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*Feminist  
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*An Unfinished Journey*

*Christine Sylvester*

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## **Feminist International Relations**

### *An Unfinished Journey*

The impact of feminism on international relations in the past fifteen years has been enormous. In this book Christine Sylvester presents her own career as a journey within the larger journey that scholarly feminism has made in the field of International Relations.

The introductory section sets the context of the journey in International Relations as a field and in key works by Jean Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe, and Ann Tickner that helped carve out a distinctly feminist International Relations. Twelve of Sylvester's essays are then grouped in three sections. The first, "Sightings", features works that reveal the presence and effects of gender in international politics. Next, "Sittings" considers locations where gender can come into International Relations through innovative feminist methodologies. Finally, "Citings" considers a range of contemporary work in feminist International Relations and suggests where the scholarly journey needs to go in the future.

This unusual and wide-ranging book will both guide and challenge scholars and students of international relations theory, gender studies, and postcolonial studies.

CHRISTINE SYLVESTER is Professor of Women, Gender, Development at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands. Her publications include *Producing Women and Progress in Zimbabwe: Narratives of Identity and Work from the 1980s* (2000), *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (1994), and *Zimbabwe: The Terrain of Contradictory Development* (1991).



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# Feminist International Relations

*An Unfinished Journey*

Christine Sylvester

*Institute of Social Studies, The Hague*



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To Karen Mingst



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## *Acknowledgments*

Zimbabwean political economy began to intersect in the early 1990s, Northern Arizona University took up the position of generous financier. It funded summers in Zimbabwe and granted leave for senior associate memberships at St. Antony's College, Oxford University (1990 and 1995) and a senior visiting fellow post in the School of International Affairs at the University of Southern California (1991). Although I moved on from NAU, I never visit the USA without visiting my friends in Flagstaff.

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*Part I*

# Introduction





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# 1      **Looking backwards and forwards at International Relations around feminism**

For the academic field of International Relations (IR), the decade of the 1980s effectively opened with Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (1977) and/or with Kenneth Waltz's neo-realist *Theory of International Politics* (1979) – depending on one's geographical and philosophical site in the field. The decade closed on a note that opened all of IR to radical departures from the general tenor (and tenure) of the Bull and Waltz tomes: it closed with Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Relations* (1989). Elements of the new colors and tones washing into the field had been foreshadowed two years earlier in Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* (1987). The feminists were not the only challengers about (e.g., Ashley and Walker, 1990a; Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989), but they would turn into one of the most sustaining groups at IR's timbered doors.

Bull had presented the realist case for basing IR on the notion of an international society of sovereign states through which order is maintained and justice struggled over in world politics (see also Bull and Watson, 1986). Waltz had re-sited classical realist theory beyond the realm of states and society; he wrote about the systemic ordering principle of anarchy in international relations and its necessary spawns – rationality and self-help. In contrast to these key mainstream works of the decade, Enloe asked us everywhere to give up thinking that international relations consisted of peopleless states, abstract societies, static ordering principles, or even theories about them, and begin looking for the many people, places, and activities of everyday international politics. Locate those who make the world go round, she said, and cite them.

The decade's triad of society, system, and then (at the last moment) people turned on their heads the order of Waltz's earlier

levels-of-analysis notions in *Man, the State, and War* (1959), and Bull's (1969:26) assessment that a researcher pushing for science in IR was like a sex-deprived nun. Man as agent of international relations was out of most IR sights in Bull's and especially Waltz's books at the dawn of the 1980s. Enloe brought him back in as central to, and not to be lauded within, the inherited traditions of all IR. "He" reached between states and into society and system in power-laden and gender-enforcing ways. It may have been fashionable in the 1980s to block him out of the picture, but his marks and traces were everywhere. More, a secret was now out too: he was not alone in the power matrices of international politics.

There were many events of note in between those years and those books. The American field set its course around *Neorealism and its Critics* (Keohane, 1986), a compendium of arguments lined up for and against Waltz's move away from classical realism, for and against his scorn for the agency-oriented thinking of early Idealism. Its editor, Robert Keohane, was a sympathetic disputant in the argument. He was concerned that his preferred approach of neoliberal institutionalism, which sites circumstances of cooperation under anarchy, not be overruled; but he was also willing to admit that states were self-helping entities working under conditions of anarchy. Others who were brought into that dispute offered radical departures from the types of argument the field had hitherto heard; they intoned critical theory (Cox, 1986) and, most especially, postmodernism (Ashley, 1986). Those approaches, which Keohane called "reflectivist," would come to occupy a greater place in 1990s IR than might have been anticipated or desired by neorealists and other critics, who kept their arguments within pre-established epistemological boundaries as they debated.

Meanwhile, Elshtain veered off to argue in *Women and War* (1987) that what we hear of war comes to us as stories deeded by acceptable sources – acceptable in the sense of being associated with the Just Warriors entitled in most societies to engage in or own war. Certain other participants, deemed Beautiful Souls, are continuously disallowed war-telling by virtue of being assigned the homefront, where their protection becomes one reason men will go to war at all. Though the places in the drama seem set and the citations to authority in order, Elshtain taught us that the empirical and narrative realities of war are something different. Her treatment of a major activity of international relations put her work inside IR. Her insistence on sighting women within and around a main topic of the field, however, sited *Women and War* outside the central concerns of that American neorealist (versus . . .) moment. The IR inside

initially won: Elshtain was not part of the Keohane book, even though she had several IR-relevant writings preceding *Women and War* (e.g., 1985). No other woman of IR was included in that volume either. The outside, though, later folded inwards: a scant ten years on, Elshtain's book had received so many citations in IR literature that it could be considered part of the canon.

