Review of International Studies (1998), 24, 299–303 *Copyright © British International Studies Association*

Engendering debate*

ADAM JONES

I had no higher ambition for my article[1] than to encourage the exchange now beginning with Carver, Cochran and Squires' response. Unfortunately, although it was nice to see my dull name in the title, I cannot say I feel any more or less gendered than when I started their piece.

The heart of the problem seems to be that the authors have confused me with someone else. This Other is a slavish devotee of the classical tradition, which is nothing less than 'the measuring stick by which [he] evaluates feminist assumptions'. This approach is judged to be 'remarkably narrow' and 'misconceived'. Indeed it is—or would have been, had I ever remotely advocated it. Instead, what I did was to set the feminist literature against the historically dominant framing of the IR discipline. The authors reject this as 'holding feminists up for evaluation' against 'the very paradigm they are criticizing'. But if there *is* a 'very paradigm', surely it is a standard scholarly approach to contrast new theories with it.

The closest I think I came in my article to passing favourable judgment on the classical tradition was on p. 416: 'Realism may not be so deeply compromised as to require jettisoning'; 'partial descriptions *are* partial descriptions . . . not dead wrong'. I suggested that the classical tradition could offer some 'sharp insights into . . . limited but significant veins of international politics'; that its endeavours had been 'not without success'. On the same page, I also pointed to the 'blank spaces and biased formulations' of realism. Taken as a whole, these comments might be seen as a caution to think twice before throwing out the classical baby with the post-positivist bathwater. They can hardly be said to express a conviction that classicism (or any other theoretical framework) is the be-all and end-all of IR.

Ironically, in their zeal to categorize me as some Waltzian neo-realist and arch-conservative, the authors exemplify many of the 'deficiencies of dominant conceptions of rationality' that they elsewhere abjure. I cannot recall the last time I saw post-positivists employing the two-by-two tables (diagrams A and B) once beloved of behaviouralists. And it takes a good deal of hyper-rationalist slicing and dicing to force complex, multifaceted feminist scholars into mutually exclusive cells, a fate to which I would not dream of consigning them.

The labelling of diagram A gives the game away. Carver et al. place Christine Sylvester alone in the radical/incompatible quadrant of 'my' conceptual grid. But I

* For assistance with the present contribution, I would like to thank Will Bain, Rex Brynen, Jo Jones, David Jones, Miriam Tratt and Dan Wolfish. Special thanks to Hamish Telford.

[1] A. Jones, 'Does "Gender" Make the World Go Round? Feminist Critiques of International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22:4 (1996), pp. 405–29. All subsequent page references are to this source, unless otherwise noted.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021059800299X Published online by Cambridge University Press

would consider Sylvester perhaps the *least* radical of the authors I dealt with in my article. One source of whatever 'incompatibility' I feel with her work is my conviction that her discourse is too baffling and insubstantial ever to buttress a meaningful challenge to the established order. I can understand that Carver et al. would sympathize with this discourse, since their own brand of postmodernism-by-committee also sends the eye skidding off the page at regular intervals. But their critique of my work would be more penetrating if it were not so distorted by their own preferences and preconceptions.

The attempt to position me along the positivist/post-positivist continuum also says more about the authors' strategies and proclivities than my own. After making the obvious point that I am not a post-positivist, they proceed to construct another two-dimensional schema (diagram B) to try to wrestle my amorphous world-view to the ground. A bizarre system of 'pluses' and 'minuses' is credited to me, though the reader will strain to find it in my original article. The discussion then peters out irresolutely. Feminist authors are left stranded between compatibility and incompatibility with the classical tradition and, by inference, my own work. I am afraid Carver et al. will have to rescue them; I find the prospect too fatiguing.

Norms and methods

I tried to show in my article how ideological blinkers could lead to evasions and blind spots when feminist IR theorists engaged with the real world of gender and international politics. The same blinkers in 'Gendering Jones' lead to some serious misrepresentations of my own work. Most galling is the charge that I reject the normative foundations of IR inquiry. Carver et al. consider it 'odd' that I am 'so disposed against the normative'. It is 'the fact that feminists have a normative agenda', they contend, that leads me to mistrust them. Again, later on, I am accused of 'criticizing feminists for mixing their normative engagement with their work in IR'.

