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Returning to the Root: Radical feminist thought and feminist theories of international relations

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Abstract: Feminist international relations (IR) theory is haunted by a radical feminist ghost. *From Enloe's suggestion that the personal is both political and international*, often seen as the foundation of feminist IR, feminist IR scholarship has been built on the intellectual contributions of a body of theory it has long *left for dead*. *Though Enloe's sentiment directly references the Hanisch's radical feminist rallying call*, there is little direct engagement with the radical feminist thinkers who popularised the sentiment in IR. Rather, since its inception, the field has been built on radical feminist thought it has left for dead. This has left feminist IR troubled by its radical feminist roots and the conceptual baggage that feminist IR has unreflectively carried from second-wave feminism into its contemporary scholarship. By returning to the roots of radical feminism we believe IR can gain valuable insights regarding the system of sex-class oppression, the central role of heterosexuality in maintaining this system, and the feminist case for revolutionary political action in order to dismantle it.

Keywords: Feminism, international relations, international theory, citational practices, radical feminism, discourse

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Q- How many radical feminists does it take to change a lightbulb?

A- Thirteen. One to change the bulb and twelve to argue over the definition of
'radical feminist.'

- Robin Morgan³

A spectre is haunting feminist international relations (IR) -- in the form of radical feminism. Its core concepts and critiques lurk throughout feminist IR, but we find direct engagement with radical feminism curiously absent in the scholarship. In this article, we explore the absence of radical feminist theory within feminist IR, the effects this has had on how feminist IR has theorized concepts which are central to its development, and attempt to sketch what might be gained by revisiting radical feminist theory for thinking through issues of the international. In forwarding this argument, we echo Eriksson Baaz and Stern's insight that feminist IR has rarely provided sustained critical engagement with the earlier feminist theoretical debates that inform current scholarship on ideas such as sexuality, violence and power.⁴ Echoing debates across the discipline regarding the representation of and depth of engagement with the 'old'

³ Robin Morgan, 'Light Bulbs, Radishes, and the Politics of the 21st Century', in Diane Bell and Renate Klein (eds.) *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1996), pp.5.

⁴ Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern 'Curious Erasures: the sexual in wartime sexual violence', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20:3 (2018) p.295.

theories from which the discipline developed,⁵ we call attention to what is lost from the death of radical feminist thought in disciplinary IR and call on feminists in IR to revisit radical feminist theory, not as a corrective to current conceptualizations of the international, but as a means for maintaining the robustness and diversity of feminist praxis in international relations.

Feminist IR owes a great deal to radical feminist theory, beginning with its basic premise that the daily lived experiences of women around the world are of ontological and epistemological significance to the study of the international.⁶ Surveys of feminist IR theory commonly begin with Cynthia Enloe's evocative claim that the personal is international.⁷ This rallying cry of feminist international thought expands on the radical feminist slogan 'the personal is political', which originated within second-wave feminist agitation for a more serious consideration of women's embodied experiences as a basis

⁵ Andrew Neal 'Neophilia' *Security Dialogue* 50:45 (2019), pp. 10-11; Sean Molloy 'Realism: A Problematic Paradigm' *Security Dialogue* 34:1 (2003), pp. 71-85; Claire Vergerio 'Context, reception, and the study of great thinkers in international relations' *International Theory* 11:1 (2019) pp. 110-137; Edward Keene 'International intellectual history and International Relations: contexts, canons and mediocrities,' *International Relations* 31:3 (2017) pp. 341-356; Lucian Ashworth 'How should we approach the history of international thought?' paper presented at the annual convention of the International Studies Association 18-21 February 2015. New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁶ Cynthia Enloe 'Margins, Silences and Bottom Rungs: How to Overcome the Underestimation of Power in the Study of International Relations' in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: positivism and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 186-202.

⁷ Cynthia Enloe *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: making feminist sense of international relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

for political analysis and engagement.⁸ Thus, the fundamental notion that relations between the sexes are political provides the starting point for feminist IR to analyse both women's participation within and marginalization from the 'high politics' of international relations as based within structural relations of disparate power between men and women, which obfuscates not only where women are in international politics, but also what effects the doing of politics at the international level has on the lived experiences of those outside the halls of power.

Since the late 1980s feminist IR has gained significant traction in the discipline. Nearly all IR textbooks and most IR theory courses now include at least a cursory survey of feminist contributions to the field. And while earlier surveys may have presented gender and women as an 'issue' of the field,⁹ increasingly feminist IR is represented as a theoretical lens for the study of international politics,¹⁰ particularly its 'structures and processes'.¹¹ Categorising feminist IR theory has proven challenging, however. Although initial surveys represented feminist IR scholarship as falling into

⁸ Carole Hanisch, 'The Personal is Political', in Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (eds.), *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*. (New York Radical Women, 1970) pp. 76-77.

⁹ John Baylis and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations* 2nd Ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium* 3rd Ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009); Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An introduction* 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013).

¹¹ John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations* 6th Ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014)

one of three ideologies: liberal, radical, or poststructural,¹² contemporary categorizations tend instead to distinguish between poststructuralist feminism and feminist standpoint, or some other configuration based on epistemological divisions.¹³ While it is not our aim here to offer a mapping of the branches of feminist IR, we are interested in the process through which radical feminist thought has been written out of the discipline. By analysing the origin story of feminist IR, we find that the academic practices around its production have problematically missed the debate about feminist theory elsewhere in academia, including resolving questions around: “are there foundational ideas on which we all ground our work? And does feminist theory provide this foundation?”¹⁴ Rather, there has been a seeming homogenization of feminist work within IR under the banner of ‘feminist theory’, but which has not sufficiently addressed what it is that makes work feminist in international relations. As such, we find the relationship between radical feminism and feminist IR deeply unresolved.

As the introductory quote indicates, defining radical feminism is a fraught task.

Some definitions focus on radical feminism as a social movement (the women’s

¹² Peterson & Runyan (2009); J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Sandra Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions*, (New York: MacMillan Press, 1994).

¹³ V. Spike Peterson, *A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy. Integrating Reproductive, Productive and Virtual Economies* (London: Routledge, 2003); Gillian Youngs, ‘Feminist International Relations: a contradiction in terms? Or: why women and gender are essential to understanding the world we live in’, *International Affairs*, 80:1 (2004), pp. 75-87.

¹⁴ Liz Stanley and Sue Wise. “But the empress has no clothes! Some awkward questions about the ‘missing revolution’ in feminist theory,” *Feminist Theory* 1(3): 261-288, p. 264.

liberation movement) which began during the late 1960s, rather than discrete ideology.¹⁵ Others try to define radical feminism based on a constellation of common beliefs held by self-identified radical feminists, such as a politics centred on women's lived experiences, an emphasis on the sexual division of labour, belief in consciousness-raising, or the rejection of specific practices such as sex work. Some try to specify a central tenant, such as those who emphasise the term radical as signifying sexism as the root oppression from which all other forms originate.¹⁶ Many definitions entail broad statements about the end-goals of radical feminism, such as Ware's claim that "radical feminism is working for the eradication of domination and elitism in all human relationships."¹⁷ Others still define radical feminism by the forms of feminism that it isn't (liberal, Marxist, socialist, cultural, postmodern, etc).¹⁸

While all these definitions provide some insight, they provide little clarity regarding the fuzzier boundaries of radical feminist thought (what is the precise line between radical feminism and lesbian separatism, or cultural feminism, or socialist feminism, etc.).¹⁹ This challenge is not unique to radical feminism. However, the

¹⁵ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: radical feminism in American 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

¹⁶ Robyn Roland & Renate Klein, 'Radical Feminism: History, Politics, Action, in Diane Bell and Renate Klein (eds.) *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1996), pp.9-11.

¹⁷ Celestine Ware, 'The Relationship of Black Women to the Women's Liberation Movement' in Barbara A. Crow, (ed.), *Radical feminism: A documentary reader*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000) p.98.