Across British IR, the decade of the 1980s was absorbed by ongoing work in the classical realist tradition, particularly around security, as well as overlapping areas of international society, normative theory, and international political economy. The English school of realism and society, spun, in part, off Bull's *Anarchical Society* (1977), also seemed to prevail for a while in Australia, where Bull began. This approach did not capture American IR's science-oriented audience. Even in the UK there was considerable talk during the 1980s of an inter-paradigm debate in which no single IR theory was seen to dominate the field. Rather, three paradigms were sighted as competitor streams of thinking: realism/neorealism; globalism/pluralism; and neo-Marxism/structuralism (Banks, 1985). The first two "paradigms" were common to US and British IR. Critical theory, sited within the third, neo-Marxist "paradigm," became the British contender for the more radical wing of IR. It poised itself against continental/North American postmodernism – against what John Baylis and Nick Rengger (1992:16) refer to as radical interpretivism. It made Habermasian efforts to complete the modern project by creating the social components of a post-Westphalian world (Hoffmann, 1987; Linklater, 1980, 1990); or it promoted Gramscian interpretations of hegemony and anti-hegemonic struggle (Cox, 1986).

During these same years of the middle to late 1980s, a few British women wrote IR, some radically and critically, some less so. The late Susan Strange (e.g., 1982, 1984), for instance, was a giantess of IR, making enormous contributions to international political economy. She did not engage in feminist research at all, but others did contribute to the establishment of a feminist IR tradition (e.g., *Millennium*, 1988; Grant and Newland, 1991). And in the early 1990s, Sandra Whitworth (1994), a Canadian trained in the UK, added a feminist voice to the British critical theory tradition, through her study of gender issues in international organizations. Today the feminist IR tradition flourishes in the UK among British and transplanted scholars, as the citations throughout this volume indicate.

British IR of all stripes has tended toward philosophical and historical methods, irrespective of the puzzles under consideration. In Britain, one

sees them referred to as “classical” or “historical” (see Rengger, 1988), whereas North American behavioralists speak of “traditional” methods (e.g., Kaplan, 1969) carrying over from an era when the fledgling field of IR was concerned, on both sides of the Atlantic, with prescriptive theory and diplomatic history. In New World IR, physics became (and sometimes still is) the exemplary, though difficult to emulate, model of positivist research. Steve Smith (1996:17) argues that positivism, in fact, infused the entire field of IR, wherever located, owing to widespread belief in a “natural science methodology . . . tied to an empiricist epistemology: together these result[ed] in a very restricted range of permissible ontological claims.” And these restricted claims – which did not allow for the notion, for example, that epistemology might be secondary to ontology, emancipation might be a value guiding research on what is out there, or knowledge might best be seen as a powerful social practice rather than product of individual rationality – determined what could be studied by IR. In other words, they “determined what kinds of things existed in international relations” (Smith, 1996:11).

Positivism made its mark on the Anglo-American field of IR during the Cold War but was under challenge from the 1980s to early 1990s. IR’s so-called Third Debate (Lapid, 1989) forced the canons of AmerEurocentric realism and positivism to defend the right to define vistas of international relations and set the epistemological tools required for analyzing them. New genres, such as postmodernism and feminism, clamored for IR to render an account of its knowledge and methods, arguing that the field could boast neither an impressive intellectual fortune for its seventy or so years of existence nor a legacy of inclusiveness and justice. Critics often fingered positivism as the culprit and argued that only new projects of theorizing could set the field right. Thrown on the defensive, conventional IR discovered that the attackers could not be killed off by a few shots of the can(n)on or made to wither from lack of sympathy. American IR recoiled against Marxian world systems and critical theory, French-inspired radical interpretivism, historical sociological underminings of realist versions of the state, and a phalanx of differently sited feminists brandishing standpoint and postmodernist epistemologies. Some British conventionals outfitted themselves for battle with postmodernism and armed even against “trendy” feminism (Coker, 1990). These were the sites of IR’s philosophy and culture wars. In many ways, they remain so.

The field’s big *faux pas* of the 1980s fed and helped inspire the many contestations. Few realists of any ilk would have argued that states

voluntarily go out of business and dismantle their territorial authorities. This the Soviet Union did. Few analysts imagined eerie slapstick moments in November 1989, when an Iron Curtain fell before an onslaught of Trabant-driving shopper-armies from the East. Few security experts would have anticipated that ethnic cleansing would soon be on the agenda in Europe, forty years after a major war and after an international tribunal had supposedly rooted it out. Fewer still might have imagined that rape would appear as a war-fighting strategy in a series of European wars conducted during the nuclear age; or that considerable diplomatic energy would soon go into wrangling over the military use of landmines.

The confluence of IR's theoretical weaknesses and a world seemingly out of order led two established figures in American IR nervously to admit in 1988 – even before the fall of the Soviet Empire – that:

Many students of international relations, like the present authors, were once convinced that they were participants in a quest for theory which would, in time, unravel the arcane secrets of world politics. That quest would deepen our theoretical insights as we tested our ideas according to the canons of science. Knowledge and understanding would be gradual and cumulative, but, in the end, they might even enable us to overcome age-old scourges like war. In subsequent decades, we have witnessed changes in discourse in the field, the development of intriguing and ingenious methodologies, the creation of new forms of data, and the diffusion of American social science techniques throughout the world. Yet, our understanding of key phenomena is expanding only very modestly, if at all. (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1988:3)

A touching and honest expression of malaise, a statement of this type was rare in mainstream IR circles, though appropriate to the times. Three years later, the same writers would revisit their anguish and admonish the field to rethink central concepts, cease endless debating aimed at determining a winning side, “venture beyond our field’s familiar boundaries,” and “tolerate the effrontery of others messing about in *our* intellectual territory” (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1991:383).

