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FEMINIST THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN A POSTMODERN ERA

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To Jean Bethke Elshtain and Cynthia Enloe
– two exemplary "women" who subvert IR

4 THE THIRD DEBATE IN IR VISITED BY FEMINISTS

The third discipline-defining debate is a sizing up, mopping up, holding firm versus letting go affair. Instead of a general confrontation between (seemingly) two ways of proceeding, there are scattered jabs and ripostes, hand-wringings, dialogues, I-told-you-sos, efforts at strategic synthesis, intransigencies, refusals, and determined partings of the way. Those who insist on having a debate ask the practitioners of science and tradition to render an accounting of the field's knowledge and methods; they are concerned that IR has not amassed an impressive intellectual fortune in its seventy or so years of existence. Two problems, they say, reduce the potency of the field: one, theory building has been done badly or inappropriately; and, two, the crisis of late-modernity has not been acknowledged by a disciplinary turn to postmodern philosophy and methods. Advocates of science, meanwhile, chastened and less physics-envious than they were in the second debate, nonetheless continue to mine the possibilities of empirical data-based or deductive theory, swatting at the challengers as at so many mosquitos, taking on board some of the new currents in the air and not others, or behaving as though the third debate should not be happening. The traditionalists, meanwhile, carry on.

Some recriminations, refusals, and celebrations

To get a sense of the disappointments and refusals of disappointment that characterize a renewed period of controversy in academic IR, we need to consider a few markers of this moment in the field. We start with notes of concern from within the mainstream and then move into the more postpositivism-celebratory modes of critique.[1]

Disappointed but not despairing

Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach (1988: 3) open their *Elusive Quest* with an expression of a malaise:

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

The problem, in their view, is that IR's methods outran conceptual advancements because the field bounced from pillar to post, partly owing to the "needs and preferences of political practitioners and the funding practices of government institutions, [t]he latter especially account[ing] for the 'scientific' bent of American international relations scholarship" (ibid.: 5). There was also the matter of the cold war, which sanctified realism as something approaching scripture, even though a close look at realism shows not so much a theory as a set of normative emphases which shape theory; it is a self-contained syllogism that has had the effect of closing off rather than of opening up possibilities for analysis; it, in fact, has been most effective at sustaining a particular ideology than at inspiring science (ibid.: 216). Faced with ideology masking as theory, some analysts moved to define a different range of puzzles (often simply reinventing idealism) or fell into a methodological field of poppies, regaining consciousness only in order to defend square inches of turf in big and little skirmishes that made for a rigid and ever less relevant IR.

At the current moment, Ferguson and Mansbach say, the field is and should be abandoning its quest for a scientific revolution that it could never rise above normative contexts to attain. How should it proceed? In 1988 they tentatively suggested that IR try "to make sense of the way in which humanists approach their materials," to understand "the shifting *Gestalten* of societies" (ibid.: 222). In 1991 they expanded this argument and suggested that the field: emphasize subjectivism in research and practice; avoid dichotomizing politics as domestic versus international; be sensitive to context; recognize normative and ideological aspects of theory and practice; maintain a skeptical posture toward the notion of finding permanent laws of politics; and seek to bring individual human loyalties to various politics into the range of IR analysis rather than focus too much on structural constraints.

Refusing disheartenment

IR's scientists, however, do not want to abandon the second debate (con)quest and tend to react badly when told that they should consider literary theoretical techniques or emphasize subjectivism in their research. "Literary" and "subjective" signal to them the abandonment of science, the abandonment of theory building for a free-for-all of personal expression.

A recent issue of *International Studies Quarterly* – the journal of the International Studies Association – shows us that the scientists still dominate the mainstream texts. Joshua Goldstein (1991) provides an account of issues of reciprocity between the superpowers. Based on empirical theory, Goldstein approaches data in a way that he claims will avoid the biases, noise, and excessive aggregations of previous studies. His model of reciprocity is quasi-experimental. Terry Boswell and Mike Sweat (1991) sort out differing conceptions, measures, and units of analysis in studying hegemony. They specifically test a proposition associated with power transition theory using a time series regression analysis that corrects, they say, for previous failings in multivariate statistical rigor. Gregory Sanjian (1991: 173) takes us, in his own words, through an exercise in developing and testing "a fuzzy multi-criteria model of arms transfer decision-making ... [that] outperforms several naive models (including an autoregressive model) and an expected-utility model ... [n]inety strategies ... predicted, with an overall success rate of 87%." Timothy McKeown (1991) uses regression analysis to examine the relationship between the average openness of a trade system and variables representing political business cycles and hegemonic stability explanations of degree of openness of a trading system over time. The point is to explain the non-collapse of trading activity during a period of US hegemonic decline.

