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TITLE PAGE

'Turning International: *Foundations of Modern International Thought and New Paradigms for Intellectual History*'

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'Turning International: *Foundations of Modern International Thought* and New Paradigms for Intellectual History'

WORD COUNT 5992, with footnotes 7079

ABSTRACT 150-200 words

This essay provides an overview of the disciplinary and analytical significance of David Armitage's *Foundations of Modern International Thought* in the context of the new international history, and the so-called 'international turn'. It then goes on to discuss the significance of the absence of women in this new sub-field of intellectual history.

KEYWORDS:

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

GLOBAL HISTORY

WOMEN

GERMAINE DE STAËL

DAVID ARMITAGE

In a new collection of essays entitled *Global Intellectual History*, its editors, the New York based intellectual historians Sam Moyn and Andrew Sartori claim that ‘Among the last decade’s most notable developments in the historians guild has been a turn towards global history’.¹ The aim of their collection is to ascertain the relevance of that global turn for intellectual history, and in the process, prod us towards the revival of a field that some might argue has not had its moment in the sun for quite some time. What Moyn and Sartori miss, however, is another recent and distinctive development in intellectual history—an ‘international turn’.

Like the global turn, the international turn is a relatively recent reaction against the default status of the nation and the state in historical scholarship. As with the global turn, we can trace the scholarly celebration of the international to the growing fascination among historians for the transnational, an analytical vogue spawned by the end of the Cold War (inaugurated by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) and the end of the twentieth century. The decade of the 1990s witnessed a heady combination of post-Cold War and millennialist scenarios that anticipated not only the end of history, but a reinvigorated international community no longer riven by ideological antipathies, and cooperating through a resuscitated UN with expanded international legal instruments.² By the 2000s, as unilateral action against terrorism became the main game, and the concept of the international community went into decline, the historical profession took up the idea of the ‘international’ with ever greater enthusiasm. The Harvard historian Akira Iriye had by this time long made his argument for the importance of internationalizing history and the existence of a cultural internationalism³; in 2002 Lynn Hunt another American historian, best known for her work on the French revolution, but in this case presiding over the AHA, described the field of international history itself as ‘the next big thing’.⁴ This ‘thing’ was different from the international history that in the mid-nineteenth century had helped shape the historical profession and taken as its *raison d’etre* the study of the nation’s rise and fall, and as its method the study of *Aussenpolitik*

¹ Moyn and Sartori, 'Introduction', *Global Intellectual History*, co-edited by Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (Columbia University Press, New York, 2013).

² For an expanded version of this argument, see G. Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Penn University Press, Philadelphia, 2013).

³ Akira Iriye, 'The Internationalization of History,' *American Historical Review* 94, 1 (1989): 1–10.

⁴ See the discussion of her speech in M. J. Hogan, 'The “Next Big Thing”: The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age,' *Diplomatic History* 28, 1, (2004): 1-21. Hunt referred more specifically to the history of diplomacy and foreign relations, although I would argue these were accommodated in the larger category of international history.

or foreign policy and the agency of political elites. By contrast, the new international history resonated the lessons of the cultural history of the 1980s, as well as the historical fascination with transnationalism that had started up in the 1990s. Its themes included the modern significance of the international as a political idea, international organizations as political spaces, and internationalism as an ideology that overlapped and intersected with, even as it ran counter to, the history of nations and nationalism. Among the definitive statements of the transnational dimensions of this international history was Matthew Connelly's *Past and Present* article 'Seeing beyond the state', in which the author argued for a new critical historical focus on the political significance of non-state organizations and movements, many of them international in scope and identification. (His own case study drew on the international history of population control).⁵ One of the more high profile dimensions of this international turn relevant to the history of ideas, and particularly its European focus, has been the embrace of the history of human rights, including the growing controversy over the origins and content of its constituent ideologies. The new international history of human rights situates ideas in their transnational and international as well as imperial contexts, and parses for culturally-specific shades of meaning and inflections.⁶ According to the new internationally-minded history of human rights, there is no transhistorical definition of human rights, and the constitution of an international realm of political action and activism, akin to an international public sphere, has been critical to the modern conceptualization of human rights as an idea.⁷ For the purpose of reflecting on the history of ideas too, the relatively new interest among historians in 'seeing beyond the state' has been as significant for its restoration of the international as a crucial context for intellectual reflections in the public domain on the nature of the state as either real or fictional, and for seeing into the national fictions of conventional modern statehood.

