

# Feminist International Relations: Old Debates and New Directions

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Many individuals and groups have a great deal to lose by the advancement of this radical project, and a great deal to gain by transforming the feminist impulse into just one more element of the nonthreatening pluralistic universe of theoretical discourse, where power relationships remain fundamentally unchallenged.<sup>1</sup>

IN MARCH OF 2002, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting on “Feminist Perspectives in U.S. and EU Foreign Policy” at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Two papers had been distributed in advance and would be examined with the help of discussants. The papers provided many possible topics for discussion; yet, instead of engaging in a detailed debate, the discussion began to revolve around whether feminists had a significant contribution to make to IR. It went so far as to obfuscate the impact feminists had already made, e.g. in human rights. When a participant claimed that human rights discourse spontaneously began devoting attention to gender-specific violations, in particular sexual violence, feminists who had fought for the recognition of these issues as human rights violations were baffled by the uninformed audacity of this claim. The event was instructive, since to this point I had heard about such non-engagements mostly second-hand from feminist colleagues or via journal articles.<sup>2</sup> A return to some of the old debates and a clarification of the issues at stake might be useful, if not for those that continue to deny the relevance of feminist interventions, at least for students of International Relations (IR).<sup>3</sup>

This article revisits some of the debates between feminist and mainstream scholars in IR during the last 15 years. On the one hand, in the spirit of Dale Spender’s work, the aim is to recover feminist knowledges to provide a source of strength and inspiration.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the goal is to explore the limits of themes covered by

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these debates to push the conversation in new directions. Feminist IR is a burgeoning field, which contributes to and revisits areas of international relations beyond those covered by the mainstream discussion. There are many indicators that feminist IR is becoming an established subfield, including panels at major academic conferences, sections in professional organizations, single-authored and edited books as well as journal articles (many in the new *Feminist Journal of International Politics*). The development is also displayed in the greater confidence of feminist IR scholarship overall. While the field initially exhibited a need to justify feminist approaches, scholars are now pursuing their work alongside or despite mainstream IR—they are getting on with it, often redefining IR in the process.<sup>5</sup>

The article begins with an overview of the history of feminist interventions in IR, beginning with several conferences in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter it outlines several contentious issues by discussing certain engagements between feminist and mainstream IR in more detail. Particular emphasis is placed on the question of what counts as knowledge in IR. Finally, by reference to debates about whether the field should choose to identify itself as ‘doing’ women in IR, gender and IR, or feminist IR, the examination concludes by arguing for a mature feminist IR. Conceiving the field as such also entails an acceptance of the (feminist) political project at its base.

## HISTORY LESSON

International Relations has been one of the last fields to open up to feminisms, which offer unique contributions to any field of research. Indeed, compared with other disciplines, the arrival feminist perspectives in IR occurred relatively late. It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that several conferences and the published books created momentum for a feminist study of IR. Among the early books, now classics of the field, are Jean Bethke Elshtain’s *Women and War* (1987) and Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989).<sup>7</sup> In addition, J. Ann Tickner’s *Gender in International Relations: Feminist perspectives on achieving global security* (1992), V. Spike Peterson and Anne Runyan’s *Global Gender Issues* (1993), and Christine Sylvester’s *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (1994) made their mark in the early 1990s. While they are all different in their approach, they are united by seeking to rethink IR’s basic parameters.

Three conferences completed the launch of feminist thought onto the IR scene: the 1988 *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* conference at the London School of Economics, the 1989 conference at the University of Southern California, and the 1990 conference at Wellesley.<sup>8</sup> *Millennium* published the proceedings from its conference in a special issue titled “Women and International Relations,” and consequently

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also published as *Gender and International Relations* by Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland.<sup>9</sup> Peterson, who had organized the conference in California, agreed to edit a collection of the papers presented at Wellesley, which culminated in the 1992 volume *Gendered States*.<sup>10</sup>

It should also be noted that feminists in peace research had already mounted a challenge to bias in their field at the 1975 International Peace Research Association conference, where they highlighted gender as a variable in structural violence.<sup>11</sup> They worked to bring feminist perspectives to bear on issues of peace, conflict, and war as early as the 1960s. By the late 1960s women peace researchers were analyzing power, “developing feminist conceptions of power as power to, or empowerment, rather than power over.”<sup>12</sup> In the 1970s they moved on to “reconceptualizing security as security with an adversary, or common security, rather than security against the adversary, also expanding the notion to mean security against want, security of human rights, the security of an empowered civilian society.”<sup>13</sup> By the 1980s “they were analyzing the relationship between war and patriarchy.”<sup>14</sup> Despite their enduring efforts, peace research, like IR, remains a male-dominated field.