This is demonstrably absurd. At many points in my work, I have stated plainly my utterly contrary belief: that a normative framework is foundational to the analysis of gender and IR. On p. 424, for example, I made reference to 'an important underpinning of feminist critiques: their normative concern for, and engagement with, the embodied subjects of the analysis'. This, I suggested, was something the 'theorist of gender and IR [could] benefit from'. In my article on the Balkan conflict, which the authors of 'Gendering Jones' include in their critique, I again warmly commend feminists for adopting a normative framework: 'Perhaps the pathbreaking efforts of feminist scholars—with their normative commitment to the alleviation of social injustice and human suffering—could usefully be supplemented by broader, more nuanced investigations along the lines proposed here.'[2] I am left wondering how closely the authors have read my work.

It should be clear that my critique of feminist IR centres not on the validity of a normative framework *per se*, but on the inadequacies of that normative framework as frequently or standardly constructed in the feminist IR literature. If, for example, Cynthia Enloe analyses 'the gendered Gulf' during the conflict of 1990–1, and if she

[2] A. Jones, 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in ex-Yugoslavia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17:1 (1994), pp. 129–30.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021059800299X Published online by Cambridge University Press

fails to acknowledge the millions of similarly gendered beings streaming back and forth across the landscape (as conscript soldiers, deserters, detainees, panicked refugees), because they distract from consideration of the gender whose victimization she wishes to highlight, then I will object to that framing. I am not objecting to Enloe's normative commitment to alleviating human suffering (including women's suffering), but to the *selective*, *one-sided*, *incomplete* character of that commitment, and to her claim that she is presenting an overarching *gender* analysis of the Gulf conflict.

My methodology receives similarly ungenerous treatment at the authors' hands. I am gratified to see that none of my many empirical findings is actually disputed.[3] But Carver et al. allege that my 'research methodology in this area [men and masculinity] relies on "intuition and common sense" *alone*' (my emphasis). These 'have a role to play in research', the authors allow, but 'they are hardly more than a start'. More rudimentary still is their adherence to the principle of fair quotation. The passage in question (p. 424) runs as follows: 'There is, of course, no space here to enter into detailed discussion of each phenomenon and issue. I buttress certain points with case-studies and statistical data, but the sketch appeals as much to intuition and common sense.' Thus, *in the same sentence from which the authors quote*, direct reference is made to two other foundations of my research methodology: case-studies and statistical data. Both are amply on display throughout my closing discussion, despite its brevity. The authors can hardly object if I supplement these strategies with others that 'have a role to play in research', as they themselves concede.

Carver et al. also take me to task, on methodological grounds, for 'putting the "gender variable" to work as a supplement for victimology'. They say my '"contribution" amounts merely to stacking male bodies and male suffering up against female bodies and female suffering'. I am of two minds about this line of attack. On the one hand, I wish feminist IR scholarship would pay *greater* attention to 'body-counts', at least where males are concerned. Corpses are quite a reliable indicator of the kind of unnaturally inflicted suffering that pervades international politics (war, political violence, sexual assault, ethnic conflict). If, in a given case, there are strong disparities in the gendering of victims, I think a scholar who claims to be motivated both by a normative concern for suffering people and by a special sensitivity to the gender variable should be sitting up and taking notice. That this so rarely happens when men are the victims is one of the most glaring failures of the feminist IR literature thus far. On the other hand, I agree there is no point in reducing scholarship and gender activism to what can be gleaned from such crude statistical measures. But overall, I would rather operate on the more mundane level of facts and ordinary human experience, at least in the tentative stages of my enquiry, than on the more ethereal plane of 'Gendering Jones'.

Feminisms, masculinities and IR

Let me respond to the authors' claims that I have (1) misrepresented feminist IR by overgeneralizing, and (2) ignored the growing social-scientific literature on men and

[3] I find it interesting that in the whole text of 'Gendering Jones', I can locate no reference to an actual international-political *event*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021059800299X Published online by Cambridge University Press

masculinities. The defining features of feminist critiques that I proposed (p. 406) were: a reclaiming of women as political and historical subjects; an epistemological foundation in the realm of women's lived experiences; and a normative concern to redress perceived patterns of inequality privileging men over women. A caveat was attached concerning the inevitable difficulties of all such generalizations, particularly where post-positivists are concerned. Carver et al. acknowledge the caveat, but still feel my generalizations hold no water. 'Each of the three core characteristics posited is highly contested', they write. 'Indeed, it is *dispute* over precisely these ontological, epistemological, and normative questions, rather than consensus around them, that has characterized feminist theorizing in the past two decades.' Later: 'the divergent conceptions of both subjectivity and experience in the literature make Jones's claim . . . so vague as to lack critical purchase'. Finally, they dismiss my idea of a commitment to female equality as 'simply not an adequate position to adopt', though I note they only seek '*clarification* of the conception of equality involved' (my emphasis).