¹⁸ Robin Morgan (1996), pp.5-8.

¹⁹ Echols (1989).

challenge is compounded by the tendency in radical feminism to reject the academic writing style common in political theory, on the basis that it is alienating and divorced from women's experience.²⁰ Due to these considerations we do not aim to define radical feminism as a coherent ideology, but instead focus on radical feminism as an intelligible corpus of work that is defined by a set of canonical texts which have come to be accepted as radical feminist.²¹ In drawing on these texts, we focus on three key tenants which unify radical feminist work: the belief in the transhistorical oppression of women by men (patriarchy); the role of sexual relations in establishing this oppression; and a commitment to revolutionary emancipation from patriarchy by abolishing oppressive sex/gender roles. We recognise that this does not answer the messier questions regarding boundaries of radical feminism, but we believe this definition is sufficient for guiding our interrogation of radical feminist work in IR.

While the radical feminist inheritance within IR can be clearly charted in the foundational notions of the transhistorical nature of patriarchy, the causes and consequences of male violence, and the power and construction of sex/gender roles in international politics, direct engagement with radical feminist scholarship is conspicuously absent in feminist IR. Looking for direct references to radical feminism

²⁰ Denise Thompson, *Radical Feminism Today* (London: Sage, 2001), p.3.

²¹ These are too many to list here, but include such as Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*, Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', and Catherine Mackinnon's *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*.

within IR theory, it appears almost exclusively as either a foil for making anti-essentialist arguments, as a vague reference in summaries of feminist thought, or as an issue-specific approach relevant to the study of rape or the sex trade. In each of these frames of engagement, direct citation of radical feminists is rare, generalising claims are common, and discussion is superficially dismissive instead of engaged.

Drawing on the framework offered by Clare Hemmings, from her book *Why Stories Matter*,²² we begin by tracing the ‘story’ of feminist IR and the treatment of radical feminism therein. In so doing, we suggest that engagement with radical feminist thought in IR has been characterised by shallowness, mischaracterisation, and silencing, often to support a narrative of radical feminism’s death, giving way to other (newer) modes of feminism. To support this claim, we explore representations of radical feminist work and present citation analysis of ‘feminism’ and ‘gender’ chapters in International Relations textbooks, key edited volumes, and monographs written by feminist IR scholars. Through this analysis, we argue that representations of radical feminism’s death have limited the radical potential of feminist IR. We believe that re-engagement with radical feminism has the potential to enrich contemporary debates on key issues (such as sexuality, the state, and international political economy) and can help feminist IR to avoid the danger of what Sandra Whitworth called ‘intellectual

²² Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

traps' of replicating the very power relations within the discipline that feminist IR initially set out to address.²³

Why Stories (Of Feminist IR) Matter

We begin with the call from Hemmings to start “from invested attention to silences in the history of feminist theory” in order to complicate the problematic uniformity of representations of feminist thought in contemporary feminist IR.²⁴ In her book, *Why Stories Matter*, Hemmings seeks to expose the silences, not to rewrite a more ‘correct’ version of the history of feminist thought, but rather, to analyse “the politics that produce and sustain one version of history as more true than another, despite the fact that we know that history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it”.²⁵ In her analysis, she foregrounds the role of both citation and affect as key techniques that reinforce and reproduce a hegemonic narrative of Western feminist thought, as citational practices assign scholars and ideas to particular epochs in the story of the progress of feminist thought, while the affect with which the story is told produces particular feelings in the reader about the works cited.

The story of feminist IR has very closely reflected the version that Hemmings calls ‘progress narratives,’ which advance the idea that the generational shifts of

²³ Whitworth (1994), p.7.

²⁴ Hemmings (2011), p.2.

²⁵ Hemmings (2011), pp.15-16.

feminist theory have been one of reform or correction, advancing from the problematic assumptions and viewpoints of earlier decades, to a more enlightened and uncontested version of feminism that has, in essence, learned from its mistakes. Thus, what interests us here is twofold: exposing the hegemonic story of feminist IR in lines with narratives of progress and the politics involved in its development; and, secondly, making visible the absent presences contained within this narrative, particularly in terms of the radical feminist thought that has hung over the political grammar of feminist IR. As Enloe reminds us, those occupying the margins in any particular power relationship are not there simply through neglect or omission, but through active and sustained labour of those with power to determine where the ‘center’ is and what is included therein.²⁶ Hemmings similarly notes this labour in the different narratives of feminist thought, pointing out “the sheer affective labor required to secure these narratives as generational, the work needed to ward off ‘the other’ in both narratives”.²⁷ In this, not only must we be attentive to the broad sweeps that the progress narrative prevalent in feminist IR uses to obscure the degree of contestation both through time and in the present, but also the politics of such sweeps “as a mechanism for obscuring these

²⁶ Enloe (1990)

²⁷ Hemmings (2001) p.81.

contests”.²⁸ As such, we extend the critique of silence that has been a particular concern for feminist IR to encompass an examination of feminist IR scholarship itself.²⁹

Again, the purpose of this article is not to ‘correct’ the story of feminist IR that has evolved of late or to assign blame to particular scholars. Rather, our aim is to revitalize theoretical debate in the scholarship as a form of praxis. As Sandra Whitworth argued in 1994, while we can celebrate any feminist analysis of international relations as preferable over the historical silences in the discipline, “we must resist... the urge to turn off our critical faculties when considering feminist work in international relations”.³⁰ She warns that “[f]eminist studies which replicate the ontology and epistemology of mainstream International Relations theory contribute little to either feminist or IR theory. In doing so, moreover, feminist academics not only fall into intellectual traps, but more importantly, have lost sight of the political imperatives which inform feminism.... A theory which succumbs to either the fallacy of liberalism’s political neutrality or postmodernism’s political paralysis does nothing to further this objective”.³¹ Instead, the critique we advance herein is meant to highlight how the figurative death of radical feminism has implications with regards to the production of a

²⁸ Hemmings (2011) p.151.

²⁹ David Duriesmith, ‘Negative Space and the Feminist Act of Citation: Strategic Silence and the Limits of Gendering an Unloving Discipline’, in Jane Parpart & Swati Parashar (eds.), *Rethinking Silence, Voice and Agency in Contested Gendered Terrains* (Routledge, New York, 2019) pp.66-77. Sophia Dingli, ‘We need to talk about silence: Re-examining silence in International Relations Theory’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 21:4 (2015), pp. 721-742.

³⁰ Whitworth (1994), p.7.

³¹ Whitworth (1994), p.7.

‘knowledge culture’ within feminist IR and the (re)production of disciplining practices internal to this scholarship.³²

The Representation of Radical Feminism in Feminist IR

We began our investigation into the representation of radical feminism in feminist IR assuming to find evidence of progress narratives, resting on a considered engagement with the core tenets of radical feminism, but ultimately a conceptual evolution away from its structural basis for understanding women’s oppression. We were surprised, however, to find virtually no engagement with either radical feminist thought or its key proponents. While there exist, in political theory, important debates on how feminism may deal with the ‘agent-structure problem,’ our survey found no such debate replicated within feminist IR to justify its abandonment of radical feminism. Instead, there appears to be a mirroring of the broader trend within academic feminism noted by Stanley and Wise towards an homogenization of ‘feminist theory’ such that “feminist theory now contains considerably more of the latter (theory) and considerably less of the former (feminism), and takes the form of a ‘parallel project’ running alongside, in many respects mimicking, but rarely influencing,

³² Margaret R. Somers, ‘Where is sociology after the historic turn? Knowledge cultures, narrativity, and historical epistemologies’, in Terrance McDonald (ed.), *The historic turn in the human sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp.53-89.

mainstream/malestream social theory.”³³ Having not had this debate, the corpus of feminist IR and its origin story problematically straddles both having ‘progressed’ from simplistic, generalized, and sometimes violent structural analyses offered by radical feminism while systematically relying on the structural analyses of radical feminists in their critiques of gender-blind mainstream IR, as we will explore below.