International Studies Quarterly is currently edited at Ohio State University, one of the US land grant universities where science hunkered down after the second debate. One expects a certain refusal of unorthodoxy from that corner of the field. And yet, when one looks closely at the aforementioned articles representing scientific IR, it is clear that the second-debate triumph has been affected by the times, metamorphosing, in most cases, into self-reflexive practice.

First, one can discern in these articles some concern to test competing theories rather than test hypotheses generated by one theory alone. Boswell and Sweat seek to compare systemic and realist theories of hegemony. Goldstein points out that differing predictions about reciprocity-based relations (leading to more cooperation versus more hostility) pepper the literature and need to be sorted out to avoid what Ferguson and Mansbach (1991) would undoubtedly tell us is an example of IR's conceptual anarchy. Second, there is a bit more soul-searching and defensiveness in some of these scientific pieces. A review article on the state of security studies (Walt, 1991) happily announces that this area of the discipline has become more rigorous and focused on theory; nonetheless, its author warns of "counterproductive tangents that have seduced other areas of international studies, most notably the 'post-modern' approach ... to date, these works are mostly criticism and not much theory" (ibid.: 223). A note of confidence is struck that security studies are undergoing a renaissance. Further along, there is acknowledgement of a "widespread belief that the end of the Cold War has decreased the risk of war [and] may temporarily divert financial support and research energies in other directions" (ibid.: 222).

The continuing fragmentation of the field *cum* loyalty to realism that concerns Ferguson and Mansbach is also evident in that security review article. We are told about: "third-image pessimists" who warn that the end of the cold war will fuel a multipolar restructuring of Europe that opens up the dangers of war; "second-image pessimists" who warn of "dangers arising from the weak democratic institutions in Eastern Europe" (ibid.: 226); and "second-image optimists" who maintain that European societies have changed and so have the prospects for war in that region. The two-to-one pessimistic predictions about the impact of the terminated cold war on issues of western national security shows both ongoing cleavages and the way the normative aura of ethnocentric realism dogs the field.

Dissident celebrations and skepticisms

A very different view of the field appeared in *International Studies Quarterly* when the journal was partly under the stewardship of a self-named dissident in 1990. Consider this:

> Whether one speaks of the "discipline of international studies," the "discipline of international relations," the "discipline of international politics," or the "discipline of world [or maybe 'global'] politics," the words manifestly fail, even as they promise, to discipline meaning. The words but broadly connote (they cannot denote) a boundless nontime and nonplace – a deterritorialized, extraterritorial zone of discourse – where the work of producing the subjects, the objects, and the interpretations of an institutional order and its limits visibly eludes the certain control of that order's supposedly reigning categories. (Ashley and Walker, 1990b: 376)

This passage is a statement of challenge to academic IR that takes both tradition and science to task for attempting to limit rather than expand possibilities of analysis and politics. It presents the quest for grand theory, however it is packaged, as an illusion that slips out from under the controlling lasso at the very moment when the beast seems secured and ready to be pulled home, scattering into a million pieces of dissidence, into scores of refusals to be tamed by theory, into resistances and lonely exiles that defy any sense that truth has been found and conquered.

It is a statement of poststructuralist or postmodernist IR,[2] the practitioners of which, in IR-related studies at least, call themselves "exiles." These dissident exiles are "marginal instances" that:

> resist knowing in the sense celebrated in modern culture, where to "know" is to construct a coherent representation that excludes contesting interpretations and controls meaning from the standpoint of a sovereign subject whose word is the origin of truth beyond doubt. In modern culture, it is the male-marked figure of "man." (Ashley and Walker, 1990a: 261)

They are certain that the time is right for dissident activity because all of us face a "crisis of the human sciences, a crisis of patriarchy, a crisis of governability, a crisis of late industrial society, a generalized crisis of modernity" (Ashley and Walker, 1990b: 377). The crisis is the "acceleration of social activity such that it strains, ruptures, overflows, or otherwise *transgresses* the institutional limitations of a social order" (ibid.). One cannot carry on as usual unless one is ignorant of the contributions that a business-as-usual attitude makes to the tumult. One cannot take refuge in some closed system of knowledge or fail to see that the very language one uses shapes, mirrors, and challenges the crisis.