#### OLD DEBATES

The first in a series of engagements between feminist and mainstream IR is Robert Keohane’s article “International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint”, one of the articles included in the 1989 issue of *Millennium*.<sup>15</sup> His treatment, to be discussed in more detail below, evaluates feminisms according to the parameters of a privileged approach (his version of social science) to which its insights might be added as Cynthia Weber first pointed out in her “Good Girls, Little Girls, Bad Girls” response in 1994.<sup>16</sup> Another engagement, probably the most disconcerting since it exhibits the tendency of not reading feminist work before daring to assess it, is Francis Fukuyama’s “Women and the Evolution of World Politics” published by *Foreign Affairs* in 1998.<sup>17</sup> Most problematic about Fukuyama’s article is his adoption of a simple binary distinction between men as aggressive and women as peaceful. He supports his view with biology, which leads him to fault feminists for trying to change human nature.<sup>18</sup> Doing so, he simply ignores a fundamental feminist insight: that gender roles are influenced by a variety of factors and vary cross-culturally and historically.<sup>19</sup>

Lately engagements have become more promising, including debates in official journals of the profession. This advance began in 1996 with a provocative article by Adam Jones in the *Review of International Studies* (the official journal of the British International Studies Association), which asked, “Does ‘Gender’ Make the World Go Round?”<sup>20</sup> It continued in 1997 with a debate led by J. Ann Tickner in the Interna-

tional Studies Association's *International Studies Quarterly*, where she suggested three types of misunderstandings are to blame for the lack of conversation between feminists and IR scholars.<sup>21</sup> They are (1) misunderstandings about the meanings of gender; (2) different ontologies; and (3) epistemological divides.<sup>22</sup> It remains to be seen whether 'misunderstandings' is the best term to use since differences in ontology and epistemology have also occurred in the debate between (non-feminist) critics and mainstream IR scholars without leading to a total silencing thereof.<sup>23</sup>

The most recent engagement is a symposium on war and gender in *Perspectives on Politics*, the newest journal of the American Political Science Association.<sup>24</sup> This review section continues the debate begun by Joshua Goldstein's *War and Gender* (2001), a detailed study of the role of gender in war. His book has attracted a great deal of interest, including a special panel at the 2003 International Studies Association conference in Portland, Oregon.<sup>25</sup> I will now establish some links between Keohane's early intervention and this latest review section to illustrate a main theme that shapes the debate—"What kind of knowledge?" In other words, what has been characterized as the (post) positivism debate.<sup>26</sup>

In 1989, Keohane welcomed feminist standpoint theorists as useful contributors to IR, drawing on the distinction between feminist empiricists, feminist standpointers, and feminist postmodernism made by Sandra Harding.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, feminist empiricists believe that science is gender biased, but can offer valuable insights if research is conducted in the 'right' way. They advocate moving away from considering the masculine condition as the defining human condition and toward incorporating a feminist awareness into the project. So-called standpoint feminists maintain that perception depends on where you stand and differs depending on gender, culture, race, and class among other factors. They believe in giving up the myth of unmediated knowledges and in developing epistemologies and programs for political action through specific (female) ways of knowing. Finally, feminists influenced by postmodernism "appear skeptical that we can locate anything morally and politically worth redeeming or reforming in the scientific world view, its underlying epistemology, or the practices legitimate."<sup>28</sup> The task these feminists face is to critique the methods, notions of truth, frameworks, criteria of validity, and unquestioned concepts.

As noted, Keohane invites feminist standpointers to make a contribution to IR, preferably by reexamining fundamental concepts of the discipline such as power, sovereignty and the state.<sup>29</sup> He thinks that empiricist feminism can independently help in this endeavor, though, by itself—that is, by simply pointing out that women are victims and have been ignored in IR—feminist empiricism will provide only limited insights into international relations. Keohane argues that this kind of feminism is in danger of committing "the analytical error of reifying a stylized 'patriarchal state' or

‘interstate system.’<sup>30</sup> His caution is warranted on this point and might even be further extended to the limits of empiricist (or positivist) feminisms in general, though this seems outside Keohane’s intent.<sup>31</sup> He fails to notice the impact of the observation itself on the object of study, the instability and contextual relativity of concepts, and the absence of approaches that can accommodate the ever-changing parameters of international relations.

A brief discussion of the reviews of Goldstein’s book might serve to illustrate this common problem. One of the reviewers, Matthew Evangelista, uses Goldstein’s detailed inquiry to provide an excellent critique of Fukuyama’s earlier piece in *Foreign Affairs*, though he does note that both conclude that a ‘feminization of politics’ could potentially be destructive.<sup>32</sup> In Evangelista’s words, “in the rough-and-tumble world of international politics, it could be dangerous to raise gentler, kinder boys—a practice akin to nuclear disarmament.”<sup>33</sup> Further, he proposes Goldstein should take his own observations about the centrality of gender to warfare more seriously.<sup>34</sup> He does not expand on what ‘taking gender seriously’ would entail in terms of Goldstein’s approach and whether it would be possible within his epistemology. Evangelista’s critique is largely content specific, readily accepting the positivism of Goldstein’s endeavor.<sup>35</sup>

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Elisabeth Prügl, on the other hand, is quick to note the constraints placed on Goldstein’s work through his adherence to positivism. She points out that Goldstein works with an understanding of gender as a social construct, rather than a biological given, and as such his work “is amenable to a treatment of gender as a political category, a category that steers, enables, and obstructs.”<sup>36</sup> Though his understanding invites such analysis, he does not deliver it; his “positivist treatment becomes possible at the expense understanding the instability of gender and reproducing a scientific myth of gender as a universal binary.”<sup>37</sup> Prügl points out that as such, the book offers lessons about the strengths and weaknesses of positivist feminism: it helps make the case that gender matters in IR to those who will only be convinced by positivism, but it fails to “show more extensively the way in which gender and war produce each other, the way gender works as an organizer of knowledge both in security institutions and social science disciplines.”<sup>38</sup> To learn more about the latter the student of IR will have to turn to works by feminist IR scholars that utilize innovative, alternative, non-positivist ap-