The authors' assertion that 'dispute ... rather than consensus ... has characterized feminist theorizing' would be more persuasive if they did not unleash a veritable blitzkrieg of generalizations of their own about 'feminism', 'feminists' and 'the feminist critique'. In a spirit of post-positivist playfulness, I have rewritten/repainted/recooked (that is, jumbled together) a few of these statements:

> . . . Feminists want to be able to point to the real, material conditions of women's oppression . . .
> . . . The central problematic—that is, what counts as knowledge in IR—is widened [in 'feminist approaches to IR'] to include questions of global inequalities and oppressions . . .
> Implicit within this broader understanding of the questions from which we should begin enquiry is a normative orientation towards redressing these inequalities and oppressions . . .
> . . . [an] epistemological shift onto human suffering – a shift not dissimilar to the one that feminists are suggesting . . .
> . . . Feminisms' predominant focus on women is hardly a surprise . . . it is self-consciously a response to the comparative (and still continuing) invisibility of women . . .

These generalizations hardly seem less sweeping than my own, or appreciably different in content.

The claim that I display a 'sheer ignorance of the literature on . . . men's studies and the sociology of masculinities' is somewhat undermined by the authors' final footnote. This informs us that '[u]nlike Jones, recent writers in feminist IR are aware of the literature on masculinities as cited in footnote 25 above'. The first source mentioned in footnote 25 is Harry Brod's *The Making of Masculinities*: the edited volume that I quoted in the main text of my 1994 article on the Balkans conflict, with a long footnote exploring Brod's conceptualization of men's studies.[4] Carver et al. might also want to consult my 1992 review for *Caribbean Studies* of Errol Miller's book, *Men At Risk*, which indicates my long-standing concern with an important phenomenon ('what patriarchy does to men, as power-holders . . . and not just as victims') that they accuse me of overlooking.[5]

The contributions that the authors mention in 'psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, criminology, etc.' may well prove a valuable resource in the full-scale research I hope to undertake in gender and international politics.[6] They are,

[4] Jones, 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict', p. 116.
[5] *Caribbean Studies*, 25:1/2 (1992), pp. 167–71.
[6] See my as-yet-untitled contribution to D. Jarvis (ed.), *Post-modernism and its Critics: International Relations and the 'Third Debate'* (forthcoming).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021059800299X Published online by Cambridge University Press

though, irrelevant to a review article subtitled 'Feminist critiques of international relations'. The authors are welcome to pass the buck to other disciplines if they choose. In my view, though, this should not be used to explain or excuse the deficiencies of the IR subfield specifically concerned with 'gender'—most commonly, its systematic marginalizing of the male subject, except where he can be brought in to explain female suffering and victimization.[7]

Conclusion

My work on gender and IR aims to entrench the subject within the mainstream of the IR discipline. I am trying to incorporate feminism's basic theoretical perspectives and normative concerns, while giving balanced consideration to both sexes. In this endeavour, I hope to synthesize the strongest elements of traditional *and* non-traditional approaches to the discipline, and present my findings in a way that avoids the abstract and jargon-laden theorizing of much IR literature, whether classical or post-classical in origin.

The project is still in its infancy. Even so, after assailing me for my 'odious and otiose' arguments and my 'obvious immaturity', Carver et al. acknowledge that I have come up with 'a dozen or so important topics that might be investigated in IR'. Not an unpromising start in the four pages of text they cite, I would have thought. Perhaps next time, the authors will set aside their reflexive hostility towards my project, and engage with a few of these 'important topics' from their own vantage points.[8] This could only promote the more 'stimulating and supportive' environment for such investigations that they, and I, desire.

[7] The mention of alternative literatures does, however, give me a chance to cite the recent 'dissident feminist' school, which in North America centres around mostly liberal-left writers like Donna Laframboise, Camille Paglia and Daphne Patai. Laframbroise's *The Princess at the Window: A New Gender Morality* (Toronto, 1996) is perhaps the best exemplar of the genre. The relevance of this literature to political science obviously varies, but I have found a number of the basic normative and analytical frameworks very useful in my own study of gender and politics. I certainly feel more comfortable with this feminist critique than with any strain of 'masculinist' scholarship.

[8] Carver has published a groundbreaking study of masculinity and IR, though from a post-positivist perspective that does not thrill me: see T. Carver, *Gender Is Not a Synonym for Women* (Boulder, CO, 1996).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021059800299X Published online by Cambridge University Press