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## The Importance of Being “Modern” and Foreign: Feminist Scholarship and the Epistemic Status of Nations

**T**he claim that “a place on the map is also a place in history” (Rich 1995, 212), one that has grounded much feminist scholarship, is simple but significant. It has been interpreted in a multitude of ways and has sparked numerous avenues for research in women’s, gender, and feminist studies (WGFS).<sup>1</sup> It is this claim that drives one of the longest and richest debates in feminist scholarship: how does one’s place on a map shape the place that one is likely to occupy in the (hi)stories told daily—in classrooms, articles, conferences—about WGFS?

Scholars from across the world, within and beyond WGFS, have offered compelling analyses of how the hegemony of particular Western countries in the global academic system, the status of English as the dominant language of communication within it, and the structure of the academic publishing industry generate asymmetrical patterns of knowledge circulation and recognition of authors and institutions.<sup>2</sup> They argue that (some)

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<sup>1</sup> Choices about the naming of the field are contested, play out differently across national contexts (with the same name having different connotations across places), and are shaped by many (theoretical, institutional, political) considerations (Hemmings 2006). While I want to acknowledge the importance of these debates in the history and present of WGFS, I cannot engage in detail with them here, and I thus use this umbrella term to refer to the field.

<sup>2</sup> My use of the concept of hegemony with respect to global academic exchanges is inspired by the work of Susan Meriläinen et al. (2008). For examples of analyses of the manifestations

Western countries are believed to generate more advanced and exportable knowledge, and as a result scholarship produced outside those countries is much less likely to circulate to other regions and be read, referenced, and taught. These authors have persuasively shown that the privileging and large-scale export of theories from and about Western countries has several detrimental effects: it renders our collective canons worryingly exclusionary, skewed, and homogeneous (Widerberg 1998; Calvi 2010), can lead to inaccurate or simplistic analyses of social life and gender relations in other countries (Cerwonka 2008), may stifle the development of autochthonous feminist concepts or theories (Macedo and Amaral 2002), and can discourage authors from producing nationally relevant knowledge and working with local partners and audiences (Stöckelová 2012).

This debate has occupied center stage in international WGFS networks and conferences.<sup>3</sup> It has also occupied the pages of this journal, most recently, for example, in Allaine Cerwonka's (2008) thought-provoking analysis of the complicated and contested relations between Western feminisms, on the one hand, and Central and Eastern European feminisms, on the other. Cerwonka argues that examining how discourses and institutions travel transnationally and come to be used locally "is crucial for understanding the true complexity of power relations within . . . women's and gender studies in a global area" (2008, 811). Wholly persuaded by this claim, I want to suggest that we have not been able to fully understand the complexity of these relations because debates about transnational travel and local appropriation in WGFS have lacked an engagement with a large and significant dimension of those processes. In most texts on this topic, the unequal status of WGFS scholars and scholarship from countries of the center and periphery is framed in terms of loss and constraint; in other words, the focus is often exclusively on what becomes repressed, made invisible, and excluded through—and because of—the hegemony of Western Anglophone feminism. This is the case even with texts, such as Cerwonka's, that helpfully and pertinently seek to bring complexity to those accounts of constraint by highlighting the agency of non-Western feminist scholars in global exchanges.

The hegemony of particular countries in the global academic order demonstrably constrains the growth, diversity, and local relevance of WGFS;

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and impacts of these academic hegemonies, see Spivak (1987), Canagarajah (2002), Griffin and Braidotti (2002), Alatas (2003), Kaplan and Grewal (2003), Lykke (2004), Paasi (2005), Connell (2007), and Meriläinen et al. (2008).

<sup>3</sup> This has been the case, e.g., within ATGENDER (the European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation) and its triennial European Feminist Research Conferences.

thus, that emphasis on constraint is entirely justified and necessary. And yet when reading accounts of the institutionalization of WGFS throughout the world, one encounters many references to situations where that hegemony has produced not (just) constraints and losses but (also) gains, openings, and opportunities for feminist scholarship. Two examples illustrate this. In a study of the establishment of WGFS in Taiwan, Peiying Chen notes that Taiwanese academics “invited feminist scholars from other countries to lecture and help raise awareness [in Taiwanese academia] of the significance of women’s studies” (2004, 68–69); according to her, this contributed directly to increased acceptance of, and support for, the field. Andrea Pető’s (2001) contribution to a debate about the status and (negative) impact of “western [feminist] theory stars” is another example. She notes that such stars can play a crucial positive role in the development of WGFS in countries outside the center, namely, by providing support to local WGFS initiatives under attack. She gives the example of an “international protest [in 2000] by Joan Scott, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Elizabeth Minnich, Rosi Braidotti, to name just a few, who immediately [and with some success] stood up with horror to protest against [the firing and demotion of faculty in] a gender studies programme” at a university in Hungary (2001, 91).

These gains, openings, and opportunities have not received close and sustained attention within our debates, and as a result we tend to operate with a somewhat simplistic conceptualization of power within global academic exchanges. In this article, I seek to contribute to a broader and more nuanced “understanding of the true complexity of the power relations” (Cerwonka 2008, 811) within WGFS by analyzing precisely those gains, openings, and opportunities and highlighting the complex ways in which they intertwine and interact with the losses and constraints that we have so thoroughly inventoried. I will examine how feminist scholars based in countries at the (semi)periphery of the global academic order use the figure(s) of Western, Anglophone scholarship in their attempts to institutionalize and legitimate WGFS in their academic communities.<sup>4</sup> It is an issue that, as I will argue, provides rich insight into some timely questions: In profoundly changing academic landscapes, what is the local status of global academic hegemonies? How are these hegemonies negotiated by feminist scholars in (semi)peripheral communities, and how do they shape their daily interventions locally and internationally? What is the relationship between feminist scholarship and the epistemic status of nations? I

<sup>4</sup> I use “(semi)periphery” and “(semi)peripheral” to refer both to peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

explore these questions through an ethnographic study based in a (semi)-peripheral country (Portugal) that draws on concepts and insights from science and technology studies (STS), feminist and postcolonial theory and epistemology, feminist geography, studies of the institutionalization of WGFS worldwide, and sociological research on contemporary changes in scientific policy.