proaches to develop their analyses.<sup>39</sup>

It would be interesting to hear Keohane's reaction to Goldstein's work considering his critique of so-called postmodern feminists' possible contributions to IR, indeed his downright dismissal of them - he refers to them as "a dead end in the study of international relations" and prophesies that "it would be disastrous for feminist international relations to pursue this path."<sup>40</sup> Keohane's reaction is influenced by his faith in social science methods and his worry that cumulative knowledge would become impossible.<sup>41</sup> He defends his view by noting, "science has the value of narrowing gaps by providing common standards to test beliefs, and therefore disciplining our minds, protecting us to some extent from bias."<sup>42</sup> What is more, he writes that "the very difficulty of achieving social scientific knowledge is an argument for cherishing rather than discarding social science and the aspiration for a more or less unified epistemology."<sup>43</sup> This is very instructive, and deeply troubling, as it suggests that disciplinary coherence is more important than accuracy or depth. He does not question whether his approach will provide better understandings of the world, nor does he explain why this version of science has not prevented bias in IR thus far.

Even a cursory archaeology of modern science reveals its bias. Harding, in *The Science Question in Feminism*, examines the emergence of modern science and of emancipatory impulses underlying ideals such as value-neutrality or objectivity.<sup>44</sup> Particularly worthwhile is her discussion of the New Science Movement of 17<sup>th</sup> century England, where "science's progressiveness was perceived to lie not in method alone but in its mutually supportive relationship to progressive tendencies in the larger society."<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the institutionalization of science produced a new division of labor between science and politics which, in turn, lead to an abandonment of the social reform goals at the basis of much of science at the time: "The destiny of Modern Man was bifurcated: scientists as scientists were not to meddle in politics; political, economic and social administrators were not to shape the cognitive direction of scientific inquiry."<sup>46</sup>

The separation of science and politics could not and cannot be upheld in practice. The production of knowledge and its modalities (science and scientists) are intrinsic to the social/symbolic/political order and never free from its dimensions.<sup>47</sup> The division of knowledge from politics and vice versa has consequences of a different kind: it *represents* science *as though* it is clearly divided from politics and thus provides legitimacy that seems to rest on a foundation other than authority. Ironically, as Harding points out, "science *is* value-neutral in the dangerous epistemological and social sense that it is porous, transparent, to the moral and political meanings that structure its conceptual schemes and methodologies."<sup>48</sup>

Within IR, the political nature of feminist knowledge claims along with their

adoption of what are seen as disruptive approaches constitute the main grounds on which feminist insights have been dismissed. Feminists, by definition, have a political project and consistently articulate this dilemma at the heart of modern science. It is imperative that they continue to do so to prevent the deradicalization of feminist projects. The feminist insight that “even the best forms of knowledge cannot be divorced from their political consequences,” as Tickner notes, “can only appear unsettling to proponents of scientific methodologies who frequently label such knowledge claims as relativist and lacking in objectivity.”<sup>49</sup>

An underlying concern shared by many scholars wary of alternative approaches is that it would become impossible to judge between competing claims. The perceived necessity to articulate truth or to at least agree on universal norms in order to point to injustices or abuses of power is typical of modernity. Approaches refusing to articulate such claims or rejecting attempts to do so by pointing to the contextual nature of all knowledge claims tend to be charged with relativism and consequently dismissed.<sup>50</sup> Yet, the charge of relativism only acquires force within a framework based on a possibility of fixed truth and stable foundations.<sup>51</sup> In other words, to see relativism as a problem rather than as characteristic of the world requires the belief in having access to some universal, absolute, timeless and metaphysical knowledge which is not already bound by our finitude of Being. As Jean Grondin phrases it:

The misapprehension lies in the metaphysic-historicist expectation that credible criticism can only be derived from a timeless authority or norm. The opposite is the case. Humans are inherently critical *because* they are subjects of their time and are only able to proceed against evil in the name of their interests and aspirations, which can only be thought of as temporal themselves.<sup>52</sup>

It is thus necessary to contextualize, to locate spatiotemporally, our claims about a better world. As Maria Lugones and Elisabeth Spelman write, “our visions of what is better are always informed by our perception of what is bad about our present situation.”<sup>53</sup> It is necessary to resist the “one means fits all” approach of modern science because “how we think and what we think about does depend in large part on who is there not to mention who is expected or encouraged to speak.”<sup>54</sup> Keohane, through his failure to interrogate his own assumptions and his becoming “he who ‘impartially’ observes and therefore records his observations” is lacking such a vision.<sup>55</sup> As Weber notes, his “way of seeing constitutes the feminist body of literature as that which is to be seen but not heard from, unless its voice(s) is/are mediated through Keohane’s textual interpretations.”<sup>56</sup>

Keohane treats feminist IR as a subject to be studied, not a way of studying IR. Whereas Harding and Sylvester, on whose work he draws, *look through* feminist lenses

at IR, Keohane *looks at* feminist IR.<sup>57</sup> He divides what he sees into those approaches that fit with his concerns and those that threaten his belief in cumulative social science.<sup>58</sup> He does not allow for even the slightest divergence from his vision of what this means, even though “many feminists do see structural regularities, such as gender and patriarchy,” as Tickner points out.<sup>59</sup> They do not however, perceive their insights as universal or natural, but instead “define them as socially constructed and variable across time and space.”<sup>60</sup>