In the twelve essays written between 2000 and 2013 and collected under the title *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, David Armitage argues that before the international turn coincident with the turn of the twenty-first century, intellectual historians had showed almost no

⁵ M. Connelly, 'Seeing beyond the State: The Population Control Movement and the Problem of Sovereignty,' *Past and Present*, 193, 1 (2006): 197-233.

⁶ See for example, M. Duranti, 'Curbing Labour's Totalitarian Temptation: European Human Rights Law and British Postwar Politics,' *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 3, 3, (2012): 361-383.

⁷ Of course the main proponent of the 1970s as the beginning of modern human rights is Sam Moyn, see *The Last Utopia* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

interest in analysing the international as a domain of political thought. They had more or less abandoned that task to international relations theorists and international law specialists, few of whom were attentive to the historical specificity of the texts under their review. Even though intellectual historians grew increasingly interested in the status of empires and imperial ideologies, and in the methodological opportunities offered by a focus on transnational modes of experience and agency, they ignored or neglected the international imaginaries or practices that, according to Armitage, nourished imperialist and colonialist inflected theories of the state, society, and politics. In other words, self-identified intellectual historians have long been behind the disciplinary times.

The key to *Foundations of Modern International Thought* is Armitage's ambition for expanding the parameters of intellectual history. *Foundations of Modern International Thought* delineates an important, and at times revolutionary, new disciplinary sub-field Armitage has conceptualized as 'international intellectual history', namely the study of '[r]elations between states, and the multiplicity of non-state relations, taking in the modern era in which the individual is a subject of international law, and international institutions and transnational organizations thickly populate the world'.⁸ The international thought in which Armitage is interested is 'theoretical reflection on that peculiar political arena populated variously by individuals, peoples, nations and states and, in the early modern period, by other corporate bodies such as churches and trading companies. ... treating the nature of the interactions between these actors and the norms that regulate—or should regulate—them'.⁹ This is no vague aim. The essays in *Foundations of Modern International Thought* carefully outline not just the possible theoretical parameters of a new field, but its empirical existential inevitability. It is this attention to detail that reveals the origins of the term 'international thought,' as invented by British publicists and litterateurs sympathetic to the League of Nations and nascent international institutions in the interwar.¹⁰ As importantly, Armitage's point is as much that the invention of the term is only one clue to a longer history of international thinking.

⁸ D. Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013), p. 7.

⁹ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 26.

International intellectual history is, as *Foundations of Modern International Thought* explains, 'a self-conscious area of inquiry pursued by intellectual historians with international interests and by international historians with inclinations towards intellectual and cultural history.'¹¹ It can be assembled under the rubric of both the international and intellectual turns, either as the intellectual history of the international, or as internationalized intellectual history. In the case of this volume, it is the latter description that guides us most helpfully to the heart of a new historiographical venture and its innovating potential.

Armitage's personal genealogy of how he travelled from an earlier focus on the state and imperialism to arrive at international intellectual history usefully illuminates some of the individual and structural strands that comprise this new sub-field. In a recent issue of *Itinerario*—a Leiden based journal of imperial history—Armitage portrays his interest in the international as less the product of his current location in the Harvard History department, and more of a family gene for *wanderlust*, particularly a father in the British Merchant Navy, who travelled regularly to the Pacific and Australia. To this, the son add his own auspicious birthdate—on the day Winston Churchill (and with him, the British empire) was buried—as well as his formative students days in a post-imperial Britain in the economic ravages of decline, or as Armitage describes, an 'amnesiac Britain trying to forget its international, imperial and global connections.'¹² Then, in the midst of an English doctorate, there was his belated encounter with the work of Quentin Skinner, 'the pivotal figure in my career,' as Armitage explains. He is very specific about his intellectual debt to the Cambridge School of political thought, and to Skinner, the man at that school's intellectual heart. As is now well-known, Skinner put the history back into the study of ideas, on the argument that ideas do not float above us unchanging as we change, that ideas are articulated by people in specific historical and cultural contexts, and that ideas have historically specific meanings. As second-nature as this approach is now to a broad range of intellectual historians, in the 1970s it constituted a radical departure from the reigning practice among intellectual historians who had treated ideas as transhistorical, and, as importantly, as transcending geography or space.