An IR-relevant understanding of the crisis often points fingers at the long Cartesian search for foundational Archimedean points that could stand beyond social constitution as truth. The tool of choice in this search has been rationality, the agent of transcendence. Rationality enables a researcher to separate himself from "objects studied" and to control them in the name of objectivity. As long as such seek-and-control missions evoke little dissent within the community that undertakes them, the method can seem consensual. But there are always doubters, homeless people, skeptics, madwomen, who defy the logic and who refuse to be controlled. Their whispered, bellowed, or silenced dissent orchestrates into a crisis of knowing and then into a more encompassing cultural crisis when the truth begins to disappoint, and does so time and again. Just in the current phase of late modernity or postmodernity, we think of scientific progress and of

bombarded people on Japanese islands, of smashed people in a crashed space shuttle, of "our" failure to kill enough people in Vietnam to make for a US technological victory. We cannot cure AIDS even though health sciences are biased in favour of improving men's health and many AIDS sufferers are men. Third world underdevelopment worsens and science cannot get a handle on it or sustain western development. Offering material progress as a substitute for old-fashioned spirituality, morality, ethics, poetry – for death – science has not tamed all frontiers of "ignorance." It has not fixed everything in the name of sovereign man. It has not even fixed the problem of homelessness in US cities. This is our crisis: one puts faith in the assurances of modern progress and finds the recurrence of the unexpected, the irrational, the taboo, rather than the triumph and transcendence of strategic reasoning.

In IR the signs of the general crisis creep into the disheartened but reformist efforts of Ferguson and Mansbach (1991) and into the new reflexivity *cum* defensiveness of the scientists. It can be heard in the clamorings of gay, feminist and men's groups, handicap-rights and cross-cutting peace-feminist movements. The pieces of these movements have been visible for a long time. The crisis makes it marginally safer for these marginal groups to speak out, and in speaking out the groups help to constitute (sometimes to heighten) the crisis. It is the *gestalten* of the times that "[t]he attempt to impose boundaries – to exclude the concerns of cultural and ecological movements from the political programs of worker movements, say, or to exclude feminist scholarship from international studies – becomes distinctly visible" (Ashley and Walker, 1990b: 377). These movements press on, transgressing "institutional boundaries that would differentiate, mark off, and fix time, space, and identity within a social order, including the identities of subjects as agents of knowing and the objects that they would know" (ibid.: 377–8). Now:

> there is no clear and indubitable sense of inside versus outside, domestic versus international, particular versus universal, developed versus underdeveloped, reality versus ideology, paradigm versus counterparadigm, fact versus fiction, political theory versus political practice, identity versus difference, progress versus regress, continuity versus change, father versus mother, rationality versus irrationality, system of communication and circulating exchange value versus nature, positivity versus negativity, maturity versus immaturity, seriousness versus play, sense versus nonsense. (Ibid.: 378)

The articles that comprise the issue of *International Studies Quarterly* edited by IR dissidents and exiles approach study and research in ways

that differ both from science and from the many traditional reforms that would quell the crisis without responding to its specter. James Der Derian (1990), for instance, talks about the importance of simulation, surveillance, and speed as global forces that have eluded conventional second-debate IR because they are more of time than (geo)space, more transparent than discrete, and more bound up with signs that are exchanged rather than goods that exchange. Bradley Klein (1990) examines NATO as a set of practices that both constitutes the West and provides a network of intertextual representations of global political space. His method includes genealogy (examining mechanisms by which certain ideas and practices come to grip minds and rule actions as though they were natural and true) and deconstruction (which I think of, using a construction-industry metaphor, as pulling apart and looking in-between the cantilevers of knowledge and power that hide a host of meanings and identities at the movable joint, and that engineer the left beam [reading right] to be more reliable, solid, active, normal than the other beam).[3]

Michael Shapiro (1990) provides an account of strategic discourse as transected by a variety of practices (including commercial practices) "with which American policy is thought, expressed, represented ... understood" and increasingly scrutinized by the media "which creates the need for another level of strategy, a media or representational strategy, for both the official strategic discourse and its various contenders" (ibid.: 329). William Chaloupka (1990) leans on Foucault and Baudrillard to consider the partial interventions into US foreign policy that come under the guise of "lifestyle politics," a "moment of difference ... located by a specific characteristic: the *self* has become crucial to every political critique" (ibid.: 342). Finally, Cynthia Weber (1990) takes us into an analysis of third world debt as the constitution of a foundation of interpretation for speaking positions on the claims of obligation. Her illustrative case is Peru and the foundations she uncovers are theological metaphors that lead, she says, to contrasting claims of debt-servicing obligations by two Peruvian presidents.

These pieces and others that make up the lexicon of dissidence problematize the modes of social and political discipline that modern subjects have imbibed with the morning newspaper, taught our students, believed, and defended. They interrogate present knowledge through an evaluation of practices that have built up our sense of what is normal. They listen for critical voices that have been drowned out by official discourses. They read "the textual interplay behind power politics" (Der Derian, 1989: 6–7). They exemplify a postmodernist philosophical approach to late or post-modernity.