Keohane also replicates a common misunderstanding of so-called postmodern approaches, such as the worry that the ascendancy of such approaches would have the political effect of relativist resignation.<sup>61</sup> Contrary to this view, approaches influenced by continental philosophy and/ or postcolonial thinking are profoundly influenced by a concern with the political. They go to great length to show that far from being politically neutral, science is inherently political. They insist that matters of ontology, epistemology, and methodology are always already political. Feminists, as members of social/ symbolic/political orders deeply infused with structures of gender, race, class, and cultural hierarchies, need to provide “practical everyday and long-range efforts to eliminate *all* these forms of domination.”<sup>62</sup>

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Reviewing these exchanges provides an indication that the debates about feminism in IR continue to revolve around similar themes. Notwithstanding, changes are noticeable in that at times the kinds of insights gleaned by different feminist approaches have begun to be debated and that more scholars take on feminist lenses for their own work. However, there has been too little appreciation for the implications of considering gender as a dynamic social construction. Further, rarely is the centrality of innovative feminist methods to the production of feminist knowledges recognized or even noted. Instead, as Marysia Zalewski pointed out, feminism tends to be reduced to “What’s the feminist perspective on Bosnia?”<sup>63</sup> Feminists are still not encountered on their own grounds by the IR mainstream.

Yet, what do feminists think of the state of feminist IR?

### FEMINIST DEBATES

Feminists are generally comfortable with the diversity of their approaches and most scholars combine several types of inquiry. While categorizations can be useful to demonstrate the variety of feminist approaches, they are always exceeded. It remains important to tailor the approach to the task at hand, recognizing the limits of adopting a particular perspective. As Weber expresses it, “while acknowledging the tensions and complications this creates, [feminists] welcome rather than attempt to constrain the richly transformative visions looking through feminist lenses enables.”<sup>64</sup>



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To locate feminisms differently, the piece now turns to examine the ways in which feminists have pitched their research agenda to the mainstream.<sup>65</sup> In line with a major research question “Where are the women in IR?” some feminists refer to their research program as ‘women and IR.’ Their task is to identify the various roles that women occupy in the international, many of which had rarely been taken into account by the field of international relations prior to the introduction of feminist approaches. An early example is Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*.<sup>66</sup> She points to the various ways in which women are present everywhere in international relations. It is the lenses through which certain activities are seen by IR that obscure the work done by women, be it as diplomat’s wives, as sex workers outside military bases, or as poster girls for Chiquita bananas.<sup>67</sup> Enloe manages to paint an international relations entirely unlike that described in major works of the discipline. Like many feminist scholars, she is quick to note the power relations involved in this omission in mainstream scholarship:

Conventional analyses stop short of investigating an entire area of international relations [...] it has taken power to deprive women of land titles and leave them little choice but to sexually serve soldiers and banana workers. It has taken power to keep women out of their countries’ diplomatic corps and out of the upper reaches of the World Bank. It has taken power to keep questions of inequity between local men and women off the agendas of many national movements in industrialized as well as agrarian societies. It has taken power to construct popular culture—films, advertisements, books, fairs, fashion - which reinforces, not subverts, global hierarchies.<sup>68</sup>

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As Grant notes, bias generated by political theory is transmitted to IR: “Taking men as the sole actors and citizens, the political theory borrowed by IR postulates a domestic/international divide premised on the private/public distinction that relegates women to a space outside politics”<sup>69</sup> Women and their experiences are rendered invisible by the traditional focus on the public, on politics understood as competition for power, and on male experience as representative for human experience.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, asking “Where are the women in IR?” by itself is a powerful challenge to IR—it refuses to ignore this bias, offering a corrective by populating international relations with women.

A second way to characterize feminist work in IR has been as “gender and IR.” Some feminist scholars, not being satisfied with describing and analyzing women’s roles in the international, turned instead to investigating how practices, both within IR as a discipline and in the policy world, are profoundly shaped by gender. Judith Lorber explains:

Gender [is] a social structure that has its origins in the development of human culture, not in biology or procreation. Like any social institution, gender exhibits both universal features and chronological and cross-cultural variations that affect

individual lives and social interaction in major ways. As is true of other institutions, gender's history can be traced, its structure examined, and its changing effects researched.<sup>71</sup>

Looking at gender takes the field beyond the 'woman question', making it possible not simply to identify women as a special case, but to interrogate how femininity and masculinity both produce gendered international relations. How does gender shape concepts, ideas, and institutions central to the discipline? Elshtain describes her work *Women and War* as "the result of overlapping recognitions of the complexity hiding behind many of our simple, rigid ideas and formulations."<sup>72</sup> She goes on, "contesting the terrain that identifies and gives meaning to our received understanding of women, men, and war does not grant a self-subsisting autonomy to discourse; rather, it implies a recognition of the ways in which received war stories may lull our critical faculties to sleep."<sup>73</sup>

For the argument of this article a third way to characterize the field is most important. A mature "Feminist International Relations" would ask, "If we take feminist scholarship seriously, what kind of IR would this engender?" Such an approach necessarily brings the political back into international politics, since feminism, by definition and no matter what variant one chooses, entails a political project. While there are many feminisms, some say as many as there are feminists, they agree on a common goal—to make the world a better place for women. So, while they might not agree on how this should be done nor on what exactly the label 'woman' encompasses, they want to dismantle current hierarchies and reduce gender inequalities.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing power struggles, not just over material goods, but over meanings, they have a dynamic research agenda that continually questions established frameworks—in this case those of the discipline of IR.

