The books reviewed in this section explore feminist politics in a global frame. These will include writings in feminist international relations, but will also feature multi-disciplinary scholarship pertaining to global gender relations. The reviews section comprises three distinct elements: a think-piece, review essays and book reviews. The think-piece, entitled ‘Rethinking the Canon’, gives space for an individual to reflect on one text that they feel ought to be essential reading, but which is likely to be marginalized by existing disciplinary boundaries: they are invited to bring the text to our attention and explain why it is essential reading. The review essays will survey several texts on a single theme, aiming either to explore a recent debate that has generated a range of new publications or to survey the best of the literature covering a more established area of research. The book reviews will provide brief introductions to and evaluations of as broad a range of new publications as space allows. Anyone with suggestions for texts to be reviewed, or requests to contribute to the section, are encouraged to contact the Reviews Editor, Judith Squires on judith.squires@bris.ac.uk

Rethinking the Canon

REFLECTIONS ON A TEXT THAT OUGHT TO BE ESSENTIAL READING

A Candidate for the Canon

Julie A. Mertus. Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999. ISBN 0–520–20962–1 (hbk); ISBN 0–520–21865–2 (pbk).

The wars of Yugoslavia’s disintegration in the 1990s generated a large literature narrating the events and analysing the causes. Not surprisingly, this complex series of events was subjected to a wide range of explanations focusing on a multiplicity of different factors. It is no disrespect to the many fine analyses of the historical, political and economic roots of the implosion to single out an account that lies somewhere between history and anthropology and asks how the things that people believed affected how they acted and thus helped shape history.
Julie Mertus’s study of the role of myths and truths in building violent conflict in Kosovo is a contribution both to the analytical literature on Yugoslavia’s break-up, and to the wider literatures on nationalism and the political role and influence of storytelling. The book’s starting point is the observation that the role of facts as a driving force behind human behaviour is much less than the influence of experience and myths. The book is both an exploration and a confirmation of this basic insight.

Yugoslavs themselves have produced numerous contradictory accounts of developments in the Balkans in the 1990s. The pattern of many of these explanations is to weave disparate hard facts together into an ascription of a long-term, conscious strategy of this or that party to this or that end. Political discourse in the Balkans is heavy with conspiracy theory, and is little interested in the role of coincidence and error. Such explanations come not only from leaders, politicians and paid spokespeople of the various regimes, nor only from the media pundits and academic experts. They come also from ordinary concerned citizens. The political culture is remarkably rich, despite intrusive restrictions on normal rights and freedoms. Indeed, most of former Yugoslavia has had a relatively high level of participation in elections, and in the towns there has been widespread and knowledgeable political debate. Any attempt to characterize the people of the region as unusually uninformed or uninterested in politics is the exact opposite of the truth. This labyrinth of wholly incompatible explanations of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, therefore, is an important feature on the political landscape.

While any mildly observant observer has been aware that there were many contradictory explanations, few observers have subjected them to study. Presumably this is precisely because they are not facts, and are therefore both irrelevant and unamenable to some of the dominant modes of study within political science, international relations and history. You could equally well say that, in these fields, myths are generally more difficult objects of study than facts. One major exception to this inattentiveness is Tim Judah’s book *The Serbs*, a history that lays considerable stress on cultural myth. His study gives a hint of how a combination of research approaches from cultural studies, anthropology, sociology and political science can be a fruitful basis for examining complex events in the Balkans and elsewhere. Not surprisingly, Judah is a journalist; most academics simply are not up to it.

Compared to *The Serbs*, Julie Mertus’s book is more narrowly focused, looking at one issue – the build-up to the war in Kosovo that began in 1999, whereas Judah takes on Serb history as a whole. Within that one issue, Mertus goes narrower still, focusing on four specific cases.

The first consists of the student mobilization in Pristina of 1981, said by many Serbs to have been demonstrations for independent statehood. The second, dating from 1985, is a sexual assault on a Serb man, which he said was done by Kosovar Albanians, which most Albanians deny. The third is a 1987 incident when a Kosovar Albanian conscript in the Yugoslav army shot and killed four soldiers, one a Serb, an action presented by prosecutors and the Serb
press as the consequence of an Albanian conspiracy against Yugoslavia and Serbia. The fourth case studied dates from March and April 1990, when thousands of Kosovar Albanian schoolchildren fell ill, displaying similar symptoms, which Albanians attributed to poisoning, which in turn almost every Serb regards as pure invention.

These four cases are the book’s organizing principle. Each one is introduced by a brief survey of the historical background, a description of the case, of how it was covered and the role it played in the country’s further political evolution. At the close of each case-section, there are interviews that explore how the incidents are remembered.

The author could have chosen other cases as well as or instead of these four. The view that Albanians in Kosovo used rape as a weapon to chase Serbs out of the province in the 1980s, for example, would be a particularly rich subject for Mertus’s methodology to go to work on. But her choice of discreet incidents, in which there is no doubt that something happened, and the subsequent controversy around the meaning of the event, is well justified.

The aim of the book is not to say what really happened in each case. It is, rather, to show how the contending parties deployed competing versions of what happened and incorporated them in their political and ideological armouries. Nonetheless, Mertus’s account of each incident and its ideological deployment amounts to a deconstruction of the narrative each side put forward. The conspiratorial orientation of much of Balkan political discourse makes this implicit deconstruction especially important.

In the concluding section of her book, Julie Mertus relates the insights gained from the four case studies to the knowledge that non-governmental organizations need if they are to operate sensitively and successfully in areas in conflict. The same sort of knowledge is equally relevant for inter-governmental organizations, but they are probably even less inclined and less able to assimilate it.