In and around the field of IR, this approach is treated as a playful-mocking-irresponsible-nonserious long dangle on a bungee line without thought to whether the line is strong, there is equipment below to break a fall, or there is a way of making sense of the activity in any larger context than yahoo adolescent rebellion (e.g., Walt, 1991). Indeed, there is a form of postmodernism that Pauline Rosenau (1992) calls the skeptical mode. It seemingly abandons theory building as a legitimate goal in the social sciences in order to avoid incessant encrustations of rationality. She summarizes the skeptical position this way: "Feeling no need to be logical, to reconcile oppositions, to test, or to choose between theories, it accepts inconsistency and contradiction." The writers she textually associates with this position are Richard Ashley and James Der Derian, both from the dissident wing of the third debate in IR.[4]

But there are other aspects of postmodern philosophy that celebrate the opportunities that the crisis presents to decentralize and democratize knowledge and power by dememorializing old sovereignties and exploring the borderlands of difference. Pauline Rosenau (1922: 83) depicts this orientation as affirmative postmodernism and characterizes it as "unsystematic, heterological, decentered, ever changing, and local. Nonrepresentational, it is personal in character and community-specific in focus." She does not authorize any of the IR postmodernists for this group. I think this is an oversight. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker are skeptical and affirmative, attracted to the cusp of Rosenau's binary categories of dissidence. In fact, defending themselves against claims that dissidence can only tear down and not build up a more moral set of behaviors, these dissidents say:

> It is true that we cannot represent, formalize, or maxim-ize deterritorialized modalities of ethical conduct. We cannot evoke a juridical model, define the good life and lay down the code crucial to its fulfillment, as if bespeaking some universal consensus formed according to rules of discourse already given, without at the same time covertly imposing a principle of territoriality that these modalities refuse to entertain. But our inability to represent human beings does not prevent us from talking about it or from trying to understand how it might orient deterritorialized ethics in the valuation and disciplining of their activities. (Ashley and Walker, 1990b: 391)

At issue for Ashley and Walker (1990b: 403) is whether "those engaged in international studies will exercise their resources and their freedom to test limitations and open up possibilities, thereby both exploiting and expanding spaces for thought and action in reply to the contemporary dangers and opportunities of global political life." This

is the type of strategic concern that Braidotti (1991: 2) sees as "the sign of an irrespressible theoretical vitality," of "the will to go on theorizing, that is, to engage in philosophical discourse by all possible means," rather than abandon it.

One summarizer celebrates the third debate

Josef Lapid (1989) steps back from the disappointments and refusals of disappointment in the field to summarize the third debate in terms of three main tendencies. I think he misses at least three other tendencies but will start with his concerns first.

The first tendency he sees is to construct long-lived, large-scale, and multitiered paradigms or research programs that "qualify as basic knowledge-producing, knowledge-accumulating, and knowledge-conserving units" (ibid.: 239). This paradigmatism replaces much of the second-debate concern to craft middle-range theory and yields research that can be compared across large organizing frameworks. Recent comparisons of realist and neoliberal institutionalist views of cooperation (Grieco, 1990) illustrate this trend as do debates over modernist versus postmodernist discourses. Ferguson and Mansbach (1991: 364) are *aficionados* of paradigmatism in that they want to build a research scaffold for IR that enables its users to take "seriously the claims of [the] 'dissidents' while continuing to be precise in setting forth values and assumptions, defining terms, clarifying variables, and collecting evidence for generalizations."

A second tendency in the current debate, according to Lapid, is for mainstream scientific analysts to evaluate the premises and underlying research assumptions in their work rather than accept the custom of posing some propositions as unquestionably given or as given because they are of heuristic value and "work in the 'model'" (for example, assume perfect competition). As a result of this perspectivist trend, fortress "anarchy" has been under scrutiny as a problematic realist assumption (Jervis, 1988; Suganami, 1990; Wendt, 1992; Milner, 1992; Powell, 1993), as has the discipline-establishing claim that there are important differences between domestic and international arenas of politics (Stein, 1990; P. Haas, 1990; R. Walker, 1989; Putnam, 1988; J. Rosenau, 1990; Ferguson and Mansbach, 1991). By implication, the levels of analysis theorem is losing ground and down with it comes the assumption of unified states as actors: "states do not 'behave' ... [i]ndividuals and a wide variety of groups within, without, and extending across state boundaries act" (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1991: 370). Sovereignty takes a beating as a synonym for authority to pro-

nounce IR (Ashley, 1989) or as a specific concept that gives "states" far more autonomy, cohesion, and universality than "they" deserve (J. Rosenau, 1990; Elshtain, 1992; R. Walker, 1992).