### The epistemic status of nations

Analyses of scientific practice have recently undergone what has been called a spatial turn: there has been marked growth in empirical attention to how geographical location shapes the terms on which, and degree to which, knowledge is recognized as credible and authoritative. As Thomas F. Gieryn notes, “the *where* of science has come under increasing scholarly scrutiny. Geography [is] ever more frequently brought in as [a] factor helping to explain the legitimacy of knowledge claims” (2006, 5). Warwick Anderson and Vincanne Adams echo this, explaining that “debates about what formally constitutes ‘science’ are now focused as much on geography as on . . . epistemology” (2008, 184). What brings geography and epistemology together in this body of research is the notion that places, countries, and continents have what I want to call epistemic status.<sup>5</sup> That is, they are seen to be more or less able and likely to produce “proper” and valuable scholarly knowledge. That research is also grounded in the insight—a major legacy of postcolonial and feminist theory—that epistemic status is unequally distributed across the globe, with proper scholarliness and scientificity usually being associated with Western countries.<sup>6</sup>

Conceptualizing the relation between geography and epistemology in this way opens new avenues for analysis of the transnational traveling of scholarship within WGFS. Rather than focusing only on how concrete WGFS products, such as books, concepts, or theories, circulate between regions, we can also examine how credibility travels.<sup>7</sup> This requires exploring how the “authorizing signature” (Mohanty 1988, 63) of Western

<sup>5</sup> For more on my conceptualization of epistemic status, which attempts to articulate feminist epistemology, most centrally the work of Lorraine Code (1995); STS literature, particularly Thomas F. Gieryn’s (1999) cartographical notion of scientific boundary-work; and Michel Foucault’s concept of the *episteme*, as redefined in his later work (1980), see Pereira (2011).

<sup>6</sup> See Goonatilake (1993), Connell (2007), Santos (2007), Harding (2008), Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Boatcă, and Costa (2010), and Akena (2012).

<sup>7</sup> For analyses of how the products of WGFS travel, see Knapp (2005), Costa (2006), Davis (2007), Cerwonka (2008), Davis and Evans (2011), and Wöhrer (2012).

scholarship is imported and exported across borders.<sup>8</sup> The foreign is thus reconceptualized as an epistemic marker, as a symbol of epistemic quality that lends legitimacy to knowledge claims. When following the lines of inquiry that this reframing enables, it is key to consider another significant implication of the quotation from Rich that opened this article. If a place on a map is also a place in history, then the spatial must be understood as always and already also temporal. Indeed, and as I will show, certain “foreigns” work as epistemic markers not just because they are in a different place but also and especially because they are perceived to be in a different time (Mignolo 2000): they are more “advanced,” less “backwards,” more “modern.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, I follow feminist geographer Doreen Massey in “insist[ing] on the inseparability of time and space, on their joint constitution, [and] on the necessity of thinking in terms of space-time” (1994, 269), particularly when examining how asymmetries in the epistemic status of nations shape feminist practice and scholarship.

### **An ethnographic study of negotiations of epistemic status**

I will examine these issues here using material from a feminist discursive ethnography that examined the discourses that circulate within Portuguese academia (in the social sciences and humanities) about the epistemic status of WGFS. This study involved a ten-month period of fieldwork (from 2008 to 2009) in several institutions throughout the country, which included participant observation at over fifty public and semipublic academic events (such as conferences, undergraduate and postgraduate classrooms, book and journal launches, and meetings); thirty-five in-depth interviews with WGFS and non-WGFS scholars, students, and representatives of funding bodies; and archival research. Much like other ethnographic studies of scientific practice, I use “ethnography . . . with discourse analysis components [as a method] furnish[ing] the optics for viewing the process of knowledge production as ‘constructive’ rather than descriptive” (Knorr-Cetina 1995, 141). Therefore, my fieldwork material was examined through

<sup>8</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty uses this term when discussing how Western feminist scholarship produces a representation of “a composite, singular ‘third-world woman’—an image which appears arbitrarily constructed but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of western humanist discourse” (1988, 62–63).

<sup>9</sup> I conceptualize the “modern” not as a descriptive term but as a performative and contested category that has been the object of ongoing, exclusionary, and sometimes very violent boundary-work in the past and present (Bhambra 2007; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Boată, and Costa 2010). The scare quotes used here are dropped in the remainder of the article for ease of reading, but the critical distance that they represent is implied throughout.

a discourse analysis approach that draws both on Michel Foucault's conceptualization of discourse "as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" ([1969] 2006, 54) and on research about the discursive strategies used by scientists when making claims about the status of their own and others' work (e.g., Gilbert and Mulkay 1984).

The study weaves together three different theoretical approaches to the conceptualization of power in negotiations of epistemic status: a feminist and postcolonial foregrounding of more ossified structures of uneven distribution of epistemic authority (e.g., Mohanty 1988; Code 1995); an STS-inspired attention to the nature and effect of organizational structures and professional hierarchies in academia (Gieryn 1999), which often fails to fully engage with those broader structures (Nader 1996); and a Foucauldian commitment to considering the fluid and generative nature of power (Foucault 1980). This enables a conceptualization of epistemic status as, at the same time, structurally determined (in relatively ossified gendered and racialized ways), regularly reshaped through institutional change and organizational politics, and always subject to contingent negotiation at the micropolitical level of everyday interaction. There are clear overlaps, but also some notable incommensurabilities, between these three approaches (for a detailed discussion, see Pereira 2011), and thus articulating them is a challenging exercise in analytical juggling. However, I would argue that it is a very productive one because it renders visible the different levels at which power operates within academic exchanges and because it makes it possible to conceptualize power as both fluid and concentrated in specific epistemic sites and communities, as both systematically constraining and continuously productive.

Portugal is a rich site in which to analyze the local impacts of global hegemonies. As in many other (semi)peripheral countries, WGFS emerged relatively late in Portugal: the first WGFS degree program, an MA in women's studies, was established in 1994 at the Universidade Aberta, and the first (and thus far only) WGFS journals—*ex aequo* and *Faces de Eva*—were launched in 1999. The past decade has seen a consolidation of the field's institutionalization (with increases in postgraduate programs, publications, and conferences).<sup>10</sup> However, WGFS is still not fully recognized by all academic communities and institutions as proper scholarly knowledge, and thus WGFS teaching and research is frequently ignored, dismissed, or even

<sup>10</sup> At the time of this study, there existed three MA and two PhD programs in WGFS, hosted by Universidade Aberta and Universidade de Coimbra (each offering both MA and PhD) and Universidade Nova de Lisboa (MA only). For English-language overviews of the history and current state of the institutionalization of WGFS in Portugal, see Pereira (2011).



mocked in more or less public ways (Pereira 2012). This means that when presenting their work, junior and senior WGFS scholars must often implicitly or explicitly persuade their audiences that WGFS is a credible academic field, and they use a variety of strategies to do so.<sup>11</sup>

One of the strategies most frequently deployed in the sites I observed was to refer to what occurs abroad. As many of my interviewees explained, this is a particularly effective tool that has helped to create valuable space for WGFS in several institutions. As in many other countries, WGFS in Portugal is an object of contention, and there exist profound differences and disagreements between scholars regarding, for example, theoretical and political orientations, ways of naming the field, and preferred strategies for its institutionalization, as I examine elsewhere (Pereira 2011) but cannot develop here. However, the regular practice of invoking the modern foreign is one point of striking commonality across these divides: it is a tool deployed by scholars with distinct orientations, disciplinary backgrounds, and institutional affiliations. In the sections that follow, I analyze the uses and impacts of this citing of the modern foreign. Before that, however, I offer contextual information about Portugal to elucidate why this citing works so powerfully there and in other countries with similar features and histories.