There are two basic reasons why I think this book should be regarded as essential reading, and two further reasons why I think it is particularly appropriate to make the argument for it in a journal’s special issue on gender, peace and conflict. To begin with, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia is a major and much studied part of world politics in the 1990s and this book contributes to our understanding of it by exploring issues most others have ignored, or explored only partially and marginally. Moreover, as a combination of insights and research methods from different academic disciplines, the book stands as a powerful example of the benefits of breaking down the walls between disciplines.

The inter-disciplinary approach permits the book to take people seriously, which is one of the most fundamental contributions of feminism to the study of international relations. The book exemplifies the case for including real, breathing people in explanations of armed conflicts and other major events, rather than reducing everything to abstract social processes and, even worse, numbers. There is no romanticism in this however; what you get here are real people, warts and all. In addition, the inclusion of a section that begins to make
practical use of the knowledge gained by reading the other four sections, gives the book an organic wholeness that most studies of international political issues lack. Another way of making the same point is to say that the book has a visible normative basis as well as a solid foundation in high-quality research. The open acknowledgement of the normative foundations of research is a shared concern of peace research and a gender perspective in IR.

All that and very well written too: it is an unusual achievement.

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Notes

1 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is the state that came to an end in 1992, when it was replaced by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

2 Yale University Press, 1997.

Review Essay

CONFLICT, PEACE AND GENDER: VENTURING INTO DANGEROUS LANDS

Lois A. West (ed.). Feminist Nationalism. New York & London: Routledge, 1997. ISBN 0–415–91618–6.

Ronit Lentin (ed.). Gender and Catastrophe. London: Zed Books, 1997. ISBN 1–85649–446–2.

Mary B. Anderson. Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War, 1999. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner. ISBN 1–22287–834–2.

For feminist scholars and activists, the dichotomized lexicon of war/peace; security/insecurity; the front line/the home front, etc. has always been problematic. This was a particularly acute phenomenon when the realities of the so-called ‘Cold’ War for women in countries such as Angola brought death and destruction (a point also grasped to a certain extent by anti-nuclear campaigners in the North). Thus, when mainstream International Relations posits the emergence of a new world [dis]order, we are already primed. What, we ask, is new about an all-pervasive lack of physical security for women? What constitutes a ‘dirty’ war as opposed to its ‘clean’ version?1
It is essential to keep this scepticism in mind when considering the recent proliferation of International Relations literature, conferences, etc. in the field of civil/internal war, violent ethno-nationalism, conflict analysis and resolution and post-conflict peace building. We are fortunate in already being able to draw on the conceptual and epistemological frameworks developed by writers such as Cynthia Enloe on militarism, Nira Yuval-Davis on nationalism and gender, Spike Peterson on the politics of identification . . . the list could, of course, be considerably extended.

The broader debate over gender and conflict is by no means restricted to feminist work within International Relations discourse around allegedly ‘new’ forms of war. They also encompass feminist critiques of foundational political concepts, which place violence against women in the ‘private’ sphere and of notions of ‘protection’ in relation to citizenship and the military. (As explored by Francine D’Amico recently in this journal.) For present purposes, the texts all highlight questions which also have a strong empirical content. How can we further our knowledge of the gendered impact of violent conflict without locating women solely as victims? Where do we place the definitional boundaries around violence against women in situations of ‘peace’, i.e. absence of armed conflict? What constitutes an ethical feminist research methodology in this arena? The texts selected all have something to say in these areas.

However, I would also argue that the current debate contains two shortcomings. The first is the emergence of ‘womenandpeace’ as a definitional parameter which risks shutting off other ways of thinking about gender and conflict. The second is that perennial problem for feminist scholarship – where do we locate our priorities with regard to dealing with men and masculinity/ies? Some implications of these absences will be developed in a separate section of this essay, since it would be invidious to target the selected texts, which have a different remit.

Lois West sets out her challenge as responding to the question ‘Can there be a feminist nationalism?’ and answers with a qualified assent, based on the transformatory achievements and potential of struggles where ‘Women redefine feminism with nationalism and civil rights by redefining the private and public realms as not mutually exclusive and binary but as complementary and unitary’ (p. xxxi). She sees this as a process that is being aided by the globalization of social movements but is inevitably constrained by class and colonial differences. The ensuing twelve contributions are divided regionally: Europe; Middle East/Central Asia/Africa; Asia and the Pacific Islands; the Americas.

These chapters contain much absorbing historical and current material, particularly in contexts where Anglophone researchers are not much at home, such as Finland (Gisela Kaplan), Korea (Alice Yun Chai) and Quebec (Patrice LeClerc and Lois West). Jill Benderly’s chapter on rape, feminism and nationalism in the successor states of former Yugoslavia is a valuable contribution to the literature, especially in the way it clarifies the enormous tensions against which anti-war Croatian and Slovenian women’s organizations had to operate. The theme of cross-cutting allegiances is also taken up by West and
Lynn Kwiatkowski in relation to women workers in the Philippines while Carmel Roulston’s description of the necessity for a ‘qualified’ feminism (p. 57) as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland remains as pertinent to the situation in 2000 as when it was written.

For me, the overall effectiveness of this volume is diminished by the need for the reader to switch between a very diverse range of conceptual and methodological frameworks, but it should be noted that West sees this in terms of a necessary eclecticism (p. xxii). There is also a certain amount of conceptual slippage throughout between accounts of the activities of social movements comprised principally or solely of women and claims that these activities *ipso facto* constitute a specifically *feminist* nationalism, without very convincing evidence. This caveat aside, the volume advances our understanding of gendered relationships – including those between women – in situations of conflict. It helps a more nuanced understanding of how women’s yearning for peace and for the ability to participate to a just national future can interact.