While early feminist IR texts noted the existence of radical feminism and (often superficially) engaged with some of its key theorists, by the early 2000s radical feminism all but disappears from the landscape of feminist IR scholarship. In order to support our claim that the death of radical feminism in feminist IR has not been the result of sustained and considered debate over the value of its theoretical contributions, we survey key texts of feminist IR scholarship for their representation of radical feminism, both in name and in concept. We employ critical discourse analysis on texts selected as representative of feminist IR, including: ‘feminism’ and/or ‘gender’ chapters in International Relations textbooks and key edited volumes and monographs written by feminist IR scholars from 1989-2015. The second category of texts were identified through a survey of more than 50 syllabi on Gender and/or Feminism in International Relations available in the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights Syllabus Bank and the European Consortium for Political Research Syllabus Bank. Critical

³³ Stanley and Wise (2000) p 263.

discourse analysis was used on these texts to illuminate their representations of radical feminist theory and/or radical feminists and for analysing silences with regards to radical feminist contributions to foundational concepts in feminist IR, while citation analysis was employed to understand the depth and breadth of engagement with radical feminist works (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

We trace here two different phenomena with relation to the representation of radical feminism in feminist IR. The first is its death – how radical feminism goes from present in representations of feminist theory in IR to being suddenly absent from the scope of feminism. The second is its enduring influence – that is, how radical feminism remains an absent presence in contemporary scholarship through veiled and unreflexive references to key tenets of radical feminist thought.

The Death of Radical Feminism

International relations theory textbooks in the early period of feminist IR began incorporating chapters on ‘Feminism’ or ‘Gender’ in the mid-1990s,³⁴ written by the first generation of feminist IR scholars like Cynthia Enloe, Ann Tickner, Jindy Pettman, Spike Peterson and Sandra Whitworth. Within these chapters, feminist theory was

³⁴ Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, *Theories of International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); John Baylis and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

categorized into strands, including: liberal, radical, socialist, and postmodern/poststructuralist,³⁵ reflecting the trend in academic texts of describing feminist ideas through a “litany of theoretical ‘isms’” that were “constructed and lined up against each other in textbook after textbook, classroom after classroom, as supposed ‘descriptions’ of feminism ‘on the ground’... [each] presented as ‘true fact’.”³⁶ In these early summaries, authors varied with regards to their characterization of radical feminism. While many were measured, presenting it straightforwardly and on par with other strands of feminism (though not unproblematically, as will be shown below),³⁷ or engaging in sustained discussion of its (potential) application to international relations,³⁸ others were critical.³⁹ Yet, within nearly all of these works, the author ultimately rejects radical feminism on the basis of common discursive frames.

³⁵ Jan Jindy Pettman, ‘Gender Issues’, in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 483-497; Jacqui True, ‘Feminism’, in Burchill S and Linklater A (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996) pp. 210-251. Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Whitworth 1994; Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1998); Whitworth (1994).

³⁶ Stanley and Wise (2000) pp. 266-67.

³⁷ Steans (1998); Pettman (1997); True (1996).

³⁸ Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the war system* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985); Sylvester (1994); Anne Sisson Runyan, ‘Radical Feminism: Alternative Futures’, *Women, Gender and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies, and Prospects*. (Westpoint, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1994) pp. 201-215; Sarah Brown, ‘Feminism, International Theory, and International Relations of Gender Inequality’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 17:3 (1988), pp.461-475.

³⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Jill Steans, ‘Engaging from the margins: feminist encounters with the ‘mainstream’ of International Relations’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5:3 (2003), pp. 428-454; Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002); Anne Sisson Runyan and V. Spike Peterson, ‘The Radical Future of Realism: Feminist Subversions of IR Theory’, *Alternatives*, 16:1 (1991), pp. 67-106; Whitworth (1994).

The survey of germinal feminist IR texts illustrates three frames through which radical feminism was discursively constructed in the grotesque, allowing for its figurative death in the discipline. Firstly, there is a conflation of radical feminism with cultural feminism, particularly around the idea of biological determinism of sex-differentiated human characteristics.⁴⁰ This results in the charge of radical feminism being too woman-centered and neglecting to consider how men, too, are affected by structures of patriarchy and issues like male violence and sexual exploitation and abuse⁴¹. Most often in these works, radical feminism is mentioned when discussing women's anti-war activism, and, citing Mary Daly, to argue that radical feminism believes women to be naturally more inclined to peace and peacefulness.⁴² The representation of radical feminism as biologically essentialist hinges on accounts of radical feminist peace activists who became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, who challenged militarisation as an extension of male violence.⁴³ Early feminist IR regularly cites Mary Daly's arguments in *Gyn/Ecology*, which focused on the role of mythology

⁴⁰ While it is arguable the degree to which cultural feminists believe in innate differences in the sexes in traits like nurturing and violence (see Tong and Fernandes Botts 2015), the charge of biological determinism is a clear mischaracterization of the tenets of radical feminist thought and a means of configuring it in the grotesque. See Robin Morgan's (1996) discussion of cultural feminism and radical feminism for more detail on this. Rosemarie Tong and Tina Fernandes Botts *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2017)

⁴¹ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Sylvester (1994); Whitworth (1994), p.16; Tickner (1992). Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: a feminist international politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.16.

⁴² Mary Daly *Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

⁴³ Diana EH. Russell (ed.) *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies* (New York: Teachers College Press 1989); Kyle Harvey, *American Anti-Nuclear Activism. 1975-1990* (New York: Palgrave, 2014).

in patriarchy, to characterise radical feminist understanding of gender.⁴⁴ While Mary Daly is the archetypal radical feminist most in early feminist IR used to represent radical feminism as essentialist/determinist, a cursory look at her work finds numerous statements in opposition to biological determinism and the belief that male oppression stems from “his rationalizing supremacy on the basis of biological difference”.⁴⁵ While there were clearly debates in early radical feminist work over the potential biological origin of male supremacy, and a not insignificant number of groups who took a cultural feminist position, these approaches were not the radical feminist position; many radical feminists challenged aspects of Daly’s work in *Gyn/Ecology* for embracing myth-making too readily.⁴⁶ Rather, the ideas about the origins of male violence were widely debated and its biological origins ultimately rejected by most radical feminists. Even feminists like Firestone, who traces patriarchy to the physical ability of men to overpower women, argued that the solution was not to retreat into essentialism but to move beyond gender binary.⁴⁷ When feminist IR conflates radical feminism with cultural feminism, it does not engage with these debates, rarely cites the scholarship it critiques, nor does it aim to reconcile elements of contradiction, but relies on broad,

⁴⁴ Daly (1987).

⁴⁵ Mary Daly *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. (Boston: Beacon Press [1973] 1985), p.125. (emphasis added)

⁴⁶ Echols (1989).

⁴⁷ See Echols (1989) book for some details of how these politics played out within radical feminist groups. Barbara Crow, ‘Introduction’, In Barbara Crow, (ed.) *Radical feminism: A documentary reader*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000) p.3; Roland & Klein (1996), pp.33-34.

imprecise accounts of Daly that decontextualize her work from the context in which it was written and purpose for which it was written.

Secondly, and relatedly, there is the common charge that radical feminism is essentialist and universalizing, unwilling to account for differences between women based on race, class, sexuality, or otherwise. Issue is taken with “Radical feminism’s attribution of all women’s oppression to an undifferentiated concept of patriarchy”.⁴⁸ Even the most sustained engagement with radical feminism, a chapter written by Anne Sisson Runyan, echoes this critique. In this text, Runyan reduces the analysis of radical feminists to assumptions about innate differences in men’s and women’s sexuality, despite earlier in her analysis noting the belief of radical feminists that more egalitarian sexualities could be socially produced. Ultimately, she concludes that because “not all men” benefit from male supremacy,⁴⁹ because there is no (possibility for) sisterhood, and because radical feminism seeks to invert power relations in a way that will/might be oppressive to men, that “the future is not female. Women as well as men are complicit in creating the current world politics-as-usual. None of us are innocent”.⁵⁰

By not engaging directly with much radical feminist work, early feminist IR scholars overlooked both the attempts of the second-wave women’s liberation

⁴⁸ Tickner (1992), p.15.