Finally, Lapid argues that the third debate features methodological pluralism, which is the drift toward an "intriguing eclipse of consensus as a prime desideratum in social science," a "massive move toward relativism" (Lapid, 1989: 243). Unlike the previous two debates, more elements in the third debate disavow "exclusive epistemological principles and prescriptions" (ibid.: 244). But lack of consensus is not itself consensual or we could not find the scientists currently in charge of *International Studies Quarterly* hoeing such predictably straight rows without calling those rows "the special issue on science in contemporary international relations."[5] We can think of a fourth characteristic of the third debate, therefore, as the lingering on of second-debate issues into the third era, which means that the third debate is also – and this is characteristic five – an arena of debates-within-debates about how to proceed to find method, how to keep method at bay, how to deal with all of our bounded and/or differently configured rationalities.

The sixth characteristic, unmentioned in Lapid's summary, is that feminism is present in the third debate.

Feminism: present if not consensually accounted for

Ferguson's and Mansbach's 1991 version of the third debate mentions two feminist debaters but joins them at the hip with Robert Keohane, who is referred to as a neorealist. The text reads (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1991: 364): "NeoMarxists and feminists clash with neorealists (see Keohane, Molyneux, and Whitworth, 1989)." In fact, each of these analysts contributed a separate and distinct piece to the particular debate in *Millennium* that Ferguson and Mansbach recognize (Keohane, 1989b; Molyneux, 1989; Whitworth, 1989). Moreover, there are many other feminists in the third debate. As I pointed out earlier, there was a special issue of *Millennium* in 1988 that was packed with feminist contestations, and feminist articles and books stretch back several years (e.g., Elshtain, 1987; Enloe, 1989; Sylvester, 1987; Mies, 1986).

This is not the only example of a selective naming of feminists. Ashley and Walker (1990a) report that feminism is a worthy dissidence and that "women" too are in exile from IR. They even present the sovereign voice which they find offensive in IR as the male-marked figure of "man." But then they mimic that sovereignty, even as they very seriously critique it in other ways, by finding it unnecessary to

enable even a single feminist "marginal instance" to analyze at length the implications of sovereign man for people called "women," for her-selves. One might say that the editors represent feminists without giving one among us voice(s), interpretation(s), writing(s), word(s), brush and canvas. One supposes that in their minds this presentation is fully permissible on the grounds that in a crisis of representation, such as we are experiencing, "there is no possibility of a well-delimited, identical presence of a subject whose interior meanings might be re-presented in words, for it is impossible to exclude the contesting interpretations of subjective being that must be absent if the presence is simply to be" (Ashley and Walker, 1990b: 378).

Where are we in the third debate when "we" are so tokenized in the main debate and lively in our own quarters? There are at least three feminist perspectives on where we might be. One suggests that we are part of the dissident exile group of postmodernists. Another maintains that some of us are in the feminist third wave, which focuses more on epistemology than theory building, and in that role we are akin to participants in the IR third debate; others of us are more properly second-wave, for good or ill. A third position is that it is unnecessary to rehearse these boundary questions because the drive to fix location misses an important point about the importance of "incommensurable" voices in this era of change.

Feminism: necessarily a dissidence

Jane Flax (1987) makes the argument that contemporary feminism, the feminism we have been tracing in previous chapters, is a postmodern historical phenomenon and part of postmodern philosophy.[6] It is always and necessarily a dissidence.

Feminism is a postmodern phenomenon in the sense that the transitional state Flax believes the western world is in, "makes certain forms of thought possible and necessary, and it excludes others" (ibid.: 621–2). Feminism, a product of transition, has itself made possible the problematizing of gender. Gender was intermittently problematized in the past, but today's variants of feminism unfold in a global context that is marked by considerable questioning of "the appropriate grounding and methods for explaining and/or interpreting human experience" (ibid.: 624). We used to claim to know for certain that real women existed: you knew them by bodies and social roles as (fill in the blank) – mothers, wives, passive people in skirts, bitches, nags, tramps, little old ladies in tennis shoes, bad at mathematics, the ones who carry the wood and fetch the water and so on. Now the analogic statement

"women" is to "____" can have virtually any referent. The proliferation of markers shows up in more open public acknowledgement of what society used to pretend not to see, or to trivialize if it did see it – women novelists, women road workers, women police, women department chairs, women dentists, lesbians in the next office, women weight lifters, women guerrillas. Simultaneously, there is a backlash against the inverted-comma-ization of "women" (Faludi, 1991) and debates within feminism about how to respond to onslaughts of commercialized "new women" that mock feminism. If the postmodern is, as Wendy Brown (1991: 65) contends, a "time, circumstance, and configuration rather than an intellectual tendency or political position," then these feminist questionings of place, these backlash nostalgias of gender, these fragmentations and heterogeneities, deterritorializations of women and decolonized spots for feminism, this feminist and antifeminist and postfeminist in-your-face is of this time.[7]