As the 1980s shaded further into the 1990s, some American and British academics drew closer around concerns of theory, ethics, and constitutive as opposed to explanatory approaches to research. Smith (1995:28) describes the English school, for example, as moving to ask “whether the meanings and interpretations of international society are constitutive of that society or are mere ciphers for structural forces,” a question that gets at the issue of what we should be studying in IR. He asserts

that this query has also turned up among American schools of realism in the post-Cold War period, as attention has been focused by some on clashes between cultures instead of between states (Huntington, 1993). Baylis and Rengger (1992:8) claim more broadly that there has been transcontinental overlap in two areas recently: around choice-theoretic frameworks in some cases and around various critical schools of thinking that challenge positivism.

The constructivism to which Smith alludes is, however, the new pivot point on both sides of the Atlantic, and of particular importance, along with rational choice frameworks, to American IR. The question underlying much constructivist work is how actors (agents), issue-areas, and structures of international relations are shaped or co-shaped by ideas, norms, rules, and values that are not, strictly speaking, rational (Burch and Denemark, 1997; Dessler, 1989; Finnemore, 1996; Wendt, 1995, 1999; Forum, 2000). Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit (1998:263) argue pointedly that “[i]f the principal axis of debate during the 1980s lay between rationalists and early critical theorists, the major line of contestation now lies between rationalists and constructivists.” To tender this argument, constructivism is made into an umbrella big enough to shelter postmodernist and some modernist contingents of IR (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998:267). From the perspective of constructivism’s critics (e.g., Bleiker, 2000a; Campbell, 1996; George, 1994), however, there is no natural chumminess in such an enterprise. Critics argue that constructivism smuggles postmodernist thinking about the social construction of meaning, identity, and politics into positivist-inclined IR treatments of state and nonstate behaviors, in ways that kill off the partner. Constructivists respond that the critics have been so absorbed by metatheoretical concerns that they have offered the field no substantive research agenda. This has produced a void that is now filled by those who seek to address longstanding questions in the newer ways, and who find “answers that upon close analysis are often much more measured and persuasively defended than some of the claims that leapt out of the metatheoretical fire” (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998:271). The thrusts and ripostes persist into this millennial post-Third Debate era; only now there is even contestation about where the axes of shifting difference lie.

## **Enter feminism**

It was during the destabilizing decade of the 1980s that feminists, our main focus of consideration here, began individual and collective

journeys of self-aware identity, compensatory research, and climbs steeply uphill to recognition by the historical keepers of IR. We did not spring forth like Hobbes' famous mushrooms, with no parentage, no debts (Di Stefano, 1983). The contemporary international women's movement laid the political and epistemological groundwork in the 1960s; by the 1980s, feminists were numerous enough, confident enough, as well as sufficiently weathered, titled, and published to have women's studies programs in place, women and politics specialists on staff, and a stable of writings to consult – and internal debates to display (Sylvester, 1994a). Conferences and workshops introduced feminisms to mainstream IR audiences in London, Los Angeles, and Boston. By 1990 there was a Feminist Theory and Gender Studies (FTGS) section of the International Studies Association, followed by a similar section in the British International Studies Association. These organizations gave feminist scholars social and political visibility in the corridors of a field that Ann Tickner has often spoken of as lined mostly with "white men in ties." Indeed, Tickner carried forward the torch lit by Elshtain and Enloe with her important work on *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (1992).

The volumes by Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner offered sustained arguments about topics central to IR and revealed theoretical deficiencies across the field at large. No single-authored book emerging from any other country in the 1980s and 1990s would carry the intellectual stature and enduring importance to feminist IR of this trio. Most feminist IR writings of 1980–1993, while impressive, made contributions of a more confined scope, through articles, book chapters, edited volumes, or books focusing on somewhat narrower phenomena in the field than Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner addressed (e.g., Cohn, 1987; Grant and Newland, 1991; Jaquette, 1982; *Millennium*, 1988; Peterson, 1992; Runyan and Peterson, 1991; Staudt, 1987; Stiehm, 1984). By contrast, in *Women and War* Elshtain took up the core IR topic of war while also discussing, in passing, what she called the dubious claims of IR knowledge. Tickner's *Gender in International Relations* also worked at the core to consider issues of security within a reappraisal of the realist tradition. Enloe became the great sighter of women in unexplored (because often unnoted) realms of the international and its relations. Her *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* and Elshtain's and Tickner's two tomes, comprise work that the FTGS has deemed "eminent." In 1994, I contributed *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Sylvester, 1994a). It took on the field's formative debates to indicate what was missed, glossed over, or could

not be fully submerged in discussions that ostensibly did not site women and gender in IR. Like the other three encapsulators of early feminist IR, it also drew attention to some of the modifications of IR theory that would arise if field lenses were trained (also) on excluded dynamics, such as decision making in feminist peace camps and processes of international political economy around Zimbabwean cooperatives.

