**Intimacy, Warfare, and Gender Hierarchy**

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I have been interested for years in understanding war *as everyday violence*, and everyday violence *as war* (e.g., Sjoberg 2013), drawing the work of a number of feminist scholars of global politics who are interested in experiences of war (Sylvester 2013; 2012), war as sensed (Alexander 2012; Sylvester 2010), war as embodied (Wilcox 2014; 2011), and war as a constant presence (Cuomo 1996; Wibben 2010). Among these accounts, Rachel Pain’s is unmatched both in ambition and depth.

In particular, Pain suggests that seeing war as intimate and the intimate as war may be not pushing theorizing far enough, and aims to produce “a feminist lens on intimacy-geopolitics” which makes neither primary but demonstrates their co-constitutive nature. Rejecting the spatial metaphors that label war as distant and domestic violence as private, Pain looks at the ways that violence itself, and its emotional and psychological effects, are wound into everyday lives and even what it means to live. In so doing, she suggests that feminist geography, particularly as it analyzes emotional geopolitics, can enhance the recent ‘experience’ turn in feminist IR scholarship.

I wholeheartedly agree. Pain’s analysis of the politics of domestic violence is unhindered by IR scholarship’s tendency to separate and reify the ‘levels of analysis’ of the international system, the state, and the individual (Waltz 1959; Sjoberg 2011). Pain leverages political geography’s significant work on emotion and space, along with analyses of race, class, and religion in political spaces, to bring much-needed intersectional and multi-scalar analysis to feminist theorizing of war, where both have often been absent (see, e.g., Teaiwa and Slatter 2013; D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2013). These contributions suggest both that Pain’s work is necessary reading for those interested in gender and war, and that continued engagement between political scientists and political geographers has significant promise.

It is in the spirit of engagement that I read Pain’s paper with an eye toward the ways in which our thinking about gender, war, and experience overlap, and can contribute to each other. In so doing, I see three current trends in feminist work in IR which might productively dialogue with Pain’s approach, and serve to advance both understandings in potentially interesting and important ways. I use a particular recent work in my field to engage Pain’s analysis in each of three areas: the political economies of intimate war, understanding the body as a space of warfare, and theorizing gender hierarchy in the analysis of intimate war.

**The Political Economy of Intimate War**

In *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*, Jacqui True (2012, 3) suggests (as Pain does) that “violence against women appears to be becoming both more common and more egregious.” True, however, contends that this violence against women is “rooted in structures and processes of political economy that are increasingly globalized” (2012, 5). True (2012, 7) claims that, “as a method,” “a feminist political economy approach” “broadens both the explanation and the solutions to violence against women.” By making “explicit the linkages between the economic and the social and the political,” True (2012, 7) sees “the structural cause and consequences of violence evident in women’s poverty and labor exploitation, socioeconomic inequality with men, and lack of political representation.” Using this framework, True (2012, 13, 15) calculates the economic (direct and opportunity) costs of violence against women, analyzes the role of competitive masculinities in globalization as a cause of violence, understands gendered forms of labor exploitation in personal and international violence, and contends that sexual violence is “integrally linked to the material basis of power in societies in conflict.” Using this framework, True (2012, 187) suggests that the economic dimensions of recognizing violence against women (and of stopping it) cannot be ignored.

Pain’s analyses of the spatial, social, psychological, political, and global dimensions of intimate violence are both strikingly original and strikingly important, but, perhaps as a result, the economic takes a back seat in her framework. Jacqui True’s work (among others who relate feminist political economy and security, e.g., Cohn 2013; Tickner 1992; Peterson 2003) suggests that Pain’s inclusion of intimate violence in the definition of warfare, and of warfare in the definition of intimate violence (p.2) is incomplete without reference to the political-economic elements of the meanings, causes, and consequences of both warfare and intimate violence, or, in Pain’s terms, intimate warfare. True’s work suggests that initimate violence, warfare, and gendered political economies are *fundamentally linked.* So far, those links have not really been made in the literature focusing either on the everyday violence in warfare (e.g., Cuomo 1996; Sjoberg 2013) or on the everyday violence in political economy (e.g., Gibson-Graham 2006).