### **Of centers and (semi)peripheries: The status of the modern foreign in Portugal**

And here at the western extreme  
Of a ragged Europe, I  
Want to be European: I want to be European  
In some corner of Portugal  
—Afonso Duarte (1956, 127)<sup>12</sup>

Analyses of contemporary Portugal have characterized it as an in-between space, ambivalently positioned in global hierarchies. Some scholars, most notably Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1994), draw on Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) world-systems theory to describe it as a semiperipheral society, occupying both an intermediate and an intermediary position be-

<sup>11</sup> I use "senior scholar" to refer to scholars who at the time of fieldwork held full-time, paid academic positions and had completed their PhDs more than five years previously. "Junior scholar" refers to scholars who did not hold full-time paid academic positions and who either did not have PhDs or had held a PhD for less than five years.

<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are my own.



tween the countries of the (Western) center and those at the periphery of the world-system. Others portray Portugal as located at the perimeter of the center, as a country that is (*estar*) *in* the global center but is (*ser*) not *of* the center (Roque 2001, 283; Nunes 2002, 196).<sup>13</sup> This is a feature that Portugal shares with other countries, particularly those in Southern and Central and Eastern Europe. To give just one example, it has been noted that “contemporary Greek selves are fashioned precisely through the exploration of the tensions of *being*, yet at the same time as *not being*, ‘western’ or ‘European’” (Cowan 1996, 62).

The signs and symptoms of Portugal’s in-betweenness can, according to these authors, be found in its position in social, economic, and cultural indicators. In many of them (e.g., demographic patterns, consumption practices, and female-employment rates), Portugal’s profile is similar to that of Western countries, whereas in several others (educational levels, poverty and social exclusion, and the structure of economy and industry), it can be described as more closely aligned with peripheral countries (Santos 1994; Machado and Costa 2000). Since the fall of the authoritarian regime of Estado Novo in 1974, the country has undergone accelerated modernization in many spheres.<sup>14</sup> These include gender equality and sexual/reproductive rights, but in many respects Portugal continues to be understood as having a “modernisation deficit” (Machado and Costa 2000, 15).<sup>15</sup>

Another key dimension of the ambivalence of Portugal’s position as a “nation in between” (Reiter 2005, 81) is its colonial past. According to Santos, “the intermediate, semi-peripheral matrix of Portuguese culture” has been partly constituted by the fact that “from the seventeenth century, the Portuguese were . . . the only European people who . . . considered the peoples of its colonies as primitive and savage, and at the same time was itself . . . considered, by Northern European diplomats and scholars, as primitive and savage” (1994, 133). Portugal had the longest-lived mod-

<sup>13</sup> In Portuguese, the verb “to be” has two formulations. *Ser* is used for characteristics that are intrinsic and stable (the verb shares its root with the word “essence”): e.g., *Eu sou Portuguesa* [I am Portuguese]. *Estar* refers to temporary states or current location (it shares a root with “status”): e.g., *Eu estou atrasada* [I am late].

<sup>14</sup> Established in 1933, Estado Novo [New State] was an authoritarian regime with a single-party system and a repressive state apparatus sustained by censorship. It was overthrown on April 25, 1974, through a relatively peaceful revolution led by Left-leaning officers of the armed forces.

<sup>15</sup> Recent high-profile developments include the legalization of abortion through national referendum (2007), the recognition of same-sex marriage (2010), and the passing of a revised Gender Identity Law (2011).

ern European empire, spanning five centuries and continents, but during part of that period “had a subaltern and subsidiary [position] in . . . world economy and geopolitics, namely in relation to the British Empire” (Vale de Almeida 2008, 2). Moreover, the Portuguese were viewed by other colonial powers as too close to colonized populations, “half-breeds who generate yet more half-breeds” (5).

After the 1974 revolution, attempts were made to distance Portugal from its recent imperial past, reorient it toward the “real and fantasmatic” (Joaquim 2004, 91) space of Europe, and reposition it as a European nation. Joining the European Economic Community in 1986 was a key political and symbolic milestone. According to Santos, “integration in the European Union has tended to create the credible illusion that Portugal, because it is integrated in the center, has become central” (1994, 58). However, that alignment with the center is extremely precarious: the Portuguese are still seen as “non-whites” (Reiter 2005, 81) or “not quite white” (Vale de Almeida 2008, 1) in some contexts, especially regions and countries with large Portuguese immigrant communities, such as Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Like other Southern European countries, Portugal is sometimes depicted internationally as very different from, and less developed than, Northern Europe, a depiction that has gained renewed visibility in debates about the financial situation of Southern Europe since the global financial crisis of 2008.<sup>16</sup>

Because Portugal is not unambiguously recognized as fully European and modern, there is an ongoing preoccupation with, and investment in, the affirmation of the country’s European modernity. Bernd Reiter explains that “the imagining of Portuguese nationhood is . . . set around the necessity to demonstrate to the world . . . that Portugal is a modern country and indeed a truly European one” (2008, 407). José Manuel Leite Viegas and António Firmino da Costa note that questions of whether “Portugal [is] a modernised, developed country, or not very much so” (2000, 2) are always present in Portuguese life. They are very often posed explicitly, but “even when they are not announced as such, they are . . . in the background, as a thread, as the backdrop against which problems are raised, as a yardstick, as an implicit criterion of assessment” (2).

