visual evidence of (spectating). Its absence constructs the authoritative and objective viewer and rescuer, always outside of history.

(Grewal 1998: 502)

The constitution of desire economies is closely linked to the histories of colonialism, production, and (re)production in the United States and Western Europe, the leaders of the current global order. However, IR and IPE discourses construct the social relations in peripheries as if they are outside this historical production. The formation of desire economies, a fundamental process of (re)production, depends on naturalizing women's labor and sexualizing their bodies, and these processes are constituted through the commodification of black and white women's bodies, the policing and criminalizing of the working class, and the myths of opportunity, femininity, masculinity, and racism (e.g., white slavery).

Since the late 1980s, Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey have pursued neoliberal economic strategies such as the promotion of tourism, an industry that continues to grow in strength. This strategy is a result of domestic financial institutions such as the World Bank and technocrats working in alliance to reconfigure the position of these countries in relation to transnational flows.
of labor and capital in the transnational economy. These regions, which are marketed as providers of services, draw upon sex and domestic labor commodities from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, Ethiopia, and Brazil.

Cyprus draws most of these workers from Eastern Europe, such as Russia, Rumania, and Albania, and the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and mainland Turkey. These women workers constitute one among several groups entering northern Cyprus but they have a "particular status, reflected in the special regulations governing their entry into the country, which arises from their association with prostitution" (Scott 1995: 387). Some of these women travel to Turkey to engage in prostitution, and from there, travel to northern Cyprus. The women who come to northern Cyprus depend on their employer to deal with entry visa requirements and health and blood tests. Since the work permits and permissions are agreed upon by the employer rather than the employee, changing jobs requires permission from the state through the new employer. If women are brought to the country as a group, some formalities are waived, for instance health exams. However, if a woman is traveling alone to find a job, she must produce a visa and health certificates before embarking on a plane from Istanbul (these workers can enter northern Cyprus only through Istanbul because the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus is acknowledged by only two states internationally). Arbitrariness in the implementation of rules leaves women vulnerable.

As noted earlier, in southern Cyprus each family who decides to buy the domestic labor of a woman applies for her by depositing 600 Greek Cypriot pounds. The Greek Cypriot state and states like the Philippines work with each other to make possible the transfer of female labor to Cyprus and into homes and businesses that can afford it. For the Greek Cypriot state, domestic laborers are "a temporary solution so that they can meet some needs of Greek Cypriots. Our goal is to 'export' them if tendencies toward unemployment appear" (Harzikostas 1998: 3). Additionally, in southern Cyprus Eastern European pimps have recruited young women for prostitution. Most of these women entered either illegally after authorities were bribed or on temporary three-month work permits. In most cases, the employers forced sex workers to surrender their passports and stay beyond the terms of their work permits (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 1999a).

Turkey draws most of its workers from Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Rumania, and Ukraine. African and Asian women use the country as a transit point to other countries in Western Europe. Even though the state claims that there is no trafficking in Turkey, in 1998 there were arrests, and in most cases, deportations, of 6,700 women from Rumania, Moldova, and Ukraine. In 1997, 7,000 Rumanian women were deported. This number rose to 11,000 in 1999 (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 1999b). Greece imports women for domestic and sex work from the former Soviet satellites, Albania, Bulgaria, and Rumania. It is estimated that there are 20,000 domestic and sex workers in Greece. According to media sources, some police officers force illegal immigrants to have sex and then channel them into prostitution rings (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 1999c).

Why do these workers migrate? Feminists such as Shrage (1994) and Kempadoo (1995) argue that a large percentage of sex customers seek workers with a racial, national, or class identity that differs from their own. "Sex industries depend upon the eroticization of the ethnic and cultural Other [which] suggests that we are witnessing a contemporary form of exoticism which sustains postcolonial and post-cold war relations of power and domination" (Kempadoo 1995: 75–6). Shrage explains that "Western men demand women "different from their own" (1994: 142) because of culturally produced fantasies regarding the sexuality of these women, fantasies connected to "socially formed perceptions regarding the sexual and moral purity of white women" (48–50). This logic guides not only white Western men but also the practices of men and women in the peripheries when deciding to hire domestic and sex workers. Asymmetrical relations are produced in these countries through the (re)production of raced and classed masculinities and femininities.