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#### NEW DIRECTIONS

What elements of feminist scholarship should IR take seriously? Most importantly, feminisms are practices starting from women's lives and they, for the most part, resist making a clear distinction between theory and practice.<sup>75</sup> Taking seriously their own slogan 'the personal is political,' for feminists "women's subjectivities and experiences of everyday life become the site of the redefinition of patriarchal meanings and values and of resistance to them."<sup>76</sup> On their basis new theoretical perspectives for criticizing the mainstream are formed and new possibilities envisaged.

Its evolution through practice infuses feminisms with an appreciation of the impact of perceptions and representations on lived experience. Since "most of *us*, most of the time, reproduce gender, class, race, and countless other relations of domination unreflectively" situating oneself and the subject of study is a priority.<sup>77</sup> Writes Audre Lorde:

As women we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others' differences to enrich our visions and our joint struggles.<sup>78</sup>

This also involves denaturalizing accepted categories and modes of relating, in the process creating what Donna Haraway has called situated knowledges. Feminists ask "How does it work? What can this concept or theory do? How can such a theory exist or be lived? What are its forces?"<sup>79</sup> As Elshtain notes:

Unfortunately, contemporary social science is often ill equipped to understand the constitutive role of symbols, myths, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies, preferring instead the apparent solidity of institutional arrangements, the regularity of codified rules, or the reassurance of abstract models. Much that is important and subtle falls through the grid of standard modes and methods and is ignored. Interpretative daring is precluded.<sup>80</sup>

Besides disciplinary practices (such as the insistence on testable hypotheses in IR) hindering feminists research, in most parts of the world access to knowledge-producing institutions continues to be limited to select parts of the (male) population, unlikely to foster a feminist awareness. Consequently, in addition to an examination of contents of knowledge, attention also needs to be paid to who gets access to knowledge, who disseminates it, and how these practices are a product of, and reinforce, larger patriarchal structures.

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Notwithstanding these obstacles, feminist IR scholars have adopted innovative methods to retrieve alternative knowledges, generate new knowledges, and spread their insights. Feminists inhabit a discipline, subverting it in the process. It has "never been a simple matter of application or addition when feminism has addressed a body of thought."<sup>81</sup> Doing feminist IR involves tailoring "methods and categories to the specific task at hand, using multiple categories when appropriate and forswearing the metaphysical comfort of a single feminist method or epistemology."<sup>82</sup>

Sylvester, concerned with "getting through and around intended and unintended repetitions of men's place and knowledge," offers empathetic cooperation as a feminist method for IR.<sup>83</sup> It describes:

The process of positional slippage that occurs when one listens seriously to the concerns, fears, and agendas of those one is unaccustomed to heeding when building social theory, taking on board rather than dismissing, finding in the concerns of other's borderlands of one's own concerns and fears.<sup>84</sup>

This rather hermeneutic approach becomes a vehicle of disturbance by radically diverging from accepted approaches that never quite capture what is missing.<sup>85</sup> Emphasizing listening, it goes to the heart of the matter by uncovering feminist knowledges where science denied their existence. Listening seriously is also what guides Elshtain's *Perlenfischerei* (pearl fishing). Following Hannah Arendt, she insists the "important point is to remain open to one's subject matter, to see where it is going and follow—not to impose a prefabricated formula over diverse and paradoxical material"<sup>86</sup>

Another option feminists have used is to adapt tools from other disciplines. I have used literary theory, for example.<sup>87</sup> An advantage of a narrative approach is that narratives can keep tension alive and convey information without necessarily imposing a linear structure. Further, narratives "are capable of holding multiple cultural identities even when these 'logically' contradict [because] multiplicity and contradictoriness are made coherent, compelling in their own way."<sup>88</sup> Cheryl Mattingly, Mary Lawlor, and Lanita Jacobs-Huey describe how, unlike abstract discussions and generalized statements, apparently contradictory narratives:

Allow us to understand how morally complex the world is, particularly for social groups whose shared marginalization compels them to move between universalistic (e.g., we are American) and particularistic (e.g., we are African American) stances.<sup>89</sup>

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Feminists can teach IR "to tolerate and interpret ambivalence, ambiguity and multiplicity as well as expose the roots of our need for imposing order and structure, no matter how arbitrary and oppressive these needs might be."<sup>90</sup> This is enhanced by feminists' attention to contexts within which (or without which) they work that are able to constrain, but also inform their efforts. Inequality occurs in various forms throughout time and space and sometimes addressing one or another form of oppression might be imperative, especially when some seem more manageable than others. The fact that experiences of exclusion and injury, as well as possibilities to address them, are varied goes some way towards explaining why there are so many feminisms. This variance is important, for each feminism, depending on its location, has different insights to offer. Here, it is also important to acknowledge how some groups of people systematically and structurally have more power to do the constructing than do others. When articulating a wrong it is crucial to recognize and indicate its local, personal, or community specific variability.

This creates a productive tension that propels the feminist political project. As a consequence of being articulated in particular locations, feminisms always entail a tension between what is (the challenges faced in everyday lives) and what ought to be (their long-term goals and aspirations). This duality is continually (re)negotiated and, even with all its paradoxical effects, it is extremely productive. Articulating their political projects

in contexts that constrain them, without ever enjoying the luxury of secure resting points, feminists make strategic use of mobile subjectivities.<sup>91</sup> Realizing that frontlines are always temporary and multiple, they tend to favor cooperative over violent encounters. Mobile subjectivities are politically advantageous in that they allow for developing alliances around issues rather than identities, where ‘we’ and ‘them’ shift and slide.

