**Gender/Violence in a Gendered/Violent World**

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Review of:

Linda Ahall and Laura J. Shepherd, eds. *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence* (London:

Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmett, *Sex and*

*World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture: Telling Stories* (London and

New York: Routledge, 2013).

Annick, T. R. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (London:

Routledge, 2011).

Since the beginning of feminist work in International Relations twenty-five years ago (e.g., Tickner 1988; Brown 1988; Goetz 1988), scholarship that addresses the question of gender and violence in global politics has proliferated, and become increasingly diverse. At once, this is a cause both for celebration and reflection. It is a cause for celebration because the strong international research community interested in these issues demonstrates that gender issues have come a long way from being unrecognizable in IR (Tickner 1992). At the same time, the very proliferation of research that signifies vibrancy is a cause for reflection – what and where is research on gender/violence in IR?

 In looking for the different ways that these books recognize gender and violence, I use the construction gender/violence to suggest both the inseparability of gender and violence (where gender is always and everywhere violent, and violence is always and everywhere gendered), and look to see what the books have to say about gender/violence in global politics. Specifically, I read these four books interested in what they have to say (and what they inspire thinking) about this question in two different ways. First, I was interested in the questions they raise (and puzzle pieces they provide) regarding the relationship between gender and violence in a gendered/violent world – what do we know so far and what do we have yet to learn? Second, I read them as a sampling of the substantive diversity of work on gender and violence in the international arena. Like these books, much of the work on gender and violence shares a political interest in revealing and redressing sex and/or gender subordination in global politics. Often, however, that political commitment is the only (or one of few) commonalities between diverse research agendas exploring gender and violence. Work on gender/violence frequently disagrees on questions of epistemology, methodology, and method, and sometimes on the meaning and ontology of gender. What do these divides mean, and (how) is it possible to navigate them?[[1]](#footnote-1) After engaging with each of these books individually, this essay reflects on those two questions in turn, looking for what they tell us about ways forward for feminist IR scholarship.

Sex Inequality and Violence in *Sex and World Peace*

 In *Sex and World* Peace, Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmett present a positivist argument that violence against women *within* a state is strongly correlated with aggression *from* a state (p.5), suggesting that both bottom-up (chapter 6) and top-down (chapter 5) policies seeking gender equality are necessary to increase the likelihood of peace between states (chapter 7). The authors see gender inequality as “a form of violence that creates a generalized context of violence and exploitation at the societal level” (p.5). What they call “gendered microaggression” (the phrase they use for violence against women) builds, on their account, not only a general culture of violence “but warps women themselves to not only accept violence against them but to perpetuate it” (p.16). Early chapters of the book explain the authors’ theory that indicators of sex inequality like the physical security of women (p.55), son preference (p.56), trafficking in women (p.57), polygyny (p.58), family law inequity (p.59), maternal mortality (p.60), education gaps (p. 61), exclusion of women from government (p.62), legal restrictions on women’s movement in public spaces (p.63), and dress codes for women (p.65) are predictors of states’ likelihood to be aggressive in the international arena. The book then uses quantitative tests to evaluate six hypotheses about gender inequality and state aggression, finding robust bivariate and multivariate relationships between indicators of women’s security *in states* and peacefulness *of states* (Table B1 and Table B3). They find that the pseudo r2 for gender equality (level of impact) is higher than those for other popular variables predicting peacefulness in the field, including democracy and wealth (Table B2). The remainder of the book suggests policy strategies to improve the situation of women around the world at individual (ch6) and governmental (ch5) levels. The authors conclude, quoting Baha’i Faith, that “the world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female,” and that both wings must have equal power for humanity to fly (p.201).