⁴⁹ To which we refer the readers to R.W. Connell’s concept of the ‘patriarchal dividend.’ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ Runyan (1994), p.214.

movement to address ‘interlocking’ oppressions of sex, race, and class, but also the recognition of women’s complicity in the status quo.⁵¹ The first editorial issue of an early women’s liberation magazine off our backs, explicitly notes the “dual nature of the women’s movement”: that women not only need to be liberated from men’s domination, but must also “become aware that there would be no oppressor without the oppressed, that we carry the responsibility for withdrawing the consent to be oppressed. We must strive to get off our backs, and with the help of our sisters to oppose and destroy that system which fortifies the supremacy of men while exploiting the mass for profit of the few”.⁵² In nearly every statement and manifesto, as well as in most key texts, radical feminists explicitly recognized and theorized the different experiences of women under patriarchy along racial and class lines, noting the especially disadvantaged positions of racial minority and working class women.⁵³

Similarly, the charge made that radical feminists employed the concept of patriarchy in a monolithic and undifferentiated way is inaccurate. In her groundbreaking

⁵¹ Valerie Solanas, *The S.C.U.M. Manifesto* (New York: Olympia Press, 1968); Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (eds.), *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists* (New York Radical Feminists, 1970).

⁵² Qtd in Carol Anne Douglas and Fran Moira ‘Off our backs: The First Four Decades’, in Ken Wachsberger (ed.), *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press Part 1*. (Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2012) pp.157-158.

⁵³ Robin Morgan (ed.), *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings From The Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Random House, 1970); Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The case for feminist revolution*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1970); Daly (1973); Adrienne Rich, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience*, in Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected works from 1979-1985* (New York: W.W. Wonton & Company, 1986), pp.23-75; Bell & Klein (1996).

Sexual Politics, Kate Millett explains the means by which both race and sex operate as castes under, specifically, Western patriarchy. She recognizes these conditions as contextually contingent and the trends she outlines as specific to Western societies.⁵⁴ This is not to suggest that radical feminist writing always adequately addressed these intersecting issues. Significant criticism was directed towards particular radical feminists for their failure to understand intersecting oppression, such as Mary Daly over the Eurocentrism of *Gyn/Ecology* by other radical feminists of colour such as Audre Lorde.⁵⁵ However, the depiction of radical feminism as being entirely, uniquely and irredeemably insensitive to these factors is not evident from radical feminist texts. Additionally, this grotesque representation overlooks the involvement of and publications of radical feminist women of colour.⁵⁶

Finally, there is the trope of radical feminism as ‘old’ or passé, relying on outdated modes of analysis that are unable to account for the ‘complexities’ of modern human existence⁵⁷. Sylvester’s 1994 *Feminist Theory and International Relations* is

⁵⁴ Millett (1970).

⁵⁵ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984).

⁵⁶ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.) *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981); Lorde (1984); Valerie Mason-John, *Talking Black: Lesbians of African and Asian Descent Speak Out*, (London: Cassell, 1995); Cellestine Ware ‘The Relationship of Black Women to the Women’s Liberation Movement’ in Barbara A. Crow (ed.) *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 98-112.

⁵⁷ Steans (2013), pp. 12-13, 26. This is in stark contrast to her 1998 first edition, in which her introductory chapter includes a short section on radical feminism that represents their views of war as inherently linked

perhaps the one feminist IR text to most seriously attempt to engage with radical feminism, the narrative arc of her survey of feminist theory is to build towards the argument that “postmodernism exposes the smokescreens, and the histories of the screens and the smoke, in brilliant, eye-opening ways” that make it preferable to older modes of feminist analysis.⁵⁸ In the same breath that she is arguing against the neat categorizations of feminisms into waves, Sylvester nostalgically laments “[w]hen second-wave politics became (prematurely) passé” as “[o]ut of fashion went the empowering old ways of reading the radical oldies – Mary Daly, Sonia Johnson, bell hooks. Too bad”.⁵⁹ Here, it is clear how progress narratives become central in the story of feminist theory in IR. Given these fatal flaws of determinism and essentialism, the final nail in radical feminism’s coffin is its relegation to a history from whence we have evolved.

Yet, despite these criticisms levelled against radical feminist thought, actual engagement with radical feminism, through citations to and discussion of particular radical feminist authors, begins in the literature as sparse before disappearing altogether. While many earlier texts discussed radical feminism as a theory, most do not contain citation to radical feminist thinkers within these discussions, but rather depend on

to other forms of male violence (p. 101-102); Adam Jones ‘Genocide and Mass Violence,’ in Laura Shepherd (ed.), *Gender Matters in Global Politics* (London, Routledge 2010), p. 164;

⁵⁸ Sylvester (1994), p.213.

⁵⁹ Sylvester (1994), p.155.

through-citations from anthologies of feminist theory or other works⁶⁰. Where citation to radical feminist scholarship exists, these authors are not generally identified as radical feminists, and their ideas are discussed separately from the overview of radical feminist thought (where it exists). While the average number of citations across all texts analysed was 3.11, only Mary Daly amongst radical feminists was consistently identified as a radical feminist theorist.

We found that the limited and shallow engagement with radical feminism perceived in the content and discourse analysis above is also replicated in journal articles of contemporary feminist IR. A citation analysis of more than 720 articles published between 2008 and 2016 yielded a mere 116 citations to radical feminists out of 31,472 total citations, or a citation rate of 0.005%. Prominent radical feminist scholars averaged only 16 total citations within this body of work identified as feminist IR, compared with, for example, Judith Butler who received 189 citations and Michel Foucault, who was cited 117 times (see Appendix 2). Even these figures are misleading, as a disproportionate number of the citations to radical feminists come from the same author across multiple publications.

⁶⁰ See eg. Whitworth (1994); Peterson (1992); Jill Steans and Daniela Tepe-Belfrage (eds.), *Handbook on Gender in World Politics* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2016)

We also perceive that, with time, reference to radical feminism and citations of radical feminists decline. In updated editions and later versions of key texts, engagement with and/or citation to radical feminists all but disappear. Peterson & Runyan's 3rd and 4th editions of *Global Gender Issues* drop the original discussion of Robin Morgan's work, and the reference list includes only one radical feminist.⁶¹ Sylvester, who in 1994 took quite seriously the ('dated') contributions of radical feminism, is far less sympathetic in her later *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey*, speaking of radical feminism only through her synopses of other feminist IR authors.⁶² Instead, she shifts her approach in this work to positioning postmodern/poststructural feminism in opposition to its 'others', coalesced under 'standpoint-based research' (more on this below). In this characterization, most radical feminists drop from her portrayal, save the archetype essentialist/maternalist radical feminist, Mary Daly, and a footnote to Robin Morgan.⁶³ She characterizes feminist theory in IR as having progressed beyond radical feminism, since "[i]n the thrust forward, many feminists have come to recognize that the portraits they painted in the 1970s of women's oppression and emancipation – under the titles of liberal, Marxist,

⁶¹ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan (2009); V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium* 4th Ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013)

⁶² Sylvester (2002).

⁶³ Sylvester (2002), p.245.

radical, and socialist feminisms – naively relied on epistemologies with checkered records of gender awareness”.⁶⁴

Today, it is far more common to see critiques of radical feminism conflated with standpoint epistemology. As the field evolved, feminist theory in IR became more systematically categorized based on epistemological differences, using the categories: feminist empiricism (or liberal feminism), feminist standpoint and feminist poststructuralism.⁶⁵ The latest editions of IR textbooks contain updated ‘Feminism’ and (more often) ‘Gender’ chapters that note “a large number of approaches” encompassed by the term feminism, but which characterize their differences as being mainly on the epistemological level. In recategorizing feminist theory in this way, feminist IR has written radical feminism out of the story of its development.