Ronit Lentin’s volume is a remarkable achievement in the way it succeeds in taking the reader through the most harrowing instances of human suffering without submerging the affected women and men under a totalizing victimhood. She frames her title by arguing that, if we take into account the construction of women as ethnic and national subjects, ‘the definition of genocide must be gendered, to include political projects involving slavery, sexual slavery, mass rape, mass sterilization, aimed, through women, at “ethnic cleansing” and the elimination or alteration of a future ethnic group’ (p. 2). Using this definition, we are reminded that no region of the world can claim a unique moral standing, in that it has never been associated with the infliction of this type of suffering. This is a useful counter to the current stigmatization of sub-Saharan Africa in some circles. The conceptual ground is then widened again to include catastrophes with a natural trigger such as earthquakes and war. This is linked with the necessity to attain a gendered understanding of these extreme situations ‘well beyond the discursive level’ (p. 5). Lentin takes issue with the ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences which, she argues, can obscure the lived realities of women’s experiences of genocide, hunger, displacement, sexual exploitation, war and migration (p. 5).

Lentin’s reflexive location is of relevance for feminist research. She records her ‘autobiographical feminist exploration of the gendered relations between Israel and the Shoah between a fighting, active, “masculinized” Israel and a passive, “feminized” Jewish diaspora who had allegedly gone passively to its death’ (p. 6). She links this with the need ‘for reclaiming women’s experiences as historiographic and analytical resources, in order to understand not only the targeting of women, but the overall nature of those very catastrophic projects’ (p. 6). This attention to the historical dimension is supported by her own analysis as well as her contributors, particularly in relation to attacks on the bodies of women, men and children. She herself extends Anthias and Yuval-Davis’s arguments about the centrality of motherhood to racialized national projects by reminding us of the impact of Nazi race-hygiene sterilization programmes
on Roma and Sinti women married to Germans and on their children of over 12. This is linked to the eugenic programmes of the Chinese regime that operate not just in Tibet but in other provinces. I have to say that I find it rather disturbing to have these ‘catastrophic’ instances placed alongside policies in Singapore during the 1980s, which ‘promised financial incentives to low-caste, mostly Malay and Indian mothers to undergo sterilizations while promising “graduate mothers”, mostly Chinese, generous tax breaks . . . to increase their fertility’ (p.10).

Lentin and West’s introductory and ‘scene-setting’ chapters differ in that the former pays careful attention to the evidence of differences between women rather than a generalized statement. Lentin does emphasize the findings of her contributors on women’s capacity for resistance; for example, female slaves in Brazil, the West Indies and North America expressed defiance by, among other things, self-induced abortions which reduced ‘their master’s’ property (Helen Thomas and Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes). Further developing the point, she notes that: ‘Viewing women as homogeneously powerless and as implicit victims, does not allow us to theorize women as the benefactors of oppression, or the perpetrators of catastrophes’ (p. 12). This is followed by a brief but explicit examination of the African Rights report on women’s roles as aggressors during the Rwandan genocide (pp.12/13); something which is noticeably missing from the ‘women and peace’ literature which will be referred to below.

Lentin’s chapter is complemented in the first section by Joan Ringelheim’s. This is based in part on her interviews with Jewish women survivors of the Holocaust who had experienced sexual violence from male members of the families which were ‘protecting’ them in hiding them, or from other prisoners in the death camps. As a result, women who had been assaulted in this way felt that they could not claim their own stories as constituting the ‘proper’ history of the Holocaust. She identifies this as ‘split memory’ and notes:

> we have not wanted to go into the world of sexual exploitation amidst the other horrors of the Holocaust. Sometimes because we think it is trivial in comparison with genocide per se or because we think it is so banal. Yet when it is banal, it is too close to what we know in everyday life.

(p. 31)

The remaining seventeen chapters are divided thematically into: Women in a War Zone; Captured Subjects: Displacing Women’s Bodies; Sexualized Slaveries; Gendered Victimization: Migration, Poverty, Famines. While a certain loss of focus is inevitable with this kind of range, anyone looking for case study material for teaching will find something of value. Euan Hague’s account of how the Serb and Bosnian Serb military policies aimed specifically to demonstrate the powerless ‘femininity’ of their male prisoners through rape and sexual humiliation is particularly important. Tovi Fenster employs a feminist analysis of gendered spaces resulting in some very concrete – literally, since it affected their housing provision – outcomes for Ethiopian women migrants into Israel.
A further note of explanation is needed for the inclusion of the third text in this review essay. *Do No Harm* is the outcome of a research project funded by international donors sharing a major commitment to humanitarian aid, such as the US Agency for International Development. Although it did not originate as a piece of academic research, it raises some issues of central concern in this field. It represents an example of how ‘grey literature’ is now coming on-stream in the area of academic publishing (as evidenced by its inclusion in the ‘International Aid’ section of Lynne Rienner’s 2000 catalogue).

Mary Anderson was responsible overall for the research project, (entitled Local Capacities for Peace) and was also personally closely involved with much of the work ‘on the ground’. However, she emphasizes the degree to which both the research and the ensuing publication constitute a collaborative project. The book can thus be seen as representing the position of staff members of international and local NGOs providing humanitarian and development assistance in conflict zones as well as ‘the so-called victims of war, people who live in societies that have fallen into intergroup warfare in the post-Cold War period’ (p. vii). We are not informed specifically about the methodology other than that it involved fifteen case studies carried out in fourteen conflict zones and subsequently twenty-four workshops held in field and headquarter locations of active agencies (n.1, p. 151). For the book, the research findings are compressed into a thematic section which covers the former Yugoslavia, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia and selected case study chapters on Tajikistan, Lebanon, Burundi, India and Somalia.