 The interdisciplinary analysis that goes into *Sex and World Peace* is truly impressive, as is the amount of work that the authors and their collaborators put into the collection of data featured in the WomanStats Database (www.womanstats.org) used to test the hypotheses in the book. Still, however compelling the potential for a link between gender equality and peace is, the evidence for it in this book has some glaring weaknesses, and the proposed solutions in the book are mismatched with the problems it identifies. First, by “gender equality,” the authors mean “women’s equality” *to men*, a simplistic conflation that many feminists (including Laura J. Shepherd in *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence*, p.4) suggest leads to treating “sex/gender as a biological variable” neglecting its multidimensionality and fluidity, as well as its social, political, and performative dimensions. Second, the authors use non-standard measures of both gender equality and the dependent variable of state propensity for aggression, justifying the former but not the latter. The book evaluates the relationship only in 2006 rather than over time. These weaknesses call into question the evidence for a correlation between sex equality and peace. Even were the evidence more clearly supportive, the suggestions in Chapters 5 and 6 about how to improve gender equality focus largely on policy corrections that can be made in what the authors refer to as “Islamic civilization,” despite the lack of any evidence of the statistical significance of Islam in predicting either state violence or gender inequality. Finally, many feminist readers of *Sex and World Peace* suggest that the positivist tools that the book uses are inappropriate to investigate the relationship between gender and violence, suggesting that such work fails at “bringing [uniquely] feminist political and methodological commitments to bear” (Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies*, p.113).

Complexity and Contingency in *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*

 Annick T. R. Wibben is one feminist author who would be suspicious of the methodological approach in *Sex and World Peace.* Elsewhere,Wibben (2011, 593) suggests that feminist inquiry “ask security scholars to abandon the search for security as traditionally conceived.” Along those lines, in *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach,* Wibben suggests that one (unique) aspect of feminist scholarship its openness about having an explicitly feminist politics *of scholarship* based on understanding knowledge as situated (p.11, 19).[[2]](#footnote-2)

It is on this foundation that Wibben lays out her approach to a feminist politics of the study of security. Emphasizing “the contextual nature of experience and the necessity to engage the voices of all women,” (p.15) Wibben suggests that the feminist project is “to examine how gender has infused our very ways of thinking,” where she means a discursive, social, and multidimensional notion of gender (p.17). Accordingly, Wibben proposes seeing security as narrative (detailed in ch.4). Looking to “explore the processes of narrating security and their effects” (p.37), Wibben points out that current dominant security narratives assume “a fairly closed narrative structure consisting of four main elements: threats locating danger, referents to be secured, agents to provide security, and means to contain danger” (p.66).

Wibben finds these narratives often oppressive and always narrow, and is interested in the potential power of feminist security narratives - narratives which are personal (p.99), which draw on data normally ignored in security studies (p.99), and which challenge conventional meanings of security (p.100). Wibben (citing Moon 1997; Stern 2005; and Nordstrom 1997) suggests that feminist security narratives provide unique insights into security. In Wibben’s view, feminist security narratives “rethink security and violence as *made* (as well as unmade and remade)” (p.106). To think about the (gendered) *making* of security, Wibben suggests that feminist security scholars should: develop a willingness to listen (p.110) and be attentive over time (p.111), which will allow feminists to “tackle the politics of security directly – including the a priori assumption that security is a good thing” (p.113).

This narrative approach makes a clear (and in my mind appropriate) break with the conflation of sex and gender, as well as with the notion that there is one way to study security (as objective and external to the knower) which is superior to other ways of researching and knowing security. Wibben’s careful outline of what security narratives are and how they can be leveraged methodologically is instructive not only for feminist approaches to gender/violence but for a wide variety of the potential interests of critical work in Security Studies and IR more generally. In its re-telling of the Cold War security narrative through critical feminist lenses, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* is reminiscent in both form and intellectual uniqueness of retellings like Cynthia Weber’s (1995) account of US interventions in Latin America in *Faking It* and Laura Shepherd’s (2008) interpretation of Security Council Resolution 1325 in *Gender, Violence, and Security*. Journeying with Wibben to retell the Cold War provides fruit for the feminist imaginary in reframing the relationship between gender and violence. The book offers a strong critique of current disciplinary positions along those lines. This is also, however, its greatest weakness – a significant amount of space is taken up on these engagements, to the detriment of providing a first-order contribution to the literature it takes up. Wibben’s vision for the broader applicability of a narrative approach to Feminist Security Studies does not come through as strongly as it might: she is (ironically, given the book’s title) *telling* rather than *showing*.

Applying a Narrative Approach in *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture*

 Many of the principles that Wibben is interested in are employed in Laura J. Shepherd’s *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture.* Contending that “our cognitive frameworks are (re)produced in and through the stories we tell ourselves and others” (p.3) such that “our engagement with narratives is co-constitutive with the world and our place in it” (p.5). Shepherd suggests that presentations of the way the world works are inseparable from how that world works, and no less in the area of gender and violence. Therefore, in *Gender, Violence, and Security,* she analyzes a number of television shows and mini-series for what the stories we tell about the relationship between gender and violence tell us about how that relationship operates in the world. Shepherd posits a co-constitution of discourses of gender and discourses of violence, “in that ontopolitical claims made by gender itself are often violently inscribed on the human body, and, by contrast, the violence of vulnerability is always already gendered and gendering” (p.121).