What are the political implications of such limited engagement, dismissive narratives, and absencing of radical feminist thought in feminist IR? As Sylvester herself notes, reflecting on citational practices of the mainstream with feminism, “in absencing some people and works and including others, a footnote signals to the reader who and what the writer finds uninspiring and unimportant, or perhaps threateningly important.

⁶⁴ Sylvester (2002), p.272.

⁶⁵ Whitworth (1994), p.11. Barbara Finke, ‘Feminist Approaches’, In Manuela Spindler and Siegfried Schieder (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014) pp. 304-320. Sylvester (2002), p.306. Jill Steans, Lloyd Pettiford, Thomas Diez, and Imad El-Anis. *An introduction to international relations theory: perspectives and themes*. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

That is, a footnote can give credit where credit is thought to be due and it can snub ideas, withhold credit and recognition, or only partially acknowledge these (as when names are provided but no reference to specific works is offered)".⁶⁶ Yet, in the works surveyed, feminist IR has frequently marginalized, mischaracterized, and footnoted radical feminist thought. The dismissal of radical feminism as 'outdated' and 'wrong' on a number of issues without direct engagement with radical feminist theorists serves to reproduce a coherent 'progress' narrative of feminist theory in IR that relegates radical feminism to history, leaving it for dead.⁶⁷

The Ghost of Radical Feminism

Despite this disavowal, we find that the germinal texts of feminist IR and their contemporaries owe a great debt to radical feminism, but are curiously silent regarding the source of their radical ideas. In this section, we trace, too, the enduring influence of radical feminism that remain in feminist IR scholarship. We note with curiosity the (sometimes explicit) disavowal of radical feminist ideology, but enduring legacy of this theorizing through some of the core concepts and epistemological practices that still define feminist IR. Among these are: the lasting (though increasingly contested) value

⁶⁶ Christine Sylvester, 'Anatomy of a Footnote', *Security Dialogue*, 38:4 (2007), p.547.

⁶⁷ Hemmings (2011)

of naming patriarchy as a structure in international relations, with attendant reference to sex-based class oppression; focus on gender-based violence as a symptom and means of unequal gender relations; and standpoint epistemology as a useful means by which to advance feminist knowledge.

Early texts in feminist IR borrowed liberally from radical feminist thought, particularly in naming the problem of unequal gender relations under the sex-based system of oppression called ‘patriarchy.’ In her groundbreaking edited volume, *Gendered States*,⁶⁸ Peterson’s chapter on the formation of the state being fundamentally based on the subordination of women as a class directly builds on radical feminist thought, particularly Shulamith Firestone’s 1970 *The Dialectic of Sex*, which describes patriarchy as “the oldest, most rigid class/caste system in existence, the class system based on sex”.⁶⁹ Since the late 1960s, a core tenet of radical feminist theory has been that women represent a subordinated social class, or a ‘caste’, given the lack of opportunity for social mobility. Early feminist IR extended nascent analysis of radical feminists that took their critique of the domestic sources of women’s subordinated class position to understand the complicity of the state in the maintenance of patriarchy and

⁶⁸ V. Spike Peterson, ‘Security and Sovereign States: What is at stake in taking feminism seriously?’, in V. Spike Peterson (ed.), *Gendered State: Feminist (re) visions of international relations theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992) pp.31-64.

⁶⁹ Firestone (1970), p.15.

its investment in this status quo.⁷⁰ It was radical feminists who, in arguing that patriarchy is the governing structure of both the state and society, provided the basis for feminist IR critiques of the state and governance institutions as “not only contingently patriarchal, but essentially so”.⁷¹ In organizing for women’s liberationist groups, radical feminists recognized the complicity of the state in maintaining patriarchal domestic relations as a necessary condition for its own survival and function⁷² and worked to expose the patriarchal and sexist foundations of all institutions, from the family through the international.⁷³ However, as feminist IR evolved its own critique of the state, the ideas are represented as though they have come out of nowhere. Although Peterson explicitly refers to the exploitation of women as a “sex/gender class,” she nowhere in this work engages with radical feminists like Firestone, Millett, or Jeffreys, who have been central to constructing the sex-as-class analysis. Nor does she mention ‘radical feminism’ by name. Even the concept “the personal is political” she attributes to Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, rather than the radical feminist rallying cry of the second-wave movement and Carole Hanisch’s essay published in *Notes from the Second Year*. As a result, contemporary feminist IR critiques of the state begin from

⁷⁰ Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989); Catharine MacKinnon, ‘Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence’, *Signs* 8:4 (1983), pp.635-658; Kate Millett *Sexual Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

⁷¹ Johanna Kantola, *Feminists Theorize the State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.6.

⁷² Beverly Jones and Judith Brown, ‘Toward a Female Liberation Movement’ in *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* ed. By Barbara A. Crow (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 17-56.

⁷³ *Redstockings Manifesto* (1969).

Peterson, noting the state “as a site of masculinist power that legitimizes these patriarchal structures,”⁷⁴ but lack conceptual clarity over what is meant by ‘patriarchy’ or ‘masculinist power,’ its origins, or its prescriptions in terms of women’s liberation.

Kate Millett’s explicit recognition in *Sexual Politics* that the political relationship of herrschaft (dominance and subordination) is not only expressed in all aspects of human society, including “the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance”,⁷⁵ but is so because patriarchy ultimately is reified in not just social, but also political, economic, and cultural relations, which requires institutionalization through the state, the market, and other structures. As Bryson has most succinctly summarised, radical feminist analysis of the state has tended to be more implicit than explicit namely due to the fact that they see state power as “neither autonomous nor as reducible to the needs of the economy, but as inextricably connected to areas of life such as the family and sexuality that have usually been seen as private and non-political, but which are now seen as basic to all power relationships in society”.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Swati Parashar, J. Ann Tickner, and Jacqui True ‘Introduction,’ in Swati Parashar, J. Ann Tickner, and Jacqui True (eds.) *Revisiting Gendered States: Feminist Imaginings of the State in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 2.

⁷⁵ Millett (1970), p.25.

⁷⁶ Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An introduction*. (London: Palgrave, 1992), p.194.

Yet, at the same time that feminist IR scholarship speaks of gender-as-power, the field is increasingly reticent to use the concept of patriarchy to discuss power relations based on sex/gender⁷⁷. In her 2002 text, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey*, Christine Sylvester refers to the problem of patriarchy, but admits that the term makes her “squirm”.⁷⁸ Sylvester echoes Elshtain’s reluctance to employ the concept, and Hooper’s rejection of it, because of its roots in radical feminism.⁷⁹ In fact, she criticizes Enloe for “put[ting] most problems at the feet of patriarchy” and for borrowing from radical feminism without adequately engaging the prescription offered by the theory: that patriarchy can be dismantled through material action, and importantly through revolutionary, strategic moves.⁸⁰ Today, most feminist IR texts favour the term ‘gender hierarchy,’ which emphasises the experiences of men and values that are associated with masculinity.⁸¹ In her footnote on patriarchy in *Gendering Global Conflict*, Sjoberg notes that “At the founding moments of feminist IR in the late 1980s and early 1990s, most feminist IR scholars chose terms such as gender inequality and gender hierarchy over patriarchy both to avoid these problems and to demonstrate

⁷⁷ Jill Steans (2013), p 26.

⁷⁸ Sylvester (2002), p.35.

⁷⁹ Elshtain (1987); Hooper (2001).

⁸⁰ Sylvester (2002), p.35.