This tension at the heart of the feminist project is also often painful. What is more, disengagement from a particular social/symbolic/political order is potentially dangerous. In *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa describes survival tactics adopted by those “pushed out of the tribe for being different” and forced to become adept in switching between realities.<sup>92</sup> She notes that while it “deepens the way we see concrete objects and people, we also lose something in this mode of initiation, something is taken from us: our innocence, our knowing ways, our safe and easy ignorance.”<sup>93</sup> As such, feminists might be able to teach IR to be more comfortable with vulnerability and to learn to accept insecurity.

Feminists understand that in order to produce genuine change it is necessary to challenge not only the content of a particular narrative, but also its structure. In other words, it is not enough to simply add women, or even to achieve greater visibility of the ways in which gender shapes international relations, but it is important to also transform how IR produces, disseminates, and recreates knowledges. Feminist IR challenges the discipline to develop dynamic approaches that can be constantly revised, that can adapt to evolving events and issues, and that are imaginative enough to capture subtleties that remain unnoticed in formalized models. It disturbs because it denies the possibility of traditional cumulative knowledge and demands that scholars continually question and revise their own assumptions—as Enloe would put it, that they remain curious. ❊

## NOTES

1. Sandra G. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 242.

2. As Tickner commented in 1997 “Although critical engagement is rare, evidence of awkward silences and miscommunications can be found in the oral questions and comments IR trained feminists frequently encounter when presenting their work to IR audiences. Having articulated what seems to her (or him) to be a reasoned feminist critique of international relations, or some suggestions as to the potential benefits of looking at IR through ‘gender-sensitive’ lenses, a feminist scholar is often surprised to find that her audience does not engage with what, to her at least, are the main claims of her presentation” J. Ann Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1997): 612.

3. As customary, International Relations (IR) will refer to the discipline of IR whereas international relations in small caps will refer to the subject of study.

4. In the introduction to *Three Centuries of Women Thinkers*, Spender explains her endeavor by sharing that “the knowledge that other women did indeed feel the same way - knowledge gained by communication with other women - was a source of strength: the discovery that women of the past had been through

the same process helped to remove the doubts and increase the confidence” Dale Spender, *Feminist Theorists: Three centuries of key women thinkers*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 2.

5. What is more, feminists are ‘infiltrating’ the mainstream so non-feminist IR scholars must acknowledge and engage their arguments. They are challenged to finally encounter feminists on their own grounds.

6. As noted, part of the aim of this article is to recover some feminist IR history, of importance in particular for students of IR.

7. Enloe had already published her less well-known *Does Khaki Become You? The militarization of women's lives* in 1983, but *Bananas* is the book that has made the greater impact and is often used to introduce feminist IR to undergraduates.

8. See also Tickner's “Foreword” in V. Spike Peterson, *Gendered States: Feminist (re)visions of international relations theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992a), ix-xi.

9. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland, *Gender and International Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Further, in 1998 *Millennium* published “Gendering ‘the international’” a special issue examining feminist IR ten years after the original conference.

10. Peterson, *Gendered States: Feminist (re)visions of international relations theory*.

11. For more detail see Elise Boulding, “Women's Experiential Approaches to Peace Studies,” in *The Knowledge Explosion: Generations of feminist scholarship*, ed. Cheris Kramarae and Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992).

12. *Ibid.*, 56.

13. *Ibid.*, 56-57.

14. *Ibid.*, 57. Furthermore, feminists have linked these issues to economic and environmental exploitation thus effectively providing a broad conception of security long before IR security studies began doing so. Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), Ursula Oswald, “Agribusiness, Green Revolution, and Cooperation,” in *Peace, Development and the New International Order*, ed. Luis Herrera, and Raimo Vayrynen (Tampere, Finland: IPRA, 1979).

15. Robert Keohane, “International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint,” *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 18, no. 2 (1989).

16. Cynthia Weber, “Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls - Male paranoia in Keohane, Robert critique of feminist international relations,” *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 2 (1994).

17. Francis Fukuyama, “Women and the Evolution of World Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998). For responses see: Barbara Ehrenreich et al., “Fukuyama's Follies,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 1 (1999), Lilly Ling, “Hypermasculinity on the Rise, Again: A response to Fukuyama on women and world politics,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 2, no. 2 (2000), J. Ann Tickner, “Why Women Can't Run the World: International politics according to Francis Fukuyama,” *International Studies Review* 1, no. 3 (1999).

18. Fukuyama, “Women and the Evolution of World Politics,” 36.

19. E.g., compare Keohane's view with the following: “For the purposes of cross-cultural analysis I define gender as a multidimensional category of personhood, encompassing a distinct pattern of social and cultural differences. Gender categories often draw on perceptions of anatomical and physiological differences between bodies, but these perceptions are always mediated by cultural categories and meanings” Will Roscoe, “How to Become a Berdache: Towards a unified analysis of gender diversity,” in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual dimorphism in culture and history*, ed. Gilbert H. Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 341.

20. Terrel Carver, Molly Cochran, and Judith Squires, “Gendering Jones: Feminisms, IRs, masculinities,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998), Adam Jones, “Does ‘Gender’ Make the World Go Round? Feminist critiques of international relations,” *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 4 (1996), Adam Jones, “Engendering Debate,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998).