 The potential of this approach bears noting. In Chapter 5, Shepherd takes up the portrayals of feminism in *The West Wing*, a popular American TV drama about a fictional Presidential Administration. Analyzing several scenes over the seven-year run of the show, Shepherd acutely identifies an insidious brand of “stiletto feminism,” subtly sexualizing its female characters and trivializing gender inequity (p.56-57). According to Shepherd, this mirrors global politics, where “a specific type of liberal feminism has been ‘mainstreamed’ and rendered acceptable in wider social discourse,” leaving many forms of gender subordination both intact and invisible (p.56-57). For example, in several national security scenes, the show contrasts (sometimes women’s) rational masculinity with (always women’s) emotional femininity (p.63) in a way that maintains gender stereotypes about women and femininity *even when* women characters hold many positions of power.

 This is only one of many of Shepherd’s explorations of the significations of gender/violence in popular culture. Still, it is not Shepherd’s goal to tell *a* particular narrative of gender/violence. Instead, given that none of these shows, and none of our lives, lend themselves to a singular approach, Shepherd suggests that an “aesthetic ethicopolitical approach” (p.119) is essential to analyzing the relationships between gender and violence, with constant “space for interrogation, investigation, and critique” (p.123). She proposes that a poststructuralist approach to gender and violence “allows us to understand how what we take to be real comes to be recognized as such” (p,127).

 Some might consider this book far-fetched, finding meanings for gender and violence in global politics in popular television shows. Before reading it, I may have also thought so – given that I had only seen a few episodes of one of the shows treated in the book previous to reading it. After reading *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture,* though, I argue that reading this analysis as far-fetched would require *not reading it*, because to pick up this book is to become engaged with its relevance at every turn. The analysis is witty and connected, in addition to being incredibly insightful. Not only does the book relate how gender/violence is portrayed in popular culture and demonstrate that those portrayals constitute gender/violence relationships in the ‘real world,’ it also constitutes theorization about the gender/violence relationship. In Shepherd’s words, “our engagement with narratives is co-constitutive with the world and our place in it” (p.5). To this, I would add that Shepherd shows this engagement to also be co-constitutive of/with gender/violence theorizing. If one could ask more of *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture*, it might be to expand on the conclusion – transforming it from an exploration of the aesthetic ethicopolitical approach used and to stringing together some of the varied insights about the gender/violence nexus across the chapters of the book. Such a conclusion could add a real theoretical *tour de force* to the end of an impressive book, collecting its many contributions to framing gender/violence.

Thinking about *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence*

 Many of the contributors to *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence* (edited by Linda Ahall and Laura J. Shepherd) seek to make a theoretical contribution to theorizing the relationship between gender and violence through interrogating agency. Co-editor Laura J. Shepherd starts the volume by outlining the poststructuralist feminist take of the book, and suggesting that gender, agency, and violence are linked by power across the discussions in the book. The collection takes on the relationship between gender, violence, and agency through three general themes: violent subjects, reason/rationality, and emotion/emotionality. While, at times, the collection fits loosely together, some of the chapters stand out as very interesting contributions to the question of the relationship between gender, agency, and violence.

 Among those chapters are Sung-Ju Park-Kang’s Chapter 7, a fictional reading of the case of alleged North Korean plane bomber Hyunhee Kim. Understanding fictional IR as a tool of narrative analysis to help to see that “gendered agency becomes more complicated when we take into account [that] …there are contested truths,” (p.130) Park-Kang relates the uncertainties and complexities in Kim’s story through gender lenses to contribute to representing/feeling (gendered) violence. Co-editor Linda Ahall’s Chapter 10 on representations of female agency in political violence suggests that women involved in violence are often linked to emotion. While they are criticized for being emotional, at the same time their actions are described in ways meant to evoke emotions like shock and horror (p.170). Arguing that the conflation of femininity and emotion “function to reinforce essentialist understandings of gender, agency, and political violence,” Ahall suggests that it is crucial to realize that female behavior is always “negotiated through, and limited to, boundaries imposed by what is considered appropriate behavior for female bodies,” and that part of such a realization is to take the emotion attributed to women seriously and study it (p.170, 183).

 Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schnieker’s chapter 3 provides a compelling argument that Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are “a transnational site where gender identities too are renegotiated, claimed, and subject to competition” among multiple masculinities, which then cloud the agency it is possible for femininities to have in a constraining discourse. In analyzing gender tropes in resistance movements, Gabriela Gonzales Valliant, Michael Kimmel, Farshad Malekahmadi, and Juhi Tyagi note that different political movements constructed different gender tropes for their own political purposes, and what gender tropes a community is governed by impact the degree of agency people are allowed to have and/or perceived to have in their violent actions (p.56). Using the examples of the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Naxal in India, and the White Aryan Resistance in the United States, the authors conclude that various gender tropes are employed, but in all of these situations, “one cannot assume unproblematic relations between gender and an individual’s propensity to use violence.”

 While some of other chapters seem to have a less clear contribution to the analysis of the theme and make it difficult to find a ‘take-home’ message from the book as a whole on the relationship between gender, agency, and violence, the empirical richness and theoretical innovation of many of the contributions is well above the level of most edited volumes, which makes it well worth reading. Still, the book’s strongest moments are in its discussions of the gender tropes that influence perceptions of agency, on the part of states, non-state actors, and individuals (particularly women). In Tanya Narozhna’s words (in Chapter 5, referring to women’s violence), “behind the victim/romantic dupe faming, therefore, lies the denial of any recognition of the feminine ‘self’” (p.83). It is through the lens of recognition that I look to glean lessons about these four books’ contributions to theorizing gender/violence in a gendered/violent world. Particularly, I suggest each of these books has something to consider to recognizing and understanding gender/violence in global politics.

Recognizing Gender/Violence

 Shepherd’s *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture* suggests that our views about gender/violence are not only recognizable in but produced in the stories that we tell in popular culture. Shepherd looks to identify and apprehend significations about gender, life, and livability wherever they are found – a position that “demands that we think carefully, critically, uncomfortably about our world(s), even when we’re ‘only’ watching television” (p.127), looking for “how that which we take to be real comes to be recognized as such” (p.126). This suggests that gender/violence is omnipresent and co-constituted in our gendered/violent world. One of Shepherd’s contribution is providing tools to recognize it in daily life, and examples of that omnipresence.

 The object of recognition in *Sex and World Peace* is very different. The authors look to demonstrate the widespread nature of women’s oppression in the world (especially, it seems, at the hands of [Islamic] religion), and to draw attention to ending it both for its own sake and for the sake of peace among states. At the same time, this recognition of the oppression of women without a concomitant acknowledgment of the complex operation of *gender tropes* makes invisible women’s agency, and even existence. For example, arguments that violence against women “warps” women (p.16) or that “social structures are shaped by male dominance over both sexes,” (p.70) run counter to many feminists’ understanding that women’s complex agency should be recognized in the analysis of gender and political violence (see, e.g., Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker’s chapter in *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence*). Focusing a narrow gaze on “women’s inequality” as constitutive of gender/violence in global politics makes that inequality recognizable at the expense of both seeing the complexity *of women* and understanding the multifaceted nature of the *gendering* of gender/violence.

 The contributors to *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence* look for the multifaceted nature of those genderings – from seeing the body as a location of political power (Lori Crowe, ch.2, p.19) to renegotiating the process of knowledge production about “politically violent ‘others’ (Claudia Brunner, ch.8, p.149). This volumesuggests both that agency in violence is gendered, and that, more often than not, so is the scholarly gaze at gender/violence. Looking to avoid “the reinforcement of essentialist ideas” about what women are and what violence is (Ahall, ch.10, p.183), *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence* looks at the multiple and varied (but always present) mappings of gender/violence in a gendered/violent world. In so doing, it teaches us not only to recognize the everyday of gender/violence, but its complexities and contradictions.