There were various reactions to this first major wave of feminist IR. A few IR principals showed immediate interest. Keohane (1989a), for example, who had been Ann Tickner's Ph.D. supervisor, read early feminist IR work and sought to incorporate some of it into neoliberal institutionalism. Thomas Biersteker (1989) asked feminists to provide a distinctive construction of international security to contrast with a neorealist one. Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker (1990a) edited a special issue of *International Studies Quarterly* in which they named feminism as part of dissident IR and women as part of the margins the field shunned. Some readily referred to feminist IR writings when discussing new issues in the field (e.g., Brown, 1994; George, 1994; Goldstein, 1994; Halliday, 1988; Neufeld, 1995; Smith, 1992). Yet judging by the bibliographies framing many works, one could come away from IR texts of the time not realizing that feminism was around at all. Even among the interested parties, it has rarely been the case that sympathizers have adjusted their models or modes of approaching international relations to reflect lessons learned from feminist thinking. Citations often bunch feminists like daisies in a bouquet; it is correct to nod to them and then move on to name discipline-identified people and *their* new theoretical approaches (e.g., Linklater, 1992).

Tickner (1997) argues that there is a difficult relationship between feminist and conventional IR, owing to differences in ontological and epistemological approaches as well as differences in power. IR generally poses international relations in abstract and unitary terms, while feminists are mostly attuned to the social relations of the international, which I refer to as relations international. Feminists tend to see aspects of sociality – positive or negative in their outcomes for women and other groups in the international system – as the reality of international relations, just as neorealists see very little (and then often irritable) sociality in an anarchic state system. Feminists are also methodological innovators in the field, roundly preferring ethnographic approaches over hypothesis testing, and leaning on philosophical ancestors among feminist thinkers as well as the oft-cited men of political thought. Feminist



research programs aim first to reveal places where gender and women are located in international relations and then to offer compensatory versions of theory and practice that are less partial and more just, while also highly central to feminist and/or IR knowledge.

To many conventional analysts within IR, feminism rings in the ears but is not an enterprise to be rung in as a full partner. Feminist IR has some power to command citation, but it sometimes does not receive proper credit for its ideas. To illustrate this point, consider Tickner's (1997:614) claim that "[a]lmost all feminists who write about international relations use gender in a social constructivist sense." Her position is close to the one offered by Smith (1995:27), who sees that "[m]ost of the work of postmodernists and critical theorists, and that of some feminists, fits into this broad category of constitutive theory." Constructivism, though, is routinely credited to Alexander Wendt (1987), Nicholas Onuf (1989), John Ruggie (1983), and Walter Carlsnaes (1992), and not to feminists. The possibility that some of those seen as (merely also) fitting the category may have helped introduce aspects of constructivism to IR, as is arguably the case with Elshtain's *Women and War* – which is about the social constitution of gender through ideas carried in war stories – is not mentioned, let alone explored. All-embracing constructivism, therefore, comes out as fathered, like most IR.

A similar situation confronts feminists interested in issues of culture and identity. A new body of work challenges the usual tendency in the field to make universalist statements about states, sovereignty, anarchy, foreign policy, politics, conflict, and so on (Chay, 1990; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Huntington, 1993; Klotz, 1995; Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996; Linklater, 1998; Walker, 1988). Some of it takes to heart postcolonial literatures that answer back to AmerEuropean histories of imperialism (e.g., Alker, 1992; Chan, 1993; Darby, 1997, 1998; Doty, 1996; Kothari, 1988); but since the postcolonial tradition of scholarship comes from Indian-based subaltern studies and the analysis of fiction written from many Third World perspectives, it has not yet made its mark on an IR concerned with heroic western topics (Sylvester, 1999c, 1999d). Similarly missing in much of the new IR culture literature is gender analysis. The work offers little of the feminist sense that men and women (as decision makers, culture objects/viewers/shapers, participants in transnational movements, citizens, and so on) often inhabit different cultures, idea-realms, and social positions within international relations (which is why they see things differently) and within their own

nation-states (see Cohn, 1987; Enloe, 1989, 1993; McGlen and Sarkees, 1993; Sylvester, 1990, 1998a; Tickner, 1996). Culture and its accoutrements can thus turn up, at this late date in IR, as “innocently” ungendered – and sometimes ethnocentric.

Meanwhile, neoliberal institutionalism carries on about cooperative elements of the system without writing about failings of cooperation *vis-à-vis* women serving international relations from inside international institutions and regimes – though exactly these shortcomings were pointed out. The failure to respond to feminist arguments is not unusual in IR. In this case, Keohane (1998) claims he did his best to encourage feminists to join neoliberal institutionalism and received in turn only antipathy to his proposed alliance. It was not antipathy, exactly: I indicated the ways institutionalist cooperation and reciprocity parted company with feminist understandings of these processes (Sylvester, 1994a). Keohane did not respond. That there have been few if any feminists taking up his proposition says something about the commandeering attitude of IR *vis-à-vis* feminism. It also reveals reluctance in some quarters to embrace a mission that entails bringing feminist questions to IR rather than IR into feminism. The latter point needs clarification.