⁸¹ Even the term ‘gender hierarchy’ has begun to be questioned by feminist IR scholars particularly in the poststructuralist tradition. In a description of their 2018 edited volume, Zalewski et al. question “whether the idea and practice of gender hierarchy is outdated” (p. i).

the complexity of gender relations... With that move, though, feminist IR theorists lost the structural element of the study of patriarchy, in my view.”⁸²

Despite this unease, patriarchy still features as a key term in many feminist IR introductory texts, and in a significant number of journal article keywords and abstracts. While some authors have consciously chosen to employ the concept of ‘hierarchical gender relations’ as a replacement, we note the often slippage between these terms, which connotes the enduring utility of theorizing gender relations as structural and oppressive, based on sex-class categorizations. More significantly, though, the inconsistency in the use of the term and slippages between belie the rarity with which this core concept receives sustained theoretical engagement within feminist IR. The risk that feminist scholarship in IR runs in not deeply engaging with both the roots and theoretical heritage of this core concept is that it loses its analytical utility, becoming an empty signifier that inadvertently silences or reproduces erasures within a body of work meant to be critical of such discursive manoeuvres.

A second site we find radical feminism’s enduring influence evident are in feminist IR’s focus on gendered and gender-based violence. Men’s violence against women (and the environment, and society, and life on earth itself) was a core focus of radical feminism from the early days of consciousness-raising groups. As women began

⁸² Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2013), pp.350-351, n.55.

to share their personal experiences of male violence, they began to recognize the systemic and systematic nature of this violence and from this recognition sprang radical feminist theory of the relationship between men's violence and patriarchy.⁸³ From their early recognition of interpersonal violence as a coercive expression of patriarchal power when the socialization of women's subordination failed, feminists soon began to connect broader forms of violence and of militarism to the same patriarchal roots.⁸⁴ Reardon's influential *Sexism and the War System*,⁸⁵ for example resonates with the radical feminist critique of militarism and the picture painted by radical feminists of international politics "closely resembl[ing] gang fights in the playground. The leader is the one acknowledged to have superior force: his power is then augmented by his position – in effect, the power of his underlings is added to his own. They give this power to him and get certain benefits – protection, enhanced prestige from the relationship to the leader".⁸⁶ Reardon directly engages radical feminist perspectives of the care/kill dualism that perpetuates militarism as well as sexist repression, as well as the idea that male (sexualized) violence is fundamental to the structural condition of the war system. During the 1960s, radical feminists argued that "the Pentagon begins at

⁸³ Liz Kelly, 'The Continuum of Sexual Violence' in Jalna Hanmer & Mary Maynard (eds.) *Women, Violence and Social Control* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1987). pp.46-60.

⁸⁴ Millett (1970); Anne Seller, 'Greenham: A Concrete Reality', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 2, (1985), pp. 133–41.

⁸⁵ Reardon (1985).

⁸⁶ Penny Strange, 'It'll Make a Man of You: A Feminist View of the Arms Race', in Russell DEH (ed.) *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1989) p. 118.

home,” a strategic response to the subordination of women’s anti-war activism to the war ‘reality’ of men and the draft.⁸⁷ This approach draws directly to feminist anti-militarism which arose from feminist critiques of patriarchal state violence. As early as 1971 radical feminists groups were involved in political activism against state militarism, and produced wide-ranging critiques of the links between patriarchy and state violence.⁸⁸ Reardon’s analysis of violence as linked to male domination and state use of force strongly echoes radical feminist views, evident in statements like “The permission society accords men to maintain dominion over women by the threat and use of violence can be viewed as a significant cause of most forms of violence, both overt and structural”.⁸⁹ It was precisely radical feminists’ interest in the phallogentrism of militarism and weapons adoration that gave meaning to Carol Cohn’s influential “Sex and Death” article, which made evident the intricate and intimate ways that masculinity, sexuality, and war become entwined in the practice of global security.⁹⁰

So, too, are the concerns of feminist IR scholars with practices of sexual exploitation and sexual violence indebted to radical feminism. Not only in terms of the international advocacy that got the traffic in women proscribed in international law,⁹¹

⁸⁷ Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American images of the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.146-147.

⁸⁸ Barbara Burris, *The Fourth World Manifesto* (Distributed by Agitprop 1973).

⁸⁹ Reardon (1985), p.41.

⁹⁰ Carol Cohn, ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12:4 (1987), pp.687-718.

⁹¹ See in particular the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

which stemmed from decades of radical feminist prostitution abolition campaigning, but much more so in making explicit the links between masculine sex roles, militarism, and sexual exploitation and abuse.⁹² Further, attention to sex-selective acts of violence and killings, made explicit by Daly's term 'gynocide' and popularized by Diane Russell's term 'femicide', is precisely the feminist curiosity that has shed light on the forms of violence that had previously been obscured from notions of state security or even 'human security.'⁹³ The radical feminist analysis of Daly and Russell on sex-specific forms of violence, as well as Catherine MacKinnon and Susan Brownmiller's work on the role of rape in armed conflicts, laid the groundwork for contemporary international legal frameworks for addressing forms of gendered violence as a war crime, crime against humanity, and as an element of genocide and torture. Without their contributions, we would not have the now vast body of feminist IR scholarship that is focused specifically on this issue⁹⁴. It was radical feminists who argued that sexual

⁹² Katharine Moon, *Sex Among Allies. Military Prostitution in U.S.–Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997); Shelia Jeffreys *The Industrial Vagina: the political economy of the global sex trade* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Carole Moschetti, *Conjugal wrongs don't make rights: International feminist activism, child marriage and sexual relativism*. (Dissertation submitted in full requirements of the degree Doctor of Philosophy: The University of Melbourne, 2005); Liz Kelly, 'Wars against women: sexual violence, sexual politics and the militarised state', in Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson and Jennifer Marchbank (eds.) *States of conflict: Gender, violence and resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2000) pp.45-65; Caroline Norma, *The Japanese Comfort Women and Sexual Slavery During the China and Pacific Wars* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Caroline Norma, *Comfort Women and Post-Occupation Corporate Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Kaye Quek, *Marriage Trafficking: Women in Forced Wedlock* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

⁹³ Diana EH. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven, *Crimes Against Women: Proceedings of the International Tribunal* (Berkeley, CA: Russell Publications, 1976); Daly (1987).

⁹⁴ Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2013); Jacqui True *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sara Meger *Rape Loot*

violence exists on a continuum and that it must be conceived of as a form of violence, and a political act, not as a moral transgression.⁹⁵ From this basis, feminists in IR have been equipped with the analytical tools to talk about not just explicitly sexual acts of interpersonal violence as an expression of power and to critique the sexualization of power/domination, as offered by earlier radical feminists, but to also extend this analysis to understand how the construction of masculinity springs out of the sexualization of domination and valorization of aggression and war-making.⁹⁶

These contributions were formative to feminist IR both in setting the agenda of its work and in core theoretical concepts that inform later work. Radical feminism influences feminist IR due to the enduring utility of these core concepts, even if the intellectual tradition is no longer rigorously dealt with. These contributions are not, however, purely relics of a bygone age of radical feminist theorizing that has since died off. Instead, when we look at the more contemporary contributions of radical feminist scholarship, we find that they have continuing relevance to key questions in the field.

Pillage: The Political Economy of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016a)

⁹⁵ Kelly (1987); Catharine MacKinnon, 'The logic of experience: Reflections on the development of sexual harassment law', *Georgetown Law Journal*, 90:3 (2002), pp.813-833.

⁹⁶ Millett (1970); Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating: A Radical Look at Sexuality* (New York: EP Dutton, 1976); Sheila Jeffreys, *Anticlimax a Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

Unearthing Radical Feminist Thought on the International

In this last section, we explore what might be gained by returning to the roots of radical feminist thought directly for contemporary debates in feminist IR. While we note that radical feminism has never truly died, with current scholars conducting radical feminist analysis on internationally relevant subjects (such as Caroline Norma's work on military sexual exploitation or Kaye Quek's work on forced marriage and sex trafficking), this section explores what can be gained by returning to those "radical oldies".⁹⁷ In particular, radical feminist theorising continues to provide unique contributions regarding the system of sex-class oppression, the central role of heterosexuality in maintaining this system, and the feminist case for revolutionary political action in order to dismantle it.