 To this debate, Wibben’s *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* contributes what Butler (2009) might call an alternative frame of recognition not only to the ‘mainstream’ of the discipline’s depersonalization, degendering, and depoliticization of violence in global politics but also to the feminist work that ‘recognizes’ women’s inequality while (in Shepherd’s terms) making invisible the serious constitutive work that gender does in oppression and subordination *across* constituted sex and gender categories specifically and global politics more generally. This frame understands gender/violence as not only *told in* and *produced by* stories (be they disciplinary, media-based, or popular culture-based), but also as *itself narrativized.* Such an approach locates the recognizability of the links between gender and violence in a gendered/violent world *in the telling*, and looks accordingly to retell the stories of global politics that rely on but omit gendered violence.

 Collectively, these books tell us that gendered violence is everywhere in our world (inspiring my use of the nomenclature ‘gender/violence’), and that the world is constituted by that gender/violence as gendered/violent – a constitution which is reified at all levels of global politics, from the individual to the international. They tell us that looking at different parts of that gendered/violent world through different gendered lenses reveals very different constitutions of gender/violence, but that the theme that one cannot understand the role of violence in the international arena without reference to gender is common across all four books. This *gendering* of violence is not only that violence is committed to, by, and around women, but that it is always and everywhere imbued with masculinizations and feminizations – it is gendered. This similarity across these four books – that gender must be recognized to apprehend violence – is crucially important, both for understanding them together and for any research agenda in (gender and) security studies. That said, collectively, these books also tell us both that there are real and significant differences *among* those interested in gender/violence in global politics, and that those differences have not just intellectual and discipline-social but also political impacts on the work of studying gender/violence.

The Diversity of Work on Gender/Violence

 The real and significant differences among these four books might not be representative of the diversity of work in the field of gender/feminism/IR, but it is both significatory and contains within it some of the major axes of conflict in the field. Two key axes bear mention: the question of what methods are appropriate for feminist inquiry and the question of how feminisms should relate to the mainstream of the field (here, of Security Studies). Looking at these four books across those axes brings some important insights to bear on those debates, but also brings up a third question – the question of how to deal with (irreconcilable?) differences among feminist research strategies.

Among these books, the “method” conversation has two levels: what tools are used, and the understanding of what knowledge is that makes the use of those tools seem appropriate. *Sex and World Peace* uses statistical tools, where *Feminist Security Studies* and *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture* use narrative tools, and the chapters of *Gender, Violence, and Agency* use discourse analysis, case studies, and other qualitative tools. Some might see the debate at the level of the tool – where some feminists would argue that you cannot “count” gender equality or understand cause as linear and progressive (as a regression assumes), and others would contend that narrative approaches get away from the concrete ‘realities’ of the international system.

 But the tools used are signifiers of a deeper disagreement, where *Sex and World Peace* is firmly committed to the positivism that dominates the discipline,[[3]](#footnote-3) and the other three books (largely) reject positivism on epistemological grounds.[[4]](#footnote-4) These books question the ability and desirability of separating the knower from the known, of understanding cause outside of constitution, of taking observation on face, and of de-politicizing knowledge, while *Sex and World Peace* suggests that objective knowledge is the only way to decode the world and act progressively in it. Tanya Narozhna’s chapter in *Gender, Agency, and Political Violence* suggests that “the notion of objective and allegedly genderless rationality serves to cement the links between gender, agency, and political violence” (p.80). In other words, the work of the authors of *Sex and World Peace* not only holds different ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments than that of the other authors under review here, it is subject to their critiques of politically harmful (mis)interpretations of gender and the discipline. In Patrick Jackson’s (2011) terms, this is the difference between monism (understanding a connection between the knower and the known) and dualism (seeing the two as separable and disconnected).

 Wibben, Shepherd, Ahall and their contributors, more often than not coming at the question of gender/violence from a poststructuralist feminist perspective, are committed monists, and read gender/violence that way. As such, like Carol Cohn (2011, 582), they argue that “security cannot come from some fantasized, isolated, completely autonomous and self-sufficient, armed independence, but is rather always, inevitably, relational.” With Wibben, I contend that the epistemological choice of monism/post-positivism is a politically preferable (for its interest in change) and intellectually compatible (for its understanding of knowledge) choice for feminist research, and see the results of these three books as an argument for choosing that approach to my own research. Where Wibben and I part ways, however, is in Wibben’s *a priori* exclusion of the idea that feminisms could productively use the tools of positivisms to serve feminist political and intellectual goals. Whether or not *Sex and World Peace* is an example of such productivity, rejecting the possibility closes off many available tools that could lead to productive feminist research. Still, on the other side, it also seems deeply problematic to assume the tools of the discipline are automatically suitable for feminist research because they are the tools of the discipline.