In that most international of decades, the post-Cold War 1990s, Skinner rescued Armitage, the frustrated English graduate, from the fate of drowning in Shakespeare, by throwing him the

¹¹ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 1.

¹² For this section, I have drawn on David Armitage, J. Jacobs, and M. van Ittersum, 'Are We All Global Historians Now? An Interview with David Armitage,' *Itinerario* 36, 2, (2012): 7-28.

disciplinary lifebuoy of intellectual history. This happy set of circumstances married the 'genetic' and political roots of Armitage's historical interests (empire, the globe, the international) and the accidental origins of his training in English textual analysis with Skinner's own methods, namely close textual analysis and contextualization. By the 2000s, Skinner had lent more than his approach to the development of Armitage's own historical innovations. The title *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, as Armitage explains in the introduction to these essays, self-consciously echoes Skinner's classic 1978 text, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*.¹³ Among the most significant of Armitage's reinventions is the subtraction of the definite article 'the', and the replacement of 'political' with 'modern international'. Where Skinner and others posed the nation-state problem, 'How did we come to acquire the concept of the state?', Armitage now asks the international question: 'How did we—all of us in the world—come to imagine ourselves in a world of states?'¹⁴

Armitage's basic aim is the excavation of the historical foundations of International Relations theory and International Law, and picking up the lost strands of international thought in older seemingly 'state-bound' texts that make up the political thought canon. The stars of that canon, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Bentham, all find a home in *Foundations of Modern International Thought*. But in this new setting, those same texts are subjected to close reading and contextualization in order to recover a lost landscape of ideas and their significance. By tracing the reception of their ideas too, Armitage manages to chip away at the accrued layers of meaning and recover more historical readings, based on the principle of rejecting what he calls 'procrustean taxonomies and overhasty appropriations.'¹⁵ Instead, this richly inventive book traces carefully over the length of five hundred years, a shift in what the author calls the 'collective human imagination' towards the idea of the international, but with few illusions as to the organic or consistent nature of that 'imagination'.¹⁶ His is not a systematic history of that shift, but rather an intrepid series of forays into the numerous waysides and paths that map the international onto the territory of intellectual history.

¹³ Q. Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978).

¹⁴ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 171.

¹⁶ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 13.

To begin with, in comparison with Skinner, Armitage argues that the heyday of the state was fairly limited, 1975-1989; by contrast, he claims empires have remained relevant through the modern period. As he reminds his readers, historians have demolished the 'myth of 1648'—namely that the peace of Westphalia led to the creation of the modern state, and its sacrosanct sovereignty: '[The] Westphalian myth ...underpinned a set of assumptions that defined modern international thought: that states, not individuals were the primary actors in international affairs; that the spheres of the domestic and the foreign, the inside and the outside of the state, were distinct and separate; that positive law trumped natural law; that a hierarchical standard of civilization applied across the globe; and that the international real was anarchical and hence governed by maxims of reason of state. These fundamental assumptions were neither uniform nor uncontested but they did set the terms of debate for at least a century and a half.'¹⁷

Armitage wants to suggest that an international focus highlights the extent to which 'empires, federations and other kinds of layered or divided sovereignty were more characteristic of political authority than any alleged "Westphalian sovereignty".' It also relied on 'attention to the world beyond northern Europe to see how little respect was paid to the putative sovereignty of many of the world's peoples under the regime of empire.'

Foundations of Modern International Thought concentrates on a set of (intersecting) intellectual genealogies that provide crucial contextualizations for the interpretation of political texts, among them international thought, the international turn, and the relationship of the state to the inter-state or international. Armitage argues too for the intersecting genealogies of the international and the national or, as he puts it, the 'energetic co-production of the national and the international around the globe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.¹⁸ Sometimes, as he suggests, the invention of words gives us clues in the tracing of these genealogies—the international thought of the interwar years, globalisation as an invention of the 1980s— but if Google Ngram could answer all our questions we would not need historians. Take for example the case of Jeremy Bentham, who, as we are often now told, coined in the 1790s the term 'international' as an appellation for law that extended beyond the state, governing the 'mutual transactions of sovereigns'.¹⁹ Since the international turn, historians (here I include myself) have been blithely citing the utilitarian philosopher's coinage as shorthand for a more significant

¹⁷ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 27.

¹⁸ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 28.