As for the relationship of feminism to elements of postmodern philosophy, Flax argues that "women" possess and want to claim certain traits that modernity denied us, such as reason, sovereignty, progress, self-emancipation, and science. Therefore, if we become too dissident and deconstructive, those reclaimed traits must be revealed as bogus and relinquished as undesirable for everyone. Flax (1987: 625) works through this contradiction by posing another. She says that "[f]eminist notions of the self, knowledge, and truth are too contradictory to those of the Enlightenment to be contained within its categories." When we talk about gender, for instance, feminists soon realize that gender is linked to other subject statuses and wonder if there can be "gender" apart from race, class, sexual preference, historical era, locale, generation and so on. We wonder about "women" within "gender." Should we, for instance, emphasize the insights that come to us through mothering when, in fact, mothering is a social assignment that conflates biology with culture? Flax "solves" these dilemmas of ontology and epistemology by arguing that feminism is a postmodern philosophy because feminists stub our toes, feel the pain, and dissent from modernity's tropes whenever we seek to imitate them.

We should not construe from this position, however, that feminism can simply imbibe postmodern philosophy without exercising considerable caution. Flax (ibid.: 632) questions whether feminists should even rely too heavily on the postmodernist French *feminists* who, like the IR postmodernists, place considerable emphasis on texts. She says:

> A problem with thinking about (or only in terms of) text, signs, or signification is that they tend to take on a life of their own or become the world, as in the claim that nothing exists outside of a text; everything is a comment upon or a displacement of another text, as if the modal human activity is literary criticism (or writing).

Flax also faults postmodernism – which she paints with broad strokes – for obscuring "the projection of its own activity onto the world and den[ying] the existence of the variety of concrete social practices that enter into and are reflected in the construction of language itself (e.g., ways of life constitute language and texts as much as language constitutes ways of life)" (ibid.: 632). To relate this to IR, there is in the otherwise laudatory projects of dissidence a politics of sometimes forgetting that even exiled "men" have a social context that affects what they say and that opens up to them certain vehicles for voice that remain closed to others. That is, Ashley and Walker may lament their exile and the exile of many dissidents from IR, but some among them do have voice and the power to decide who to voice.[8] Indeed, efforts to avoid complicity with privileged identity by deconstructing the way identity has been used by (other) men to oppress, may be what leads some postmodernists (like Derrida) to "metaphorize their crisis in the guise of discourses about the feminine" (A. Maugue, 1987 in Braidotti, 1991: 135).[9]

The postmodernism Flax (1987: 640–1) encourages for feminism is not naive:

> The enterprise of feminist theory is fraught with temptations and pitfalls. Insofar as women have been part of all societies, our thinking cannot be free from culture-bound modes of self-understanding. We as well as men internalize the dominant gender's conceptions of masculinity and femininity ... We need to (1) articulate feminist viewpoints of/within the social worlds in which we live; (2) think about how we are affected by these worlds; (3) consider the ways in which how we think about them may be implicated in existing power/knowledge relationships; and (4) imagine ways in which these worlds ought to/can be transformed.

What Flax implicity calls for is a feminism within postmodern philosophy that is multistandpointed and "women"-aware. She wants a postmodern blasphemy that enables feminists to be on several (assigned and el(l)e-phantly painted) shores at once and to see around us with an owlish sweep of vision that never loses sight of embodied women even as it casts a skeptical eye on the constituted subject status "women."[10]

This perspective has a sonorous timbre in certain feminist contri-

butions to IR's third debate. Jean Elshtain (1987), for one, is well known for her efforts to homestead war and peace with blasphemous "women" and "men," whose standpoints once revealed are no longer easily corralable onto "a" shore. She says, for instance, that:

> By speaking of women *and* war – rather than presenting a chronology of women *in* wars or a paean to the notion that women have not been in the thick of violent things, not eagerly anyhow – I signal my intention to explore diverse discourses and the political claims and social identities they sustain. Women have played many parts in narratives of war and politics ... Although some men no doubt conform to the image of adolescents itching for a fight, many others seek ways to constrain and limit violence and find nuclear weapons repulsive. *Women and War* is the result of overlapping recognitions of the complexity hiding behind many of our simple, rigid ideas and formulations. (Elshtain, 1987: x–xi)

Here, there is a simultaneous acceptance of women as real – their bodies can die in war or mourn the loss of others – and a sense that "women" have been constituted, created, invented, and imagined through war and peace narratives that are repeated and repeated.