21. Robert Keohane, “Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations between international relations and feminist theory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998), Marianne H. Marchand, “Different Communities/ Different Realities/ Different Encounters: A Reply to J. Ann Tickner,” *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998), J. Ann Tickner, “Continuing the conversation ...” *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998), J. Ann Tickner, “You just don't understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1997).

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22. Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists," 613..

23. Marianne H. Marchand, "Different Communities/ Different Realities/ Different Encounters: A reply to J. Ann Tickner," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998): 202-03.

24. Matthew Evangelista, "Rough-and-Tumble World: Men writing about gender and war," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 2 (2003), Robert Keohane, "Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations between international relations and feminist theory," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998), Marchand, "Different Communities/ Different Realities/ Different Encounters: A reply to J. Ann Tickner.", Elisabeth Prügl, "Gender and War: Causes, constructions, and critique," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 2 (2003), J. Ann Tickner, "Continuing the Conversation ..." *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998), Tickner, "Why Women Can't Run the World: International politics according to Francis Fukuyama.", Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists."

25. Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Ironically, though maybe not surprisingly, for IR to take feminisms more seriously it took male scholars to take on the question of gender in IR.

26. See e.g., Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism & beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

27. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*.

28. *Ibid.*, 29.

29. Keohane, like many, seems unaware of previous feminist work e.g., on power, such as Judith Stiehm, *Nonviolent Power: Active and passive resistance in America* (Lexington, Mass.,: Heath, 1972).

30. Keohane, "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint." References for this article are taken from the reprint Robert Keohane, "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint," in *Gender and International Relations*, ed. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 45.

31. In IR empiricism and positivism are often conflated, and though they are closely linked, Smith maintains a distinction in his discussion of the matter. He writes: 'I do not accept the view that empiricism = positivism = epistemology + methodology; rather positivism is a methodological position reliant on an empiricist methodology which grounds our knowledge of the world in justification by (ultimately brute) experience and thereby licensing methodology and ontology in so far as they are empirically warranted' Steve Smith, "Positivism and beyond," in *International Theory: Positivism & beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

32. Fukuyama claims, "in anything but a totally feminized world, feminized policies could be a liability," though immediately thereafter he also writes that a feminization is impossible because "male tendencies to [...] seek to dominate status hierarchies, and act out aggressive fantasies toward one another can be rechanneled but never eliminated" Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," 36.

33. Evangelista, "Rough-and-Tumble World: Men writing about gender and war," 331.

34. For details and other interesting points see *Ibid.*

35. Evangelista also suggests that Goldstein's definitions of key terms, such as *war* and *war system*, might constrain his analysis Goldstein defines war as "lethal intergroup violence" and the war system as "the interrelated ways that societies organize themselves to participate in potential and actual wars" Goldstein, *War and Gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa*, 2-3. Compare e.g., with Reardon's classic analysis Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985).

36. Prügl, "Gender and War: Causes, constructions, and critique," 337.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. E.g., Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The international politics of militarizing women's lives* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), Cynthia H. Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual politics at the end of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Jan Pettman, *Worlding Women : A feminist international politics* (St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1996), Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An introduction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An unfinished journey* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cam-

bridge University Press, 2002), J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and approaches in the post-Cold War era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Marysia Zalewski and Jane L. Parpart, *The "Man Question" in International Relations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998).

40. Keohane, "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint," 46.

41. What is more, similar to Keohane's earlier call for an alliance between feminism and liberal institutionalism, Goldstein's "Lessons for scholars of war and peace" include the "especially promising [...] potential synergy of feminism with traditional liberalism" Goldstein, *War and Gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa*, 407.

42. Keohane, "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint," 46.

43. Ibid.

44. The main elements of modern science (e.g., atomism, value neutrality, and experimental observation) did not develop in a vacuum, and neither did the belief in the progressive, emancipatory nature of science. Importantly, "the belief that science is inherently emancipatory [...] emerges only in the projects and meanings of a *prepositive* science, where experimental observation is not yet separable from the historically specific political goals it seemed to advance" Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, 221-22.

45. Ibid., 219.

46. Ibid., 223.

47. Foucault expresses it most forcefully: "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely knowledge constantly induces effects of power [...] it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980), 52.

48. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, 238.

49. Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists," 622.

50. So, while relativism adequately describes their position (as knowledge is seen as relative to the context within which it emerges), the value attached to the notion relativism as the inferior term in the relativism/ universalism dualism is problematic and cannot simply be subverted by claiming it should be prioritized.

51. I elaborate on feminisms and modern science in general in chapter one of my dissertation where I also suggest a feminist narrative analysis as an alternative. For details see: Annick T.R. Wibben, "Security Narratives in International Relations and the Events of September 11, 2001: A feminist study" (Ph.D., University of Wales, 2002).

52. My translation: "*Der Kurzschluß liegt in der metaphysisch-historistischen Erwartung, glaubhafte Kritik könne nur aus einer überzeitlichen Instanz oder Norm her stamen. Das Gegenteil trifft zu. Die Menschen sind von Haus aus kritisch, weil sie der Zeit unterstehen und gegen das Unheil nur im Namen ihrer Interessen und Aspirationen, die man sich ja nur als zeitlich denken kann, angehen können*" Jean Grondin, *Einführung in Die Philosophische Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 15-16.