The book is relatively short (approx. 150 pages) and contains much material that is primarily directed at operational planning. Nevertheless, Anderson’s research question is clearly pertinent for our purposes:

How can humanitarian or development assistance be given in conflict situations in ways that rather than feeding into and exacerbating the conflict help local people to disengage and establish alternative systems for dealing with the problems that underlie the conflict?

(p. 1)

While not dismissing the critiques of aid arising from situations where it can be proved to have fuelled conflict, she is trenchant in its defence, since:

It is a moral and logical fallacy to conclude that because aid can do harm, a decision not to give aid would do no harm. In reality, a decision to withhold aid from people in need would have unconscionable negative ramifications.

(p. 2, emphasis in original)

The book’s first section covers War and the Impact of External Aid. While its arguments are not specifically referenced to the current literature, there is a clear grasp of current debates. For example, there is a clear exposition of the political economy of internal wars as typified by trading in arms, relief goods, etc. The
extracts from field diaries, interviews and so on, which accompany the text as ‘boxes’, seem to me more likely to bring home these realities to a student audience than any amount of theoretical exposition. To take just one example, interviews with civilian drivers immediately after the Dayton Peace Agreement revealed how they dreaded the advent of peace (p. 43). The sections on those social and economic ‘connectors’ that continue functioning even during periods of the most intense internecine conflicts are similarly vivid, e.g. a tea shop in the market on the outskirts of Sarajevo that continued serving both communities during the war in daytime but whose proprietor then took himself up to the surrounding hills to snipe on ‘Them’ at night (p. 25). The chapter on ‘Aid’s Impact on Conflict through Implicit Ethical Messages’ illustrates contrasts between rhetoric and reality. There is a whole set of ‘inter-textual discourses’ whereby aid workers may transmit the message: ‘You are mean and untrustworthy. I know you only understand toughness. I’m interacting with you in the only way you’ll understand’ (p. 59).

While references to women are by no means absent in this first section of the book, there is no systematic gender disaggregation in the text. Other than people unmistakably identifiable by other means, e.g. warriors referred to as ‘he’ or accounts of the actions of ‘women’s organizations’, the actors involved are more often categorized simply as ‘people’. From a methodological point of view, it would have been particularly helpful to know the gender composition of the informants in the field studies, since the absence of gender specificity becomes more marked in the case study chapters. One instance is the account of an ethnically divided Tajikistan village that had suffered extensive destruction of housing. A NGO set up brigades of ‘local people’ for rebuilding, paid through Food for Work (FFW). We are informed that the NGO staff ‘explained that both women and men were encouraged to join brigades and that membership did not depend on clan, ethnicity, or whether one’s property had been destroyed’ (p. 87) and that, after a period of chaotic community meetings, the programme eventually rebuilt a large number of houses benefiting both communities as well as providing crucial household sustenance. It is frustrating not to have any enlargement of the gender implications of this scheme, given the obvious gender implications of control of food supplies.

These methodological issues represent a dilemma for me and, I should imagine, other colleagues. It is clearly not fitting for academics sitting in snug offices simply to pick holes in the methodology of research projects such as these. After all, with some remarkable exceptions, we do not generally conduct interviews in venues bristling with guns. Moreover, having had the opportunity of hearing Mary Anderson speak about the project’s logistical and operational demands, it is clear that any attempt to impose preconditions such as the ‘matching’ of male with women informants could have jeopardized the entire programme. For me, therefore, the central issue of concern is how there could be a lessening of the gap between academic research that may be impeccably feminist but which reaches only a narrow readership and the work emanating from the practitioner field. Such a dialogue would also need to encompass the
tendency of the latter to denigrate ‘theory’ while continuing to operate within its own paradigmatic frame.

To recap on the terms of the debate offered at the outset, these works all contribute to the project of a historically grounded, international feminist scholarship and they encourage us towards a more complex gendered conceptualization of conflict. At the same time, they leave me with questions over the relative advantages of a very broad and inclusive remit for contributors exemplified by West and Lentin’s approach while Anderson’s work raises a different order of methodological query.

BEYOND ‘WOMAN AND PEACE’ AND TOWARDS ‘GENDER’?

Before embarking on the final section of this essay I must come clean. Raising these concerns from within the Peace Studies/Conflict Resolution context in which I operate is a prime example of the unwisdom of women in glass houses throwing stones. From the beginnings of this field of study, the distinguished historical record and unmissable presence of women’s peace activism has interacted with the influence of maternalist theories of women’s agency. As a result, there have been obstacles to exploring the more negative aspects of ‘the different voices’ of women. Even quite recent work in conflict analysis that incorporates a far more complex and critical post-positivist lens does not feel called upon to integrate feminist work on militarism in its discussion of ‘the discursive structuration of war’. With this in mind, I will restrict myself to outlining a few preoccupations.

I am not, of course, suggesting that there is a vacuum in feminist work on women’s agency in sustaining conflict. For example, we have Jan Jindy Pettman devoting careful attention to the fact that ‘Some mothers understand their attachments and responsibilities as requiring either the sacrifice of their sons for the state or the nation, or the use of violence against other women’s sons – and daughters’ (1996: 12). My concern arises first from the regular stream of ‘grey literature’ (see note 5) which crosses my desk in Peace Studies. The great majority of this material constructs women and their organizations as axiomatically ‘pro-peace’ or at most, makes only glancing references to women’s capacity for other forms of agency in relation to conflict. I feel that the import of this uncritical approach is having important outcomes in terms of what is being prioritized as relevant – and fundable – research.

