

Women's International Thought: A New History

Women's International Thought: A New History is the first cross-disciplinary history of women's international thought. Bringing together some of the foremost historians and scholars of international relations working today, this book recovers and analyzes the path-breaking work of eighteen leading thinkers of international politics from the early to mid-twentieth century. Recovering and analyzing this important work, the essays offer revisionist accounts of IR's intellectual and disciplinary history and expand the locations, genres, and practices of international thinking. Systematically structured, and focusing in particular on Black diasporic, Anglo-American, and European historical women, it does more than "add women" to the existing intellectual and disciplinary histories from which they were erased. Instead, it raises fundamental questions about which kinds of subjects and what kind of thinking constitutes international thought, opening new vistas to scholars and students of international history and theory, intellectual history and women's and gender studies.

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Women's International Thought: A New History

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The subtitle of this volume refers to a “new history” of women’s international thought. Two caveats are in order. First, a new history is not the last word. We are conscious that this volume is merely a beginning, that we ourselves are guilty of omissions, and that there will likely be further selective readings, myopias, and appropriations down the line. Yet, it was important to us to capture the sense of openness and possibility that the category of “women’s international thought” had to offer, and this is the spirit in which we have approached our work as editors. Second, we wish to acknowledge the many labors of others that went into making this book. We have incurred multiple debts, intellectual, material, institutional and historiographical, and we wish to acknowledge them here.

This is the first major publication of our interdisciplinary research project Women and the History of International Thought (2018–2022), generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust (grant number RPG-2017-319). We are hugely grateful to the Trust for its commitment to recovering and evaluating historical women’s international thought in a genuinely interdisciplinary context. We would also like to thank our co-investigator Kimberly Hutchings for her steadfast commitment to the project and for making each iteration of the grant application and subsequent work immeasurably better. Many colleagues at Sussex and beyond helped to shape our initial ideas into a coherent and (we hope) achievable research program. We are grateful to Duncan Bell, Lene Hansen, Andrew Hurrell, Helen M. Kinsella, Helen McCarthy, Iain McDaniel, Susan Pedersen, Jan Selby, Glenda Sluga, and Rorden Wilkinson for valuable feedback, support, and encouragement. We also thank David Armitage, Robert Vitalis, and Penny Weiss, who serve as the Advisors on the Leverhulme project.

The idea for this volume was sparked at a small workshop in 2015, co-organized by Valeska Huber, Tamson Pietsch, and Katharina Rietzler, and funded by the German Historical Institute, London and the Consortium of the Humanities and the Arts South-East England. The event was originally conceived as a meeting of historians interested in

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how to write the intellectual history of twentieth-century internationalist women, inspired by approaches to women's intellectual history that American historians such as Mia Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, Barbara D. Savage, and Linda Kerber have developed.¹ The workshop organizers also sought to draw in expertise from the discipline of International Relations (IR), and Patricia Owens, author of the only IR monograph on an historical woman thinker, happily joined the discussion.² In the course of the day's conversations, the idea for a collaborative and genuinely interdisciplinary project across History and IR gradually took shape.

Our collaboration received initial financial support from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and the British International Studies Association, which enabled us to convene two further workshops where we initially brought together several of the authors in this volume. Kimberly Hutchings joined us to co-sponsor a British International Studies Association pre-conference workshop in Brighton in June 2017, while, in March 2018, David Armitage co-sponsored a Radcliffe Exploratory Seminar for which Patricia was eligible to apply as a former Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute. We are extremely grateful to both institutions and their staff for facilitating these productive intellectual encounters, as well as to the participants at both workshops who have been generous with their time, knowledge, and good cheer. There were moments of gravity when the historiographical lineages were invoked: over dinner in Cambridge, MA, Linda K. Kerber and Glenda Sluga reminded us of the distinct but overlapping stages of recovery and analysis that must underpin women's international intellectual history. And there were moments of levity: David Armitage captured the spirit of what we hope is a creative re-imagining of what the history of international thought might become by introducing us all to "Martina Wight" at the start of the Radcliffe Seminar.

But most of all, we want to acknowledge the hard work and great patience of all our contributors as the essays went through multiple revisions. Every single contributor has been a pleasure to work with and we have learned so much from each of them. At Sussex, we thank Sharon Krummel, Morgan Williams, and Michael Hamilton for their administrative assistance. For incisive comments and suggestions on

¹ Mia Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, and Barbara D. Savage (eds.), *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Linda K. Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women: Essays* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