All three countries import women to respond to the desires of an emerging middle class and the desires of men and women buying services through the tourism industry. Most of the women who come to these countries are seeking better living conditions for themselves and their families. The restructuring process in the economy of their countries has changed to the extent that it has left much of its population (especially women) without jobs (Icftu 1997). Despite suggestions from liberal internationalism that supply factors (such as poverty, inadequate educational employment, the growth of transnational crime) and demand factors (demand by employers) are what push women from Eastern Europe and other countries to move to Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey to seek jobs, these factors do not tell us the whole story. What kinds of (re)productive processes, relations, and discourses does the formation of desire economies depend on in peripheral contexts? For what purpose and for whose benefit?

Domestic and sex workers as natural resources

The formation of desire economies relies heavily on professionals from the upper circuits who consume the services (and bodies) of women from the peripheries. Within this relationship, these women are constituted as natural resources or objects for the use of the new emerging professional class of men and women in these three countries as well as professionals in multinational corporations. My interviews in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey suggest that hiring domestic and sex workers to do (re)productive labor is a means of
ANNA M. AGATHANGELOU

accessing gendered and racialized power. Nirmala discusses her employment in southern Cyprus:

Loula brought me here to help with the children. Life in Sri Lanka was very difficult. My husband and I divorced a while back. Loula brought me here for a year. She paid me $300.00 before taxes and $270.00 after taxes. She will wake me up everyday at 6:00 a.m. and ask me to clean the house, wash the clothes, help her with cooking, and then take me to the family restaurant. I will have to work there till 1.00 a.m.

(Author interview 1995)

Nirmala’s arrival in Cyprus is a result of several forces. Loula, a Greek Cypriot woman, is buying these services from another Third World country through Nirmala. She argues that Nirmala is in Cyprus to make much more money than she would at home, and thus she intends to extract as much work as possible for the 180 Cypriot pounds a month that she is paying her. The abject conditions to which Nirmala is subjected would be unacceptable under any other circumstances, and Loula would have a difficult time hiring a Cypriot woman to do this work for $300.00. However, these facts are marginalized and obscured through the colonial myths that supplant the racial subjectivity and labor of her employee with the sexualized “native” who can endure all in order to ensure the (re)production of the next generation. Within this “sexual narrative of consumption those providing services are never positioned as agents” or wage workers but are rather naturalized as the poor and despondent who are to be provided a job, room, and board by the emerging upper- and middle-class women of Cyprus (Alexander 1997: 295).

The pay and working conditions of Bulgarians, Romanians, Russians, and Ukrainians compare unfavorably with those of the British croupiers who previously dominated the profession, and who were earning 100 pounds sterling five years earlier for similar jobs. The British women were less subject to the controls and restrictions on their social life than these women are now. Scott cited a British former croupier who said that “there would have been a strike if they’d tried to do that to us” (1995: 398). Additionally, British women could terminate their contracts any time and still become hired anywhere in the world without much difficulty. It is different for new immigrants. Restructuring in the former Soviet bloc and restructuring within Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey have led to conditions that make possible female migrations for sex and domestic work. For example, in Albania the rate of unemployment has hovered at 30 per cent. This leads Albanians to sell girls “usually to the mob in Italy or Greece for up to $10,000 according to a study done by an Albanian women’s organization” (Montgomery 2001). In an interview with several women working on a

“SEXING” GLOBALIZATION IN IR

cruise ship, two women told me that they did not like their job but it helped them to earn enough to send money home to their families. They both had children staying with their parents and had to make enough money to bring them to Greece. Another woman was sending money to her sister so that she could go to school.

Greek and Turkish Cypriot women of upper and middle class seem to equate true femininity with unbridled control over women from other peripheral countries. When women like Loula argue that domestic workers should be doing so much work for so little compensation, this reaffirms their power over the migrant workers. In this sense, domestic work provides women (and men) with opportunities to manage and control both themselves and others. Thus, taking into account domestic labor, a form of sex work, in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey allows us to view this work “beyond the boundaries of reproductive domestic work, the emasculation of men, and the feminization of the Third World” (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998: 27). It allows us to see this (re)productive work as integral to the (re)structuring of the global economy. Eleni, a working-class Greek Cypriot woman, 30 years old, who befriended Nirmala, talked to me about the abject conditions imposed by Loula:

I used to visit her when Loula was not home. In the beginning she would cry and show me her dry and bloody hands. She would tell me about her headaches and her hurting teeth. Finally, it seems that she became accustomed to pain. I do not think you can get used to it but what can you do? If you have family back home to feed and no job, what can you do? I asked Loula a couple of times about her mistreating Nirmala. She responded that the money they make here can buy them the world back home. She “killed” [not meant literally] the poor woman.