Academia is one stage where the negotiation of the country’s in-betweenness plays out. Portugal can be described as semiperipheral in relation to scientific practice, in keeping with Syed Farid Alatas’s defi-

<sup>16</sup> Participants in these debates sometimes refer to Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain as PIGS (or PIIGS, if Ireland is included).

nition of the term: “[academic] communities that [are] dependent on ideas originating in the . . . centres, but which themselves exert some influence on peripheral . . . communities [in Portugal’s case, its former African colonies] by way of the provision of research funds, places in their universities . . . , the funding of international conferences, and so on” (2003, 606). Scientific products and protagonists of the center have an influential role in Portugal, both symbolically and institutionally. Maria Eduarda Gonçalves found that in Portuguese debates about bovine spongiform encephalopathy (“mad cow disease”) in the 1990s there was a sharp contrast between politicians’ “deference toward foreign research” produced “in more advanced countries” and their evaluation of research by Portuguese scholars, which was “rejected as unreliable” (2000, 439). Following the recent trend across many other (semi)peripheral countries (see, e.g., Paasi 2005; Meriläinen et al. 2008 on Finland; Stöckelová 2012 on the Czech Republic), mechanisms of research assessment in Portugal are increasingly centered on international activities as the most valued form of academic work, with international peer-reviewed publications becoming established “as a primary criterion for evaluation” (Santos Pereira 2004, 249). These changes have positioned the foreign as a crucial provider of funding, training, and publication opportunities that can have a direct beneficial impact on one’s local status. Underlying all of these changes is “the rhetoric that there exists a dangerous delay” in Portugal vis-à-vis the foreign, “that there exists a modern temporality and symbolic geography centered in a point distant from Portugal [that provides] the ultimate model that we must try to keep up with at all costs” (Roque 2001, 284). This is a rhetoric frequently and strategically used by Portuguese WGFS scholars in their everyday attempts to secure recognition or space for WGFS in their institutions and disciplines, as I examine below.

### Invoking the modern foreign

Gieryn has noted that “a familiar feature of scientists’ boundary-work [is] drawing independent authority for one’s own [claims] by . . . attributing authorship *elsewhere*” (1995, 431). Faced with skeptical audiences in conferences, classrooms, and other academic sites, Portuguese WGFS scholars very frequently do just that: explicitly highlight that they are not the author of a claim or the only person studying something but that it is also said and done abroad:

[Name of social science discipline] has been developed from the perspective of men, seen as universal. . . . This has been denounced,

and it wasn't me who said this, it's well demonstrated in foreign literature. (PhD candidate speaking during the PhD defense for a feminist thesis in a mainstream social science)<sup>17</sup>

I'd argue that it's important to critically reflect about feminism and political institutions in Portugal. This is not an idea that has come from my head: many, many international researchers have raised that question. (WGFS researcher giving a paper at a non-WGFS social science conference)

These scholars are locating the source of their claim that feminist research is valuable in the more authoritative space of foreign literature. Elsewhere I have shown that the citing of particular foreign authors, notably Pierre Bourdieu, is a tool used by scholars to get WGFS scholarship accepted in journals, curricula, or institutions (Pereira 2012). However, in the claims above the focus is less on the authorizing signature (Mohanty 1988) of specific individuals, and actual names are often not cited. Indeed, many of those feminist authors' names would not be recognized by a non-WGFS audience and would therefore carry little weight as an authorizing signature. What is made salient in these references is the fact that those authors are "foreign" or "international."

The foreign is also frequently invoked in and through explicit comparisons between the situations in Portugal and those abroad:

I want to congratulate you for having the courage to explicitly take up a feminist perspective. . . . It's a perspective that, although clearly recognized abroad, is not yet recognized in mainstream [social science discipline] in Portugal. Feminist research is . . . still a rarity in Portugal, although it's widely done and easily recognized in Anglo-Saxon contexts. (Senior WGFS scholar, speaking as an examiner during the defense for a feminist thesis in a mainstream social science)

It was only very recently that some women scientists in Portugal began to be able to come out as feminists, which is something that didn't happen in Northern Europe, they were able to do this earlier, and so they've been able to argue . . . for the institutionalization of gender studies. . . . We must learn from the vast experience and suc-

<sup>17</sup> All quotations are my translations from fieldwork material originally in Portuguese. Where necessary, I have removed potentially identifying information (such as the names of interviewees' home disciplines) in order to preserve anonymity.

cess of Nordic countries. (Senior WGFS scholar speaking at a non-WGFS humanities conference)

This is . . . the first project on [a theme in gender studies] to be carried out in [social science discipline] in Portugal. . . . It's a complete gap in Portuguese research. . . . This immense gap in Portugal contrasts with a true boom in studies about [theme] abroad. . . . There's so much work being published in this area abroad that it's very difficult to keep up with the literature. (Junior WGFS scholar speaking at a non-WGFS social science conference)

The junior and senior WGFS scholars I interviewed explained that such references to the fact that foreign scholars are themselves prolifically pursuing and widely recognizing WGFS scholarship helped make their work seem more substantiated and “less like an idiosyncrasy of mine,” as one senior scholar put it. The modern foreign therefore functions as what Gieryn (2002, 2006) has called a truth-spot, that is, a site that lends credibility to claims. Gieryn proposes this concept to analyze how the credibility of claims can partly be “sustained by locating in some particular place their authors, their making or their message” (2002, 113) because that place has come to be associated with the production of proper knowledge.<sup>18</sup> But the modern foreign is not just a spot or space; it also represents a particular time, as I argued at the beginning of this article. Gieryn's concept of truth-spots can and should therefore be expanded to include a consideration of how geographical location is understood also as chronological difference. Thus, we can speak of the modern foreign as a truth-point, a point in space and a point in time that lends credibility to claims.

WGFS scholars invoke the modern foreign not just when presenting their own work but also when attempting to persuade partly or wholly resistant university administrations to grant support to WGFS. Commenting on the impact of WGFS in the discipline of law in Portugal, Teresa Beleza explains how she used such comparisons to integrate WGFS in her department's curricula. She writes, “the inclusion of [an elective course on] ‘Women and Law’ in the undergraduate degree . . . was not peaceful. Pointing to how common its existence is in the majority of American universities was an important argument in getting the course accepted in the end” (2002, 81). In an annual general meeting of the Portuguese Women's Studies Association (*Associação Portuguesa de Estudos sobre as Mulheres*;

<sup>18</sup> Gieryn's analysis focuses on laboratories and fieldwork sites, though I would argue that the notion can be applied also to countries and regions.

APEM) that I observed as part of fieldwork, members explicitly suggested drawing on such comparisons as a tool in APEM's planned strategy for strengthening WGFS nationally: "What we need to tell whoever wins the [government] elections [which were scheduled to happen four months later] to convince them to give more support and recognition to gender studies is 'this is all over Europe! Everyone's doing it, it's no longer acceptable to not have this, it makes us look bad!' So even if it's just to make sure that Portugal's not seen to be on the other side of the moon, they need to support the field!" (Senior WGFS scholar participating in the APEM annual general meeting). When composing a proposal for a WGFS program, one senior scholar went a step further and contacted feminist scholars based abroad to ask if they would be willing to let their names—very literally, authorizing signatures in this case—be added to the proposal.

R: I said [to the university administration] "this is shameful, Portugal not having it [WGFS], it exists all over and we don't have it here!". . . And for the proposal . . . , I got "consultants" from foreign institutions [names five feminist scholars based in the United States and Northern Europe].