Second, there is the contrast between feminist scholarship on South Asia and that on contemporary Europe. The former has ventured into the dangerous terrain of women’s contemporary membership of ethno-nationalist and right-wing movements. In contrast, a quest for parallel information on neo-Nazi groups in Western Europe had to draw on specialist journals such as Terrorism and Political Violence rather than feminist texts. Is this simply a question of the contrast in the scale of violence between the two regions? Yet surely a feminist approach cannot simply dismiss attacks on immigrants and refugees
in their hostels by neo-Nazi groups with an active women’s membership as insufficiently important to investigate?

To take a separate illustration, the texts above demonstrate that the complexity of women’s positioning during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia has not gone uncovered but at the time of writing, it remains underdeveloped. As Pettman sees it, we are faced with a ‘puzzle of extraordinary theoretical, ethical and political import’, that is ‘how women who might reject any association with violence in their personal worlds can be persuaded to accept of advocate violence in the name of the state, or nation.’

The feminist response to this challenge will have to confront some unattractive methodological realities. Amrita Basu describes as ‘perhaps the most startling form of women’s activism . . . their complicity and often direct participation in Hindu violence against Muslim families’ (1998: 167). This has involved her with a research methodology which includes interviewing women associated with the Hindu nationalist campaign from leadership to rank and file level; interviewing participants and victims in the violence; joining processions of women as they marched from door to door campaigning for the BJP (Basu 1998: 168).

And finally, men, or rather their absence. Once again, this is not a wholesale critique of the literature. Yet, it is possible in the current debate for a major conference in the field of gender and militarism to elicit papers on all topics other that those covering the realities of war and conflict for men. Should this concern us? Or are we yet again being asked to take up the task of cultivating an intellectual and political field left untended by male colleagues?

In this arena at least, I would hope that Peace Studies has something to offer because of its work on male dissent from organized violence in the form of conscientious objection to military service, civil disobedience, etc. It would be of great help to have this area further opened by comments on this area – however critical – through this journal.

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Notes

1 For example, Kaldor (1999).
2 I borrow this formulation, of course, from Cynthia Enloe’s ‘womenandchildren’. My preoccupation has been considerably strengthened during the process of co-editing a volume on gender and conflict with Susie Jacobs and Jen Marchbanks but the contents of this review are, of course, entirely my own responsibility.
3 See Molyneux (1998) for a further development of this aspect.
4 African Rights (1995).
5 Consisting of research reports, evaluations, etc. from aid agencies and institutions such as the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) primarily concerned with
policy and/or advocacy. They may be widely distributed but are not generally available for sale in this form through academic channels.

6 Jabri (1997).
7 Sarkar and Butalia (1995); Jeffery and Basu (1998); Mukta (2000).
8 See Introduction to Jacobs et al. (2000: 12–14) for details.
9 Pettman ‘Theorizing Gendered Violence’ Presented at the International Studies Association Conference in Washington, DC, 16–20 February 1999. See Jacobs (2000) for another exposition of this issue.
10 I have attempted a similar approach in my own work on gender and the peace process in Northern Ireland (Jacobson 2000).

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Sarkar, T. and U. Butalia (eds). 1995. *Women and the Hindu Right*. London: Zed Books & New Delhi: Kali for Women.
Vivienne Jabri and Eleanor O’Gorman refer to their edited volume as ‘a second-generation agenda for feminist international relations’ (p. 187). For them, what characterized the first wave of feminist international relations (IR) scholarship was a singular focus on gender difference in order to foreground the exclusion or marginalization of women in world political structures and practices and the masculinist nature of the epistemological approaches and ontological categories of conventional IR discourse and analysis. The second wave project of feminist IR, influenced by postcolonial and poststructural developments in feminist theory generally and already underway by the mid-1990s in the works, for example, of Jan Jindy Pettman and Christine Sylvester, is problematizing the category of ‘woman’ to foreground cultural and other differences ‘among “women” and within “woman” as subject’ (p. 5) and the multiple feminist standpoints that arise from these differences. This opens the way for more self-reflexive, non-essentialist, and heterogeneous representations of women and their subjectivities and agencies in order to further disrupt universalist categories in IR and universalizing tendencies in feminism.

What follows from this call for significantly expanding the loci of difference is a series of largely philosophical pieces which bring feminist and non-feminist poststructural and postcolonial insights to bear on feminist standpoint theorizations of women as ethical, revolutionary, development, and political subjects. Kimberly Hutchings compares and contrasts the grounds on which Sara Ruddick, in her work on maternal thinking, and Seyla Benhabib, in her account of interactive universalism, make claims for a feminist ethics. Hutchings argues that neither has shaken off the desire for universalistic moral certitude and counsels that feminist theorists should cease this quest for ‘epistemologically valid grounds for moral judgment’ in favor of ‘examining the actual conditions of moral judgments in different contexts and in the context of difference’ (p. 33). Jabri takes this further by arguing against a feminist ethics based on a unified female subject and for a feminist ‘aesthetic ethicality’ inspired by Judith Butler’s work on gender performance and transgression. Such an approach plays upon the multiple subjectivities and fragmented identities of individual women to produce not coherent coalitions, but subversive ‘restylizations’ of the self and the other to enable ‘a reconstituted “we”’ (p. 57) that is not based on relations of domination.