A different angle on the problematique of sighting and unsiting women in IR is revealed in Anne Sisson Runyan's (1992) review of "The 'State' of Nature." Runyan provides a critical picture of the intricate relationships to which "women" are assigned (or assign themselves) vis-à-vis "nature": Mother Earth tending her flock well if only she is allowed to do so by the fettering forces of capitalist-industrial-statist-industrial politics; witches associated with nature's presumably dark and disorderly side; gardeners of nature (for man); whole-earthers who offer "a sterile and harmonious picture of Mother Earth by denying man-made disasters and natural forces of death and decay" (ibid.: 133). Her owlish vision takes her to "fractious holism" understood, following Jane Bennett (1987), as a politics that "refuses to see the natural world as organized either around human ends or around the needs of the state, and refuses to see women's bodies and lives organized around the needs of the white man's state or as subsumed by the images and claims of an anthropomorphized, state-centric "environment" (Runyan, 1992: 136).

Some feminisms are second and some are third?

A second perspective on feminism's place, as it encounters the third debate in IR, can be deduced from feminist discussions about the pros and cons of second- versus third-wave approaches to knowing. The

question of which wave of feminism has been better for "women" has two-ish positions.

Hester Eisenstein (1984) makes a definite distinction between the waves of feminist thinking. She argues that feminist approaches to knowledge and action shifted in the 1980s from a modernist-resonating effort to correct analysis and public policy finally and once and for all, to a concern to explore epistemology and the existence of the subject. One can indeed make the argument that the liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s were really feminist modernisms. After all, they seemed beholden to various pre-existing philosophies that posited one cause of and answer to women's degraded status in the West if not Everywhere, and some among them were adversarial in denouncing feminists who did not see things their (one) way. In chapter 1 I suggested many distinctions between feminisms that could, at first glance, make it textually difficult for some of them to ride the third wave rather than be stuck behind it. But I did attach each second-wave body of thought discussed to a third-wave epistemology, thus smudging the boundaries between waves, which I think is a more accurate depiction of overlapping waters.

Braidotti's (1991) second, more complex way of understanding the relationship between second- and third-wave feminist thinking smudges boundaries in a different way. She claims that "some feminist theorists, too often and too hurriedly labelled as 'difference thinkers,' have moved towards ideas of multiplicity and difference in order to avoid the trap of ready-made dualism" (ibid.: 130). They have, in effect, reinvented "an" enemy in the binary opposition even as they strike out against the notion that there is a unitary logic to anything. Second-wave feminisms made "women or the feminist the new master, or patroness, or protector of a new form of normativity ... This would ultimately result in rationalizing women's counter-knowledge, experience and discourses, but it would basically leave untouched the framework of power within which they operate" (ibid). Yet the second wave, says Braidotti, was utopian, full of political blueprints that specifically addressed frameworks of power and justice. It produced a feminist literature that was inspiring, unconventional, irreverent, humorous, fun to read – "free from the specialized tone of later feminist scholarship" (ibid.: 153). It was linked in struggle and in tension with workers, lesbians, third-worlders, people of color, Marxists, students – all subjects claiming subjectivity. It revolted too – against reformist and revolutionary doctrines of the day that could not extricate themselves from gender-occluding formulas and from

complex patriarchy. It radically rejected master narratives even as it accepted certain subject positions as real. It was in your face.

The point to recuperate from Braidotti's analysis is that to be second-wave need not mean that one has lost the race for progressive knowledge. It need not signify a banishing of the second behind the third in a patronizing rehearsal of the modern sense that to move to a new way shows some freeing of ourselves from the past. Second-wavers are not necessarily in some rhapsodic state of numbed thinking. Their movement politics in the 1970s empowered some women relative to the hyper-intellectual, hyper-epistemological third wave of the 1980s. When second-wave politics became (prematurely) passé, away went a certain permission to be outspoken, outraged, and out on the streets – as subject positions with power and confidence. Out of fashion went the empowering old ways of reading the radical oldies – Mary Daly, Sonia Johnson, bell hooks. Too bad. I still believe that the "radical feminists" pushed feminist thinking the farthest the fastest and with the most KAH-POW(!!). Now "[t]he 'problem without a name', as Betty Friedan called it in the sixties, has gradually been transformed into a movement without an ideology, and against all ideologies" (Braidotti, 1991: 157). It can seem to be struggling against power as a thing to struggle for.

Ah, but that is nostalgia for you. The second wave was also mean-spirited at times, rejecting, violent, and not for the terminally shy. It was knowledgeable, but knowledge was not always translatable into power for us. Ultimately, we did not ride the second wave to our way, however many ways that way was articulated. Some "women" hated us. Some of us mingled with the popular texts of burn-out. And so the cautions of the third wave.