(Author interview 1995)

When Eleni found out that Nirmala was being mistreated, she questioned Loula about her relationship with her domestic worker. Loula’s response revealed her class politics as it is gendered and racialized. To her, Nirmala makes enough money to buy the world back in Sri Lanka. Domestic work as a relation of sexual power and as productive and reproductive labor is integral to the local and global economy and it is a site upon which the First World and the new emerging transnational class reconstitutes its power. In hiring a migrant domestic worker, one only does she get services at harshly exploitative rates, she also reconstitutes herself as more powerful in relation to both Eleni and Nirmala. Furthermore, the relationship among Loula, Nirmala, and Eleni is anchored in ideologies that draw from masculine and feminine notions of protectionism, property, and individual opportunity and success. These ideologies are also heterosexual and
are premised on normative definitions of women as mothers and nurturers. The explanation given to Eleni by Loulla about her domestic laborer was one of protectionism as well as support: "the money they make here can buy them the world back home." However, these interactions mystify the structural conditions within which this relationship becomes possible. The idea of women as servants is based on the assumption that women's labor is a natural resource and thus does not cost the same as men's labor. For example, Greek Cypriot women of middle and upper-middle class who move upward in class via professionalization hire women from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Eastern Europe to continue doing the household chores and care for their children and the elderly. In this relation, patriarchal and capitalist understandings of production (in this case, professionalization) and reproduction are sustained in an asymmetrical relation to each other, with production at the top of the hierarchy and reproduction at the bottom. Moreover, professional upper- and middle-class women do not question their role in the (re)production of a world system.

The subordination of the woman of color and the working-class woman is critical in the process of reconstituting new forms of power. We see in the interview a reflection of the patriarchal/capitalist double standard that dominates the local context around male and female work: the new emerging professional woman uses women of color and of the working class to do all (re)productive work for little compensation because as women they are expected to nurture and sustain the members of the household. Thus, professional women in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey are guided by the racialized patriarchal and capitalist logic of colonization which sees women of a certain race and class as "nature". Professional women do not question why women from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, or Cyprus should be doing this reproductive labor for very little compensation because it frees professional women from domestic work and also enables their power over domestic workers. In these peripheral sites, a new emerging middle class is co-implicated in the very processes of violence and reconstitution that originated in heterosexual "Western" capital. This class colludes with the hegemonic nation-state in seeking to consume the labor of women of particular races and is also complicit in recirculating earlier colonial myths about (re)productive labor as being "natural." As Mies (1996) informs us, this allows for the superexploitation of women's work. In sum, the transnational hegemonic code constructs women's labor as a natural resource, and we see the existence of class- and race-based parallels in the regulation of women in diverse social locations.

These transactions are premised on racializing labor and the economy which in turn allows for the (re)production of global power in sexual, racial, and class terms. Liberal capitalism as a structure does not shy away from creating markets where none existed before, or from boosting existing ones from finding new areas to colonize. There was indeed a time when racial and sexual capital wanted nothing to do with the "backward" Cypriot, Greek, and Turk11 consumers. "Now it seems that the same crises that have come about as a result of aggressive transnationalization and expansion, have forced ... [metropole] capital to consume on the same site" with peripheral capital (Alexander 1997: 293).12 with the masculine and white capitalist class at the top, black females of working class at the bottom, and women of other peripheral contexts as the co-implicators in the production of Western modernities or more specifically capitalist-patriarchial relations.

**Commodification of (re)productive labor**

Women who work as both sex and domestic workers are objectified and commodified. Within Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, women work as artists or Nastashas in dance and nightclubs. In Cyprus particularly, women dance and offer their sexual services to not only Cypriot men but tourists, businessmen, United Nations soldiers, and men still working at the British bases in Cyprus. These women are subject to strict surveillance at their jobs, and some of them, depending on the conditions under which they enter the country, are not allowed to shop unsupervised. These restrictions are implemented because their bodies are seen as sexual commodities and thus any kind of opportunity to develop non-monetary relations undermines the possibility of the employer receiving their commercial value. Irena explains:

No matter how upset we were, the customers persisted in wanting us to sit on their laps. I couldn’t speak to them because they were mostly Greeks and Arabs. We had to act sexy knowing quite well that if we didn’t we were not going to make enough money to pay back what we owed. We drank with them because we had to sleep with them.