Perhaps, though, asking those sorts of questions of intimate war would be fruitful. What are the material underpinnings of the continuum of violence (Pain, p.?)? What are the economic dimensions of gendered insecurities, in intimate violence, war, and intimate war (Pain, p.?)? How do wartime political economies change the risks and stakes of wartime domestic violence (Pain, p.?)? How do the economic and militaristic dimensions of hypermasculinity overdetermine the structural power relations of domestic violence and war (Pain, p.?)? How does the naturalization of gendered political economies influence the naturalization of the public/private divide responsible for making much domestic violence invisible (Pain, p.?)? How are economic dimensions necessary to the production of intimacy (Pain, p.?)? How might “historical legacies of alliance or patronage” be considered differently if the economic dimensions of dependency are forefronted (Pain, p.?)? How might feminist readings of the shock of personal (and personalized) violence be read as a function of its relation in particular contexts to levels of economic security and/or the deployment of illicit economies (Pain, p.?)? Would psychological discussions of fault for violence be different if it included analysis of the psychological impacts of economic dependence (Pain, p.?)? Might it be useful to analyze the economic dependence that societal underclasses often have on the reproduction of militarisms when thinking about the relationships between militarisms and intimate war (Pain, p.?)? Might theorizations of peace (p.?) be intimately intertwined with theorizations of economic stability? Might political economy, indeed, be the key underlying factor of analysis for what a ‘feminist’ peace might look like? Might the political economies of the intimate and the political economies of war be a key dimension of thinking about intimate war?

**The Body as a Space of Warfare**

In *Making Bodies Count*, Lauren Wilcox (2014, 2) suggests that “one of the deep ironies of security studies is that while war is actually inflicted on bodies, bodily violence, and vulnerability, as the flip side of security, are largely ignored.” Wilcox (2014, 3) looks to challenge the “theorization of bodies as natural organisms” in order to “develop a reading of IR that is attentive to the ways in which bodies are both produced and productive.” Analyzing torture, force-feeding, suicide bombing, airport security procedures, and precision warfare, Wilcox argues that the body is always present and necessary for the making and fighting of wars, but often made invisible in dominant frameworks analyzing those wars (2014, 5). Concerned with “the constitution of bodies as political subjects,” Wilcox (2014, 14, 15) sees this production in political/intimate violence as well as discourses of race, religion, sexuality, and civilization – discourses which combine to classify some bodies as inviolable and others as tortureable or killable. In so doing, Wilcox (2014) suggests that theorizing war as the product and producer of embodied subjects is not only productive for but indispensible to understanding the war/vulnerability nexus.

It is not that Pain’s account leaves out bodies. In fact, it could well be taken as an active critique of disembodied accounts of war and privatized accounts of bodies, given Pain’s (fairly radical) suggestion that domestic violence *is* war, and war *is* domestic violence. In important ways, Pain’s analysis not only ‘talks the talk,’ it ‘walks the walk,’ utilizing the accounts of two women whose bodies were torturable and violatable, tortured and violated – of *their* wars to make the argument that domestic violence *is* war. Throughout Pain’s paper, which is a stunning contribution to the theorization of domestic violence/war (‘intimate war’), the uncomfortable (yet crucially important) appearance of abused women *with names and lives* ‘like’ ‘ours’ is a reminder of both the salience and political importance of Pain’s account of intimate war as related to “our own lives” (p.?). The key role of those bodies in Pain’s account, however, makes me all the more curious about the utility of theorizing *embodiment* in (intimate) war (e.g., Sjoberg 2013; Zarkov 2007; Hyndman 2007).