It is safe to say that all feminists involved with IR are appalled at the field for systematically excluding the theoretical and practical concerns that feminist theory raises to visibility. Some of us, though, do not seek to improve the flawed product line called IR so much as to take off in new directions altogether, because a marriage of feminist ways of thinking and doing research with IR's positivism appears doomed. We believe that a new international relations tradition is needed to accommodate and theorize people, places, authorities, and activities that IR does not sight or cite. IR would then become a site where feminist questions could be (also) asked about gender, sexuality, bodies, travel, difference, identity, voice, subjectivity, and patriarchy (see e.g., Harding, 1998; Weedon, 1999) in spaces of the world where social relations breach boundaries and spill out internationally. To find those places and work analytically within them, we “do” IR as transversal and liminal *vis-à-vis* philosophy, anthropology, literary and art theory, women's studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, history, psychoanalytic theory, and the like. Of course we have our differences: Enloe is a standpoint feminist and I incline toward postmodern feminism; Elshtain gracefully combines the two in *Women and War*. We have each been redoing international relations by doing something that carries IR echoes but is not embedded in IR frameworks. And, although our views on ontology,

epistemology, scholarly style, and citational authority differ, these differences are small compared with those that set our thinking apart from most of IR.

Others among us assist IR to see that feminist theorizing and methods can bring missing vistas to the field's usual outlook. Tickner is a specialist in IR who recognizes its shortcomings and wants to infuse the field with feminist sensitivity. From a perch within, she presents feminist critiques of IR knowledge and practice and also seeks to strengthen IR so it can advance progressive agendas. The approach she takes is bolstered by Lara Stancich's (1998) argument that feminist IR is marginalized exactly because it is too keen to ground itself in feminist epistemologies and agendas and is therefore insufficiently attuned to IR, theoretically and practically.

At times there can be a fine line between feminist questions in IR and IR questions in feminism and other fields, and some of us have been known to go back and forth between the two. Yet there are research implications raised by work that brings feminism to IR relative to research that makes IR a subset of feminism. Posing a feminist question in IR maintains the authority and legitimacy of the father field, even as it seeks to help it wise up. Turning IR, in part at least, into a set of questions within feminism has the effect of "provincializing" much of IR *vis-à-vis* frameworks that foreground subaltern *and* world analyses (borrowed from Chakrabarty, 1992). Both approaches deal with issues we can associate with IR, such as war, peace, trade, cooperation, and international development. The departure points are there, though: those who work with feminist questions brought to IR allow that the field has contributed work that needs feminist enhancings and alterations; those who look at IR questions in feminism find the constitution of IR such that it cannot handle important feminist issues, such as rape as a war-fighting strategy.

In some sites of analysis, neither a feminist question in IR nor an IR question in feminism has been raised at all. Studies of international society are surprisingly silent on feminist thinking. I have yet to come across a sustained critique of Bull's *Anarchical Society* that raises questions about the salience of gender and/or women to his constructs of international sociality, to say nothing of an effort to move explicitly beyond Bull and into a feminist theoretical framework for international society. A special issue of *Millennium* entitled "Beyond International Society" (1992; see also Dunne, 1995) took up a variety of premises and problems of international society, but dropped the gender ball. Current

American rational choice research is not especially gender sensitive either. Feminist scholars rarely get into that fray, finding IR's preoccupations with rationality decidedly masculinist (Tickner, 1988), and game theory "the opposite of relational and the context dependent" (Fierke, 1999:405).

As well, despite laudable efforts in IR to revisit the history of the field with the tools of today, women, gender, and feminism still go missing. A panel at the International Studies Association meetings 2000 presented an impressive line-up of field historians (e.g., Tim Dunne, 1998; Brian Schmidt, 1998; Robert Vitale, 2000); but none among them so much as hinted at the possibility that women may have been *involved* in originary moments of "our" field, or that gender issues may have been *neglected* as the field's knowledge coalesced. Another panel showcased critical approaches to IR around another all-men cast of Steve Smith, Robert Cox, Rob Walker, Richard Ashley, and Yosef Lapid. Feminist IR analysis is critical in the broad sense of the term, and should have been represented on the broadly based panel. Smith mentioned the oversight; other panellists did not.

If we scan horizon lines, we can find more robust cases of feminist interest and actions outside the usual, and until now, dominant USA–UK orbit. In Australia, the department of IR at the Australian National University – the only field-specific department in the country – became devoted in the late 1990s to research on the Asia-Pacific region; thereafter it gave only passing attention to feminist IR. Scholars located elsewhere in Australia and around the ANU, however, continued to produce feminist IR/IR feminist work (e.g., Bleiker, 2000c; Pettman, 1996a; Sylvester, 1998a). Feminist IR/IR feminism is alive in Sweden (Aggestam et al., 1997), in pockets of Austria and Germany (Kreisky and Sauer, 1997; DVPW Kongress, 2000; *Femina Politica*, 2000), in the Netherlands (Ling, 2001; Marchand et al., 1998), at the University of Tampere in Finland, which publishes the journal *Kosmopolis*, and elsewhere. Along with the geographical spread of feminist research, there are signs of shifting focus within a diverse camp, from critiquing the mainstream of IR *en route* to other goals, to investigating various gendered phenomena within international politics. There are now feminist commentaries on globalization (Chin, 1998; Kofman and Youngs, 1996; Marchand and Runyan, 2000), royal marriage and European state formation (Saco, 1997), international policy formation and women's bodies (Bretherton, 1998; Buck et al., 1998; Neale, 1998), and the international sex trade (Moon, 1997; Pearson and Theobald, 1998; Pettman,

1996b; Tadiar, 1998) – as well as a continuing tradition of analysing masculinity in international relations (Carver et al., 1998; de Goede, 2000; Hooper, 2001; Zalewski and Parpart, 1998). Numerous textbooks introduce undergraduate students to feminist themes in IR (e.g., Peterson and Runyan, 1993; Pettman, 1996a; Steans, 1997; Tickner (1992) was designed as a textbook). One might say that the openings created by first-wave feminist IR have been enlarged, made pedagogically useful, and traversed in nuanced ways, albeit mostly by other feminists.