O’Gorman takes on overarching explanations for women’s participation in national liberation struggles. She argues that the question of why women become revolutionary subjects subsumes women’s agency under revolutionary organization requirements and reduces their identities and actions to a small set of revolutionary roles. Instead feminists should ask: ‘What do women want
from revolution and what is their relation to it?’ (p. 106), and should seek out ‘everyday, localized narratives of women’s locations, actions, identities in a context of war’ (p. 111) through genealogical methods such as attending to oral testimonies through which subjugated knowledges are articulated. Sarah White makes a similar argument for how women in development (WID)/gender and development (GAD) programs hegemonize their ‘target’ women, reducing them to liberal individualist gendered subjects with little regard for their familial and cultural affinities. Only through connections with local feminist movements can GAD proponents move beyond their own reifications of ‘other’ women.

These latter two prescriptions fit with Stephen Chan’s admonishment that ‘armchair’ IR theorists need to ‘go out into the Forest’ (p. 177) of the Other to find different versions of events, ethics, and visions to mess up the sureties of the ‘international relations of Home’ (p. 174). But, as Nalini Persram points out, there remains the Spivakian question of ‘Can the subaltern speak?’. Persram argues that the question acts as an agent provocateur, but it does not absolve us from the responsibility to attend to not only subaltern silence, but also subaltern narratives and historiographies, such as those being produced by the Subaltern Studies group. Nicholas Higgins, who rehearses the debate between postmodern liberal humanist Richard Rorty and pragmatic socialist-feminist Nancy Fraser, also finds that despite her problematic foundationalism, Fraser is right to challenge Rorty’s politically disengaged notion of feminism as a purely linguistic movement for continuously redefining woman for it fails to acknowledge the power of ‘institutional structures that influence the realm of possible redescriptions of contemporary woman’ (p. 153).

In their conclusion, Jabri and O’Gorman state that complicating women’s subjectivity ‘does not have to threaten moments of collectivity across issues and cultures but must unmask an assumed sameness as a partial expression of solidarity, empathy, and unity’ (p. 187). Unfortunately, although the volume in toto makes a strong case for the latter, there are few examples of the former in this highly abstract collection. Moreover, too rarely do the voices of the ‘non-generalized other’ pierce through the dense thicket of heavily western (and significantly male) critical and poststructuralist thought. Given that there is now a wealth of feminist postcolonial work (in and outside of IR) that fleshes out multiple feminist politics of difference as well as a growing feminist literature (in and outside of the West), which speaks to taking care not to make a fetish or ‘doxa’ of difference, it is surprising that this work was not significantly represented in this second-generation feminist IR project. Nevertheless, it points the way to such work by encouraging readers (who would be largely graduate students and scholars in IR and political theory) to ‘forget’ IR orthodoxies and complicate feminist IR narratives.

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Kimberly Hutchings. *International Political Theory: Rethinking Ethics in a Global Era*. London: Sage, 1999. ISBN 0–7619–5516–X.

Kimberly Hutchings’ book offers a valuable rethinking of the terms of normative international theory. It has two express purposes: to survey competing schools of normative international theory and to ‘move beyond theoretical deadlock between realists and idealists, cosmopolitans and communitarians towards something which would properly be called international political theory’ (p. xi). In fulfilling these objectives – and she does so admirably – Hutchings argues persuasively for a form of what she calls ‘second best normative theorizing’ (p. 172) – starting with the world as it is (p. 183) – that is marked by both ‘phenomenological adequacy’ and ‘genealogical honesty’ (p. 118) rather than the ‘fixed, idealized ontologies and abstractly authoritative epistemologies’ of mainstream normative international theory (p. 182). In defending her second best normative theorizing, Hutchings addresses both the ‘theory of politics’ – how the international is conceived – and the ‘politics of theory’ – the nature of theorizing and the relationship between theorist and theoretical object (p. 93).

Hutchings begins with a devastating critique of mainstream normative theory, especially realism, idealism, moral cosmopolitanism and moral communitarianism. These perspectives and the debates among them, she shows, presuppose and perpetuate ‘apparently opposed, but actually complementary, positions’ (p. 6). Because of their commitments to a set of conventional binary oppositions – i.e. reason/nature, ideality/reality, universal/particular – these theories are limited to one of two conclusions: international politics is either ‘necessarily that which it ought not to be’ or it will ‘necessarily . . . become that which it ought to be’ (p. 116). What normative international theory needs to do is ‘rethink the standard oppositions between morality and politics, state and inter-state relations’. But the conventional approaches are ‘locked into a vocabulary which made such a task impossible’ (p. 87).

In her review of different perspectives, Hutchings concludes that critical theory, postmodernism and feminism best approximate what she is looking for both because they try ‘to grasp the conditions of possibility of political agency by individual and collective international political actors’ and because they recognize the politics of their own theoretical practices (p. 179). Her solution to the problems of normative international theory seeks to meld ‘Hegelian and Foucauldian insights into the impossibility of disentangling ethics from politics and into the nature, scope, and limitations of normative judgment’ (p. xi). Both Hegel and Foucault:

understand ethical life (or relations of power and resistance) and the practice of theory . . . as both absolute and relative: absolute in the sense that all aspects of political existence, including attempts to understand and judge that existence, are constructed and conditioned; relative in the sense that ethical life . . . is always a
contingent structure of possibilities, possibilities which are in principle incapable of exhaustion.

(p. 114)

Combining insights from these two theorists, she maintains, provides the best handle on the interrelation of theorist, object of theory and reader. Hutchings thus prescribes a form of normative theorizing that entails both the phenomenology of the international ethical life on which any particular ethical position relies, which means examining ‘the range of conditions which constitute the nature and possibility of agency in the current world order’, and the genealogical assessment of the theorist’s own ethical judgement (p. 148).