I: What was their role?

R: They were only there to act as guarantees, as witnesses in a way. [*Laughs*] I wrote that these were highly qualified people with dazzling CVs, and that they'd said that if we needed them to write something for us, they would. But they didn't need to because it was more than enough to have their names there and mention what universities and countries they were from, that was powerful enough.

This scholar's reference to shame points to a key aspect of how these comparisons function as tools to bolster both the credibility and the persuasiveness of Portuguese scholars' claims that it is legitimate and necessary to support WGFS. As a senior WGFS scholar explains in the interview excerpt below, explicitly contrasting Portuguese institutions with well-respected foreign universities that offer WGFS degree programs highlights the former's backwardness vis-à-vis the modern foreign, generating modes of shame or embarrassment that may generate support for the field: "One argument that we used [when preparing an ultimately successful proposal to launch a WGFS postgraduate degree] was, 'Look at foreign universities . . . , at what is done in Spain, France, England, the United States, and there's nothing here.' That argument usually works because what gives consistency and authority to [WGFS] is the fact that it exists in

institutions abroad, right? If respected places have it and we don't, then that's embarrassing, because it shows how many miles away from them we are." This last scholar refers to, among others, the situation in France as an example and model. France has, nevertheless, been consistently described in comparative European studies as having low levels of institutionalization of WGFS (Griffin 2005), and several authors have reported significant micro- and macrolevel obstacles to its recognition (Viennot et al. 2000). Discussing the French situation, Françoise Armengaud and Ghaïs Jasser make frequent invocation of the foreign—exactly as the Portuguese scholars above do—to demonstrate how shameful the French situation is: for example, "abroad, in the United States, in England, [male] social science experts integrate the results of feminist research in their work" (1994, 13). And yet this claim is not entirely accurate either, as many authors in the United States and Britain have themselves denounced their non-WGFS colleagues' lack of attention to, and citing of, feminist scholarship (Hawkesworth 2010). It seems that because particular countries have considerable symbolic weight as sites whose academic knowledge is more advanced, their names can be mobilized effectively even when the situation of WGFS in those countries does not correspond exactly to what is claimed. In this sense, references to the foreign are both descriptions of actually existing differences in levels of institutionalization and invocations of an authorizing signature that does not need to fully match actual practice in order to command authority.

Sometimes, the authors of the modern foreign are brought into Portugal not just discursively or on paper but also physically:

We want to have foreign speakers at the conference, that's absolutely crucial, because their presence allows us to more easily confront [the invited representatives of universities], to force them to face the contrast between the European and national situations. Having foreign speakers helps exert pressure to change attitudes [toward WGFS]. (Junior WGFS scholar, co-organizer of a WGFS conference aimed partly at a non-WGFS audience)

One thing that directly contributed to legitimating our [WGFS] MA program was the fact that we organized several public lectures with foreign speakers, French, English, or whatever. One lecturer knew people abroad and got lots of them to come, and that was good. . . . It made our work more credible, the fact that we were bringing foreign scholars to the university to speak about feminism. (Senior scholar who coordinates a WGFS program)



We can say, then, that these foreign speakers act as authorizing bodies, as embodied symbols of epistemic status whose presence can, and does, afford credibility to Portuguese scholars' work. This last interviewee went on to say that through contact with these visiting scholars she realized that "in the contexts where they work they experience exactly the same problems we have, although we tend to think that our context is more difficult." Indeed, even WGFS scholars who fail to secure recognition in their own institutions and countries can still work relatively effectively as authorizing bodies in Portugal by virtue of the fact that they are seen to represent a space-time of higher academic value. Foreign WGFS academics' visits work, therefore, not just as a means of circulating scholarship but also as a key instrument for the display of the epistemic status of the field locally.

As the quotations above illustrate, invocations of the foreign are often generic: scholars talk about the foreign or international but do not mention specific countries or regions. Where there is explicit naming of locations, the categories most often invoked are Anglo-American or Anglo-Saxon, the United States, the United Kingdom or England, Northern Europe, and Nordic countries. But two contexts that do not fit within these categories are also sometimes (though less frequently) mentioned and play a particularly interesting role. Spain is one of them. Santos describes Portuguese narratives about Spain as a "game of mirrors: sometimes highlighting the contrasts, sometimes highlighting the similarities"; the two countries are "counterposed, always against a background of affinity" (1994, 55). WGFS scholars' discourses mirrored this: their references to Spain were based both on an affirmation of its proximity to Portugal and a foregrounding of the two countries' difference vis-à-vis the recognition of WGFS.<sup>19</sup> For example, a quotation analyzed above, where a scholar contrasts the "complete gap" in Portuguese literature with a "true boom" of research abroad, continues as follows:

There's so much work being published in this area abroad. . . . This production has been more prolific in the US and UK, but even right here next to us, a Spanish anthropologist has just published a book on this. (Junior WGFS scholar speaking at a non-WGFS conference)

Only a few Portuguese universities have [WGFS] degrees . . . but we go next door to Spain and all universities have postgraduate degrees, sometimes more than one, and research centers doing feminist re-

<sup>19</sup> For accounts of the institutionalization of WGFS in Spain, see Borderias et al. (2002).

search, many of them since the 1990s! . . . In Portugal we only have general women's studies journals. If we look at, I won't even say the UK or US, all we need is to look at our neighboring country, and Granada, which isn't even one of the main universities, has a journal on women's history, a subtheme of women's studies! (Junior WGFS scholar speaking at a non-WGFS humanities conference)

As a country nearer to Portugal in location, culture, and history, Spain offers a model that is closer (one only needs to go as far as "right next door") and therefore can throw into sharper relief the inadequacy of Portuguese academia's levels and modes of engagement with WGFS.

The other context is Brazil. In two interventions by WGFS scholars in non-WGFS conferences, Brazil was invoked as a close and potentially shaming example, much like Spain, but was positioned differently from Spain. Critically drawing on a Portuguese tendency to see and dismiss Brazil as less advanced than Portugal (Reiter 2005), WGFS scholars highlighted how "interesting" and "important" it was to note that WGFS is more institutionalized in Brazil than in Portugal and how it was clear that in this area Brazil had successfully and rightfully "overtaken us" in terms of academic development.<sup>20</sup> Brazil was invoked not as a traditional symbol of a modern foreign but as demonstration that even countries portrayed in the popular imagination as less modern are already more advanced than Portugal vis-à-vis WGFS.<sup>21</sup> These references to Spain and Brazil show that it is not only the supposedly most modern foreign that can work as a truth-point. In some situations, contrasts with foreign spaces understood to be closer may work equally or even more effectively because they provide a supposedly more realistic, and therefore potentially more shameful, reminder of how much more developed Portugal might have already become with respect to WGFS.