Particularly, I wonder what Pain’s account would look like if *violence* against *bodies* (both generally and the two that feature in the paper) were central and/or primary to the analysis. I see three directions that such a focus might encourage, and will treat each briefly in turn. First, though Pain’s account deconstructs the boundary between the personal and the international in one sense (where the international is personal and the personal is international), it preserves the sense of the ‘natural’ settlement of ‘people’ in (individualized) bodies. In Wilcox’s (2011, 598) terms, “feminist theory is at its most powerful when it calls into question accounts of the ‘biological body,’ in whatever form they take, to analyze the relations of force, violence, and language that compose the deeply unnatural bodies of humans.” Along those lines, I want to open the analysis in Pain’s piece to questions of what constitutes certain bodies as available for violation, in the intimate, in war, and in intimate/war. Understanding the bodies of domestic violence victims as product *and* producer of intimate war might be a fruitful move to deepen understandings of ‘intimate war.’ Along those lines, I find both presentation of data on domestic violence and the telling of Kim and Jennifer’s stories in Pain’s paper to be incredibly *sanitized* – that is, it is a fairly non-violent discussion of domestic violence. Following early feminist critiques of the sanitization of war discourses (e.g., Cohn 1987; 1993), Wilcox (2014, 7) expresses concerns that discourses of bodies in war expel the abject in favor of making bodies look clean, proper, and whole (citing Kristeva 1982). In Wilcox’s (2014, 8) terms, then, I the analysis of intimate war could and should deal explicitly with the grotesque nature of the violence that it involves – which “threatens the borders between inside and outside that must be maintained for the subject to remain a self-contained individual.” Such a view makes a third intervention in ‘intimate war’ theorizing possible: a view of such war that collapses the distinctions between individual, community, state, and society fully. This might open up space of a notion of intimate war not only *in* and *on* bodies but *productive of* and *produced by* them.

**Theorizing Gender Hierarchy**

In “Gender Identities, Ideologies, and Practices in the Context of War and Militarism,” V. Spike Peterson (2010, 17) presents “a discussion of intersectionality to make a case for ‘feminization as devalorization.’” Suggesting that the deeply naturalized sex binary constitutes feminization as “ideologically powerful” such that “subordinated individuals or groups are devalorized by feminization,” Peterson argues that this dichotomized, hierarchical notion of sex and gender is “culturally and collectively internalized” to the extent that it becomes unrecognizable (2010, 18, 20). Using examples of contemporary warfare, Peterson (2010, 23) argues that feminization operates “to construct enemies as so absolutely different from ‘us’ that the only viable strategy is their annihilation.” Peterson (2010, 19) suggests that “not only subjects (women and marginalized men), but also concepts, desires, tastes, styles, ‘ways of knowing’, cultural expressions (art, music), roles, practices, work, nature, and so on can be feminized – with the effect of reducing their legitimacy, status, and value.”

Pain’s analysis of domestic violence carefully accounts for it as gendered, and explores in depth the related ways that women and men are positioned differently in political, economic, social, and even wartime contexts. The paper mentions several times the importance of taking into account different axes of inequality on the basis of race, class, nationality, and religion – all of which could be understood (in Peterson’s terms) as axes of feminization. At the same time, I wonder if explicit theorization of sex, gender, and sexualization in ‘intimate war’ might enrich how it is articulated in Pain’s presentation.

Particularly, Peterson’s understanding of feminization as a tool of subordination (whether the subordinated is a ‘female’ body or not) involves a sophisticated analysis of the incomplete mapping of sex and gender – where masculinities and femininities (multiple, gendered, contextualized) are situation-specific expectations of and performances of both the perpetrators and victims of domestic violence/war/intimate war that structure their behavior, but do not map ‘naturally’ onto male or female bodies, or rely on their dichotomization. Understanding both aggressive war and acts of domestic violence as acts of *feminization* can enrich Pain’s understanding of intimate war. If domestic violence is political (Pain, p.?), part of its politics is a politics of masculinization of the perpetrator and feminization of the victim (regardless of the sex of their bodies). If there are gendered spaces of violence relations (Pain, p.?), those spaces are *gendered* in part by dichotomized notions of what/where *men* are, and what/where *women* are. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the analogies Pain finds (p.?) to just war discourses can be found in the production of masculinity through idealizations of the chivalric citizen-soldier providing (claimed if not actual) protection to its feminized other (Sjoberg and Peet 2011). This analysis, applied to ‘intimate war,’ might provide a complicated and complicating notion of the (often sex-essentialist and/or heteronormative) conceptions of the intimate which slip their way into war discourses.

**Conclusion**

It is the very ambition and sophistication of Rachel Pain’s project here that gives me the impulse to relate it to the other exciting things I am thinking about, to challenge it, and to push it. With or without those challenges, however, Pain’s contribution has significantly furthered my thinking on the role of the intimate in war, and of war in the intimate. I hope that this engagement is the start of a long and fruitful conversation leveraging the tools of feminist/political geography and feminist/queer IR to think about the nature of what *war* is, both ‘here’ and ‘out there.’

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