This volume is ideal for either advanced undergraduate or graduate teaching. Hutchings successfully makes sense of a welter of theories – specifically realism, idealism, morality of states, moral cosmopolitanism, moral communitarianism, constitutive theory, neo-Aristotelianism, the theory of moral sentiments, the English school, Marxism, critical theory, postmodernism and feminism – and offers a remarkably clear analysis that distinguishes among these theories, highlights their interconnections, exposes their weaknesses and draws out the components of a more adequate normative international theory. Rendering the volume even more useful are the well-constructed illustrations. Supplementing the sometimes dense theoretical discussions are analyses of two on-going normative debates: (1) the international validity of rights to individual and collective self-determination, and (2) cosmopolitan citizenship and democracy.

Hutchings argues in conclusion that her rethinking of normative international theory moves away from the ‘articulation and defence of specific prescriptions as the primary aim of such theory’ (p. 182). Its primary purpose, she argues, is instead ‘the exposition of international politics’ as a form of ethical life because ‘the validity of normative judgements of international politics relies ultimately on the identification of others with the conditions of possibility of the normative positioning question. Where there is no such identification,’ she reminds us, ‘the carrying through of that prescription in practice can only be a matter of coercion’ (p. 183). Hutchings thus insists on the political character of normative theory. In so doing, she successfully criticizes one of its ‘long cherished pretensions’, namely ‘that moral truth is somehow above and beyond politics’ (p. 150).

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Doing the Dirty Work is a comprehensive and clearly written analysis of migrant domestic workers in Europe. Drawing on interviews carried out in Athens, Barcelona, Bologna, Berlin and Paris, Bridget Anderson asks questions about how issues such as citizenship, immigration status and whether or not domestic workers live in their employers’ homes, shape the living and working conditions of women employed in this profession. Her book represents an excellent example of theoretically informed empirical work in this area, and distills a broad range of experiences of women who migrate from Asia, Africa and Latin America to work in European homes. For those researching domestic work and the politics of labour migration, this book provides excellent comparative examples. For those who have wondered about the feminist and ethnic/racial politics of paid domestic work, Anderson’s analysis raises difficult questions about the extent to which women from ‘the North’ oppress women from ‘the South’ as they relinquish domestic roles to pursue their careers.

Anderson situates the politics of migrant domestic workers within feminist debates about reproductive labour, stressing the need to reconceptualize domestic work as it takes on new and racialized forms. The employment of migrant domestic workers in Europe is transforming the social relations of households, and is related to two interconnected trends. First, although European women engage in full-time work, they remain responsible for managing households and ensuring domestic duties are carried out. For women with limited time and career aspirations, hiring outside help is an option. Second, aging populations and a lack of affordable child care services drive women to seek outside assistance. Migrant domestic workers provide these much-needed welfare services – services that are, in many respects, the social right of citizens (although migrant women themselves are denied citizenship rights). Indeed, Anderson discusses how the ‘relationship of domestic workers to the state encourages and reinforces the racialisation of domestic work’ (p.175) both through welfare and immigration policies. These sentiments are welcome to debates about migrant domestic workers in North America.

Although difficult to quantify, this book attempts to define domestic work, and the mental, manual and emotional work involved. Domestic workers do physical tasks such as cleaning, laundry and cooking, but often assume a ‘caring’ function for children and the elderly as well. Many women are on call 24 hours a day, undertake superfluous household duties on demand and routinely endure the matronizing dispositions of female employers. Employing a domestic worker, despite need or demand, is not merely a matter of survival. It is an ‘expression of reproduction of social relations’ (p.14), Anderson argues, and domestic workers help to reproduce the life-style and status of their employers. Within this discussion of life-style and status, Anderson explores the tensions between ‘labour power’ and ‘personhood’ in the sale and purchase of domestic services. While domestic workers aspire for good employer relations,
their employers often seek the ‘power to command’: ‘paid domestic workers reproduce people and social relations, not just in what they do (polishing silver, ironing clothes), but also in the very doing of it (the foil to the household manager)’ (p.113). Tensions between labour and personhood are particularly apparent for the issue of care (of children or the elderly), and Anderson describes these situations in rich detail.

A crucial factor in determining the working and living conditions of migrant domestic workers is whether women ‘live-in’ or ‘live-out’ of their employer’s home. Women who ‘live-out’ are more likely to enjoy better working conditions, but migrant women are often sought to fill the gap for ‘live-in’ work. The different routes women take into private households, and how they position them in relation to their employers, are explored at length in Chapters 4 to 6 which document the cases of Southern and Northern Europe and the United Kingdom respectively. In each region two similarities persist: ‘first, that those who have legal status are often dependent for that status on their employer; and second, that a large proportion of domestic workers are undocumented’ (p. 176). In the United Kingdom, a place where migrant domestic workers are largely admitted into the country with their ‘foreign’ (non-UK) employers, this dependence of immigration status is most apparent. Throughout Europe, however, many migrant women have little choice but to live in their employer’s home and be dependent on contracts for their legal status (e.g. in many states domestic workers who break their contracts must leave the country). This can lead to situations of abuse, where domestic workers feel compelled to stay with their employers to reside in the country legally.

Given the now well-documented history of the shift from live-in to live-out domestic work in the American South, it is not surprising to find a chapter in this book that draws parallels between slavery and the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Europe. Anderson examines the binary oppositions that constitute the social relations of these (apparently similar) households; that is, binaries such as clean/dirty, emotional/physical, Madonna/whore, etc. as they map onto the relation of employer/employee. Although Anderson’s aim is admirable, some tendentious links are made to slavery and make this the weakest chapter of the book. A view of domestic work as slavery neglects to address the varied experiences of women, their agency and choice in labour migration, and produces a rather determined subject position of the domestic worker as ‘slave’.