### **Projecting Portugal into the modern foreign**

WGFS scholars also described actually being in the modern foreign as an effective way of contributing to the affirmation of WGFS within Portugal. According to several interviewees, having a physical, institutional, or intellectual presence abroad made it easier to secure recognition and space nationally. One senior WGFS scholar explained that upon returning to

<sup>20</sup> For more on the institutionalization of WGFS in Brazil, see Mayorga (2002).

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that Portuguese WGFS scholars are not themselves dismissive of Brazil and indeed express a profound admiration for Brazilian WGFS, frequently attending conferences or publishing in journals in Brazil and inviting Brazilian academics to Portugal.

Portugal after a period in the United States, “Colleagues saw me as very exotic, as the American, in the way that I thought and spoke, and in the department they liked that, it helped make it more modern, . . . and so they let me work on my [WGFS] stuff. Although, of course, with time I realized that there was still a lot of resistance there.” Research participants also highlighted the importance and impact of joining international academic networks.

- I:* Do you sometimes feel that in [name of discipline] there are themes that are considered less relevant?
- R:* Yes, of course, completely! Women and gender! Absolutely! But our colleagues have to put up with us because we’re like fleas, we hop about and go everywhere, we’re very internationalized, often more than they are! We’re in touch with foreign colleagues, we do things with them. . . . We’re in [lists international and European disciplinary networks], we’ve had positions in committees in these networks, and so they end up taking us more seriously because we’re so active abroad. (Senior scholar in a social science discipline, with expertise in WGFS)

Another important strategy is to implant Portuguese WGFS scholars abroad. In recent years, very few positions have opened in Portuguese universities, and this situation has left scholars concerned with the very limited opportunities for renewal and expansion of WGFS’s academic presence. Five interviewees explained that in this climate the most useful thing that early-career WGFS scholars could do, both for their careers and for Portuguese WGFS, is to leave the country: “The intellectual and institutional climate in Portugal isn’t going to change much in the next few years, so there’s no point staying. If they want to be able to work in gender studies, younger scholars need to leave. An ideal situation is to do the PhD abroad, spend some time in the United States, and have publications in foreign journals. All that helps to legitimate a scholar here. This way when they come back they’ll be invested with lots of foreign status” (interview with senior WGFS scholar).

According to this and other interviewees, Portuguese scholars can be “invested” with foreign status—that is, they can themselves embody and carry the authority of the modern foreign, thus acting within their country as authorizing signatures and bodies. As an early-career Portuguese scholar who completed PhD training in the United Kingdom and is working in a UK institution, I myself was seen and interpellated several times as one of those scholars who could inhabit the foreign to help advance WGFS

within Portugal. Participants encouraged me to stay abroad because interventions from afar would carry significantly more weight. As one senior scholar put it, “What we need above anything else is for people like you to be abroad, because with their connection to foreign universities they can help things here. . . . If you’re abroad, we can call you for PhD boards, send students for cosupervision, all real advantages when trying to get the field recognized. . . . A foreign institutional affiliation has more value and can do much more than any affiliation you could get in Portugal.”

The projection of Portuguese WGFS abroad is important but not always easy. Interviewees reported having difficulties accessing, and intervening in, the modern foreign. This was partly due to Portugal’s image abroad as a country that produces less-advanced and narrower knowledge and that thus can only participate in international debates as a case study (Joaquim 2004). One interviewee described sometimes being treated in a patronizing and dismissive way by foreign colleagues when participating in European WGFS meetings. Others spoke of established hierarchies between countries in terms of academic relevance and influence and discussed these hierarchies’ impacts on their work:

Power relations between countries are unequal, and countries of the center have other working conditions, namely being able to make publications visible in ways we can’t. I think Portuguese gender studies has to fight very hard for attention. We pay attention to external scholarship, and our foreign colleagues make stunning contributions, but it’s hard to affirm ourselves internationally, both because of language and because our research is seen as less relevant. (Senior WGFS researcher in the humanities)

I wanted to have more international publications and sent book proposals to loads of international publishers. One of the reviewers wrote, “it’s a pity it’s about Portugal, because it’s such an interesting theme and it’d be perfect if it were about another context, but about Portugal, blergh.” . . . I can only get my work published abroad if I make comparative analyses between Portugal and more well-known countries; otherwise they’re not interested. (Junior WGFS researcher in the social sciences)

This is one dimension where the generative and the repressive impacts on WGFS of the unequal global distribution of epistemic status intersect, producing particularly complex configurations of power relations. I will discuss this in more detail in the conclusion of this article.

### **Making Portugal (more) “modern” through feminist scholarship**

The relation between WGFS and the epistemic status of nations is made more complex by the fact that it is not just WGFS scholars who are involved and invested in shaping the relationship between WGFS and the “modern”: governmental and institutional representatives also refer to that relationship in their own boundary-work. Indeed, the relationship between WGFS and the affirmation of Portugal’s modernity can be problematized from the reverse perspective: examining not how claims about Portugal’s (lack of) modernity are used to display and strengthen the status of WGFS (as I have discussed in the previous sections) but how claims about WGFS are used to display and strengthen the modernity of Portugal.

Scientific development has often been framed in (past and present) Portuguese public discourse as closely aligned with, and an avenue of, modernization. The official guiding document for science policy for the period of my fieldwork, titled *A Commitment to Science for the Future of Portugal* and published by the Ministry for Science, Technology, and Higher Education in 2006, stated that “scientific progress is a motor of development and a source of progress” (MCTES 2006, 4). Women’s and gender equality has also featured in public discourse as symbols of modernity. Rosa Monteiro’s (2010) study of the history of Portuguese state feminism provides many illustrations. She explains, for example, that Estado Novo, a profoundly antifeminist regime, created a Working Group for National Policy in Relation to the Woman in 1970, partly as a way of cleaning up its image vis-à-vis the United Nations, which was critical of Portugal’s refusal to withdraw from its remaining colonies.

