

Review Essay

Dialogues Between *Queer International Relations* (2016) and *Sexualities in World Politics* (2015): What Does IR Need to Learn?

Ricardo Prata Filho*

Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge. 195pp.

Weber, Cynthia. 2016. *Queer International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press. 222pp.

Introduction

The limits of the (neo)realism/(neo)liberalism debate were exposed with the end of the Cold War, an event that surprised both IR schools. In the 1990s, the relevance of ideational factors, norms, values, identities and cultures was reshaped by constructivism. Constructivist approaches contemplate the process of norm-setting in liberal-democratic contexts. Developing models that explain the emergence, acceptance and internalization of these norms is central in this sense. The cultural and institutional environment affects states in different ways, and a multiplicity of actors are encompassed by transnational networks driven by altruism, empathy and moral values (Wagner 2014).

In addition, constructivism opened space for a tangential discussion on gender and sexuality, since, through values and norms such as human rights, it dealt with these issues through a liberal feminist perspective and a more sociological view of sexuality close to LGBTI¹ studies, which focus on issues of identity, citizenship, visibility, legislation and individual rights – unlike queer theory² and its impetus to destabilize norms that constrain subjects and institutions such as the nuclear family, marriage and compulsory heterosexuality (Richter-Montpetit 2017).

* Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil; ricoprata@gmail.com. ORCID iD 0000-0001-8290-8933.

This paper aims to provide a critical review of two important IR books on sexuality and gender: Cynthia Weber's book *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality, and the Will to knowledge* (2016) and the book *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations* (2015) edited by Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel. The purpose of this text, besides presenting a little of the books, is to put into dialogue two conflicting strands in the studies of sexuality and gender: queer theory and LGBTI studies. To do so, it will be interesting to draw a brief narrative on gender and sexuality issues in IR discipline in order to contemplate different approaches and understand how we came to these two books, which, in different ways, try to foster a curiosity about sexuality and gender in International Relations. Subsequently, Weber's (2016) book and the book edited by Picq and Thiel (2015) will be presented so that they can be read together in the end.

Gender and International Relations

The feminist contribution to International Relations is recent, given the theoretical and methodological development throughout the second half of the twentieth century of feminism in its most varied aspects. It was the end of the Cold War, however, that brought the plurality of themes of the 'New Order' in which feminism emerged as an analytical and theoretical strategy for understanding gender issues (Tickner 2001). Like much of postcolonial and poststructural criticism, gender became a subject of IR in the 1990s, when rape as a weapon of war became too obvious for the discipline to ignore and when major events on gender were happening, such as the Third International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, with a focus on the theme of sexual and reproductive rights, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Messari and Nogueira 2005).

International Relations, by reproducing a masculine neutrality in its concepts, refused dialogue with gender problems, causing feminism to be faced as a dissident or marginal manifestation within IR (Messari and Nogueira 2005). Based on the idea that all knowledge is partial, the introduction of gender in International Relations tries to work on inequalities and practices of international politics, as well as problematizes the typical binarisms of the discipline: order/anarchy, inside/outside, domestic/international, political/economic, public/private. While IR feminists are committed to making visible how gender has been kept and constructed in the discipline, they are also concerned with how to overcome these problems in order to dismantle hierarchies and combat oppressions (Tickner 1992).

In this context, the concept of gender is understood as an analytical tool, as an empirical category and as a normative position (True 2005). Gender transforms knowledge as an independent variable, decentralizing biological explanations, focusing on the related binaries and dualisms, paying attention to the historical and temporal context and, finally, opening space for analysis of multiple approaches and dimensions. It is relevant for feminists that gender can open the door to the inclusion of other experiences – and here I call attention to the experience of transsexual women and men, *travestis*, and dissident

genders – as well as to turn attention to specific types of domination such as in labor and in sexual relations for example (Peterson 1992).

Nevertheless, it is important to note here also that, although gender – especially in IR – is related to women, gender is also an important category when we deal with LGBTI subjects and/or dissidents such as non-binaries, genderfluid, agender, *travestis* and others. The queer umbrella, however, seems to be more widely used to talk about these subjectivities today. In this sense, sexuality as an issue in IR is fragmented and carries with it some of the gender concerns that feminists have brought in the post-Cold War era. The pair sexuality and gender works together in these cases and is essential to understand LGBTI issues, queer and/or other dissidents. The next section will talk about it.