## Feminist journeying

At the start of a new millennium, now nearly twenty years into feminist IR/IR feminism, I offer here an unfinished genealogy of an ongoing project. The first stop is at the three bedrock texts on which the sub-field of feminist IR/IR feminist analysis built itself: Elshtain's *Women and War*, Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, and Tickner's *Gender in International Relations*. Those revisitations, brief as they are, remind us – we of feminism, we of IR, we of both and also of overlapping fields – of the scope of the journey feminists undertook in the early days, and of the large questions of IR that have been made to defend themselves against the large questions introduced by feminist analysis. It is a moment of journeying worth contemplating, for these particular texts (each author has since gone on to other related projects) presented the field with enormous challenges and enormous possibilities. If we do not cast an eye backwards, partial vision, entrenched location, or citational myopia may hinder movement forwards. We may keep reinventing the wheel or we may forget about the wheel altogether, only to notice later that something has gone missing. So I pay attention to the progenitors in the introductory chapters and only then turn to my more particularistic and personal case of feminist journeying within a larger journey that has moments of resonance with the travels of Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner.

All the discussions are set up around themes of vision, location, and reference. Drawing out the novel *sightings* of gender and women that one makes as part of the journey, I point to the ways we can anchor or *site* newly noticed subjects within international relations, feminism, and/or IR through a variety of stylistic and methodological innovations. I also call attention to the *citations* that feminists doing international relations rely on to make their cases and build authority in a field that still holds us at arm's length. The volume elucidates ways of seeing the shadowy

presence of gender and of women in international relations, as well as the styles and methodologies by which such sightings have been brought to our attention. It follows one journey set in the context of others to reveal both the distinctive and the common perspectives of an early project that keeps us on our toes today.

That parallel, overlapping, and nonlinear genealogical journey I have undertaken in IR feminism is signposted through twelve of my essays and twelve genealogical introductions to them. The essays were written between 1985 and 2001 – although they are not ordered chronologically here – and roam widely in demonstrating the range of themes, methodologies, and research styles in the genre. Some essays echo or interweave personal with professional themes in the spirit of Elshtain's, Enloe's, and/or Tickner's biographical musings. Others move along more differentiated professional pathways. As a group the essays represent journeying within larger efforts to sight, site, and cite gender and women around international relations. As for the introductions to the essays, these provide a travelogue on how each essay came about: what I was thinking, seeing, and remembering at the time; why a puzzle compelled me to write; what books I was reading; and where I had to go to find "answers." Alone and cross-referenced with the early works of Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner, the essays and introductions provide a sense of how feminist IR/IR feminism was developing coherence while also revealing wanderings by one sojourner around and beyond that project.

The structure of the volume reflects the sense that a genealogy of feminist IR/IR feminism requires both a reminder of the rise of a genre's main works and stories that break the apparent seamlessness of a project. Enloe (1989:196) claims that the personal is international in that "[t]o make sense of international politics we also have to read power backwards and forwards." To make sense of our work, by analogy, we should read the power of ideas back to those who personally inspire us and forwards to the ways that inspirational writings have powerfully spawned new aspects of personal biography and scholarship. Revealing the circumstances and thinking behind one's work feeds a single journey into others; whereas, when relations of the personal and international remain hidden, readers can imagine that a body of work just popped up, gathered steam, progressed in quantity and quality, and moved steadily into the citational stream of a field. In fact, fields and people in them move in all sorts of directions. Some, as I have heard James Der Derian say, scuttle sideways like crabs on a New England beach; others march off to the wilderness, and some follow the lead of others.

Offering essays on feminist IR/IR feminism, and making the stories behind them visible, should facilitate the reader's travel with one researcher who remembers the company of others while devising her own research program. Hopefully, the essays also enable us to picture links between a field often leery of feminism and feminist insistence on siting IR work in many places while also siting some of it in and around IR. The journey commences at the turn of the page.

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## 2     **Introducing Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner: looking at key feminist efforts before journeying on**

My journey through feminist IR/IR feminism moves alongside, ahead of, and behind the footsteps and voices of others. Before recalling aspects of the trip, those who marked out important pathways before me deserve to be sighted, sited, and cited. Nostalgia is not what pulls me to the early IR-relevant works of Jean Bethke Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe, and Ann Tickner; nor have these scholars produced research that is above criticism. Rather, these particular progenitors of the feminist IR tradition are lodestars because they developed methods of locating gender and the international around feminism, or women, men and gender around international relations (and IR); their work improved our visual acuity in IR and in feminism; and the citations they provided drew attention to everyday people of international relations and not just to the usual heroic or scholarly men. Works by these writers are also indisputable classics, which is to say they have sustained. Librettos, then, to their efforts.

### ***Women and War***

Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* (1987) is a bold rethink of conventional war traditions by an American political theorist who trained in IR but cut her teeth on feminism *cum* motherhood. Elshtain probes war by juxtaposing conventional and unconventional perspectives on what is done, said, and claimed in and around war. Hegel's Just Warriors/Beautiful Souls dichotomy serves as the point of departure: western men are deemed fit to mastermind, conduct, and narrate wars, and western women are deemed too beautiful, soft, and motherly to be anything other than receivers of warrior tales. Elshtain crashes through this trope by showing us the women in war and the men who prefer not to be there,



as well as revealing gender-related secrets about war studies celebrities. Many she cites are ordinary people. Some are fierce, others are modest, and many are at unexpected intersections of warrior-beauty sites. Throughout, Elshtain gives IR's contemporary research on war a pass, except to suggest that its approaches to this area of high politics can be ridiculous. Elshtain is also openly troubled by the feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s and lets us know where that stream of thinking is deficient. All the sightings are masterful, the style of presentation brilliant, the arguments trenchant, and the vision both bright and unaccountably myopic.