¹⁹ See M. Mazower, *Governing the World* (Penguin, New York, 2012), p. 21.

historical shift in how we came to imagine ourselves in a world of states. But it is Armitage who dissects and reassembles that shift in a chapter with the glorious title, 'Globalizing Jeremy Bentham.' By paying attention to original texts Armitage discovers Jeremy Bentham the self-styled 'jurisprudential cosmopolitan,' and divines what it means to imagine the international in the context of contemporary events. That context is the American War of Independence, and the attempts by the breakaway colonialists to articulate the international legitimacy of their state-building.²⁰ Armitage re-reads Bentham's papers in order to illuminate crucial moments in the imagining of the international and its influence on the conceptualization of the state, and the laws common to both. Armitage's retelling brings Bentham's internationalism alive, not only as a response to the world around him, but as a way of situating himself in that world, interpellating himself by means of an idea. Take this telling entry from Bentham's diary in 1786, written in the third person: 'The Globe is the field of Dominion to which the author aspires. The Press the Engine and the only one he employs – the Cabinet of Mankind the Theatre of his intrigue.' Then in 1831, on the day before his 83rd birthday: 'Jeremy Bentham the most ambitious of the ambitious. His empire—the empire he aspires to - extending to and comprehending the whole human race, in all places—in all habitable places of the earth, at all future time . . . Limits has it no other than those of the earth.'²¹

Armitage's re-reading of Bentham exemplifies his method, namely the recovery of the international in the ideas and arguments that political theorists have presumed to be solely concerned with the state, or the identification of the international tenor of better-known foundational texts. We discover that Hobbes is not the theorist that International Relations scholars have made him out to be, that is, the proponent of the view of the international realm as anarchic, populated by fearful and competitive actors. Instead, on Armitage's reading, Hobbes argued that the cases of internal and international politics were not comparable, 'because [sovereigns] uphold [...] the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men'.²² John Locke is seen not only as the proponent of social contract theory, or racist colonialist rationales, but also the author of important

²⁰ For an extraordinary account of the international dimensions of this story, see Armitage's earlier *The Global History of the Declaration of Independence* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2010), as well as chapter 11 of *Foundations*.

²¹ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 173.

²² Cited in Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 67.

international texts that complicate our understanding of the history of empire and political thought.

Foundations of Modern International Thought tackles the more worked over controversies of the relationship between international and imperial thought, including the complicity of 'international' thought (and the thinker) in imperial/colonial projects. Armitage's critique of the political thought that has made up the canon of theories of states, whether Hobbes, or Locke, or Burke, or Bentham, finds that the interventions by these political thinkers in international themes are inextricably bound up in the histories of imperialism and colonialism. He concludes however that the world of ideas is not Manichean. Just as 'there have been different strains of imperial and colonial liberalism and . . . they have not necessarily been continuous with each other. . . the job is to expose and expunge traces of its complicity with empire. . . in diverse and historically sensitive ways to create various post-colonial liberalisms, some of which may be able to draw robustly upon other Lockean legacies.'²³ In a further chapter on John Locke, theorist of empire, this conundrum is probed further. Armitage concludes that the label 'imperial' cannot be aptly applied to Locke because he did not espouse or elaborate a hierarchical ordering of populations, 'least of all one that placed Europeans above or even apart from other groups, because he saw rationality itself as evenly distributed among human populations and the usual marking of civilization as contingent and fragile.'

Armitage's historical sensitivity extends also to the personal detail of contextual settings:

'the time Locke had spent living in Europe, the offers he received and his administrative experience meant that Locke had more extensive international experience and diplomatic opportunities than any British political thinker before David Hume, the erstwhile secretary in the 1740s to General James St Clair and attendant to the British ambassador to France in the aftermath of the Seven Years War.'²⁴

We learn too that Locke's collection of travel literature at his death comprised 195 books, many maps and a portfolio of ethnographic illustrations of 'the inhabitants of several remote parts of the world especially the East Indies', including, Cape of Good Hope and Java, Amboina, Macassar,

²³ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 131.

²⁴ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 76.