(Author interview in Larnaca 1995)

In this interview, both Greek and Arab men buy access to sex workers’ bodies. These men expect ‘unbridled sexual access to willingly objectified women” (O’Connell and Taylor 1998: 41). In addition to their location as migrant workers, commodification of sex plays a major role in positioning these women in the global political economy and also how they will be treated. Altink (1995) interviewed women from the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, and Brazil who suggested that they came to Greece after they needed to earn a living because their husbands were not earning enough money back home. They were recruited by an intermediary who promised them enormous salaries in comparison with Dominican standards and brought them to Greece. After they arrived in Athens they were taken to the "tourist office" in a seaside resort and began working right away at eight o'clock that night. One of the women said the following:
ANNA M. AGATHANGELOU

That first night I was like a piece of furniture. Punters could only look at me, not touch me. I didn't want to do that kind of work. Why would I do my best to attract customers? Surely not to line the pockets of the bosses. Later on I only had intercourse with them if I couldn't avoid it. And those customers smelled. I continually argued about money with this self-styled impresario, the proprietor of the club. Since I couldn't refuse customers, I wanted to be paid for entertaining them.

(Herma quoted in Altink 1995: 91)

These women are targeted racially on different levels: from racisms embedded in structures, and cultural imperialism refracted through transnational discourses on prostitution and domestic labor. Labor-importing states decide who will enter as a prostitute or as a female domestic worker on the basis of economic, racial, and ethnic calculations. For example, images of the exotic are intertwined with ideologies of racial and ethnic difference: the Nattashas and aris are defined as "others" and always in comparison to the racial and ethnic background of the client and his attached property, women of his own ethnic, racial, and class background. In both northern and southern Cyprus, women who are considered legitimate workers for the sex trade are the exotic green- and blue-eyed, white-skinned women from Rumania, Russia, and the Ukraine. It should be noted that other issues of virginity and age complicate this story. A working-class Turkish woman shared the following story with me:

He teaches at our university. We have two kids together, a son and a daughter. He and I were together for twenty years till he found this Rumanian, green-eyed, blond woman. He came home one day and he gushed to a friend of ours about his new green-eyed, blond woman. "She is beautiful and she worships me like a Turkish woman who want your money but will not give you all you want in bed." I was so angry at him for leaving me for this younger blond woman and also concerned that he might catch AIDS. What does she have more than me?

(Authors interview 1995)

This woman's husband was enamored by the other woman's ability to provide him with everything that he wanted in bed. Although his wife speaks angrily, she does not inform us why she is angry. In the interview, she repeats three times that the new woman her husband left her for is green-eyed, blond, and younger. From what this Turkish woman imparted, I gathered that Turkish men equate true masculinity with having younger, lighter women next to them. There is a sense in which Turkish men attempt to restore their masculinity by finding sex workers who will presumably satisfy all their needs, unlike Turkish women with whom their relationship is circumscribed by traditional norms.

The logic guiding these politics stems from colonialism, which still informs the construction of the hierarchical status of a female worker: a woman who is white-skinned with green or blue eyes becomes the object of ultimate masculine desire and sexual exploitation. This heightened exoticization of the sexuality of white-skinned women is a way of doing two things: valorizing peoples and cultures and "concurrently also constituting them as projections of western [and eastern] fantasies" (Rousseau and Porter 1990: 7); they can be exploited because of their commodified beauty and sexuality. Furthermore, these women's sexualized and racialized labor becomes a marker of danger and pollution to the members of the world economy: these women are here to sell their white bodies but at the same time pose danger for the tourists who buy them, and can pollute public morality, health, and the family if they are left unsupervised. Altink argues that some of the women from Colombia when going through Cyprus were not even provided with condoms despite the public rhetoric of regular health exams by the state (1995: 96). Such investment reduces surplus value and increases costs, which in turn increases production costs, something the state tries to avoid in favor of efficient production. Further, Altink (1995) claims that in southern Cyprus, when groups of young, virginal women arrive from the Philippines, they are allowed to participate in sex work. However, these are exceptions. A Greek Cypriot, working-class, 35-year-old domestic laborer had this to say about these racial distinctions:

MARIA: Most of the domestic female workers are from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and sometimes from Bulgaria. These women could not find a job back home and they all have kids that need food and clothes. They come here because somebody tells them in their country that there are jobs and they can earn money for their children. These women are not considered to be sexy and dangerous enough to steal the husbands of women who hire them because most of them have children and families. These women are expected to be good servants for the rich women in cities. I know this woman, called Lito, and she has a black maid.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by "black"?

MARIA: She is from Sri Lanka. Not only does she clean their house starting at the crack of dawn but she is also teaching their kids how to speak their language. The kids know her language better than Greek.

INTERVIEWER: How is Lito treating her domestic laborer?

MARIA: Ah ... she is treating Houanita quite well, better than Eleni who used to beat up her domestic worker. Here is from the Philippines.