Sexuality and International Relations

Like feminism, queer theory and LGBTI studies began to engage with IR in the 1990s as well. The analytical category of sexuality allows International Relations to understand the state as a historical construct regulating biological and social reproduction through heteropatriarchal families and to note the invisibility of certain bodies in international politics through hierarchies of gender and sexuality. It is also possible to observe how sexualities previously seen as abnormal can reinforce (neo)liberal logics of consumption and privacy and how the intersections between sexuality, ethnicity and gender in the processes of militarization, nationalization and national identification are constructed for example (Jesus 2014).

Richter-Montpetit (2017) talks about a ‘queer turn’ in International Relations in the 1990s, which expands the notion of international politics and seeks to analyze sexual subjects, their contestations and the sexualized order of the discipline. Queer theory in IR, concerned with the radical contingency of the subjects, turns to the processes of normalization in relation to sexuality and gender, unlike LGBTI studies that, from a more liberal-constructivist logic, tend to assume stable subjects in the search for rights in a normative grammar closer to local realities and socialization processes. Instead of focusing on a stable identity, queer theory will cling to the tensions, subjectivities, and norms that the Western binary terms (heterosexual/homosexual; man/woman) produce (Richter-Montpetit 2017).

Thinking about sexuality in IR has gone toward mobilizing a queer understanding in recent years. For Weber (2014), queer studies have an affinity with feminist and gender studies, analyzing the politics behind gender, sex, and sexuality, as well as being close to poststructuralist studies for which ‘the political’ has multiple and open-ended meanings. Still, a queer take extrapolates these perspectives, according to the author, just as it approaches gender and sexuality differently from its predecessor: LGBTI (or Gay and Lesbian) studies. In IR, however, queer international theories are located outside the discipline, being something other than what is experienced in the practices of international relations (Weber 2014). Queer in IR is understood as non-existent, since it lacks a base of classical texts, unlike what can be observed in queer political theory. Queer theory does

not necessarily focus on the politics of the state system and the diplomatic community and describes the world through a mixture of theories and epistemologies of which IR as a discipline is averse. Queer theory has little capital within IR and is considered a 'poor immigrant' (Weber 2015) or a 'fallen daughter' (Agathangelou and Ling 2004) because it is linked to social sciences and to philosophy at its origin.

Silences around gender and sexuality are very deep in IR. Only with the post-positivist opening of the 1990s to new readings of the international did gender and sexuality become possible categories of analysis. Their respective strengths, however, remain marginal in the disciplinary spectrum and more with sexuality than with gender. Perhaps because of the very mismatch between LGBTI studies (introduced via constructivism and the liberal individual) and queer theory (via post-structuralism and non-monolithic subjects) both are responsible for presenting the LGBTI themes and its unfoldings. Having this brief narrative in mind, we now turn to the books of Cynthia Weber (2016) and Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (2015).

The books

Cynthia Weber's Queer International Relations (2016)

Cynthia Weber is Professor of International Relations at Sussex University in England and has a long career in gender, sexuality, sovereignty, citizenship, aesthetics and post-structural studies. She is one of the pioneers in the study of queer theory within IR. The book *Queer International Relations* is written, therefore, through questions already taken up by Weber in the last few years. In the sense, I highlight texts like 'Why is there no Queer International Theory?' (Weber 2015) and 'From Queer to Queer IR' (Weber 2014). The book is, in this sense, the effort of a first queer compendium within IR and stands as such by presenting some figurations of the homosexual in the international, as well as some analytical strategies that are consistent with the confluence of gender, sexuality and International Relations.

Starting from two different theoretical-methodological approaches, Weber (2016) attempts to place the curiosity about the homosexual and homosexuality at the center of International Relations investigations (Weber 2016). In this sense, the first approach refers to Foucault (1999) and to his idea of power-knowledge-pleasure in relation with the appearance of the perverse and abnormal homosexual figure in the development of psychiatric medicine (Foucault 1999). Along with this, we have the idea of figuration by Donna Haraway (1997), evoking a continuous temporality of construction of subjects thought cartographies that dialogue with the idea of performativity of Judith Butler (1990). In this sense, performative acts (re)produce themselves constantly even if they do not have a core that points to a common beginning. Performative acts construct subjectivities at the same time as they can recreate them (Butler 1990). Finally, Richard Ashley's (1989) argument about 'statecraft as mancraft' is mobilized to try to understand the sexualized orders that regulate international relations, and which point to an original, non-problematic and extra-historical presence of modern rational man. The idea of statecraft as mancraft is then a

way of taming this man and his centrality in modern thinking, building up his problems, dangers and fears given in the international, the outside, the anarchy (Ashley 1989).

All of that seems like a lot and sometimes it is. In an effort, however, to present robust analytical strategies, Weber (2016) gives space to three important elements when observing gender and sexuality: the construction of the concepts that involve these themes and their peers within a localized system of power-knowledge-pleasure through Foucault (1999), the subjectification processes using Haraway (1997) and Butler (1990), and how IR reproduce these knowledge and concepts from an embedded view that conceives the subjects within a logic either/or from Ashley (1989). Weber (2016) is attentive to the possibilities of plural constructions of the subjects and to the figurations that organize different narratives in the international realm.

In this context, Weber (2016) proposes a second approach that continues the dialogue with Ashley (1989) but adds the reading of plural figures by Roland Barthes (1974) in order to capture the various nuances of the most different genders and sexualities embraced by Eve Sedgwick's (1993) definition of queer. None of the figures mobilized by International Relations such as the rational man, the modern state, and the international order are ahistorical or stable. Ashley (1989) calls upon Barthes (1974) to bring the multidimensional and plural spaces of texts and subjects, their various voices, never original and never pure (Ashley 1989; Barthes 1974). In this way, it is possible to extrapolate the binary either/or logic of the mainstream readings in International Relations and reach a pluralized and/or interpretation that is consistent with the infinite possibilities in the fields of gender and sexuality (Barthes 1974; Weber 2016). This plural logic, in turn, is consistent with Eve Sedgwick's (1993) definition of queer as '[...] the excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically' (Sedgwick 1993: 8). One of the greatest examples of this queerness for Weber (2016) is the winner of Eurovision 2014 the drag queen Conchita Wurst, who also refers to herself as he/him under the name of Neuwirth and thus breaks with the logic either/or and the idea of statecraft as mancraft through a plural *logos* (Weber 2016).

According to Weber (2016), analyzing IR under the queer standpoint makes the investigations of figures, orders and relations expressed in the international more complex, while challenging the usual binaries of anarchy/order, domestic/international, normal/perverse. The queer logics about statecraft create new institutions and practices, destabilizing pre-established views on subjects, spaces, temporalities, and foundations of the international arena. Weber's proposals (2016) seem abstract thus far, but the author begins to work each of the figurations of homosexuality in the international, bringing discourses, narratives and acts that mobilize sexuality in the context of international politics. In addition to perverse figurations related to homosexuality such as the 'unwanted immigrant,' the 'underdeveloped' and the 'terrorist,' there are two fundamental figurations linked to normality – the figurations of the 'gay rights holder' and the 'gay patriot.' This cartography of figures reinforces a binary logic that the author calls homo(inter)nationalism and reiterates specific normativities (Weber 2016).

The figuration 'gay rights holder' – and in this case, human rights - is organized into four movements and is mobilized by Western countries to reinforce the idea of 'good' and 'bad' states. We abandon the idea that the desire for persons of the same sex (gender) would be a perversion in the whole universality of the cases and we connect it to (neo) liberal values, like the domesticity of the nuclear family and consumption. Hence, we have the construction of this racialized, physically able, domesticated and reproductive multicultural subject of market capitalism, which may now be heterosexual or homosexual, in contrast to those who do not conform to that definition, the perverse ones. In this sequence, finally, the (neo)liberal homosexual becomes a rights-holder just like the heterosexual subject (Weber 2016).

The gay patriot, in turn, appears in a similar way, to mark a progress narrative that reinforces the idea of countries friendly to the LGBTI community. Still, the resonance of binary positioning centralizes sexuality and restricts LGBTI to specific subjectivities. Some LGBTI bodies are better than others, since a portion cannot fit the specific class and race dimensions mobilized by the idea of nation and its fraternal and familiar core. The secularity of the gay patriot is constituted via the autonomy of the liberal subject, through a regulatory approach, which captures the deviant and the pathological and becomes an alibi of a selective multiculturalism and a blind meritocracy. Consumption and market, family and reproduction become devices that encompass the middle class white gay man by a language of tolerance and freedom (Weber 2016).

Through this view, the white, patriot homosexual is the opposite of the hypersexualized and monstrous homosexual terrorist. By means of homo(inter)nationalism, the criticism that states such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel cynically promote LGBTI rights as human rights becomes recurrent. Weber (2016), in order to mark the silences in relation to other types of violations of rights in these territories, shows the regulation processes that happens in LGBTI politics that create differences between good and bad states. The practice of pinkwashing is embedded in this dynamic, since it is characterized by the promotion strategies of products, events and countries that support LGBTI causes in order to disguise the disregard for the rights of other peoples and neglect of the environment for example (Weber 2016).

Now, by the negative figurations of the homosexual in international arena, Weber (2016) explores the idea of the underdeveloped/undevelopable, the unwanted immigrant and the terrorist. These figurations, though embedded in the Western imagery, are in motion along with the positive figurations of the gay rights holder and the gay patriot and dialogue with diverse spaces, times and desires. By the idea of the immigrant, the author works the dualism between desirable immigration, the image of the immigrant who contributes to the construction of the nation in good faith, and undesirable immigration, the outsider within the culture and the state that brings risks for the maintenance of the order. It is important to note that both the figurations of the unwanted immigrant and the terrorist are linked, since terrorism is, primarily (in this view), the activity of the irreparable foreigner who migrates to undermine the progress of the West. Weber (2016) emphasizes that the unwanted immigrant and the terrorist are out of the mark of time (linear and

progressive), as well as out of space (state) and desires (heterosexual or neoliberal homosexual) of the West. Only the white, heterosexual, middle-class, white man belongs to the state, while the LGBTI Muslim, for example, is seen as an intruder or as a victim of the violence of her/his own culture (Weber 2016).

The desire of the unwanted immigrant to develop in the North puts his/her condition at risk, since this subject would bring with him/her 'Southern' time, its delays and problems. In this way, the immigrant travels between two temporalities and is in motion, without belonging to the legitimate space of the state. S/He is always sexually immature and threatens the state configuration and the sovereign man, because s/he has no reproductive function in the nation. The terrorist, in turn, is not only non-functional as the immigrant and the underdeveloped, but he has no space in civilization, since, through his sexual barbarism and his acting in networks, he is outside the state domain. The terrorist is the anarchic and pure enemy and he is everywhere. The private space of the terrorist is racialized, polygamous and perverse when facing the bourgeois nuclear family of the cisgender, heterosexual, white and middle-class man. The terrorist interrupts family reproduction to reproduce terrorist cells; he leaves his wife and children to become what Weber (2016) calls 'monster-terrorist-fag,' sometimes hyper-heterosexual, sometimes hyper-homosexual (Weber 2016).

The figuration of the one that develops, finally, unfolds in two: the underdeveloped and the undevelopable. This terminology is recent in IR and emerged in the post-World War II as the last Great Dichotomy that marks relations of superiority and inferiority between different populations. The underdeveloped and the undevelopable are not in line with the expected time, space and desire. The underdeveloped is degenerate in the sense that it expresses a very early stage of development. In Western history, for example, homoerotic relations between Greeks and Romans are perceived as a phase already overcome which allows admiration for this founding past without embarrassment. The underdeveloped predates the sovereign man of modernity, marking the line between the civilized and the uncivilized. The undevelopable, however, cannot be in the narrative of progress and is not a precondition for civilizational development. S/He is decadent, since s/he has no function in the reproduction of the family and the state and is deprived of her/his own time and space. These two figures are not only essential to international development policies, but they also dialogue with the figures of the terrorist and the unwanted immigrant. Nevertheless, Weber (2016) recognizes the malleability of all these figurations of the homosexual in the international arena and leaves them open for reconstructions and recreations (Weber 2016).

After two analytical strategies and six different figures, the reader gets more questions than answers and I think that is the author's goal with the book. *Queer International Relations* (2016) comes as an effort to write a first major book on queer IR and one of the firsts on sexuality in the discipline. It opens up more questions and future research agendas than works on a topic in itself. The conclusion of the book invites the reader to think of the plurality of possibilities in the field of gender and sexuality within IR. Queer theory is a platform for this, but it is not necessarily the best or only way of thinking about the

issue. But how can we think about gender and sexuality beyond queer? Where are all these criticisms so attached to an abstract and larger international structure? We may have to look for this intersection between global and local in other places.

Picq's and Thiel's Sexualities in World Politics (2015)

Manuela Picq is Professor of International Relations at Amherst College in the United States and at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador and works on themes such as feminism, gender and sexuality, postcolonialism, and indigenous perspectives. Markus Thiel is Professor of International Relations at the Department of Politics and International Relations at Florida International University and works on topics such as European Union and integration, LGBT politics and research design. Both are organizers of the book which has seven more authors each one with an individual chapter. Picq and Thiel have, in addition to the introduction together, one chapter each as well. The book then consists of an introduction, eight chapters written each by a different author and a conclusion.

All chapters mobilize different approaches and work themes equally different, but all pass by the idea that the discipline of IR and international politics can dialogue with LGBTQ politics and its local, regional and international unfoldings. In this sense, LGBTQ politics goes beyond the understanding of LGBTQ rights and challenges the discipline more fully, since gender and sexuality have a marginal presence in IR as we have seen. The book also attempts to engage with an empirical and more attentive view of the much absent local perspective within the IR literature so obsessed with abstraction and prediction. How a sexual and gender politics can challenge the disciplinary body of International Relations and tell us more about the international structure is a central question for this book. It is an invitation to rethink this indifference towards gender and sexuality through local cultural studies focusing on the peripheries and on the diversity of analytical perspectives (Picq and Thiel 2015).

The openness to different terminologies of gender and sexuality is notable, sometimes approaching the frightening acronym LGBTTIQQ2SA³ and sometimes approaching a queer language. In any case, the book, even approaching a more anthropological and sociological perspective of sexuality and gender, seems to build on a hybridism between a strategic queer theory and a strong LGBTI posture. These perspectives, however, vary according to the authors and their research. The willingness to dialogue with the mainstream of IR theories is a way to recognize the importance of looking at sexuality and gender that the discipline does not engage with and which, for the most part, is also not seen in the practice of international relations as a political activity. Like the feminist analyses that incorporated gender for the first time in the discipline, the book is aimed at pointing to the male and cis-hetero-patriarchal foundations of IR (Picq and Thiel 2015).

The book brings in the multiplicity of themes and authors this need for greater pluralism in IR, which is so focused on specific subjects that it almost always loses sight of the experiences of LGBTQ people. To understand that the universal is parochial helps to think the local in the international realm and vice versa in a dynamic very different from the one on which the discipline rests. The analysis of case studies within the book is quite

present and is one of the strategies of the authors to bring the non-core, the periphery to this theoretical field that focuses primarily on events distributed between Europe and the United States. New places and new theories are created in this context, while 'new' actors are rescued for a broader understanding of international politics, its debates, its contradictions and its intricacies (Picq and Thiel 2015).

The first chapter by Langlois (2015) uses exactly the study of politics of sexuality and gender to think the consequences generated for theories of international politics and especially of human rights. IR generally naturalizes some issues instead of others and control what may be considered International Relations theory or not. LGBTQ problems are increasingly aligned with the human rights discourse, and despite the myriad issues that this thematic tension provokes, it can be read in very different ways. In this chapter, the author presents four different perspectives to theorize human rights that are permeated by performativity, positionality, queer liberalism and state critique, in order to access a more critical thinking of IR from the challenges and dilemmas experienced in LGBTQ politics (Langlois 2015).

Then, Bosia (2015) focuses on the state's relationship with sexuality from modernity to denounce the instrumental use of sexuality itself by the state machine as in the case of Uganda. In this sense, the production of homosexuality as deviant would be the product of this modernity with a specific time and with a well-defined and excluding normative structure. The homosexual and homosexuality are re-signified in the contemporary narratives from the North to the South in political, economic, and cultural contexts. The regulation of sexual bodies, the export of scientific understandings about gender and human sexuality, and the superiority of the West over the rest are the starting points for understanding the practices of consent and condemnation of LGBT identities by the state. The state as a great modern institution is suspended between the global and the local and performs the part of the psychopath who loves or loathes a specific object and, in this case, this sexuality so central to the modern project based on inclusion/exclusion, Self/Other binaries (Bosia 2015).

There is a certain convergence with Weber (2016) here, whether in the use of queer and the idea of performativity as with Langlois (2015), or in a critique of modernity as with Bosia (2015). The third chapter focuses on the polarization of gender and sexuality issues in the United Nations, showing the access dynamics of LGBTIQ organizations within the UN system itself. The influence of sexuality and gender politics in the domestic and international spheres is undeniable, but the difficulties that the advocates of human rights discourse face in bringing the matter to the UN discussions are also notorious. The author builds a well-detailed history of documents and debates that brought the issue to the space of the organization and analyzes the different arguments and situations that serve as a background for this ongoing advocacy (D'amico 2015). This chapter changes somewhat the abstract tone of the two previous chapters and approaches a more sociological take very close to a part of the constructivist literature on norms (see Risse and Roop 2013, for example).

In the next chapter, Thiel (2015) – one of the organizers of the book – writes about the European Union and the ambiguous role of sexual rights in the construction of a neoliberal-

al market policy and the obstacles that the bloc itself faces when it comes to sexuality and gender. The author pays attention to the relationship between the creation of a single market and the extension of an egalitarian LGBT legislation, sometimes hampered by some member states and the limitations of this common market. Different experiences and the struggles of the local arena are important variables to understand not only the diversity of genders and sexualities, their respective nuances and queer identifications, but also how this diversity is articulated within the community. The discourse of competitiveness and liberalization without an adequate political debate places dissident subjects in a complicated situation, since they do not fit into the binaries that the market and that a neoliberal world understanding impose. For the author, perhaps this new generation of people and this nonconformist literature on gender and sexuality are important in order to respond to the problems that the European Union faces in this area (Thiel 2015).

Next, Rahman (2015) works on homophobia and homosexuality through an Islamic standpoint within the movements that founded modernity and continue into contemporary social life. The author works on the assumptions that the expansion of a queer or LGBTIQ politics carries by arguing that they are directly linked to the West and to modernity. In this sense, several misunderstandings arise and must be approached from within a sociological view that is truly intersectional and rests between several different cosmologies and the diversity of gender and sexuality across the world. Approaching the problems presented by Weber (2016) and IR, Rahman (2015) questions the idea that there is an antipathy on the part of the Muslim populations towards homosexual identities. In fact, this narrative is one of the ways of locating these peoples as inferior in the line of modern progress and development. Confusions with homosexual identities in the relationship between the West and the non-West thus take place in a multidimensional game that accommodates discourses on (neo)colonialism, exceptionality, and identities. The author draws attention to the importance of the local realm and plays with ethnographic examples to illustrate its points and, above all, to foster analyses consistent with the contingency of situations and the diversity of the non-West (Rahman 2015).

Following next in this sequence, Picq (2015) – another organizer of the book – also brings a concern with the local and tries to think IR from the LGBT politics of the Amazon in order to bring out the international that exists in the peripheries of the world. The adoption of an LGBT language employing the rights discourse, for example, proves that apparently isolated places are being influenced by the cosmopolitan language that characterizes what is modern and developed. The parades and festivities that celebrate LGBT identities in the Amazon show that the global and the local are in a constant and contingent dialogical relationship. An ethnographic and sociological view of cases like these, which are described as out of the line of sexual modernity, can enrich sexuality and gender studies and challenge IR as a discipline and its theories (Picq 2015). This chapter finds a path that benefits from the postmodern critiques within postcolonialism and post-structuralism without losing sight of the local and its ethnographic richness, echoing much of the uneasiness already posed in the introduction of the book. I'll talk about this later.

Through the case of Turkey, the next chapter deals with the importance of LGBT rights for local movements while at the same time brings the difficulties of establishing

universalist policies within local spaces. Birdal (2015) analyzes Gezi protests in Turkey to propose new directions for a local LGBT politics. From the mixture between conservatism, authoritarian nationalism and (neo)liberalism of the Turkish government, the author attempts to work out a radical alternative to the LGBT movement in a context of re-evaluation and reorganization of strategies post-Gezi – when the gender and sexuality agenda was more visible. The protests may be a possibility to balance a discourse that has universal interests, but that also represents the particularities of the case at issue. A cultural translation of the terms mobilized by LGBT rights is a necessary effort for prudent political alliances to be built and the movement to be strengthened (Birdal 2015).

In the last chapter, we have McEvoy (2015) discussing the case of Northern Ireland and the participation of women in the activities of paramilitary organizations during the conflict between 1968 and 1998. Through an autobiographical and ethnographic look – involving interviews with these women – the author explores security studies from an interest in LGBT and queer issues. In this reflexive practice, the work explores the researcher's place and her voices in the work, as well as the silence on gender and sexuality in security studies and in the IR discipline. In this sense, narratives and figures that pick up on masculinities/femininities and male/female, for example, appear, and the forces that reaffirm certain understandings and create theories that freeze subjects and experiences in conflict and post-conflict contexts are shown (McEvoy 2015).

In the book's conclusion, Sjoberg (2015) gives a general overview of everything that has been constructed so far, retaking each chapter in order to direct some final notes to the reader. In this context, it is important to highlight the research agenda that puts into dialogue the poststructuralist critique of IR and the field and case studies, along with the life and experiences of LGBT people and social movements. Not only is there a diversity of identifications, but also a diversity of situations that impose the challenge of a more pluralistic understanding for specific localities. Feminist, LGBT and queer perspectives are important vehicles that intersect theories and practices of IR and bring new dynamics and politics. The notion of a history interconnected with several other histories is a first step towards an integrated and dialogical view between the IR of LGBTI studies and the IR of queer theory that allows greater attention to the universal in the particular (Sjoberg 2015). But what does IR need to learn?