 That brings me to the second point: the differences between these books on their relationship with the (at least partly imagined) disciplinary mainstream. This question is discussed explicitly by both the authors of *Sex and World Peace* and Wibben in *Feminist Security Studies*. Wibben rejects starting at “Security Studies” to study security from a feminist perspective, given that the traditional methods of the discipline contain and reify gender subordination (see also Wibben 2011, 592). The authors of *Sex and World Peace* contend that operationalizing feminist goals is *progress for feminism* because it makes it accessible to the mainstream of the discipline (see also Hudson 2011, 589).

 I see both of these positions on relating to ‘the discipline’ as fundamentally shortsighted. Wibben’s position pays attention to the (gendered) power politics of the creation and telling of security while at the same time neglecting the (gendered) power politics of the ‘mainstream’ of researching and teaching security studies (however constituted). The ‘mainstream’ of the field (however politically poisonous, which should be a point of debate rather than assumption) will continue not only to exist but to hold the keys to jobs, research money, journal editorial positions, conference panel distribution, and the like, whether or not feminist research chooses to engage it. To me, that is an *a priori* case that some (though not all) feminist research should engage ‘the discipline,’ aware of the political and intellectual quagmires involved. That said, Hudson’s position (in *Sex and World Peace* and elsewhere) that feminist research simply needs to evolve to have the ability to use the tools of and communicate with the mainstream of the discipline provides warrant for Wibben’s critique. It is not only just plain wrong (in that there are at least some, if not most, things feminists are interested in studying that cannot be pushed into a quantitative, positivist mold, perhaps including the relationship between gender equality and state aggression), but also insulting to a deep and rich history of feminist ethnographic, case study, and discourse analytic work that is anything but insufficiently evolved. My critique of Wibben’s position suggests that engagement is necessary, but I think Hudson’s terms constitute a manual on *how not to* perform that engagement. Rather than doing work which oversimplifies and even disregards much of the tradition of feminist work on gender/violence, I suggest a careful, reflexive, political and politicized approach to engagement might constitute a middle ground between these two radically different positions.

 Wherever one falls along the spectrum of the differences among these books (and in the field of inquiry that they represent) on the relationship between gender and violence, on the methods used to investigate gender/violence, and on the position of work on gender/violence in a gendered/violent world/field, the differences are impossible to ignore. While I have addressed different methods for negotiating those differences elsewhere (Sjoberg 2013), reading these four books together suggests it would be fruitful to explore the political consequences of disagreement (and even conflict) among feminists who work on gender/violence. On the one hand, this question seems absurd on face – there are differences and conflicts among realists, liberals, and constructivists in IR on ontology, epistemology, and method – why should feminism be any different? Yet the gendered politics of the discipline seem to make it different – where some feminist scholars gaze on conflict among feminists as betraying the solidarity of the feminist mission, and some in the ‘mainstream’ of the field see it as catty femininity at its worst.

 Such a realization leads, to me, to a demand for reflexivity at three levels – evaluating gender/violence in a gendered/violent world, looking at gender/violence in the scholarship accounting for that world, and seeing gender/violence not only in the scholarship but in the field. These gazes, though, must be matched with the critical *action* of navigating those three levels of gender/violence to create a condition of possibility of achieving the sort of recognizability. Thinking about the constitution of feminist scholarship in IR and the relationship of feminist scholarship *to IR* in terms of *the politics of recognition* makes it possible to imagine *both* maintaining a specifically feminist politics (and therefore specifically feminist epistemologies and methods) *and* looking for engagement with the ‘mainstream’ of the discipline. This task is fraught with the obstacles Wibben points out, but essential to assure that *Sex and World Peace* is not the only portrayal of gender/violence that the gendered/violent IR world consumes – especially because (as Shepherd tells us), the substance is often in what story is told and how.

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1. A question I addressed briefly in Sjoberg (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Other perspectives see knowledge as situated (e.g., postcolonialism), but Wibben sees the uniqueness of feminism in this recognition paired with the insights that feminist situation of knowledge brings. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In this, it is not alone, see, e.g., Hudson et al (2009); Caprioli and Boyer (2001); Caprioli (2004) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Following a long line of feminist work, including but not limited to Tickner (1997); Ackerly, Stern, and True (2006); Sylvester (1994; 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)