Malaya, Ternate, Tonkin, Japan, China, and Tartary. According to Armitage, Locke's awareness of the diversity of human beliefs influenced his arguments against the supposed innateness of ideas, and fed his skepticism about human capacities and the alleged superiority of Europeans. An encounter in 1670 with two sons of the Emperor of the Kiawah Creek town of Cofitachequi in Carolina, who had come to England by way of Barbados, named Honest and Just, convinced Locke that their rational capacities existed. But the experience of being in the world, also led to less Romantic international interventions. As the author of a number of key constitutional texts in the early 1680s, Locke justified absolute control (power of life and death) over slaves by slaveholders. This viewpoint becomes even more unsettling when we remember that Locke was one of many 'liberal theorists' 'who possessed specialized knowledge of extra-European settlement and commerce...from Grotius and Hobbes to Tocqueville and Mill', and who were employed by overseas trading companies.²⁵ As importantly, as Armitage reveals, the complicity of liberalism with English colonialism was unearthed not by other liberals, but by conservatives, who wanted to undermine republicanism.

In response to the question 'how did we come to imagine ourselves in a world of states?' Armitage returns to the missing history of the separation of the two spheres 'domestic and international', and 'what propelled them apart.' In a subtle and deftly parsed essay, 'Parliament and International Law in Eighteenth Century Britain', his historical answer traverses the terrain of English parliamentary law and the crown. The story begins as an anecdote of diplomatic history: In 1708, after his final audience, the heavily indebted Russian ambassador Andre Artemonovich Matveev is arrested on the demand of his creditors, the ambassador is beaten and his footmen assaulted by the arresting sheriff and his men. The Russian Tsar is livid, and Queen Anne finds that she must intervene to calm down the situation. The result is a bill put before the English Parliament reinforcing the inviolability of the rights and privileges of ambassadors and other public ministers. The point is, as Armitage divines, that an international convention, the solemn recognition in the law of nations of the right of ambassadors, has now become English law. Specifically, Armitage's reassessment of the relationship between the domestic and the international in eighteenth century England divulges the international dimensions of a parliamentary history that is often thought of as specifically national. In general, from the perspective of the intellectual historian and the international historian, this is a moment that also

²⁵ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 91.

illuminates the national history of Britain as international, the limits of state sovereignty shaped in relation to international law.

Like many of the concepts discussed in this book, globalization and international thought have genealogies that take us much farther back into history than the mere invention or use of the words 'global' or 'international'. When it comes to the place of global history in this international history, Armitage discerns multiple tracks towards globalisation, and multiple movements of resistance to it. 'Globalisation', he points out 'is no more a unitary enterprise than was internationalisation before it.'²⁶ He distinguishes between globalization as a process—that is, the gradual thickening of connections across national boundaries, up to and including the emergence of a universal cosmopolitan community—and globalization as a condition, that is, a state of complete transnational integration, encompassing all the people of the world within a single network of economic and cultural connections informed by a common global consciousness. In response to the pertinent question 'Is there a pre-history of globalisation?' he answers that even though we can describe (as contemporaries did) the features of economic life in the late eighteenth century as global, the interruption of free trade in the late nineteenth century and national autarky movements in the interwar years are evidence that this pre-history does not contribute to a teleological or progressive account of globalization. Instead '[g]reater economic convergence undoubtedly had a mutually sustaining relationship with cultural contact... but that led less readily to a convergence of norms than it did to a collision of competing universalisms.' Economic globalisation is just one 'far from uncontested or inevitable-alternative among many even today'. We live in an age of globalisation, rather than a globalized age. This is the sort of fine distinction that shifts the way in which we think about the past: 'The historians' contribution to the study of globalisation should therefore be to remind us that we may be living amid only the latest (but probably not the last) of globalisation's diverse and disconnected pre-histories.'²⁷

Why is all this important? Obviously if our understanding of the contemporary world is built on presumptuous historical knowledge, then rereading the past and its ideas might help us revise that understanding. . In his *Itinerario* interview, Armitage provides a further useful defense of the historian's act, and the point of being international or intellectual in one's approach to the present, let alone the past: 'we should not settle with the boundaries of moral and political

²⁶ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 44.

²⁷ Armitage, *Foundations*, p. 45.

philosophy as we have inherited them, we should always be seeking to expand them, if we believe that there is any transformative potential whatsoever in our use of historical knowledge to enlighten contemporary society and open up new questions.’²⁸

Foundations of Modern International Thought overflows with alternative readings of texts and intellectuals, ideas and the international itself, that together suggest not just one internationalism or one genealogy, but many, to paraphrase Armitage's other favourite phrase, *E Pluribus Unum*. *Out of many one*. However, the essays also raise the question, which many? A global historian might charge the absence in this marking out of the terrain of an internationalized intellectual history of intellectuals beyond the confines of Britain, and to a lesser extent Western Europe and (English) America. I could not help wondering whether a new approach to intellectual history can reasonably claim its novelty if it does not have a more pronounced place for women as agents of ideas than the 'old' state-focused intellectual history?