Despite their positioning within such structures, Anderson does make a case for conceptualizing domestic workers as ‘workers’ and for the professionalization of their work. Because employment contracts are negotiated in the private sphere, however, they are prone to being broken/violated. This is particularly true for migrant workers with an illegal immigration status, although workers with legal contracts often suffer contract violations as well (e.g. no days off, the underpayment of salaries, no privacy, and so on). Anderson explores the social and sexual contract theories of Locke and Pateman for inspiration, but argues that while professionalization solves some of the
problems, ‘it leaves gender and class ideology in an awkward position’ (p. 169). Domestic work is, after all, women’s work and menial labour, and is unlikely to be respected as a professional occupation.

It is a pity Anderson did not connect her thoughts on the professionalization of the industry with her work with activists in the United Kingdom. In Chapter 6 she documents the development of migrant worker government policies over the past two decades, as well as the emergence of UK advocacy groups to protect the rights of migrant women. Perhaps these case studies could provide a means to reimagine activism and the professionalization of the industry outside the structural forces she critiques.

Despite these limitations, Doing the Dirty Work will provide good reading for those researching migrant domestic workers and those concerned with the global politics of reproductive labour. It summarizes some of the key issues in a clear and succinct fashion, and is punctuated by interview materials that bring these issues to life.

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John Hoffman. Sovereignty. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998, ISBN 0–335–19789–2.

John Hoffman’s book Sovereignty (1998) addresses a highly relevant concept in the study of International Relations (IR) and politics today. Sovereignty has been one of the defining concepts of the traditional IR theory and yet, little problematized in the field’s theoretical debates. Hoffman’s work is an important corrective in this sense. Furthermore, the discourse of globalization seems to be challenging the traditional state sovereignty like never before. There is clearly an acute need to theorize the concept.

Hoffman’s book is a very useful introduction to the concept on sovereignty for both undergraduate and postgraduate students of IR, politics, sociology and women’s studies. It covers the views of a variety of philosophers and political theorists from Thomas Hobbes to Chantal Mouffe. The debates between absolute and relative sovereignty, between internal and external sovereignty, between the understandings of politics and international relations are well revealed with special emphasis on the historical context of the concept. Hoffman develops a complex and effective argument of the issue.

Central to Hoffman’s argument is the recognition of the troublesome nature of the concept of sovereignty that results from linking it with the state. The crucial first step is to detach sovereignty from the state. State itself is a deeply problematic and contradictory concept for Hoffman because all states claim monopoly of legitimate force that they cannot possess. It is this claim to exercise monopoly of force that makes the states appear sovereign. Hoffman argues that
the concept of sovereignty has to go beyond the state. It has to be associated with individuals. The aim of such analysis is to define sovereignty as ‘a concept which denotes empowerment and development – a concept which embraces democracy, autonomy and self-government’ (pp. 19–20).

The structure of the book is clear. Hoffman discusses, first, the various attempts to dismiss and abandon the concept of sovereignty. Second, he focuses upon the realist writers who have accepted the concept as unproblematic. Realists have taken the link between sovereignty and the state for granted. For Hoffman, their position is untenable. This leads him to develop the argument of the problematic nature of the state further. He draws implicitly upon Max Weber’s work on the state and more explicitly on modernism, liberalism and the concept of legitimacy. The state needs to be distinguished from government and force from coercion. Hoffman claims that government simply involves resolving conflicts of interest while state seeks to do this through force. Force undermines the legitimacy of the state by crushing subjective identities. Coercion, in contrast, maintains people’s capacity to act, exercise choice and maintain freedom and is thus a legitimate method for the government for maintaining order in the society.

A significant part of the book is devoted to challenges to the concept of sovereignty which come from theories of democracy, from feminism and from postmodernism. These are used to confirm Hoffman’s solution to the problem of sovereignty, which is to individualize the concept. Hoffman emphasizes that individual sovereignty should not be conceived in a naturalist fashion, that is individuals should not be seen as having static natures which are not amenable to historical change. Sovereign individuals relate to other individuals and to the society and the world around them. It is only the atomistic individuals of classical liberalism which come into collision with each other so that their sovereignty has to be underwritten by the sovereignty of the state (p. 8). For Hoffman, in contrast, sovereignty involves a continuous and ongoing development in which asserting greater control over one’s own life is only possible through a concern with the freedom and autonomy of others (p. 101). It follows that if sovereign states are to aspire to legitimacy, then they must identify sovereignty with the rights and capacities of individuals (p. 9).

Hoffman’s work is highly theoretical, and I was left missing more concrete examples of the merits of his theory. Especially, the consequences of the discourse of globalization are not focused upon. Besides, Hoffman’s emphasis on liberalism, his theorizing of the state and attitudes towards it seem very Anglo-American. For Hoffman, ‘going beyond’ (the state) means ‘building upon’ (the traditional theories of the state), and thus he draws extensively upon modernity and liberalism. On the one hand he highlights how everything relates to everything (a more communitarian perspective), but on the other hand he emphasizes the ultimate value of the individual. A further contradiction arises from the lip service he pays to postmodernism and from his rather essentializing analysis of the state. Hoffman reduces the existence of states to the exercise of the monopoly of legitimate force (p. 7). Thus he is unable to conceive states in
more positive terms. His distinction between force and coercion is problematic as well. His definition of coercion as ‘simply a force which causes individuals to act in ways which they would otherwise have avoided’ (p. 52) is parallel to Roald Dahl’s definition of power and is ultimately vulnerable to the extensive criticism of this simplistic conception.

Despite these reservations Hoffman’s work offers an interesting starting point for further theorizing. Individual sovereignty is a concept that deserves the attention of feminists. A route for feminists to pursue might be to explore the relationship between autonomy and sovereignty and how these, in turn, relate to the various dependencies experienced by women.

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