We are not alone in seeing value in returning to the roots of radical feminism, as can be seen in Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern's recent article 'Curious erasures: the sexual in wartime sexual violence'.⁹⁸ In their exploration of the sexual in sexual violence, the authors note that feminist IR scholarship have been curiously inattentive to theorizing on the sexual (sexuality, desire, eroticism, pertaining to biological sex, etc) in their accounts of sexual violence.⁹⁹ Charting the development of scholarship on sexual

⁹⁷ Sylvester (1994), p.155.

⁹⁸ Eriksson Baaz & Stern (2018)

⁹⁹ Eriksson Baaz & Stern (2018), p.295.

violence, the authors suggest that this has largely resulted from a misuse of Susan Brownmiller's work, and a lack of attention to the broader radical feminist conversations which informed current theorization on sexual violence as violence.¹⁰⁰ Emphasising the importance of a contextual reading of this foundational theorization, they suggest that "Brownmiller's (and others) work should be read as a product of their time (the women's movement of the 1970s) which opened up inquiry into sex and sexuality to probe its relations to power, violence and dominance, and crucially, to politics (e.g., Dworkin 1976; Jeffreys 1990)."¹⁰¹

Eriksson Baaz and Stern have noted that despite the prominence of sexual violence scholarship in contemporary feminist IR and the increased interest in sexuality, key insights are missed if scholars leave radical feminism for dead.¹⁰² By returning to the root sources of theorizing on conflict-related sexual violence, Eriksson Baaz and Stern have not only been able to contextualise current thinking, but to augment current theoretical frameworks which have moved in very different directions since the canon of radical feminist classics was penned. Focusing on the relationship between violence and sexuality within patriarchal heterosexuality, Eriksson Baaz and Stern put forward a

¹⁰⁰ Eriksson Baaz & Stern (2018), p.299. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, women and rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975).

¹⁰¹ Eriksson Baaz & Stern (2018), p.299.

¹⁰² Charlotte Mertens and Maree Pardy. "'Sexurity' and its effects in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.", *Third World Quarterly* 38:4 (2017), pp.956-979; Sara Meger, 'The Fetishization of Sexual Violence in International Security', *International Studies Quarterly* 60:1 (2016b), pp.149-159; Sara Davies and Jacqui True, 'Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence: Bringing gender analysis back in', *Security Dialogue*, 46:6 (2015), 495-512.

powerful case that much of contemporary work within feminist IR on gendered violence unintentionally reifies war/peace, sex/violence distinctions.¹⁰³ What their article highlights is just one of the ways in which radical feminist scholarship on sexuality, and in particular the critical scholarship on heterosexuality, domination, and the production of desire can speak powerfully to current focus issues in feminist IR in unexplored ways.

Classic radical feminist texts, such as Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Andrea Dworkin's *Women Hating*, and Kathleen Barry's *Female Sexual Slavery* all placed sexuality, and the erotics of heterosexuality in particular, at the centre of their analysis.¹⁰⁴ These texts take sex and sexuality not only as subjects worthy of study, but as key fixtures of their analysis of politics and gendered power. While much of the recent work on sexuality in IR has emphasised poststructural readings of discourse, performativity and fluidity, radical feminist work sought to construct structural and material accounts of sexual power under patriarchy. In ways that resonate with recent interest in sexuality from feminist IR scholars, this scholarship offers a rich set of resources for understanding power by presenting a contrasting analysis to much of recent queer theory work on sex. By suggesting a return to the roots of radical feminist scholarship, we do not mean to suggest that it will supplant current work, but that like

¹⁰³ Eriksson Baaz & Stern (2018).

¹⁰⁴ Millet (1970); Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (1976); Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1979)

Eriksson Baaz and Stern's exploration of the sexual, it will open new avenues, provide other theoretical tools and expose current thought to a different sensibility of feminist research. As with work on sexuality we believe that a similar return to radical feminist thought may provide added richness to contemporary feminist IR theorizing on the gendered state and growth in international political economy (IPE).

The nature of the state has possibly been the most fundamental question within the discipline of IR.¹⁰⁵ Despite this, in the forward to the recent edited volume *Revisiting Gendered States*, V. Spike Peterson has noted the state remains undertheorized in international relations.¹⁰⁶ As feminists are increasingly interested in subjects such as feminist foreign policy and feminist diplomacy, this under theorization has become increasingly untenable and precipitated a return to the state.¹⁰⁷ Radical feminist scholarship began with trying to theorize the relationship between patriarchy and the state. For pioneering radical feminist Kate Millet, this meant that her analysis of sexual

¹⁰⁵ David A. Lake, 'The State and International Relations', in Christian Reus-Smit & Duncan Snidal, (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp. 41-61.

¹⁰⁶ V. Spike Peterson, 'Forward', in Swati Parashar, J. Ann Tickner, & Jacqui True (eds.), *Revisiting gendered states: feminist imaginings of the state in international relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) pp.vii-xii.

¹⁰⁷ Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman-Rosamond, 'Swedish feminist foreign policy in the making: Ethics, politics, and gender', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 30:3 (2016), pp.323-334; Karin Aggestam, Annika Bergman Rosamond, and Annica Kronsell, 'Theorising feminist foreign policy', *International Relations*, 33:1 (2018), pp.23-39; Karin Aggestam and Ann Towns, 'The gender turn in diplomacy: a new research agenda', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21:1 (2019), pp.9-28; Fiona Robinson, 'Feminist foreign policy as ethical foreign policy? A care ethics perspective', *Journal of International Political Theory*, (2019), Online-prepublication version: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1755088219828768>;

politics was centred on the state defined as “the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male”.¹⁰⁸ Millet’s understanding has underpinned the subsequent radical feminist theorizations on the state, which has looked to explain the state, not as the sole site of political activity, but as the institutionalisation of men’s power.¹⁰⁹ Later theorists, such as Catherine MacKinnon, chart the institutional development of the state out of prior forms of private patriarchal domination in the household.¹¹⁰ This distinction has been drawn between what socialist feminist Sylvia Walby’s calls the private patriarchy of paternal domination in the household and the public patriarchy exhibited in the formal political and economic structures of society.¹¹¹ MacKinnon argues that the state has an intimately intertwined relationship with gender oppression, solidifying and reinforcing oppressive power structures on the one hand and providing meagre protections for marginalised peoples on the other.

Radical feminist theories of the state take the sexual politics of patriarchy as their theoretical foundation, developing understandings of the state that rule out of

¹⁰⁸ Millet (1970), p.25.

¹⁰⁹ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

¹¹⁰ MacKinnon (1989).

¹¹¹ The history of radical and socialist feminist variants of thought is not straightforwardly delineated. There are numerous political and theoretical links that makes distinguishing between the two difficult. Key texts for both bodies of scholarship, such as Maria Mies’ (1986) *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a Global Scale* or Walby’s own body of work, tend to combine insights from radical feminist authors on patriarchy with work from Marxists to analyse the global implications of male supremacy. Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990), p.173.

private patriarchal configurations. While the liberal legal tradition sees the state as the impartial arbiter for disagreements and contention, MacKinnon suggests that this stance smuggles notions of the natural citizen from male patterns of behaviour while ignoring the patriarchal foundation of existing political orders.¹¹² Radical feminists started from the premise that, as an institution created by men, the state is an embodiment of male interests. This recognition led to radical feminists analysing the “as an arena of conflict which is systematically biased against women but within which important victories can nevertheless be won; it is essential to understand the power relations that are involved and the tremendous obstacles that women face, but this need not lead to the pessimistic abandonment of conventional politics”.¹¹³ It is this patriarchal foundation, MacKinnon argues, that underpins the core structure of international law and contemporary foreign relations.¹¹⁴ For this reason, MacKinnon characterises the international state system as “an apex form in which the power of men is organised both among men and over women while purporting to institutionalise peace and justice.”¹¹⁵ Men’s dominance, MacKinnon argues, has been codified into international law such that so as to intentionally exclude the aggression against and exploitation of women, resulting in the

¹¹² MacKinnon (1989), p.165.