*Not a soldier*

*Women and War* sets up with two introductions to essays grouped around armed civic virtue and history's gender gap in war. The most innovative chapter in the book appears as the second of the two introductions, the one telling "Not-a-Soldier's Story: An Exemplary Tale." In it, Jean sighs, sites, and cites herself as a war fighting-narrating child who turns into Jean Bethke – hobbled but warring as an adolescent – and then morphs into the battling mother-theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain. Her voyage to women and war flows with the grace of fine literature:

Approaching stealthily, leapfrogging from behind a bush to the camouflage of a large, gnarled tree, trying not to stumble over her weapon or to fall and skin her knees, or worse, tear her dress, the determined, athletic eight-year-old prepares to surround her enemies – a curly-headed, befreckled, slim six-year-old and a plump, red-haired, three-year-old toddler. (p. 15)

One expects a passage like this in Kate Atkinson's fictional account of war-scarred childhood in *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995), which won Whitbread Book of the Year (see chapter 14). The difference is not in writing quality but in the place myths of each. British wartime angst sets the backdrop of a little girl's tragedy in the Atkinson tale, whereas girls enacting a carefree Norman Rockwell scenario of 1950s Americana are at the center of the Elshtain passage. Young Jean is the boss of a game she shapes as she wants it to be: "You saw the movie. We both stand here and fight until one of us dies or gets hurt" (Elshtain, 1987:15). Jean then fights, and has fun doing so.

She borrows a "Block That Kick!" approach to her professional work (Elshtain, 1997:vii) from a mother who often showed "determination to make war, to fight when fighting seemed necessary" (p. 320). That

fighting spirit wins out early in Elshtain's *Bildungsroman* and later through her influential writings and prestigious posts at Vanderbilt University and the University of Chicago. But in the early middle she is hurt. She, the hero (her word) of movie-mimicked stories of dusty cowboys and Indians, she a Jeanne d'Arc of Colorado, finds herself starring in a *noir* drama at the tender age of ten, year 1951: polio. Hospitalized and struggling against physical immobility, she finds she "had not relinquished my fascination with war, with combat, with tests of courage and loyalty. War promised a field of action more vital and serious than any other. War enlisted men in a common cause" (Elshtain, 1987:21). "War enlisted men," and Jean, gender-bending her way through childhood and adolescent hopes, says, wistfully: "My dreams of warrioring dashed, it still seemed possible I might recover sufficiently to be a war correspondent" (p. 20). Soldier men and a reporter woman animated an imaginary of war in which women no less than men could be intimately involved.

Elshtain moves on, episodically, to her years of motherhood. Or is it that she enters academia? Elshtain treats the two overlapping moments of her life as one set of influences on her war interests:

By 1960 my childhood was over. I was a college student and the young mother of an infant (my first daughter), and my examination of war and fears of war and male/female identity more and more fell to one side or the other of a line that severed official, public *discourse* from unsystematic, private *understanding*. The public student of history and politics, inhabiting the sphere of official public/academic discourse, being taught the ways of the political world as the "realists" (Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bismarck, Clausewitz) understood it, and the private dreamer, mother, novel reader, and Beatles buff parted company. (1987:31)

Journal writing softened the binary discomforts. It became the way Elshtain played with and won at education and motherhood without choosing between them. But that did not prevent her from asking: "Where was my voice? Was it a female voice, a mother's voice? Or that of a tough, no-nonsense expert, squeezing all possible sentimental nicety out of political thinking in order to bring politics and our discourse about politics into a more approximate mimetic relationship?" (p. 32). Although Elshtain says she could serve up the right IR "like a seasoned *realpolitiker*, impatient with expressions of fuzzy idealists who were ignorant of the ways of the world" (p. 32), she "hoped inchoately that I might one day put together mothering and political thinking rather than

have to put aside the one in order to engage the other" (p. 32). Contradictions were everywhere and their resolution was something Elshtain deferred long enough to find countermeanings in those interstices. Kathy Ferguson (1993) would later suggest that keeping contradictions alive instead of working to resolve them prematurely is a feminist way of generating new knowledge.

Questioning the gender content of one's voice and life choices marks feminist thinkers from those who operate within academia with qualms of other ideological or methodological types. Choose motherhood and women can lose professional location and voice, finding themselves cited, favorably or unfavorably, mostly by family members. Choose a nonsense professional voice and risk losing the authority, pleasure, and understanding that come from sites of life left behind. Choose. One is meant to choose, Elshtain (1987:33) says, "between realist discourse and idealist principles, between strategic deterrence and civil disobedience, between the dominant image of the public man and the shaky vision of the private woman, her voice sounding strange and tortured as a public instrument . . ."