All feminisms are percolating through our postmodern time, debating each other and all others, scripting and rescripting their own texts and identities as they confront a world that once fixed us and now is a bit unhinged. Accordingly, I have placed all the waves of feminism in all the debates of IR, whether they belong there in linear time or not. I am placing them again, in ever different ways, in the third debate. This is not a refusal to see feminist differences. It is a flexibilizing move that recognizes mobile subjectivities. But not everyone will agree. There will be debates about which wave does it better and why all these labels anyway.

As for flexibilizing feminism in its encounter with IR's third debate, ponder the intellectual journey some feminists have taken as they consider and reconsider the relations of (second wave) women to issues of (third wave) epistemology.

Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (1991: 2) open their collection on *Gender and International Relations* with this statement:

> From the start international relations has had difficulty drawing the connections between individual citizens – male or female – and the states system. The focus on events and behaviour has not been conducive to feminist thought because the role of women has long been muffled. At the same time the competing influences of realism, idealism, Marxism, behaviourism and so forth have had one particular effect in common. These intellectual concepts which helped define the discipline also gave the appearance of transcending gender issues.

Here, "women" and "gender issues" almost converge textually. In the special issue of *Millennium* that first highlighted the feminist IR link, and from which most of the chapters in *Gender and International Relations* were taken, there was a very definite insistence on the part of the editors, Grant among them, that "'women and international relations' is a viable subject of intellectual significance, in its own nascent terms and within the discipline of international relations" (1988: Editors' Introduction). And we "know" that studying unproblematized women is second-wave.

In a recent piece, Grant shows us how a foot in second-wave feminist thinking may be needed to negotiate the third debate in IR. Her concern is to think through what a feminist epistemology can do for security studies. This is her view:

> What a *feminist epistemology* must do in time is to include tools for confronting the gender bias structured into the theories of security in international relations. It must also resolve the conflict of values between women's experiences in combat, and feminist assumptions about security that feed a feminist epistemology. Finally a feminist epistemology must define how it functions given the presence of other epistemologies that cover the same agenda of war and security. (Grant, 1922: 96)

The emphasis on "bias" and the need to "resolve the conflict of values" and "to define" and delineate epistemologies is different from pondering whether "women" exist, whether bias can be corrected without dissenting from the inherited intellectual-power order. It is different from asking whether a conflict of values is necessarily as undesirable as she suggests. Yet Grant's approach resonates with third-wave efforts to move "beyond simply criticizing established ideas ... [to] a critique of the status of theoretical discourse itself" (Braidotti, 1991: 174). So where is the boundary between the second and third wave?

Again, that differences mark feminist contributions to IR's third debate should not be refused. But our discussion of points of overlapping waters suggests that there is little reason to engage in acrid and enervating debates about which feminism is the best for IR. Our waves unfold around, under, on top of each other, blurring the borderlands into that "mestiza consciousness" that enables us to be on several shores at once. In effect, we are drawn away from the liberal convention of dialogue or debate, where one side tries to display such brilliance that the other side is cowed into publicly conceding the point, while privately, perhaps, dissenting. The postmodern in feminism is conversational, fluid in identity, and comfortable with a certain degree of unpegged ontology. It comes around once again.

Postmodern feminism – again

Kathy Ferguson offers us a third perspective on where feminism could fit that takes us around and through and into the others and back to postmodern feminist borderlands – yet another time.

She writes about the "important tension within feminist theory ... between articulating women's voice and deconstructing gender" (Ferguson, 1991: 322). This standpoint versus postmodernist tension has a flaw on both of its sides that makes righteous side-taking somewhat pompous. The standpoint flaw is this: "expressions of women's voice usually call for respect for differences among women (and sometimes among men as well), but the logic of the search for a founding experience tends to elide difference nonetheless" (ibid.: 323). Thus Grant (1992) has difficulty reconciling her sense of women in combat with "a" way of thinking about "women's" experiences, although she sees no reason to doubt that some founding experience is authoritative in establishing the existence of women and men. The flaw in the postmodernist project of deconstruction is that it is "parasitical upon the claims it seeks to unfound, including claims about sexual difference, both those of the patriarchal order and those of feminists" (Ferguson, 1991: 324). Thus, one could argue that Elshtain's (1987) approach to women and war, although ungluing in its refusals to accept the authority of inherited war narratives, depends on war for a starting point (indeed, it is more complicated than this because Elshtain also critiques peace as being a piece of the war/peace dichotomy).

In Ferguson's mind, the tension between the two feminist approaches, both of which seem to straddle the second and third waves, can be overplayed to the point where we fail to see that the deconstructionists keep the standpointers honest by reminding them