(Authors interview 1998)
There are distinctions made between black female workers and the other female sex workers who are considered sexy and dangerous. Such racial distinctions between the "good" and the "sexy and dangerous" female servants reinforce limits on national and ethnic membership. However, material (re)structuring is leading to other kinds of relations not necessarily envisioned by the agents and managers of the state: the transformation of the Greek, Turkish, and Cypriot citizen through interaction with domestic and sex workers, and ultimately, the (re)organization of the state itself into a regime that serves the interests of the emerging global capital class, and that (re)organizes production and (re)production globally.

These men (as well as women) who can afford in a transnational context to buy the services of these sex workers do so by commodifying their services in bars, hotels, and cruise ships. For them, the labor of these workers is a commodity to be sold and bought, especially the labor from white bodies. Women's participation in this commodified (re)production process is expressed consistently through comments like the following by Kostantina:

She is Rumanian. They come here and they steal our husbands. Ever since my husband went out with her, he lost his brains. He lies in bed fantasizing about her and I ask him all the time if he is thinking of her and he nods "yes" as if we are acquaintances and not husband and wife with two children.

(Author interview 1999)

These comments reveal the heteronormative/patriarchal myths and expectations by which women in Cyprus abide. Cypriot women point to a few Rumanian sex workers as evidence that Rumanian women are all "loose" husband thieves. However, these comments make invisible the violent processes of (re)colonization and control over women's bodies, whether Rumanian or Cypriot. The same liberal capitalist-patriarchal relation that allows men to ignore their wives' needs enables them to consume sex from Rumanian women: men using women as commodities.

Policing and controlled through particular rules and laws, these relations render sex and domestic workers vulnerable to their employers and clients' practices once they are out of public spaces and in private homes, hotel rooms, bars, and cruise ships. A Bulgarian woman, who worked on Louis cruise ships, said she started working at five o'clock in the morning, making beds, doing laundry, and sending off her employers' advances, and then she danced in two night shows, and of course, depending on the night, provided "companionship" to some of the tourists (Greek, German, British, French, and Arabs) on the ship. When I asked her what she thought about all this work, she replied, "It is okay because I will be able to save enough soon to be stable financially." A construction worker and a man who owns a grocery store who frequently booked cruises on this line said that two things made the trip worthwhile: gambling and the blondes from Rumania. The middle-class manager stated the following:

This woman I met on one of the cruises from Cyprus to Egypt. She was Rumanian. She talked to me at the casino, we went to her room and I gave her 30 pounds.

(Author interview)

This quotation reveals a set of social relations defined by commodification in which the woman is a means to the constitution of masculinity and femininity through pleasure. Sex and domestic workers often discount the risks of violence and AIDS when faced with the potential payoff of financial stability. Working as sex and domestic workers is a more certain path to financial gain than other kinds of work back home.

Why do women place themselves in a context of violence and uncertainty? Women from these different countries decide to move to Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey as a result of the globalized changes in several sites. The decisions of these women are determined not only by local factors (e.g., the change of socialist economies into market economies, and ethnic conflict) but by the location of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey in the transnational economy of tourism. These nation-states are daily becoming desire sites through (re)colonizing practices: importing women from other peripheries, selling their (re)productive labor for very little, and constituting sex and domestic workers as objects and spectacles of consumption. These decisions by states are also guided by the need for foreign investment in tourism in these countries. Just as international investors see Cyprus and Turkey as a site of cheap labor, and offshore activity that brings white clients, international tourists know it as a place to buy cheap sex. Other factors that influence their decision are "ideographs" or the images of the world that the international media produce and disseminate (Appadurai 1991: 25).

Violences: criminalization of the local and transnational working class

Another major process leading to the formation of desire economies is the criminalization of the local and foreign working classes. This opportunity or success myth is (re)produced within the boundaries of these countries. The state rhetoric is that "we need to learn to live with people of different ethnicities, religions, and who speak different languages especially in relation to our integration to the European Commission, which possibly will bring to Cyprus workers from European countries." However, middle- and lower-class women within Cyprus treat black women from countries such as
Sri Lanka and the Philippines differentially, and frequently with violence because of their race, gender, and class:

Unfortunately, it seems that there is a larger difficulty, when it comes to people from countries of the “third world.” More welcome, are, for example, Europeans who work in large corporations ... finally, the treatment of foreign workers in Cyprus is inhumane ... Either we accept them or we will have a problem. We have the previous problem of the Western countries. They brought foreign workers when they needed them and then started developing a whole racist movement against them with all the incidents and tensions that we have observed. The same can happen in Cyprus. Even when you have laws to control their entrance, it is inevitable when the door opens for issues to go out of control. An example today is that nobody knows how many are legals and how many are illegals.