Her tale goes on to more babies – three by late 1963. No mention of the father of the children, of a husband or a partner or whoever it is whose help makes graduate training *cum* motherhood possible. Babies sprout from a myopic spot, where a homespun heroine, babes at breast, book in hand, and images of warriorhood stirring in the brain becomes a man-woman, Beautiful Soul-Just Warrior, self-contained conceivor. Elshtain warmly acknowledges her husband, Errol, in earlier and later volumes (1981:xvii, 1982; 1986; 1990), savvy in presenting him doing "occasional typing, Xeroxing, mailing, checking out and returning books . . ." (Elshtain, 1982: acknowledgments). In *Women and War*, husband is somewhere near home and wife is out with men who frequent IR's power centers – men such as Harry Truman, who did not think to "question whether one man should have the power to drop such a bomb on his own authority no matter what the situation" (Elshtain, 1987:39). Other male *copains* are exemplaries of civic virtue: Lincoln, one of Elshtain's childhood favorites, wins her adult respect because he can admit "I have not controlled events" (p. 251). That *Women and War* means to correct failures to see private influences in public spheres lends an irony to Elshtain's silence about the support at home that enables her to be a public figure. But then her point is that the private *is* a realm of sanctuary from public pressures, a place of conscience that can be brought to bear on public issues but is not itself public.

Elshtain enters public debate around feminism, a scene where the mother-theorist finds “an animus toward a maternal woman’s voice as pronounced as that of any *realpolitiker* male from seminars in the past” (1987:40). Elshtain fights. In a 1979 essay for *The Nation*, she refuses the then-popular feminist slogan that “the personal is political,” on the grounds that “if politics is power and power is everywhere, politics is in fact nowhere and a vision of public life as the touchstone of a revitalized ideal of citizenship is lost” (Elshtain, 1997:146). Elshtain wants to preserve the two spheres so that the private realm, where mothers and children dwell, can inform a civic ethos that does not rely on war for its legitimacy. She objects to the idea, then popular in radical feminist circles in particular, that the household is a site of male tyranny. She says in *Women and War* that radical feminism extols the female body as the site of goodness, and then has trouble dealing with pregnancy and child-bearing that eventuate (at that time) only through cavorts with “bad” male bodies. Elshtain the mother is put off by this position and accuses radical feminism of exerting “a silencing effect over free and open debate on a whole range of issues . . . even as it provides no alternative vision of a revitalized concept of ‘citizenship’” (p. 149).

Elshtain expresses strong views but expects civil responses to her work. Instead, feminists accused her of every sin in the book, including labeling all feminism “radical,” failing to acknowledge patriarchy, and refusing to see problems in the heterosexual family. At a twenty-year remove, I notice how dated the arguments on both sides sound, how well Elshtain fights, and how patently disinterested her critics truly were in citizenship issues as compared with now (e.g., Connolly, 1993; Curthoys, 1993; Jones, 1990, 1993). Elshtain is impatient with her critics and cleverer by a country mile than many of them. Yet her mental dexterity can be blinding: if the criticisms are ineloquently expressed, but do represent real worries, is it wise to fight so hard, to block so fiercely?

Elshtain’s “exemplary” chapter is both a personal testimony and a public opening that helps us appreciate the concerns of feminists who were in proximity to IR in the 1980s. Visibility was a major concern. Women were not in the state- and system-centric works of IR because they were neither fighters nor leaders, except in unusual and exceptional and overlooked ways. Elshtain tells us (1981:301) that “[t]he activity of theory is, literally, about seeing. *Theorein*, the Greek word from which our own derives, meant to watch or to look at.” Elshtain-theorist first sees herself in and around war, drawing an outline of herself there as an agentic person preoccupied by warriorism and its virtues and

vices. She then sees how other identities add on over time and frame choices about which parts of oneself to highlight when talking about war (warrior, mother, student, current events analyst, feminist, citizen) and which to conceal (wife) in the private sphere of democratic society. The key, which is her argument against radical feminism, is “not to impose a prefabricated formula over diverse and paradoxical material” (Elshtain, 1987:xi). In the effort to avoid imposed theory, she and Sandra Harding (1986), who is writing her influential feminist treatise – *The Science Question in Feminism* – at the same time, strike a similar methodological note.

How rare it was in the middle 1980s for personal experience to beam out of scholarly research! How stunning when that experience was of a girl, woman, and mother, whose boundary-crossings put the wrong people into war. And how irrelevant Elshtain’s exemplary chapter must have appeared to some in IR, who were undoubtedly accustomed to minding the fact/value dichotomy by providing only scant and impersonal information on issues behind a study. Positivism held the line between scholarly objectivity and the “personal biases” that could appear in novels, poetry, and art. Elshtain, an outlaw from positivism’s rules, posed “filiations of childhood narrative” (1987:25) as data, along with journal excerpts, interpretations of popular films, and “sometimes pained, more often ironic, commentaries on the complexities of identity and knowledge, of being a mother and becoming a political theorist” (p. 25). The result is a methodologically innovative feminist ethnography of war.

### *To war fields*

The remainder of *Women and War*, which is most of it, examines experiences with and reports of war and peace other than her own. In the section on armed civic virtue, Elshtain cites and discusses stories rehearsed by students of IR: the Greek citizen army arrayed; Sparta prepared; the casts of Homer’s *Iliad* and Plato’s *Republic*; Machiavelli and Rousseau, whose ideal republics are plump with armed civic virtue. Hegel celebrates the nation at war and Marx and Engels struggle. There are new, war-enabling sightings too. Mrs. Clausewitz curtsies into view as the person responsible for publishing Karl von Clausewitz’s monumental *On War*. Her words of preface to the work, which are reproduced only in some editions (e.g., Clausewitz [Howard and Paret, eds. and trans.], 1984), tell of how Karl had half-joked to his wife: “You shall publish it” (Elshtain, 1987:79). She does so, all the while wrestling to