In delineating the *limes* of a new field that he designates international intellectual history—whether as the history of internationalized ideas, or ideas of the international—Armitage works around the landmarks of a heavily subscribed Anglo-centric canon of political thinkers, completely male. The absence of women from intellectual history is a well-established feature of historiography.²⁹ The salient points of that absence in the context of (the) foundations of modern international thought are its double-qualities, namely that the place of women in an internationalized intellectual history is dependent to a significant extent upon their place in the old state-focused history of political thought. The intellectual history of liberalism—whether state or non-state focused—is a pertinent case in point. In view of the fact that the battle to have women included in the existing canon of political thought is ongoing, it is *almost* inevitable that women have no place in *Foundations of Modern International Thought*. Adding women requires not merely the re-reading of well-read texts, but the recovery of those texts, alongside others lost to their own time because of the bias against women publishing in 'masculine' genres, , and the formulation of a context by virtue of which these recovered texts might be read into the larger story of an internationalized intellectual history—a sizable task.

²⁸ 'Are We All Global Historians Now?', p. 23.

²⁹ See Eileen O'Neill's forceful argument in 'Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History,' in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, edited by J. A. Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 17-62.

Some of the work of locating women who can be accommodated in the existing tradition of intellectual history is being done, particularly for the early modern period, to a lesser degree for the nineteenth century, the epoch that determined the gendered segregation of private and public spheres in the European world. However, in the nineteenth century too, we know for example that Bentham had his equivalent in the woman he refused to see, despite her interest in engaging him, the French-born political thinker Germaine de Staël.³⁰ In the twenty-first century, Staël is one of the few women who manage to appear in lists of early nineteenth century liberal theorists.. The trail of Staël's shifting intellectual status in particular tells an edifying story of the significance of the presence of women as thinkers in the past, and of their persistent marginalization within the confines of intellectual history, and its nation-state categorizations, in the present.

To the extent that Staël does appear in the historiography of political thought she is commonly situated as a French thinker, the leader of the Coppet group, which included her better known collaborator Benjamin Constant as well as Sismonde de Sismondi, August Schlegel, and others. For specialist Staëlian scholars, her publications resonate contemporary debates regarding the significance of civil liberty achieved through constitutional and institutional means, as well as the form of political culture we might now think of as a public sphere. Staël has also been resuscitated as a voice for a politics of moderation, not unlike the late-nineteenth century pragmatic school, deliberating ideas in the context of a historically-situated world.³¹ Her philosophical motivation was the observation of the political and social upheavals effected in France since the 1780s in the absence of political and legal guarantees for the safety and well-being of the individual. Less recognized is her significance for an international history of political thought.

In the context of the re-imagining of politics in Bentham's 'international' terms, and, more specifically, of debate over the principles that would guide the framing of the post-war European

³⁰ 'He called her "a trumpery magpie." He abhorred her sentimentalities and her flatteries. She said to Dumont, "Tell Bentham, I will see nobody, till I have seen him."—"Sorry for it," said Bentham, "for then she will never see anybody,"—and he would not receive her, nor return her visit.' Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, published under the Superintendence of his Executor, John Bowring (William Tait, Edinburgh, 1838-1843). 11 vols. Vol. 10. Chapter: *Lord Holland to Bentham*. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2085/210301> on 2013-10-13.

³¹ See A. Criautu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012).

peace in 1814, Staël was an outspoken advocate of the universal relevance of liberal principles: liberty of the person, beliefs, and the press, required the representation of public opinion and guaranteed mitigation of the arbitrary exercise of power. Political power required regulation through the practices of 'public liberty'. Staël measured these expectations against not only French society, but also the political leaders of the time as they worked to overthrow Napoleon and inaugurate a post-Napoleonic international European order.³² The theoretical innovation of Staël's version of liberty was to present liberalism as both 'universal' (or European) and socially adaptable (since, as she asserted throughout her writing, societies are the dynamic products of historical circumstances). . . i. Read into the state-focused history of political thought, Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (published posthumously in 1818), becomes a defining text of liberal ideology; re-read in the context of the rise of modern international thought, it elaborates the liberal tenets of the ideological revolution in 'international norms' that the international historian Paul W. Schroeder has described as having taken place in the early nineteenth century period: 'This sense of inherent limits, acceptance of mutual rules and restraints, common responsibility to certain standards of conduct, and loyalty to something beyond the aim of one's own state distinguished early nineteenth-century politics from what had preceded and would follow it.'³³

At the same time as Jeremy Bentham was touting his constitution-writing skills for any newly emerging state, Staël was busy actively inserting her '*liberalisme*'—a term she is credited with coining—into the debates among the 'great powers' of the time.³⁴ Maurizio Isabella has recently confirmed that 'Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française* had a key role to play in the shaping of post-Napoleonic 'moderate liberalism', providing 'the intellectual tools to make a critical assessment of Napoleon and to accommodate [...] political ambitions without denying each and every theoretical achievement of the revolution'.³⁵ Further, working against the current historiographical practice of effacing Staël from the intellectual histories of the individuals who made up the otherwise all-male Coppet group, Jennifer Pitts has argued that, Staël 'long stood at

³² R. Escarpit, *L'Angleterre dans l'oeuvre de Madame de Staël* (M. Didier, Paris, 1954), p. 167.

³³ P. W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994), p. 802.

³⁴ M. Delon, 'Le Liberalisme au féminin', *Europe*, jan-fev 1987, p. 5. The word *liberalisme* appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the circles of de Staël as a mode of denouncing the feudal privileges and reactionaries in the aftermath of the Revolution.

³⁵ Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p. 15.

the center of French and Swiss anti-slavery activity: indeed, in that context [Benjamin] Constant might be seen as something of a latecomer to active abolitionism.’ Pitts dates Staël’s own involvement in the articulation of this ‘humanitarian outlook’ to 1789.³⁶ By 1814, in the context of Napoleon’s downfall (which she helped orchestrate), Staël was producing essays and pamphlets that attempted to persuade the negotiators of the Treaty of Paris to ban the trade as a condition of the peace, as well as take military action against political tyranny, and on behalf of constitution-based political societies.³⁷ But we need look no further than Staël’s own texts, as in this passage from the *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, in which she attempts to articulate both the universality and international legitimacy of her liberal view:

‘Is the question the abolition of the slave trade, or the liberty of the press, or religious toleration? Jefferson thinks as La Fayette, as Wilberforce; and even they who are now no more are reckoned in the holy league. Is it then from the calculations of interest, is it from bad motives that men so superior, in situations and countries so different, should be in such harmony in their political opinions?’³⁸

While Staël was not the only liberal thinker in this period, she was the elaborator of the philosophical and practical terms of liberty that became the conceptual axis of political debate of a post-Napoleonic world. Even more importantly, given Armitage’s interest in the intersecting histories of the national and international, Staël’s anti-Napoleon texts—some written as fiction (most notably, *Corinne ou l’Italie*, 1807), others as innovative ‘cultural studies’ (namely, *De l’Allemagne*, 1813)—are evidence of the extent to which the new age of international thought was being carved out of a new ‘national’ language (according to John Isbell, it is in Staël’s writing that the French-speaking world first encounters the term ‘nationality’).³⁹ Staël is said equally to have

³⁶ Jennifer Pitts, ‘Constant’s Thought on Slavery and Empire,’ in Helena Rosenblatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Constant* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009), pp. 126-128.

³⁷ For more discussion of this argument, see G. Sluga, ‘Madame de Staël and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812-1817’, *International History Review* (forthcoming).

³⁸ Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, edited by J. Godechot (Tallandier, Paris, 1818, 1983, 2000), p. 755.

³⁹ On Staël’s view, nations were not intrinsically expressions of liberty, but rather politically significant forms of sociability that were produced by, and led to, an effective and enduring organisation of public power in the interest of civil liberty. Like many of the acknowledged ideologists of the nation who succeeded her, including Fichte, Mazzini and Michelet, she emphasised not only the mutually reinforcing relationship of the individual and society, of the personal and political, it promoted a particular social subjectivity, with its related emphases on

stood for the liberalism of a cosmopolitan Europe composed of its national cultural particularities. Like Locke, her international thought was a product of her accumulation of a European cosmopolitan, if not global, knowledge, extending from her Genevan home-in-exile 'Coppet' — 'ce foyer imaginaire du libéralisme européen' — to her life of exile— 'De Rome à Berlin, de Vienne à Saint-Pétersbourg, l'ambassadrice du génie français côtoie gens de lettres et gens du monde, déployant tous les fastes de sa conversation prestigieuse'.⁴⁰

A recent review of the Liberty Fund edition of Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française* begins with the observation, 'Staël has never been given her due as a political thinker'.⁴¹ It is an observation that is both true and untrue; there certainly have been phases of recognition. For all Staël's political 'invisibility', the traces of her in the historical record, as well as the correspondence of the period, and early historical narratives, consistently allude to her overlapping roles as a writer and political agent. When it comes to shifting the parameters of political thought however, there remains significant work to be done even in her case, whether one thinks of the old history of liberalism, or the new international version, around the question of her intellectual status. In an essay on Benjamin Constant that is meant to contribute to that philosopher's own resuscitation, Marcel Gauchet makes the point that it is impossible to discuss the influences on Constant without touching on Staël, although he then goes to do precisely that in a specific manner, by enjoining us to 'leave aside Madame de Staël, with whom [Constant] collaborated too closely to permit attribution of responsibility for specific ideas. Nevertheless, Constant's answer was still fundamentally new, if only in the sharpness of its formulation.'⁴²

urban civility, the role of passions, embodied habits, and the political significance of gender differentiated patriotisms. This cosmopolitan face of Staël's view of nations and cultures sits most comfortably with her interest in sustaining individuality and difference and of happiness as the reconciliation of contrasts, including the individual and society, men and women, and distinctive nations. Lucia Omacini has suggested that Staël's texts are torn between 'a desire for self-affirmation and an act of submission to the norm', K. Szmurlo, 'Introduction', M. Gutwirth et al (eds) *Germaine Staël: Crossing the borders* (Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1991) cited, p. 4. J. Clairborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne'*, 1810-1813 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994), p. 9.

⁴⁰ G. Gengembre, 'Fréquentation et sociabilité mutuelles,' *Revue Française d'histoire des idées politiques*, special issue 'Les Idéologues et le Groupe de Coppet', 18, 2 (2003): 259-270, pp. 266-268.

⁴¹ R. Scurr, 'For liberty; Madame de Staël as a political thinker' 10 December 2010, *The Times Literary Supplement*, pp.14–15.

⁴² M. Gauchet, 'Liberalism's Lucid Illusion, in Rosenblatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Constant*, pp. 38-9.

Leaving aside Staël has been and continues to be easier than the challenge of including her, even when her place in the intellectual past is acknowledged.⁴³ Indeed, the very specific question of Staël's influence on Constant leads us back to the broader conceptual problem in intellectual history – whose ideas, why, and when do they matter?

Explanations of the absence of women from history of ideas have often revolved around the absence of texts. But in this case, as in the problem of how to read Staël's own more available texts—which were not always written in the most conventional forms, for social and political reasons dictated by her gender—the new global intellectual history might have salutary lessons to offer for an internationalized intellectual history. For example, Christopher Bayly's recent study of Indian liberalism, is devoted to showing how 'some, but not all ideas moved, and how they were appropriated, domesticated or even 'cannibalized' in different contexts.'⁴⁴ Recovery in Bayly's project is as much about the efforts of Indian (and Arab) intellectuals to inscribe themselves a liberal intellectual tradition. He argues that it is precisely because of the relative unavailability of conventional texts, that intellectual historians have to adopt new methods, branching out beyond the Euro-centric, or even Anglo-centric canon, in search of 'dialogue between intellectual history and social history, without "reducing" one to the other.' That same dialogue would not go astray in the location of women as thinkers in the past. If women, from anywhere, like other marginalized 'groups', are to be written back into intellectual history, international or otherwise, then global and international historians need to begin by taking note of their gender bias and endeavouring to recalibrate our understanding of the past through the recovery and re-reading of relevant textual sources.

⁴³ In a very recent history of political thought in France since the eighteenth century, Jeremy Jennings follows a long description of Constant's ideas with a footnote in which he acknowledges that the argument for which Constant is best known --the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of liberty – was advanced by Madame de Staël in her text of 1796, *Circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la révolution*, a text which was only published almost two hundred years later;;J. Jennings, *Revolution and Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011), p. 159: fn 72.

⁴⁴ C. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011).