(Prodromou in Hartkosta 1998: 3)

Liberal internationalists claim that the professional worker is the one who counts in transnationalization processes. Similarly, the Cypriot media discourse argues that the European businessman is more welcome, and therefore more valued. The entry of sex and domestic workers is presented as a potential problem with chaotic implications in the Cypriot context. Thus, the Greek Cypriot state, despite attempts to control the illegals, ends up supporting this process of globalization by opening its doors to the service economy as a crucial strategy of reproducing its power and the upper- and middle-class purchasing power, and the legitimate members of the world economy's global power. According to the dominant discourses of globalization circulated by most leaders of the political parties, these states not only have to compete in the international tourism market but they also have to come up to par with the European countries’ economies in order to better integrate themselves into those economies. However, to manage and control the contradictions that emerge out of these transnationalized processes, all three states criminalize and police legal and illegal workers.

Policing the foreign “criminals” (domestic and sex workers, along with others) and also the local working classes is about more than simply sex and ethnicity. It is about the kind of sexuality, race, and ethnicity that endanger the nation and “promotes citizenship.” Not everybody can be a citizen, especially the bodies and subjects who are nonproductive and do not offer economic gains for the survival of the new emerging transnational state. As the state moves to reconfigure the nation, it simultaneously “resuscitates the nation as heterosexual and white” (Alexander 1997: 6) and makes invisible the criminalization of citizens (national and international) who are consumed and managed locally.

"SEXING" GLOBALIZATION IN IR

Conclusion: possibilities for transforming the hegemonic neoliberalist project

There will be no feminist revolution without an end to racism and white supremacy. When all women and men engaged in feminist struggle understand the interlocking nature of systems of domination, of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the feminist movement will regain its revolutionary progressive momentum.

(hooks 1995: 107)

I have theorized the contradictions inherent in the globalisation project by examining the participation of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey in the import of labor for the lucrative desire economies. A postcolonial feminist materialist analysis challenges the intersecting histories of colonialism, capitalism (commodification and naturalization of women's work and bodies) and nationalism. A postcolonial materialist feminist orientation allows us to critique the practices of peripheral nation-states, their hegemonic and transnational discourses and inequalities that cut across peripheral sites. But how are transnational sex and domestic workers in conjunction with the local working class to resist the neoliberal project and to create more egalitarian and democratic spaces? How are these workers who recognize and experience both familiar and new histories of disenfranchisement to work together for change?

Greek, Turkish, and Cypriot working-class women are forging alliances with migrant sex and domestic workers to transform the current exploitative structures. They use their agency to achieve an inclusive vision of social transformation by (1) exposing how the postcolonial nationalist and transnational discourses of naturalization, commodification, and the myths of opportunity and white slavery are strategies of colonization at different scales simultaneously; (2) understanding how these individuals and groups people are exploited and oppressed by various methods that “keep them in place,” (3) recognizing that they as agents can envision their futures because they carry not only the scars of oppression and exploitation, but also the stories of survival and self-collective empowerment; and (4) (re)envisaging strategies utilized by capital and patriarchal discourses and practices (nation-state, citizen, freedom, and democracy) toward (re)envisioning social justice and constituting a feminist democracy. All of these current transformative processes are riven with contradictions and divisions.

A non-essentialist position does not imply a nonbelonging to a group, nor does it imply loss of agency or of coalitions and solidarities. For some feminists of color, identity politics remains central ...
which can enable a politics through positions that are coalitions, intransigent, in process, and contradictory. (Grewal 1994: 234)

Sex and domestic workers are a force to be reckoned with in these three nation-states and within the European Union. According to the Greek Cypriot Ministry of Labour’s statistics for 1995, foreign nationals working in Cyprus reached an all-time high of 24,000 persons or 8.5 per cent of the working population. Of this group, domestic workers comprised the majority, numbering about 4,000 persons (Agathangelou and Ling 1997). While other official statistics are not yet available, government officials of Greece and Turkey do assert that the phenomenon of migrant sex and domestic workers continues to grow. This feminized proletariat could ally with counterpart groups in a newly transnational European Union. In 1990, women accounted for approximately 50 per cent of the foreign population in Europe’s industrialized economies.