This framing of science and of attention to women and gender as markers and evidence of modernity was also present in public claims made by governmental and university representatives in events that I observed.<sup>22</sup> When addressing audiences at WGFS conferences, government representatives often explicitly positioned WGFS as a project both demonstrating the present modernity of the nation and enabling its future modernization. In a speech at the closing ceremony of a WGFS conference, a secretary of state used WGFS to contrast the less advanced Portugal of the past with its present, more modern, incarnation: “As I listened to the previous speaker, . . . I was thinking of how far Portuguese society has come, how it has advanced, for us to now have in universities areas of study such as this [WGFS]. When we look back . . . it’s clear just how far we’ve come and

<sup>22</sup> It is common in Portugal to invite such figures to speak at conference opening or closing ceremonies, especially when they have provided funding.

how much we traveled to get here.” He then spoke at some length about women’s rights throughout Portuguese history, and he concluded by saying, “To stimulate our society to be more open and modern . . . , it’s necessary to mobilize and educate. . . . For that, I believe that it’s very important for universities to be interested in these themes [of WGFS], because these are, after all, the themes of our time and the themes of our modernity. I’m convinced that this is why you [the audience] were here and also why [the organizers] held this event. Thank you. [*Applause*].” By framing WGFS as the “themes of our time and the themes of our modernity,” this speech positions the country, the institution hosting the event, and its audience firmly within the modern because they are interested in, and supportive of, WGFS. It is not exactly clear who this “our” refers to, but I interpret it as alluding both to “our” *contemporary* time/modernity and “our” *Portuguese* time/modernity, thereby aligning the two and positioning Portugal as a nation of this (modern) time.

These ceremonial claims about WGFS are not made only to affirm the modernity of the nation; WGFS is called upon also in claims where what is at stake is the status of particular institutions as up-to-date sites of teaching and research. Consider this excerpt of a speech made by a university representative during the opening ceremony of a WGFS event:

To say that universities must be attentive to the world is to say the obvious. But universities have not always done so. . . . That is why changes . . . in our university that reflect that attention to the world are always welcome. . . . The decision to offer [WGFS programs] in our university is inscribed in that aim because it is a field which has much to do with a set of issues that are very old but also very much of our current time. It is a set of issues that is particularly pressing today—as illustrated by the fact that last year [2007] was the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. . . . That’s why we supported this conference from the start . . . because the idea was interesting and current.

The speaker describes “attention to the world” as a crucial and “obvious” concern for a university but one that many institutions have failed to uphold. He then frames this university’s WGFS program, and its hosting of this conference, as being “inscribed in that aim.” The presence of WGFS acts therefore as proof that this institution is keeping up with “the world” and is giving attention to the issues “of our current time.”

When asked about their institutions’ positions toward WGFS, seven interviewees described situations where university administrations had made similar strategic appropriations of WGFS: “I think gender equality is now

a bit of a fashion [governmentally] because it's something that used to be less explored and now can be explored, thereby allowing them to show they've done something. . . . In academia the same thing is happening, institutions can explore a field that . . . has become more visible, exists in other countries and doesn't exist here, and can use that to show they do things, that they're more modern and innovative than other universities" (senior WGFS researcher in the humanities).

One senior scholar said in an interview that she believes that her institution has used her as an "alibi-expert":

- I: Do you feel that the work of trying to persuade others of the relevance of women's studies has had results?
- R: I don't know if it's my persuading that had results. . . . You have to see that it's always useful for an institution to have an expert on these matters; it's a sort of alibi-expert. They'll say "oh yes, we know all about those issues, we have an expert on them in our university." I definitely felt that, it was very visible.

Portuguese institutions' use of WGFS scholars and scholarship has also been discussed in the literature. Graça Abranches (1998) recounts that feminist scholars at the University of Coimbra faced significant institutional resistances to their work in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, when the university hosted the SIGMA Conference on Women's Studies in Europe (July 1995), "in his opening speech, and to the astonishment of many quarters, the Rector explicitly mentioned GREF [Grupo de Estudos Feministas, the university's Feminist Studies Group] as a testimony of the University's commitment to Women's Studies" (1998, 12). Abranches argues that this was part of "a strategy of using [GREF] as a token of the University's up-to-dateness in the academic world market" (1998, 16). Three interviewees argued that these affirmations of support for WGFS enabled the positioning of Portugal, or a specific institution, as already advanced and equal, rendering less visible the resistances still faced by Portuguese WGFS scholars. According to them, such public (ceremonial or daily) affirmations of support for WGFS sometimes work to detract attention from the ways in which those very same institutions do *not* support WGFS and potentially make it harder to demand more support for the field.

### **Feminist scholarship and the imagination of nations: Conclusion**

I have shown that the positioning of particular countries as sites of production of better knowledge can be, and is, used by scholars located (semi)pe-



ripherally in the global academic order to create valuable openings for the expansion or legitimation of WGFS. In these negotiations in/of the (semi)periphery, being from the modern foreign, having a presence in it, or citing what happens there may be extremely important and even decisive because it renders claims about the value of WGFS more easily recognizable as true. The modern foreign functions here as a truth-spot (Gieryn 2002, 2006) or, as I prefer to call it, a truth-point, a point in space-time that when invoked produces truth-effects, as Foucault (1980) might put it. My choice of the term “invocation” to describe how the category of the foreign is mobilized locally is not arbitrary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “invoke” as “to call on (God, a deity, etc.) . . . as a witness; to appeal to for aid or protection . . . or in confirmation of something” and “to utter (a sacred name) in invocation; to call to (a person) to come or to do something.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, what has interested me here is exploring how the modern foreign functions in some (semi)peripheral countries as a sacred name, or as I labeled it, drawing on Chandra Talpade Mohanty, an authorizing signature or body. Because it may aid or protect them in local struggles, WGFS scholars call upon the modern foreign to come (discursively or physically) to their countries to witness and confirm the value of WGFS.

But WGFS is not just the subject of invocations; it is also an object within the invocations of others. Semiperipheral countries are constantly embroiled in laborious struggles over whether they are on the right or wrong side of boundaries, namely, the boundaries that are seen to separate the modern from the nonmodern, the center from the periphery. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1994) and João Arriscado Nunes (1996) have argued, this often involves a process of imagination of the center, whereby “in order to be included among ‘developed’ societies, a country increases the visibility of those features generally associated with ‘development,’ and correspondingly decreases the visibility of those associated with ‘underdevelopment’” (Nunes 1996, 14–15). I have shown here that the existence of WGFS in a country or institution is seen as a feature associated with “development” and thus can be invoked, and made more visible, in this ongoing process of imagination.

The configuration of these links—between global relations of power and local negotiations of authority, between the epistemic status of WGFS and of nations—is very much shaped by a region’s specific historical, cultural, and political trajectory. In peripheral and semiperipheral countries where there is a widespread recognition of, and orientation toward, coun-

<sup>23</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed., s.v. “invoke.”

tries of the center as academic models and agents of certification of scholarly quality—as in Portugal, Taiwan (Chen 2004), or the Czech Republic (Stöckelová 2012)—invocations of the modern foreign are likely to be effective in strengthening credibility and/or producing shame. Nevertheless, the same invocation may have a different, even opposite, effect within those contexts and constituencies where the (greater) authority of the countries of the center is disputed (as described, e.g., in Allaine Cerwonka's 2008, Almira Ousmanova's 2003, and Susan Zimmermann's 2005 discussions of Eastern European scholars' repudiation of scholarship from the West). In countries of the center, the foreign seems to have much less weight as a marker of (higher) epistemic status, though it can affect negotiations of WGFS's institutional position in other guises, namely, as a potential source of income. Clare Hemmings notes that in her British university, and in a context of "institutional thirst for international fees," it was "the *international* development of the field that finally convinced institutional bureaucrats to support (albeit in minimal terms) a field they otherwise failed to see the national relevance of" (2008, 125).