² Patricia Owens, *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

earlier drafts of the introduction we thank Kimberly Hutchings, Helen M. Kinsella, Paul Kirby, Joanne Paul, Louiza Odysseos, Vanessa Ogle, Glenda Sluga, and Joanna Wood. As we came closer to producing a draft of the full manuscript, we found a very enthusiastic supporter in Liz Friend-Smith and Atifa Jiwa at Cambridge University Press (CUP). We are grateful for their commitment to this book and to our anthology, *Women's International Thought: Towards a New Canon*, which is a teaching companion to this volume, co-edited with Kimberly Hutchings and Sarah C. Dunstan. We are also grateful to Natasha Whelan who has expertly guided the book to publication, Joanna North for her copy-editing work, and the three anonymous reviewers for the Press. We have been fortunate to be able to access and reprint rare images of the thinkers in this volume, often taken from archival material. The inspiration for our front cover came from the papers of F. Melian Stawell, whose obituary in the Newnham College Roll pointed mourners “who did not know her in youth” to the central figure in Giovanni Bellini’s *Fortune or Melancholy* (c.1490), an allegorical portrait of a woman with a globe on her knees. We are grateful to the Gallerie dell’Accademia di Venezia for permission to reprint. Here we also acknowledge permission from Newnham College, Cambridge, Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections, Julian Brigstocke, the Women’s Library at the London School of Economics, McMaster University/the Vera Brittain Estate, the University of Southern California Libraries Special Collections, Wellesley College, Oberlin College Archives and Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University to reprint images of F. Melian Stawell, Merze Tate, Elizabeth Wiskemann, Helena Swanwick, Vera Brittain, Elizabeth McQueen, Emily Greene Balch, Anna Julia Cooper, and Barbara Sutro’s portrait of Vera Michele Dean.

Linda K. Kerber once argued that the locus of women’s intellectual life “has rarely been institutional” and that historians ought to direct their attentions to “wherever women gathered to argue.”³ Yet, where they exist, institutions – and their histories – matter. Through their distinct contributions and ethos, two institutions have shaped the production of this volume. Of course, the first of these, as we’ve already mentioned, is the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, which was founded in 1999 when Radcliffe College and Harvard merged. Established in 1879, then Radcliffe College played a distinct role in institutionalizing women’s research in international politics. After white women in the United States gained the vote in 1920, the

³ Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History*, 227–28.

Harvard/Radcliffe Bureau of International Research began as a feminist project to “equip qualified women with the information and training which will enable them to become teachers and interpreters in the field of international affairs.”⁴ Ada Comstock, then president of Radcliffe College, approached powerful institutional backers to “show the interest of women in the field of international research,” and to promote her most promising students whom she expected to “achieve results of considerable value.”⁵ Some of these scholars completed benchmark studies under the auspices of the Bureau, including two figures in this book: Merze Tate and Vera Micheles Dean, the latter offered (but declined) the presidency of Radcliffe in 1943. Although the feminist identity of the Harvard/Radcliffe Bureau was swiftly diluted and appropriated, women international thinkers found an institutional welcome there. Comstock put her faith in the relevance of women’s international thought, a faith without which Tate, Dean, and many others would not have completed their work.

We would also like to acknowledge the University of Sussex, both of our academic homes when our collaboration began and where we worked on this book. The Heads of School and Research Directors and Development Officers of Sussex’s Schools of Global Studies and History, Art History and Philosophy have been extremely supportive of the Leverhulme Project. But apart from the material and moral support we received, we were also buoyed by distinct institutional legacies in our respective departments. Sussex was the first university in Britain to establish degree programs and academic posts specifically in the field of intellectual history. Since the 1970s and 1980s, intellectual historians at Sussex have developed an approach to intellectual history that embraced methodological and terminological eclecticism, paid close attention to the idiosyncrasies of voices from the past, was open to a range of genres and welcomed intellectual endeavors that sat between and across disciplinary boundaries.⁶ This vision would have attracted Elizabeth Wiske-mann, one of the figures in this volume, who taught modern and international history at Sussex between 1961 and 1964.

⁴ Katharina Rietzler, “Experts for Peace: Structure and Motivations of Philanthropic Internationalism in the Interwar Years,” in Daniel Laqua (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 47.

⁵ Ada Comstock to Beardsley Rumml, May 6, 1923, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, NY, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives, Series III.6, box 54, folder 573.

⁶ Stefan Collini, “General Introduction,” in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young (eds.), *Economy, Polity, and Society: British Intellectual History 1750–1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–21.

The idea that the intellectual history of international thought should be broader than a specialist history of one subject matter suited us better than a more conventional approach to writing international intellectual history as the disciplinary history of International Relations would have done, not least because of the exclusions based on gender, race, class, and ideology that have shaped this discipline, arguably more than others. Yet, we are fortunate to have benefited from the intellectual openness of the Department of International Relations at Sussex, at the forefront of so much theoretical innovation within the discipline. That said, we were also very wary of anachronistically assimilating women into an existing disciplinary history of International Relations, which would have obscured many roads not taken and “what-might-have-beens.” While we hope to build on Sussex’s tradition of openness to discovery in our work, we are also mindful that genuine dialogue between the disciplines is hard, and dismissals of the things that other scholars care about not uncommon. Our academic home when this book was conceived made it possible for us to talk to and to learn from each other, and for that benign influence of the “Sussex spirit” we are truly grateful.

Our final words of thanks go to our partners and extended families for supporting our academic work and for sharing all the other work that goes into maintaining family lives and the kind of home most of us need outside of academe. We’d like to dedicate this volume to our children, Maggie, Edith, Cali, and Myla.

Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler