



**QUEER FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
UNEASY ALLIANCES, PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the ‘uneasy alliance’ between Feminist IR and Queer IR. The article focuses on three areas of tension and continuity between the fields: (1) sexuality, sexual deviance and gender variance; (2) the roles of liberalism in gendered, sexualized and racialized violence; and (3) binaries relating to sex, gender and sexuality. The article argues that it is around tensions between Queer and Feminist IR that a Queer Feminist IR can be productively articulated. In particular, a Queer Feminist IR should: centre women and femmes as well as sexuality and gender variance; disrupt of binaries and fixed identities without losing the political leverage that sometimes comes with them; and acknowledge entanglements with the institutions Feminist and Queer IR seek to transform while also resisting being neutralized by assimilation.

Keywords: International Relations, Feminism, Queer, Gender, Sexuality.

INTRODUCTION

In the last thirty years, Feminist International Relations (IR) has become a well-established and widely recognised¹ field within the discipline of

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* Makale Geliş Tarihi: 27.05.2017
Makale Kabul Tarihi: 29.05.2017

International Relations, while the growing field of Queer IR has much more recently become recognised in this way². The successive emergence of these disciplinary fields echoes shifting concerns in global politics more broadly from what Rahul Rao (2014) calls “the Woman question” to “queer questions”. At first glance, there are many affinities and continuities between these two varied fields, just as there are between feminist and queer politics more broadly (Marinucci, 2010). These affinities are so great that Feminist IR scholar Cynthia Enloe calls Queer IR “an added string to the bow of feminist interrogation of international politics” and suggests we “continue into the realms adjacent, the realms mutually supportive” (Enloe, 2016). Not only does Queer IR often build on or echo key intellectual and politics commitments of Feminist IR, but some Feminist IR scholars support Queer IR scholarship institutionally, and even undertake Queer IR research themselves.³ In these ways, Queer IR may not exist without Feminist IR and is in part a product of Feminist IR.

At the same time, however, tensions exist between Queer and Feminist IR, just as they do between feminist and queer work more broadly (Marinucci, 2010). These tensions are so pronounced that Queer IR scholar Cynthia Weber asks, in reply to Enloe, whether a “queer intellectual curiosity radically contest[s] where some feminists draw their ontological limits... their epistemological limits... and their methodological limits” (Weber, 2016c). Further, Melanie Richter-Montpetit (2007) shows how a Queer IR analysis challenges feminist investments in liberal war challenges the potential heteronormative, assimilationist, militarist, corporate and/or carceral tendencies of some Feminist IR scholarship.

What is the relationship between the fields of Queer and Feminist IR? How can an exploration of this relationship inform a Queer Feminist IR? This article examines the uneasy alliances between Queer and Feminist IR and the challenges, imperatives and directions posed by that relationship for a Queer Feminist IR.⁴ The article examines three areas of continuity and tension between Queer and Feminist IR in turn: (1) sexuality, sexual deviance and gender

¹ For example: the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies section of the International Studies Association has grown from 23 members in 1990 to 473 in 2016; the *International Journal of Feminist Politics* has risen in ranking; and introductory IR textbooks now generally contain sections on Feminist IR (Baylis, Smith and Owen, 2014; Brown, 2009).

² Cynthia Weber’s book *Queer International Relations* (2016) was a pivotal moment for the recognition of Queer IR scholarship by the wider discipline.

³ For example: Spike Peterson’s (1990, 2014) research in particular has been foundational to both Feminist IR and Queer IR; anyone attending a Queer or Feminist IR panel at an IR conference would notice the overlap of participants.

⁴ In doing so, the article builds on Rahul Rao’s (2014) exploration of the relationship between “the woman question” and “queer questions” through literature and film, as well as Melanie Richter-Montpetit’s (2007) formulation of a “queer transnational feminist” approach to “the prisoner ‘abuse’ in Abu Ghraib.”

variance in global politics; (2) the roles of liberalism in gendered, sexualized and racialized violence; and (3) the naturalisation and violation of binaries relating to sex, gender and sexuality. In each section, I explore how Queer IR is informed by and builds on Feminist IR as well as how the two fields differ from and disrupt each other.⁵

I argue throughout that it is around tensions between the two fields that a Queer Feminist IR can be productively articulated. I also argue that even while Queer IR critiques liberal, institutional and assimilationist tendencies within Feminist IR, Queer IR scholarship is also in part dependent on those tendencies. At the same time, queer analyses can help us understand and strategically mobilize this ambivalent relationship between the two fields. Finally, I return repeatedly to the heterogeneity of both fields and, as such, to the closer affinities between some strands of both fields than others. In particular, Queer and Feminist IR align more easily and/or necessarily when they are informed by intersectional, transnational, Black and decolonial feminist politics more broadly (Richter-Montpetit, 2007: 38) and where they centre – or could/should centre – transfeminist analyses (Rao, 2014).

1. FROM QUEER SUBJECTS AND EMBODIED SEXUALITIES TO SEXUALIZED LOGICS AND PRACTICES

This section explores how Queer IR builds on Feminist IR in its focus on the role of sexuality, sexual deviance and gender deviance in world politics. First, I describe how some Queer IR scholars focus on non-normatively sexualized or gendered subjects, or the ways that subjects performatively inhabit non-normative sexualities. This Queer IR concern echoes the Feminist IR question “where are the women?” (Enloe, 1989: 7) by asking “where are the queers?”. This Queer IR concern also echoes intersectional feminist concerns by asking “who are the queers?”, showing how sexual subjectivities are racialized differently in global politics. Second, I explore how other Queer IR scholars eschew this focus on queer subjects, focusing instead on sexualized and sometimes queer logics of statecraft and world politics more broadly. This builds on Feminist IR which similarly explores the logics of masculinity and femininity in IR in addition to asking questions about men and women themselves. Overall, while Queer IR scholarship sometimes critiques Feminist IR scholarship for

⁵ I do not dedicate the same amount or type of attention to both fields here. This is because I was invited to contribute a specifically Queer IR perspective to this special issue and the issue already contains several explorations of Feminist IR perspectives. That said, centring a Queer IR perspective in this article does not imply that queer is ‘good’ and feminism is ‘bad’: rather, this article explores how the fields can learn from/with each other.

cissexist and heteronormative assumptions, this section primarily shows that Queer IR can build on, extend, complement and ally with Feminist IR.

Sexualized and Queer Subjects

Cynthia Enloe's question, "where are the women?" is foundational to Feminist IR (Enloe, 1989: 7). Answering this seemingly simple question from an IR perspective has complex implications for the study of world politics. As Enloe illustrates, this question draws attention to the many and varied involvements of women with the conventional objects of IR, such as war, security and the state (Enloe, 1989: 7; see also Tickner, 2014; Zalewski, 2013). Often this means drawing attention to power located in homes, workplaces and in interpersonal relationships, in addition to the forms of power located in combat and foreign policy. The question "where are the women?" also draws attention to the ways in which women have been defined out of war, security and the state through a focus on the activities and locations of men. That is, asking "where are the women?" also makes visible that we may have been asking 'where the men are?' all along. As such, simply posing the question "where are the women?", reveals the way that women have been defined out of the very concept of 'the international' and as such excluded from the study of international relations.

In a similar vein, much Queer IR scholarship seeks to locate queer, LGBT or otherwise sexually deviant and gender variant subjects within IR and global politics. This poses the question: 'where are the queers?'. Much Queer IR scholarship has explored, for example, the increasingly visibility and integration of LGBT people in militaries (Agathangelous, Bassichis and Spira, 2008; Bulmer, 2011, 2013; Richter-Monpetit, 2014). Queer IR scholars have also explored how LGBT people face specific security problems (Amar, 2013; Hagen, 2016; Jauhola, 2013; McEvoy, 2015). Other Queer IR scholars consider LGBT activism and particularly LGBT rights activism from an IR or international perspective (e.g. Ayoub, and Paternotte, 2014; Ayoub, 2016).

Implicit in this project of making queers visible is a queer critique of the ways that Feminist and mainstream IR have made queers invisible by focusing on heterosexuality, assuming the subjects it studies are straight, or has otherwise overlooked queer women and people. For example, Jamie Hagen's (2016) research on the UN reveals how gendered and feminist approaches in the Women, Peace and Security agenda are heteronormative and cissexist. These assumptions obscure or even condone practices that affect people who (or whose practices) are not heterosexual or cisgender. In this way, Hagen argues that WPS policies might protect heterosexual and cisgender women, while leaving queer women and queer people in general unprotected.

In asking ‘where are the queers?’ Queer IR scholars also raise the question of ‘which queers?’. This Queer IR question is especially informed by transnational, women of colour and Black feminist scholarship and activism, as well as decolonial scholarship in Queer Studies such as Jasbir Puar’s (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages*. Queer IR studies have shown that, while LGBT rights are increasingly promoted by Western foreign policy, these policies promote the rights of very specific – white, western, Christian and non-disabled - LGBT people (e.g. Weber, 2016a). In this line, Queer IR suggests that some specific LGBT people participate in colonial violence in the name of rights, against other LGBT people, and racially darkened people in general (Leigh, Richter-Montpetit and Weber, forthcoming).

If we return to Feminist IR here and ask again “where are the women?”, we can also see that the figure of the queer in international relations is often imagined as male. For example, all but one of the figures considered in Cynthia Weber’s field-shaping text *Queer International Relations* are male or men (Weber, 2016a). From a feminist perspective, we can also see that women are sometimes excluded from “queer”. For example, bisexual asylum seekers or lesbian asylum seekers who have married men for security and/or had children, are *not* seen as authentically homosexual and therefore worthy of asylum by Western governments (Lewis, 2010).

Sexualized and Queer Logics and Practices

Because women and men are inseparable from (although not the same as) ideas about masculinity and femininity, asking “where are the women?” also opens up questions of gender in international relations much more broadly. Feminist IR scholars have, in this vein, followed feminist scholars more generally to show how logics of war, security, statehood and nationalism are gendered (Yuval-Davis, 1997). For example, not only are Western soldiers imagined as embodying hegemonic – tough, aggressive, protective – military masculinity, but national identity and security policies themselves are similarly gendered as hegemonically masculine (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Cohn, 1987; Duncanson, 2013; Gentry and Sjoberg, 2015). Reading masculinity and femininity into IR, Feminist IR scholars have also documented the imagined and embodied roles of heterosexuality in IR. There is a (heterosexual) female ‘other’ to the (heterosexual) hegemonic masculinity of IR: together they reproduce citizens, soldiers and nations, while aggressive masculinity and men protect peaceful femininity and women (Elshtain, 1995).

Similarly, Queer IR scholars look not just to the constitution or embodiment of sexualised subjects, but also to the operation of sexualized logics and practices more broadly. Queer IR scholars also go further than Feminist IR

scholars by focussing not just on heterosexuality, but on the implications of this focus for non-normative sexualities or genders, and on the presence of sexual deviance or gender variance in global politics. Suspending the focus on queer (or straight) *bodies* and *people* brings into view queer (and straight) *logics* and *norms* in global politics. Here, Queer IR not only draws on Feminist IR scholarship that examines gendered norms and logics but also draws on post-structuralist feminism more which sees gender and subjectivity as performatively constituted (Butler, 1990) and Foucaultian accounts of sexuality as produced in similar ways (Foucault, 1978). For example, Weber's Queer IR methodology asks how the homosexual is "figured" in policies and practices (i.e. not just embodied by self-identified homosexual subjects) and how this figuration is core to the construction of states and sovereignty (Weber, 2016b, 2015).

For Queer IR scholars, paying attention to sexualised logics involves making Feminist IR's presumed heterosexuality explicit (Peterson, 1999) and further showing that ideas about homosexuality are equally central to international relations' core concerns of sovereignty, nationhood, security and state formation. For example, Weber's scholarship on US-Caribbean relations after the Cuban Revolution extends Feminist IR through Queer IR, arguing that the Cuban Revolution was perceived as a crisis for US hegemony in the region, and that this crisis included not only a masculinity crisis but also a heterosexuality crisis (Weber, 1999). Similarly, Weber and I show that figurations of gender and sexuality are central to conceptions of Western state security (Leigh and Weber, forthcoming). This Queer IR work builds on Queer Studies and transnational feminism more broadly and specifically on Indigenous feminist (Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2005; Coulthard, 2016) and trans prison abolitionist (Stanley and Smith, 2011) critiques of the entanglement of gender, sexuality, statehood and sovereignty.

By examining sexualized logics rather than sexualised – and specifically human – subjects, we might further ask "what" counts as queer in IR. Elizabeth Povinelli describes how a creek in northern Australia has become a contested figuration of security among Indigenous people, the Australian government and the mining industry (Povinelli, 2015; Povinelli, 2016; see also the reading of Povinelli in Leigh and Weber, forthcoming). According to some of the Indigenous women who live near this creek, the creek used to be a girl, who turned into a boy, who turned into a creek. This means, Povinelli suggests, that some people might call *Tjipel* "transgender" or "butch", particularly in the "contemporary fields into which her legs extend" (Povinelli, 2015: 177). The creek's gender is part of the version of the creek that these Indigenous women want to preserve, but Indigenous people must be careful about telling public stories about sexuality or gender because Indigenous people are themselves

figured as racially darkened undeveloped perverse security threats by the Australian liberal state (Povinelli, 2015: 176). At the same time, Indigenous people do need to tell stories about what are perceived to be their 'traditional' relationships to the creek in order to make claims to land are deemed legitimate by the Australian state. This example demonstrates how Queer IR also raises questions about how who or what counts as a sexualized figuration more generally assumes a line between the 'biological' and the 'geological', how this line designates proper objects and agents of global politics, and what worlds it enables or works to extinguish in the IR imaginary.

Finally, tracing sexualized and queer formations of sexuality and gender in this way further exposes the inseparability of sexuality and gender from race, ability, and other axes of power and reinforces Queer IR's commitment to intersectional and transnational analysis and politics. For example, Melanie Richter-Montpetit examination of rationalities of empire, gender and sexuality in "the prisoner 'abuse' in Abu Ghraib" shows how white heteropatriarchal colonialism functions in practice – and benefits some women at the expense of others (Richter-Montpetit, 2007: 38). Similarly, Weber shows how sexualized logics of international relations render racially darkened subjects sexually "perverse" and white western subjects as sexually "normal" (Weber, 2016a). Here, once again, Queer IR is informed by and allied with transnational, women of colour and Black feminist scholarship and activism, decolonial scholarship in Queer Studies – and those Feminist IR Scholars who are similarly aligned. Once again, these intersectional commitments are often the basis on which Queer and Feminist IR converge or diverge.

Overall, some Queer IR scholarship builds on Feminist IR scholarship. Queer IR scholars also build on Feminist IR scholarship on the roles of men, women, femininity and masculinity in key objects of IR such as war, state formation, nationhood and sovereignty, by showing that sexuality and sexualized subjects are equally central. Also like some Feminist IR scholars, Queer IR scholars explore how sexualised subjectivities are imagined or embodied at intersections of multiple axes of power, including not only sexuality and gender but race, religion and ability.

Thus far I have described a relationship between Feminist and Queer IR that is largely continuous and complimentary, with Queer IR extending Feminist IR's concerns with power, gender and (hetero)sexuality over new terrain, asking 'where are the queers' and exploring queer and sexualized logics in international relations. From this angle, Queer IR scholarship points to gaps in Feminist IR scholarship which could be addressed without fundamentally challenging Feminist IR. While this does not make Queer IR merely an "added string to the

bow of feminist interrogation of international politics”, it could make Queer IR “adjacent” and “mutually supportive” (Enloe, 2016).

The focus of Queer IR scholars on intersectionality, race, religion and ability, however, points to a stronger affinity between Queer IR scholarship and certain strands of Feminist IR scholarship – and tensions between Queer IR scholarship and less intersectional strands of Feminist IR scholarship. Yet a focus on sexuality and gender variance or on intersectionality and race alone does not constitute Queer IR. As I explore further dimensions of Queer IR in the following sections, tensions between the two fields become more pronounced.

2. LIBERAL, FEMINIST AND LGBT VIOLENCE

A critique of liberal theories and politics of subjecthood, including of liberal feminism and liberal LGBT politics, is central to Queer IR scholarship. In this section, I first consider Queer IR critiques of liberalism and particularly the role of rights in liberal politics. I then describe how Queer IR questions feminist and LGBT engagement with liberalism. In this section, I show how Queer IR continues to build on Feminist IR, especially on those strands of Feminist IR that are informed by post-structuralist and transnational feminism more broadly. However Queer IR can also be seen to come into conflict with other strands of Feminist IR around the embracement of liberal politics.

Critiques of liberalism, human rights and identity politics are central to Queer IR as well as to Queer Studies and queer politics more generally (Brown, 2008; Conrad, 2014; Duggan, 2003). Like post-structuralism and Queer Studies, Queer IR scholarship show that liberal politics and logics misrepresent the world. Sexualized subjects are not, as they appear in liberal narratives fixed, natural or universal (Butler, 1990). Instead, sexualized subjects are made to *appear* fixed natural and universal – and it is this process of making to appear in which Queer IR scholars are most interested. In this line, Queer IR scholars challenge liberal narratives of human rights, human rights holders and identity categories such as ‘women’ or ‘LGBT’ (Leigh, Richter-Montpetit and Weber, forthcoming). While rights, rights holders and identities might be articulated as universal and fixed in liberal narratives, and even as universally ‘good’, Queer IR scholars show how these narratives misrepresent contingent and emergent realities.

Further, Queer IR scholars show how liberal narratives of rights, rights holders and identities have political implications and that, far from the ‘progress’ and ‘emancipation promised by liberalism, those implications are often violent and neocolonial. Queer IR scholars draw on scholarship on the historical emergence of liberalisms to show that liberalisms are historically and

contemporarily entangled with empire (Leigh, 2014). Liberal narratives of citizenship, rights and progress have justified and enacted colonization, war and other violence. They continue to do so: with liberal narratives of progress, freedom, civilization and rights justifying everything from the racist regulation of Muslim women's clothes to Western war. Here Queer IR once again draws on broader decolonial, anti-racist and intersectional scholarship (e.g. Spivak, 1990).

Queer IR is therefore critical of Feminist IR when Feminist IR takes a liberal approach and focuses on rights or identity, and resonates with those post-structuralist strands of Feminist IR that similarly critique liberalism, rights and identity politics. When some feminists seek inclusion for women in liberal states, militaries and IGOs, or when they promote rights globally, Queer IR scholars ask whether this desire and promotion enacts further colonization and violence, benefitting white Euro-American middle class cis women at the expense of poor, trans and racially darkened women (Richter Montpetit, 2007).

Similarly, Queer IR scholars have shown how the rights bearing LGBT subject is figured as a universal (often white, male and non-disabled) subject. Queer IR scholars have also shown how LGBT rights have been used as a symbol of liberal progress, and a rationale for neo-colonial colonial relations (Leigh, Richter-Montpetit and Weber, forthcoming). This is illustrated by Hilary Clinton's speech, "LGBT Rights are human rights" which echoes Clinton's speech "womens's rights are human rights" (Clinton, 2011; see also Rao, 2014). As Rao (2014) notes, as an international figure of feminism and female success in state and international politics, Hilary Clinton embodies tensions between Queer IR and liberal strands of Feminist IR.

For many Queer IR scholars and activists, particularly those concerned with intersectional and anti-racist politics, this analysis of the violence of human rights discourses means we must outright reject those discourses. This 'anti-assimilationist' and 'anti-normative' position is common to Queer Studies and queer activism more broadly. This position would mean an outright rejection of liberal feminism, including liberal Feminist IR, along with demands for inclusion in and the use of the tools of sovereignty, statehood, militaries and security.

Two points, however, complicate any straightforward rejection of liberal Feminist IR by Queer IR scholars. First, some Queer IR scholars are joining a small but increasing number of Queer Studies scholars in calling into question the feasibility and desirability of maintaining this 'anti' position. As Queer Studies scholars Robyn Weigman and Elizabeth Wilson put it, these scholars are exploring the value of "suspending Queer's aximomatic anti-normativity" (Weigman and Wilson, 2015). For example, Richter-Montpetit, Weber and I (forthcoming) draw on Weber's (2016a) work to argue that:

“while a Queer IR analysis shows how certain articulations of LGBT rights and subjects may underpin and/or justify neo-imperial global relations, it is also necessary to take seriously questions such as, what would it mean for Clinton not to argue that gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights? What harm (and good) would that (also) do in the world, by differently organizing international relations through LGBT rights claims and their rejection?”

Second and related, the post-structuralism that informs Queer IR scholarship suggests that may be impossible to get “outside” of liberalism (Walker, 1992; Foucault, 1978: 95; Butler, 1993: 21). Seeking inclusion is not only an object of scholarship but also a scholarly practice when it comes to gaining legitimacy, status and resources in universities and organisations (a common practice in this line would be activity within the International Studies Association). Some Queer IR scholars might oppose the assimilation of some feminist IR scholars into mainstream IR in this way. Yet without this ‘assimilation’ and its associated institutional capital as well as the legitimization of new realms of enquiry (e.g. the body) in IR, it is possible that queer IR would not even exist. Queer IR is in some ways dependent on liberal Feminist IR, even as Queer IR rejects liberal Feminist IR.

In these ways, Queer IR has an ambivalent relationship to Feminist IR, particularly liberal Feminist IR and liberal feminism more broadly. Queer IR is critical of and opposed to liberal Feminist IR, but is also partially indebted to and potentially inextricable from liberal Feminist IR. In the next section, I consider how a Queer Feminist IR might navigate such ambivalence.

3. BEYOND, WITH AND WITHIN BINARIES

Queer IR further builds on and departs from Feminist IR in its attention to binaries of gender.⁶ Queer IR scholars are concerned both with the naturalisation of binary logics of sexuality in world politics, and with the ways that sexualized subjects and practices exceed these politics (Weber, 2016a, 2016b; Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 2017). In this way, Queer IR builds on Feminist IR which has long been concerned with the binary relationship between masculinity and femininity or men and women at the heart of international relations (see above). Queer IR makes explicit the implicit binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality already present in Feminist IR (Peterson, 1999; Hagan, 2016). We might call this an omission in some Feminist IR scholarship, or we might say it was the implicit object of that scholarship all along. Either way, Queer IR scholars make visible the queer or homosexual ‘other’ to the heterosexual and heterosexuality in world politics examined by Feminist IR scholarship.

⁶ See Cohen (1997) for a discussion of binaries and Queer Theory more broadly.

Queer IR further multiplies the binaries that matter with regards to gender and sexuality in global politics, centring not only the homosexual vs. heterosexual binary, but the normal vs. perverse binary and the transgender vs. cisgender binary. Queer IR research into the construction of the 'normal' homosexual, for example, shows that the homosexual is not always 'other' to Western states and liberalism (Weber, 2016a). 'Normal' homosexuals (e.g. LGBT rights holders, citizens and soldiers) can also stand-in for Western states and liberalism with 'perverse' homosexuals standing in for those threats that need civilizing and/or rescuing (Rao, 2012). Equally importantly Queer IR research shows that the binary of cisgender vs. transgender creates cissexism and violence against transgender people in world politics (Shepherd and Sjoberg, 2012).

However, Queer IR not only explores how these binaries are made to seem natural, but also how they are and can be exceeded by queer international subjects, policies, practices and analyses. That is, Queer IR scholars explore how queer international subjects, policies, practices and analyses can inhabit seemingly mutually exclusive opposed positions simultaneously (e.g. male and/or female, homosexual and/or heterosexual, normal and/or perverse). Importantly this is not a refusal of the binary, but the simultaneity of non-binary logics (hence not just 'and' but also 'or'). For example, Cynthia Weber's (2015, 2016a) and Altman and Symons' (2016) analyses of Conchita Wurst, the Eurovision Song Contest winning drag queen, exemplify the and/or logics of queer international relations.⁷ European politicians and commentators do talk about Conchita Wurst in binary terms, often accusing them of being *either* perverse *or* normal. At the same time, however, Conchita Wurst figures herself as normal *and* perverse (as well as male *and* female, racially darkened *and* white). That is, this European figure is normal *and/or* perverse (Weber draws on Barthes here). Over time, however, as Conchita Wurst becomes more established, she is increasingly articulated in either/or terms – with the ambiguity stripped out of her public profile.

Similarly, in a very different context, I have shown how activists seem to be faced with 'either/or' political choices when it comes to engaging with state, nationalist, sovereign and institutional logics (Leigh, 2014). Political theories and political organisations, for example, tend to focus *either* on embracing states, nations, sovereignty and institutions *or* rejecting them. This includes embracing or rejecting all the ways that the state, nationalist, sovereign and institutional logics are gendered and sexualised. Once again, however, in practice many activists embrace and/or reject the state, nationalist, sovereign and institutional logics.

⁷ Here Weber draws on Roland Barthes (1974).

Importantly, the fact of and/or is not enough for Queer IR scholars: precisely *how* this and/or manifests, how gender and sexuality manifest, and what the political implications are, all matter as much as the and/or itself for Queer IR scholars. As I show elsewhere, one instance of ‘and/or’ might be a way of assimilating and neutralising anti-normative or anti-state threats, while another might be an instance of subversion (Leigh, 2014). Of course, the same instance could itself be reinforcing and subverting of heteropatriarchal colonization simultaneously: another implication of Queer IR’s engagement with Queer Studies more broadly is an avoidance of simple oppression vs. resistance binaries.

Once again, Queer IR can be seen to build directly on, critique, and diverge from Feminist IR in its approach to binaries. Here, again, Queer IR and Feminist IR stand in uneasy alliance – Queer IR is in part continuous with post-structuralist IR and post-structuralist-informed feminism, but Queer IR’s focus on the and/or of sexuality is also often at odds with Feminist IR foci on the either/or of gender.

This does not mean that the queer way is the ‘right’ way: blurring binaries comes with its own set of risks, not least a loss of the lines of political action and accountability offered by hard opposition. Nonetheless, a queer analytics of the ‘and/or’ can help articulate existent and potential relationships between Feminist and Queer IR – not least when it comes to approaching the paradox of Queer IR benefitting from institutional and assimilationist Feminist IR while also challenging it. That is, we can see that that Feminist and Queer IR are and could be further related in and/or ways.

4. UNEASY ALLIANCES, PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS

Queer IR owes an enormous debt to Feminist IR as well as to Feminist scholarship and activism in general. Feminist IR has opened up questions about who or what counts as the conventional objects of IR, bringing gender, bodies, homes and more into the discipline. Feminist IR has also opened up questions of the workings of power, gender and (some forms of) sexuality. Many feminist IR scholars have also insisted that gender is inseparable from race and other axes of power. Queer IR makes explicit heteronormative assumptions within Feminist IR, insisting that Feminist IR analyses be expanded to include sexuality, sexual deviance and gender variance. In these ways, Queer IR draws and builds on the Feminist IR project. Queer IR arguably also contributes to the Feminist IR project: suggesting that when Feminist IR scholars are concerned with women in world politics, they should also be concerned with lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

Yet this relationship is not always an easy one – not least because the terms ‘Feminist IR’ and ‘Queer IR’ hold together and in tension so many different strands of feminist and queer politics. Queer IR draws on specific versions of Feminist IR and feminism more generally (particularly those informed by post-structuralist, decolonial, intersectional, Black, transnational, women of color, and trans feminisms), and often rejects other versions of feminism (particularly liberal and institutional feminisms). Following this rejection, Queer IR also calls into question the ways in which Feminist IR has become integrated or assimilated into ‘malestream’, mainstream, liberal and state-oriented IR, as well as into liberal, carceral, corporate, militarised and institutional feminisms more broadly.

Conversely, Feminist IR raises questions about the presence (or absence) of misogyny, women, femmes and femininity in Queer IR (including transmystogy, trans women, trans femmes and trans femininity). Much LGBT scholarship and activism more broadly has conventionally been dominated by (white, non-disabled, cissexual) gay men. Not only are there more spaces, organisations and so-on for gay men, but gay men somehow come to stand-in for ‘L’, ‘B’ and ‘T’. This might be the case, for example, when ‘LGBT’ participation in the military more accurately means ‘G’ participation in the military. When Weber (2016a) looks at representations of the queer in IR, for example, she finds these are predominantly male. Feminism is essential here to ensure that Queer IR scholars keep asking “where are the women?” (Enloe, 1989). Feminist IR raises questions about Queer IR’s feminist commitments, including Queer IR’s commitments to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and femmes.

Queer and Feminist IR also have an uneasy alliance around their respective statuses within the discipline of IR, which echo tensions between queer and feminist politics more broadly. Feminist IR brings institutional and disciplinary capital from which Queer IR benefits, even while opposing the implications of that capital. Queer IR scholars bring a unique and/or analysis not only to the study of world politics but to the ways that a Queer Feminist IR can and should relate to Feminist IR, ‘malestream’ IR, and international politics more broadly.

Queer Feminist International Relations must operate within/from these tensions: expanding analysis far beyond ‘where are the [white, cis, heterosexual] women?’ even while continuing to ask ‘where are the women and femmes?’, making sex, sexuality and sexual deviance central without losing sight of gender; disrupting binaries and fixed identities without losing the political leverage that sometimes comes with them; and acknowledging entanglements with the institutions Feminist and Queer IR seek to transform while also resisting being neutralized by assimilation.

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