¹¹³ Bryson (1992), p.195.

¹¹⁴ Catharine MacKinnon, *Are Women Human: and other international dialogues* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.2-3.

¹¹⁵ MacKinnon (2006), p.3.

systematic dehumanisation of women within the international realm.¹¹⁶ Unlike later feminist IR theorists, who began with malestream IR theorising and then began to read gender into it, radical feminism's starting point of women's experiences led them to profoundly different conclusions. Returning to radical feminist theorizing on the state has much to offer, in terms of theoretical difference to current models present in IR. This is indicative of the tradition of radical feminist scholarship on the topic and indicates the vibrant corpus of work which may can enrich the discipline.

The second areas we would like to highlight that would benefit from revisiting radical feminism is the growth in feminist international political economy. While interest in international political economy has always been present in feminist IR, recent years have seen a rapid growth in scholarship which blends work from feminist international relations theory and feminist political economy. These scholars have highlighted the importance of a feminist analysis of households, care work, and sexual violence in understanding world affairs.¹¹⁷ Radical feminist political economics has, since the 1970s, sought to understand how women's private economic exploitation

¹¹⁶ MacKinnon (2006), p.43.

¹¹⁷ Jacqui True (2012); Sara Meger (2016a); Genevieve LeBaron, 'The political economy of the household: Neoliberal restructuring, enclosures, and daily life,' *Review of International Political Economy*, 17:5 (2010), pp.889-912; Amanda Chisholm and Maya Eichler, 'Reproductions of global security: accounting for the private security household', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20:4 (2018), pp.563-582; Juanita Elias, and Samantha Gunawardana, 'The global political economy of the household in Asia: An introduction', in Juanita Elias, and Samantha Gunawardana (eds.) *The global political economy of the household in Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.1-12.

forms the basis for the public economic system and the political arrangements around it.¹¹⁸ One of the central concerns of early radical feminist scholarship was how the marriage contract and the extraction of women's care work was essential to the organisation of the economy.¹¹⁹ Radical feminist historian, Gerda Lerner traced the origins of trade in human societies to the trade in women that began after the agricultural revolution in Mesopotamia shifted these societies from matrilineal, matrilineal kinships to patrilocal, patrilineal, and eventually patriarchal.¹²⁰ The subordination of women in peace, and the enslavement and exploitation of women's sexual and reproductive capacities by invading tribes during war, became the basis for the formation of class distinctions and the concept of property, itself. These accounts emphasise the central role of heteronormativity in producing women as a class available for economic exploitation and argued against the devaluation of women's care work. The direct analysis of how sexuality is linked to the political and economic exploitation of women aligns closely with the work of more recent feminist scholars like Claire

¹¹⁸ As with writings on the state, the early influential writing on political economy from radical feminists came in the form of pamphlets, essays and entries in DIY magazines. Key contributions such as Betsy Warrior's (1973) *Housework: Slavery or Labor of Love?* and Shulamith Firestone's (1970) *The Dialectic of Sex* presented an understanding of political economy in which men's private domination of women forges the foundation of the public economic order.

¹¹⁹ Millett (1970); Pateman (1988); MacKinnon (1989); Betsy Warrior, 'Housework: Slavery or labor of love?', in: Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine & Anne Rapone (eds.) *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), pp. 208-212.

¹²⁰ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Duncanson¹²¹ and Juanita Elias¹²², while providing a distinct account of how to redress inequity through revolutionary action starting with the personal.

Radical feminism approaches the central subjects of feminist IR in profoundly different ways to contemporary scholars in this field, using different methods and sensibilities to contemporary scholarship. Radical feminists' commitment to unmaking the structures of patriarchy through revolutionary action, rather than tinkering at the edges of male domination provides a distinct approach from liberal feminism's reform approach or poststructural efforts to trouble gender. We do not envision that a return to radical feminist work will result in wholesale adoption, but see productive space for conversation with the roots many key concepts used in contemporary feminist IR. While these three areas (sexuality, the state and political economy) are hardly an exhaustive list of areas which might warrant being revisited by feminist IR, these examples highlight the added value of going back to the root of radical feminist work. Much as mainstream IR has gained much from revisiting the foundational works of the discipline, we feel that radical feminist work has the capacity to contextualise and enrich contemporary debates.

¹²¹ Claire Duncanson, "Beyond liberal vs liberating: women's economic empowerment in the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security agenda," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21:1 (2019), pp. 111-130.

¹²² Juanita Elias and Adrienne Roberts *Feminist Global Political Economies of the Everyday*, London: Routledge (2018).

Conclusion: Radical feminist IR redux

Ultimately, we have sought in this article to better understand the curious absence of radical feminist thought in contemporary feminist IR scholarship and the potential of returning to this work. Our dual concerns have been with the representation of radical feminism as outdated and the ending influence of concepts which originate in the radical feminist tradition in contemporary feminist IR scholarship. In doing this, we have not aimed to construct a coherent camp of radical feminist IR. Such a project of ideological reconstruction would be likely to do little beyond reinforcing the pernicious camp rivalries and ‘on-brand’ thinking which tend to dominate the field.¹²³ Moreso, we are interested in highlighting how, despite its erasure from feminist IR, radical feminism’s contributions have the capacity to inform how contemporary feminist IR understands the international. We have found that not only does the treatment of radical feminism within the discipline impoverish feminist IR’s intellectual inheritance, which remain salient to core questions in the field, but that it also does a disservice to the range of theorising that has been done within a radical frame.

¹²³ Christine Sylvester, ‘Experiencing the end and afterlives of International Relations/theory’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:3 (2013), pp. 609-626.

Radical feminism continues to provide vibrant and provocative analysis of women's oppression on a global scale. Stemming from its original contribution of the theorisation on patriarchy, radical feminism has provided incisive insights on sex, nature of the state, and the international political economy. Yet, the prevailing 'progress' narrative of the story of feminist IR both fails to recognise the enduring significance of core radical feminist concepts shape the discipline and the enduring interventions of radical feminists into the study of international relations.

Feminists in IR have levelled serious criticism of the IR mainstream for its efforts to obscure, misrepresent and write out feminist contributions from the discipline.¹²⁴ As accounts of feminist IR and its role within the discipline have largely been generated by other feminists, the writing out of radical feminist voices is particularly troubling.¹²⁵ As with the feminist critique of mainstream IR's representation of their work, our goal has not been to suggest that no critical commentary should be directed towards radical feminist work, but, rather, that the representations so far have entailed very little substantive engagement in favour of silence and misrepresentation. Our aim is not to discourage robust criticisms of radical feminist work; such an effort

¹²⁴ J. Anne Tickner, 'You Just Don't Understand: troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:4 (1997), pp. 611-632; Cynthia Weber, 'Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls: Male Paranoia in Robert Keohane's Critique of Feminist International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 23:2 (1994), pp. 337-349.

¹²⁵ Raluca Soreanu and David Hudson, 'Feminist Scholarship in International Relations and the Politics of Disciplinary Emotion', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37:1 (2008) pp. 123-151.

would be meaningless, considering the breadth of options within the canon.¹²⁶ Rather, we call on feminist scholars within the discipline of IR to re-evaluate how radical feminist work has been represented, and to engage in good faith with radical feminist scholarship, both in legacy and contemporary forms, which endures outside the disciplinary confines of international relations. We believe that rejecting the discursive narratives that have facilitated radical feminism's death from the discipline will allow feminist work to better address theoretical contestations in feminist work, and to avoid reproducing the problematic citational practices that have been directed from mainstream IR towards feminist work overall.

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¹²⁶ Morgan (1996).