Transborder alliances are equally problematic. Even when the peripheral nation-state mediates with transnational capital to constitute the desire industries as a strategy to create jobs for some people, it is still actively participating in the commodification of women’s labor and bodies. It is informed by local and transnationalized practices and ideologies of servility and servility that depend on a set of commercial productions: the black maid, and the exotic and erotic white beauties to be consumed for sexual pleasure. However, sex and domestic workers along with members of the local working class are challenging these contradictions, which in turn challenges conceptualizations of race, peripheral nation-state, civil and human rights, freedom, and democracy. Women who stand at the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality are speaking up and telling a story different from the one told by agents of the state and the women and men who hire sex and domestic workers. In the interviews with these workers, the contradictions of the nation-states’ practices and ideologies become apparent. I close with two interview excerpts, from the first from an individual interview with Sophia, a 35-year-old working-class woman who used to be a domestic laborer, who discloses that her son had just hired a Filipina domestic worker:

Did my son forget when I used to work as a domestic worker? I hope not. Otherwise, he could participate in the same torture I experienced when I was working to feed him and help him grow and go study abroad … Why do the rich need their houses cleaned? Why don’t they do it? And I wonder why I lost my job. I lost my job because they had to pay a little more to me than they pay the Sri Lankans and the Bulgarians who are my friends and are exploited. They work for nothing! (Author interview 1995)

Sophia’s words bring to the fore the memories of some of the local working class. She reminds us how restructuring is another strategy to disenfranchise some Cypriots and people from Sri Lanka and Bulgaria. The crucial point here is that the new emerging middle and upper class, some of whom are children of working-class mothers, collude with transnational power structures by exploiting these women and treating them as servants. Her friendships with Sri Lankans and Bulgarians emerge out of these same structures of exploitation. One of her friends who worked as a domestic worker for five years in Cyprus is now married and lives next to her house in her community. These two women talked about their own exploitation and oppression and their need to work as domestic workers:

SOPHIA: I used to get up very early and catch the bus to go to work. I will leave my 5-year-old son behind with my sister and I will worry the whole day about his well-being. I will take care of Maria, Antonis, and many others and my sister will take care of my son. These were scary times for me.

GALENA: Scary times for me when I was in Bulgaria. My husband left me with two kids and I did not have any savings to take care of their basic needs: food and clothing. I left Bulgaria for a better life and I left them behind with my parents. I came here for a better life. But my boss was torturing me till I decided to leave this family. I came here to find a job and a better life. It was all for a short time. Now, I got married here and found a new country.

These stories are the seeds of creating alliances and new relations. The mobility of sex and domestic workers engenders the potential for the development of new social relations. When Galena says that domestic workers migrate with dreams of success but they remain unrealized, she makes the first step toward the creation of a critical consciousness regarding the capitalist myth of opportunity. However, their lived practices present them with ways of challenging the effects of normalizing and regulating women’s lives through racialization and nationalization. These stories undermine the stability of categories such as Cypriot and Bulgarian woman, Cypriot and Bulgarian worker, nation, race, and class.

Female migrant laborers are now organizing. A Filipina domestic laborer, Rosalyn, told me that all domestic laborers meet every Sunday and discuss possible connections with other Filipinas in both the Middle East and Europe:
We come together and share stories and strategies to help women who are new in Cyprus and do not know how to find themselves of their contracts when they work under very bad conditions. The state does not support them. On the contrary, the state always ends up supporting the employer. Domestic workers in the Middle East and Europe are working with us to mobilize resources and legal knowledge that can be utilized against the local employers. (Author interview 1993)

The study of sex and domestic workers broadens our understanding of agency and feminist struggles. It demonstrates that globalization's subjects are agents who simultaneously collude and resist the practices of the heterogeneous structures in the new millennium. Caught in geopolitical shifts, and carrying overlapping geohistories, sex and domestic workers along with the local working class require a "differential consciousness," which unites them. This new and differential consciousness permits men and women in peripheries to "self-consciously break and reform ties to ideology ... to the achievement of coalition across differences" (Sandoval 1991: 15).

In the case of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, we see emerging agents of change and alliance building in the subjects who work collectively with others and engage in a mutual critique of their location in the oppressive capitalist structures. When these workers recognize and contest their positions in the global political economy, they are able to negotiate transnational solidarity.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Kyle D. Killian, Geeta Chowdhry, and Sheila Nair for their invaluable comments and suggestions for revising the several versions of this article. Many thanks to the other participants of the ISA 2000 workshop: L.H.M. Ling, Marshall Beier, Shampa Biswas, and Randolph B. Persaud.

Notes

1 Mohanty (1997: 13) following Mies (1986) stated that traditionally we understood the worker as male. However, this silences women's labor and its costs, and that women are agents who are capable of making their own choices. The constitution of this class depends on the services and labor of what is relatively consubstantial with the working class.