Possible dialogues: what does IR need to learn?

I understand queer theory as a problematization of ever-certain identity politics, its foundations and its constructs, by approaching transgression, deconstruction, subversion, revisionism, decentering and non-assimilationist positions. As Picq and Thiel (2015) put it, the term 'queer theory' was first used by Teresa de Lauretis and was quickly appropriated by critical literature and poststructural philosophy in the investigation of normativities and dissidences. Queer theory itself challenges the binaries of gender, sexuality, class, and race in ways that mark a nonconformity with the hegemonic norm. The term queer, however, encounters barriers and misunderstandings when traveling through different places,

cultures, and social relationships, and although it also produces valuable critiques, it often does not go with this LGBTI politics that works within certain pre-disposed institutions and structures as law for example (Picq and Thiel 2015).

In addition, several problems can be pointed out with the use of the word queer as if it were interchangeable in any context, replacing the LGBTI acronym or other identities (Green 2002). In the non-anglophone global South, in which the word queer may not mean anything due to its Anglo-Saxon and Euro-American background, we must be careful about its employment. In this sense, queer is used as a possibility to think gender and sexuality outside the binaries (male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, civilized/un-civilized), so it will never be something to be achieved or incorporated as identity and it should not be seen as the only or best approach to research about gender and sexuality. The same can be applied for the LGBTI acronym or any other term of universal pretensions. The point here is to understand that there is no correct, better-developed, or more complex approach, especially when sexuality and gender are thought of in their contingent, uncertain, unpredictable and accidental diversity.

It is necessary to hesitate about the idea that a queer politics or theory is more advanced than LGBTI studies or the IR discipline itself (Rahman 2015). This reinforces a supposed evolutionary line which is also present in the sciences and which imprisons certain narratives in a disciplinary language where they can be more easily regulated and controlled. In fact, all these modern world dynamics are what the queer itself points out as a problem and tries to destabilize. IR must return to the local realm – where the international really happens – as a political project that decentralizes this fetish with macroanalysis that locates the international in a great abstract and transcendent space that occurs at political and diplomatic meetings. IR also happen in micro places, in relationships between ordinary people, in the private space of the household. I feel that a queer IR can fall into the same traps that IR as a discipline falls when it tries to grab its object of study: the international realm. It is necessary that we start to see LGBTI studies as an interesting antidote to minimize these risks, because it brings with it a sociological and anthropological concern that should be closer to IR.

I do not suggest here an abandonment of any of these theoretical perspectives on gender and sexuality. What is in question is a close look at the local and its dialogues with the global within a critique that also recognizes the normativities that regulate the social life and the in-between place of subjects in the world, without final destinies, in the intervals, constituted in the gerund form of becoming. This concern in the book organized by Picq and Thiel (2015) is important so that we can respect the diversity of approaches on gender and sexuality and, above all, use them in order to create intersections that make analyses of LGBTI/queer politics richer. And here, we are not thinking of a configuration that mirrors the English School *via media* – between realisms and liberalisms – but a dynamic that embraces the diversity of worlds, genders and sexualities, respecting the local arena. *Queer International Relations* and *Sexualities in World Politics* supplement themselves rather than merely complement each other in the sense that they strengthen and add something new and plural, as Barthes (1974) and Weber (2016) call attention to, in order to reinforce the relevance of gender and sexuality in IR and destabilize the discipline's silences around it.

Notes

- 1 It is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. The term LGBT was approved in Brazil in 2008 at the First GLBT National Conference. Despite being used worldwide by activists since the 1990s, the LGBTI acronym is recent and subject to challenges and changes (Facchini and Simões 2009). In this paper, the acronym will be used in different ways respecting how each author/theory uses it in the texts interpreted here.
- 2 Queer theory began to be developed in the 1980s and differs from 'gay and lesbian studies' (from cultural and sociological studies) by the poststructural conception of subjects and by the performative understanding of gender and sexuality (Thoreson 2011). The term queer was formerly a curse of the English language that came to be co-opted in activism and academia.
- 3 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, 2-spirited and allies.

