

Feminist Methodologies for International Relations. Edited by Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006. 316 pp. \$75.00 cloth, \$29.99 paper.

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Anna M. Agathangelou
York University
and Heather Turcotte
University of California at Santa Cruz

Over the past four decades, feminist scholars have contested and disrupted dominant research paradigms through nuanced strategies of analysis. Yet recently, some of these interventions have been appropriated to shape the transnational strategies of propertied classes (i.e., the militant attacks in Eurasia by the North Alliance) against the working class, women of color, indigenous populations, and sites of the Third World. These trends in world politics call for innovative theorizations that demystify and disrupt these processes and methods. It is within this context that the urgency for collective work such as *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* is necessary to provide further critical approaches to research paradigms and feminist interventions.

This book promises to instruct by providing a guide to methodological issues within international gender scholarship. In the words of the editors, this collection “offers students and scholars for international relations, feminism, and global politics practical insight into the innovative methodologies and methods that have been developed — or adapted from other disciplinary contexts — in order to do feminist research for IR” (p. 1). More importantly, this text raises methodology as a feminist issue and suggests that methods are personal, collective, conflictual, political, and systemic experiences.

Dividing their book into an introduction, three major parts, and a conclusion, Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True engage with 1) methodological conversations between feminist and nonfeminist IR; 2) examples of methods for feminist international relations; and 3) methodological reflections for feminist international relations that reach “beyond the boundaries of the discipline” (p. 200). By juxtaposing a range of methods and epistemological questions from the social sciences, humanities, and the “subjects” of our research, this text aims to

raise “new” ethical, political, and methodological dilemmas within IR and interdisciplinary feminist debates. The text suggests that at the core of these juxtapositions are two methodological premises: 1) Reflexivity as a research practice enables one to be “responsible” and “responsive” to her work and her “subjects” of study because it “make[s] explicit the deliberative moment of her scholarship” (Ackerly and True, 258); and 2) recentering the “diversity” of women’s lives, histories, and thought within existent academic and policy frameworks is necessary to “dislevel IR’s structures” of power, which are complicit in the production of epistemic and material violence (Zalewski, 49).

In the first section, three feminist IR scholars are engaging with the ways feminism “meets” international relations and with the methodological issues that emerge within that meeting (Tickner). Zalewski’s piece, for instance, traces genealogically some of the feminist contributions within IR and interrogates mainstream scholarship’s inquiry of what feminists have contributed to the discipline.” She explains that “the discipline’s inabilities to theorize and understand feminism in part illustrate its troubled relationship with problematizations of modernity,” which have induced a “wash of insecurity, anxiety and hopelessness across a political landscape formerly kept dry by the floodgates of foundationalism and metaphysics” (p. 60). The basis of the arguments rely on the principle that feminist epistemology and methods are different from the mainstream and that by “attending to feminist perspectives,” these differences could “transform,” enhance, and desecuritize the discipline in multiple ways (Weldon, 87).

Part II of the book illustrates the convergence of theory with practice through Cohn’s, Kronsell’s, D’Costa’s, Jacoby’s and Stern’s work that read as a series of “self-reflective discussions of the authors’ own feminist research methods applied to critical IR questions of security, military, the state, international justice, and the global order” (Ackerly, Stern, and True, 10). Each of these chapters draws upon different methods, such as qualitative interviews, oral history, and discourse analysis, to destabilize “familiar sites of international relations,” such as “military and foreign policy establishments” (*ibid.*, 10), and to (re)constitute meanings of security and power through “unconventional sites,” such as “conducting fieldwork” among “activist groups in conflict zones, and with subjects of study that have been traditionally absent from IR, such as women and marginalized communities” (*ibid.*, 12). It is these detailed incorporations of “silenced” knowledges,

experiences and practices that enable the third section of the book to move to “define and delimit IR scholarship, while also offering new methodologies for feminist IR” (ibid., 14). Sylvester, Robinson, Ackerly, and True contest the boundaries of what came to be defined as the “home” of the IR field by trespassing these problematic borders and crossing into other disciplines and “borrowing” methods that “address the silences in the field that attention to gender reveals” (ibid., 14). In other words, the text argues that an “explicitly feminist, critical methodology and its concomitant method of theorizing” (ibid., 15) is in the interest of “clarify[ing] the struggles for social justice in our globalizing age, but also enable us to do better scholarship and, as theorists, to live up to the goal of informing and transforming practice in order to improve human well-being globally” (ibid.).

As each author negotiates her experience with methodologies, epistemologies, ontology, and her own positions of power and “vulnerability” within the operations of academia, there are lessons to be heard in the “layerings of different sites, contexts, and constituencies” of global politics (Cohn, 107). These authors suggest that there are people, thoughts, and practices that are historically “silenced” or “marginalized” from the “public” operations of academia. Each argues, through a different vein, that it is these various *unheard* spaces that need to be paid attention to in order to “advance our understanding of IR,” feminist IR, and academia’s relationship to power (Ackerly and True, 258). The book is strong in the sense that it highlights the importance of making legible silent operations of power within global politics. However, it would be stronger if it reflected upon the privilege and exploitation that intersect between the lines of its own text.

If we are to take the work of interdisciplinary feminism and the multiplicity of feminist IR seriously in order to argue that language shap[es] systems of thought (Cohn, 104), that research is a collective process (Stern), and that there is a “feminist political ethic of care” (Robinson, 222), then one of the first steps of feminist methodology is to refuse (re)colonizing languages, such as marginalized/mainstream, silenced/voiced, or victim/survivor, because these conceptualizations themselves, and their relation to each other, are what uphold hierarchal relations of power. Perhaps there is no “silence” to recover, nor “marginalized” to (re)map; rather, we need to reflect upon our listening in order to hear power’s complexities that are always already operating, regardless if the “researcher” names it as so (see Anna M. Agathangelou, *The Global Political Economy of Sex: Desire, Violence, and Insecurity in*

the Mediterranean Nation-States, 2004; M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Mediations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*, 2005).

If we take seriously the authors' suggestion that feminist methods are personal, collective, conflictual, political, and systemic experiences, then each conversant must ask: What are the questions and operations I am assuming within feminist articulations? Whose feminist authority has been cultivated through this production? Whose labor is necessary to do what feminist work? What are the implications of "our" political (mis)alignments, and of multiple feminist interventions?

Overall, this text is productive and can be used in feminist inquiry courses. It contributes a particular feminist perspective to the depth and breadth of methodological knowledges already circulating within feminist IR and within critical interdisciplinary feminist locales.

***Marriage and Democracy: Equality for All.* By R. Claire Snyder. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 2006. 176 pp. \$60.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.**

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Valerie Lehr
St. Lawrence University

R. Claire Snyder's book is published in the series *Polemics*, designed to engage controversial ideas in a way that appeals to both "the most accomplished scholar" and "the general reader and student." Her polemic intervention does both, and is important given the Senate's June 2006 vote on a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. In this hearing, numerous arguments were rehashed by those opposing same-sex marriage: It is against God's will, it is too great a deviation from what marriage has historically meant, it will lead to polygamy and bestiality. Snyder's work responds to these arguments; equally important, the author makes the case that discrimination against gay and lesbian people through the denial of marriage benefits is incompatible with liberal democracy because it denies the necessary foundation of equal citizenship. The denial of same-sex marriage, then, leaves unfulfilled the promise of equal rights and the possibility of democracy.

After a brief chapter that outlines democratic theory and the plan of the book, Snyder explores the history of marriage. Here she argues against the assumptions, shared by many senators and other Americans, that marriage