53. María C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for 'the woman's voice,'" *Womens Studies International Forum* 6, no. 6 (1983): 579.

54. Ibid.

55. Weber, "Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls - Male paranoia in Keohane, Robert critique of feminist international relations," 338.

56. Ibid.

57. For more detail refer to Ibid.

58. It is worth noting that Keohane's later contribution to the debate, as a reply to Tickner's 1997 piece, largely rephrases his earlier points. He is still insisting that "the basic method of social science remains the same: make a conjecture about causality; formulate that conjecture as a hypothesis, consistent with established theory (and perhaps deduced from it, at least in part); specify the observable implications of the hypothesis; test for whether those implications obtain in the real world; and overall, ensure that one's procedures are publicly known and replicable" Keohane, "Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations between international relations and feminist theory," 196.



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59. Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists," 619.
60. Tickner also notes that the post-positivist move resonates with many feminists due to their commitment to epistemological pluralism and certain ontological sensitivities Ibid.
61. Keohane, "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint," 47, quoting Alcoff.
62. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, 242.
63. Marysia Zalewski, "What's the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?," *International Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1995).
64. Weber, "Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls - Male paranoia in Keohane, Robert critique of feminist international relations," 339.
65. Note the use of 'approach' instead of some other designation, following Der Derian who uses "the word 'approach': not 'analysis,' 'system,' 'methodology,' or 'model,' but an 'approach,' which recognizes the impossibility of pure coherence of thought and object, and yet draws the self into the event" James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 173.
66. Note that this is not to imply that Enloe herself identifies her work as belonging to this trend.
67. Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, & Bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*, 1st U.S. ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 1990).
68. Ibid., 197-98.
69. See Rebecca Grant, "The Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory," in *Gender and International Relations*, ed. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). This summary from Eric Blanchard, "Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory," *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 28, no. 4 (2003): 1293.
70. I scrutinized appeals to experience and their utility as a basis for knowledges in earlier work: Annick T.R. Wibben, *Narrating Experience: Raymond Aron and feminist scholars revis(it)ed - a subversive conversation*, vol. 7/ 1998, *Department of Political Science and International Relations Research Reports* (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1998).
71. Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1.
72. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), xi.
73. Ibid.
74. Judith Butler questions the necessity of unity (e.g., of women) is necessary for political action and argues that "certain forms of acknowledged fragmentation might facilitate coalitional action precisely because the 'unity' of the category woman is neither presupposed nor desired" Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15.
75. Some feminists have worried that the diversity of women's experiences makes this task unachievable. It seems however, that it is the task of taking women's experiences seriously that matters, not whether it matches one's worldview or provides the bases for a singular alternative truth. This resonates with Ferguson's suggestion to post a genealogical "reminder that the unity was imposed rather than discovered [in] an effort to be alert to the limitations of strategies of analysis that one must nonetheless use in some form. Living with the tension between these two impulses takes ironic humor and persistence" Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of subjectivity in feminist theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 88..
76. Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: B. Blackwell, 1987), 5-6.
77. V. Spike Peterson, "Security and Sovereign States: What is at stake in taking feminism Seriously?" in *Gendered States: Feminist (re)visions of international relations theory*, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992c), 38.
78. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 122. In addition, "the experience of being a woman can create an illusionary unity for it is not the experience of being, but the meanings attached to gender, race, class and age at various historical moments that is of strategic significance." Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters: Locating the politics of experience," in *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary feminist debates*, ed. Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips

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(Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 86. Ferguson suggests to post a genealogical “reminder that the unity was imposed rather than discovered [in] an effort to be alert to the limitations of strategies of analysis that one must nonetheless use in some form.” Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of subjectivity in feminist theory*, 88.

79. Claire Colebrook, “Introduction,” in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. Claire Colebrook and Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 8 [sic].

80. Elshtain, *Women and War*, xi.

81. Colebrook, “Introduction,” 5.

82. Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson, “Social Criticism without Philosophy: An encounter between feminism and postmodernism,” *Theory, culture and society* 5, no. special issue on postmodernism (1988): 391.

83. Christine Sylvester, “Empathetic Cooperation - a feminist method for IR,” *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 2 (1994a): 321.

84. *Ibid.*: 317.

85. Compare with Wibben, *Narrating Experience: Raymond Aron and feminist scholars revis(it)ed - a subversive conversation*, 102-05.

86. Elshtain, *Women and War*, xi.

87. Wibben, “Security Narratives”.

88. Cheryl Mattingly, Mary Lawlor, and Lanita Jacobs-Huey, “Narrating September 11: Race, gender, and the play of cultural identities,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 750.

89. *Ibid.*

90. Jane Flax, “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory,” *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 12, no. 4 (1987): 643.

91. “Mobile subjectivities” is a term coined by Ferguson. She writes, “mobile subjectivities are temporal, moving across and along axes of power (which are themselves in motion) without fully residing in them. They are relational, produced through shifting yet enduring encounters and connections, never fully captured by them. They are ambiguous: messy and multiple, unstable but preserving. They are ironic, attentive to the manyness of things. They respect the local, tend toward the specific, but without eliminating the cosmopolitan. They are politically difficult in their refusal to stick consistently to one stable identity claim; yet they are politically advantageous because they are less pressed to police their own boundaries, more able to negotiate respectfully with contentious others” Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of subjectivity in feminist theory*, 154..

92. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The new mestiza*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 59-60.

93. *Ibid.*, 61.