References

- Agathangelou, Anna and L H M Ling. 2004. 'The House of IR: from Family Power Politics to the Poisies of Worldism.' *International Studies Review* 6 (4): 21-49.
- Ashley, Richard K. 1989. 'Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism and War.' In James Der Derian and Michael J Shapiro (eds), *International/Intertextual Relations: postmodern readings of world politics*. Toronto: Lexington Books.
- Barthes, Roland. 1974. *S/Z*. Paris: Blackwell.
- Birdal, Mehmet Sinan. 2015. 'Between the universal and the particular: the politics of the recognition of LGBT rights in Turkey.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 124-138.
- Bosia, Michael J. 2015. 'To love or to loathe: modernity, homophobia, and LGBT rights.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 38-53.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- D'amico, Francine. 2015. 'LGBT and (Dis)United Nations: sexual and gender minorities, international law and UN politics.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 54-74.
- Facchini, Regina and Júlio Assis Simões. 2009. *Na trilha do arco-íris: do movimento homossexual ao LGBT*. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo.
- Foucault, Michel. 1999. *História da Sexualidade: a vontade de saber, Vol I*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal.
- Green, Adam Isaiah. 2002. 'Gay but not Queer: toward a post-queer study of sexuality.' *Theory and Society* 31 (4): 521-545.
- Haraway, Donna. 1997. *Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience*. New York: Routledge.
- Jesus, Diego Santos Vieira de. 2014. 'O Mundo Fora do Armário: Teoria Queer e Relações Internacionais.' *Revista Ártemis* 17 (1): 41-50.
- Langlois, Anthony J. 2015. 'Human rights, LGBT rights, and international theory.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 23-37.

- McEvoy, Sandra. 2015. 'Queering security studies in Northern Ireland: problem, practice, and practitioner.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 139-154.
- Messari, Nizar and João Pontes Nogueira. 2005. *Teoria das Relações Internacionais: correntes e debates*. Rio de Janeiro: Campus Elsevier.
- Peterson, V Spike. 1992. *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Picq, Manuela. 2015. 'Amazon prides: LGBT perspectives on international relations.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 108-123.
- Picq, Manuela and Markus Thiel. 2015. 'Introduction: sexualities in world politics.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-22.
- Rahman, Momin. 2015. 'Sexual diffusions and conceptual confusions: Muslim homophobia and Muslim homosexualities in the context of modernity.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 92-107.
- Richter-Montpetit, Melanie. 2017. 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But were Afraid to Ask: The 'Queer Turn' in International Relations.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46 (2): 220-240.
- Risse, Thomas and Stephen C Roop. 2013. 'Introduction and Overview.' In Thomas Risse, Stephen C Roop and Kathryn Sikkink (eds), *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-25.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. *Tendencies*. London: Routledge.
- Sjoberg, Laura. 2015. 'Conclusion: LGBTQ politics/ global politics/ international relations.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 155-171.
- Thiel, Markus. 2015. 'Transversal and particularistic politics in the European Union's antidiscrimination policy: LGBT politics under neoliberalism.' In Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: how LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 75-91.
- Thoreson, Ryan Richard. 2011. 'The Queer Paradox of LGBTI Human Rights.' *Interalia* 6 (6): 1-27.
- Tickner, Ann J. 1992. *Gender in International Relations: feminist perspectives on achieving global security*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- _____. 2001. *Gendering World Politics: issues and approaches in the post-Cold War era*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- True, Jacqui. 2005. 'Feminism.' In Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True (eds), *Theories of International Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, pp. 213-234.
- Wagner, Wolfgang. 2014. 'International Relations Theories and Human Rights.' In Mark Gibney and Anja Mihr (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Human Rights*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 105-122.
- Weber, Cynthia. 2014. 'From Queer to Queer IR.' *International Studies Review* 16 (4): 596-622.

_____. 2015. 'Why is there no Queer International Theory?' *European Journal of International Relations* 21 (1): 27-51.

_____. 2016. *Queer International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

About the Author

Ricardo Prata Filho has a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Universidade de Brasília (UnB) and a Master's degree in International Relations from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). He is currently a PhD candidate in International Relations at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). He is interested in contemporary political theories, gender, sexuality, queer theory, human rights, transnational networks and refuge. At the present, he is working with the overlaps between refuge, gender and sexuality through a performative approach to engage with eligibility issues and problems regarding gender and sexuality stereotypes in refuge processes. His focus is on dissident sexualities and genders.

Received on 25 March 2019, and approved for publication on 7 April 2019.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>