In a text on the institutionalization of WGFS in Croatia, where she briefly addresses these complex relations, Biljana Kašić challenges WGFS scholars to consider issues of "location, . . . western/eastern, northern/southern cooperation, . . . and expectations regarding our roles and status in relation to . . . the different stages of women's studies' development in [different] countries" (2004, 38). She suggests that we must ask "whether the legitimisation of [WGFS in (semi)peripheral contexts can] only be achieved through the mediating of recognised and well-respected programs of women's/gender studies from the West and how that influence[s] the efforts and contributions of local feminists and potential collaborations" (39). I want to close this article by engaging with these questions from the perspective of my fieldwork in Portugal.

In debates about the relations between WGFS scholarship produced in different countries, much critical attention has rightly been dedicated to international asymmetries between countries in terms of status and influence. But drawing on the empirical study I offer here, I suggest that we also devote attention to thinking about how this hegemony enables the creation of possibilities and opportunities for WGFS scholars in the (semi) periphery. In other words, we must consider both what gets silenced because of these hegemonies and what becomes possible and speakable locally through the invocation of the hegemonic modern foreign. As John D. French asserts in a discussion of the international circulation of social theories, we must avoid "model[s] of [Western] domination/imposition and subaltern submission/complicity" that risk "eras[ing] the process of

local appropriation” (2003, 376) of foreign ideas and, I would add, of local appropriation of the epistemic status of the modern foreign (see also Cerwonka 2008). I am not calling for a reframing of these global asymmetries as only or mostly positive—they have powerful negative impacts, as I have demonstrated—but, rather, as extremely complicated relationships. I am arguing for a reframing of these global asymmetries that recognizes more explicitly that they produce both losses and gains for WGFS and that the two are closely intertwined and interact with each other. For example, I have shown that WGFS scholars from (semi)peripheral countries sometimes explicitly and emphatically frame their own contexts as less advanced than the center because locally this heightens the persuasiveness and effectiveness of their claims that WGFS must be accepted; and yet, the framing of their countries as academically underdeveloped reproduces and legitimates the very same hierarchies that lead to the extremely problematic devaluing of their scholarship in global academic exchanges.

I have often been asked whether such small-scale gains, in terms of legitimization of WGFS locally, outweigh the heavy losses—of plurality, dialogue, inclusiveness, and heteroglossia in transnational WGFS and of the vitality of local efforts to develop concepts and theories attuned to the specificities of each context. This is an important question; however, it cannot and should not be answered in a straightforward or abstract way. Because WGFS is a diverse field with sometimes conflicting pressures, demands, and aims; because power operates on different levels in scholarly exchanges; and because such gains and losses are so closely intertwined, answering such a question requires much clearer specification. Do the gains outweigh the losses—for whom, and at what level? In the short term or the long term? Locally or globally? For the development of knowledge, broader political transformation, or the strengthening of institutionalization?

Global hegemonies have very different effects on and implications for each of these levels. For example, the asymmetrical canonization of authors from the center and the concomitant large-scale reliance on their work to analyze gender in (semi)peripheral contexts renders global WGFS debates profoundly unequal, contributes in the long term to stifling local concept formation and theory building, and thus can have a considerable negative impact on the development of knowledge, as Ana Gabriela Macedo and Ana Luísa Amaral (2002) have argued for the Portuguese context. And yet, as I show here, many scholars in the (semi)periphery, and specifically in present-day Portugal, find that quoting and invoking authors and debates of the center makes all the difference in the short term when attempting to

create WGFS programs, get a WGFS book published, and thus advance the local institutionalization of WGFS.

There are many other examples of complex entanglement. On a political level, WGFS scholars' framing of their own (semi)peripheral contexts as not yet that modern (compared to the center) can help disrupt problematic attempts to portray their own countries and institutions as already modern and equal. On the other hand, this acclamation of the modern foreign as term of reference and foil has problematic effects. It arguably helps to normalize the hegemony of the modern foreign not only as a site for the production of proper knowledge but also as the site and route of progress. This is by no means a minor issue in a global world order where the category of the more egalitarian modern is regularly invoked to position Western nations as symbols, protectors, and enforcers of development and to enact and justify domestic or international exclusions and violence (Volpp 2001; Shepherd 2006; Puar 2007).

These entanglements are complicated further by the fact that WGFS scholars based in the center can and do benefit from these global hegemonies in a range of ways: their work is likely to be more easily recognized as transnationally relevant and more widely read and cited, and thus they are more frequently invited to present their work abroad. However, the higher epistemic status of the modern foreign that enables these advantages is premised on the framing of particular countries as already success stories of WGFS. This can, in turn, complicate the work of WGFS communities in the countries of the center because that portrayal can be, and has been, harnessed by states and institutions to justify refusals to provide additional or continued support for WGFS on the grounds that WGFS is already doing comparably well in that context (Liinason 2011).

All these examples make one thing clear: short- and long-term aims, as well as institutional and theoretical concerns, are not affected in the same way by global academic hegemonies, require different strategies for negotiating these hegemonies, and may sometimes work against each other. How one assesses the impact of global hegemonies on WGFS will thus depend on the aims and concerns one foregrounds and the particular needs of a WGFS community. This means that such assessments must be openly and regularly debated, remain attentive to context, and consider the imbrication of the local and the global. Crucially, they must also recognize that WGFS scholars (in the center and [semi]periphery) can both lose and gain from global academic hegemonies and thus have complex, ambivalent, and not always fully acknowledged investments in the transnational epistemic and institutional politics of academic relations. It is vital not to let the

(semi)peripherality of a country in global hierarchies, or the (semi)peripherality of WGFS in academic hierarchies, lead us to see WGFS or those countries as peripheral or external to the relations of power that constitute certain centers as centers. The production of feminist knowledge is always imbricated in global relations of power; continuing to work to disrupt and transform those global relations of power requires constant attention to how we, as feminist scholars, define and invoke the space-time of proper knowledge, as well as a continuing critical engagement with the ways in which WGFS is used to imagine nations.

*Department of Sociology and Centre for the Study of Women and Gender  
University of Warwick*

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