2 Greece's "per capita income places it above only Mexico and Turkey among the member nations of the organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" (Thomadakis 1995: 147).

3 Note here refers to the discourses that inform the ordering of international political economy inquiries and the ways that such inquiries legitimize and delegitimize pursuits of knowledge.
ANNA M. AGATHANGELOU

We come together and share stories and strategies to help women who are new in Cyprus and do not know how to rid themselves of their contracts when they work under very bad conditions. The state does not support them. On the contrary, the state always ends up supporting the employer. Domestic workers in the Middle East and Europe are working with us to mobilize resources and legal knowledge that can be utilized against the local employers.

(Author interview 1993)

The study of sex and domestic workers broadens our understanding of agency and feminist struggles. It demonstrates that globalization's subjects are agents who simultaneously collude and resist the practices of the heterogeneous structures in the new millennium. Caught in geopolitical shifts, and carrying overlapping geohistories, sex and domestic workers along with the local working class require a "differential consciousness," which unites them. This new and differential consciousness permits men and women in peripheries to "self-consciously break and reform ties to ideology ... [to] permit the achievement of coalition across differences" (Sandoval 1991: 15).

In the case of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, we see emerging agents of change and alliance building in the subjects who work collectively with others and engage in a mutual critique of their location in the oppressive capitalist structures. When these workers recognize and contest their positions in the global political economy, they are able to negotiate transnational solidarity.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Kyle D. Killian, Geeta Chowdhry, and Sheila Nair for their invaluable comments and suggestions for revising the several versions of this article. Many thanks to the other participants of the ISA 2000 workshop: L.H.M. Ling, Marshall Beier, Shampa Biswas, and Randolph B. Persaud.

Notes

1 Mohanty (1997: 13) following Mies (1986) stated that traditionally we understood the worker as male. However, this silences women's labor and its costs, and that women are agents who are capable of making their own choices. The constitution of this class depends on the services and labor of what is relatively construed as the working class.

2 Greece's "per capita income places [it] above only Mexico and Turkey among the member nations of the organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" (Thomadakis 1995: 147).

3 "Sexing" Globalization in IR

4 Cox does not refer to liberal democracy here but rather to a participatory kind of democracy that allows the possibility of redistributing resources and the constitution of a just society.

5 Gramsci's understanding of consciousness and ideology as nonhomogeneous and contradictory allows us to explore racist ideologies within the working class and within trade unions (Hall 1986: 26).

6 Alexander argues that both the generative scripts of heterosexual tourism and those of gay tourism ... traverse a similar imperial geography and draw upon similar epistemic frames to service an imagined "Western" tourist. The similarity requires our political attention for it suggests that material and ideological gestures of relocalization may not be the province of heterosexual capital alone. (1998: 281)

I agree, and thus, when discussing sexual relations in different contexts, I suggest that we sustain a deconstructive postcolonial mode and we can do that by focusing on the relationship of imperial capitalist relations especially in the context of production and (re)production which do not only assume heterosexuality but also a "queer fetishized native" (Alexander 1998: 287).

7 See Doeze's (1998) work, which engages systematically the discourses about the "trafficking in women," and argues that there is a re-emergence of the myth of "white slavery."

8 All of my interviews were conducted between 1995 and 1999 in Nicosia and Larnaca, Cyprus. The names of the interviewees are confidential; therefore I have used pseudonyms within the text of this chapter.

9 See also http://www.unifemeseasia.org/Resources/Traffic2.html.

10 Desire economies exist in both the peripheries and metropoles. The difference between these two kinds of desire economies is (1) peripheries' cash inflows depend to a large extent on this kind of economy because of their location in the global economy, but this is changing; and (2) capitalist development in its globalized form does not distinguish sites so much as long as new consumer markets are created that can be colonized. See Alexander (1998: 287) for a similar argument.

11 We still see this refusal in the debates surrounding the issue of Cyprus and Turkey joining the EU. In the case of Cyprus, the debate is linked to the militarization of the North by Turkey, and thus debates around Cyprus joining the EU constantly bring to the fore the fact that its entry will be contingent upon resolving the ethnic conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Muffler-Bac has argued that "Turkey's failure to uphold democracy justifies the EU's rejection but at the same time conceals an aspect of the EU's reservations about Turkey; its perception of Turkey as the Other of Europe" (1999: 240).

12 Alexander (1998) uses this logic to explain the interdependence and competition between heterosexual and homosexual capital. This logic applies to the relation between metropole and marginalized capital.