



## **‘Feminine Trouble’ and the (re)constitution of the militarised masculine subject.**

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This paper provides an outline of debates within feminist IR about the inclusion of women in the military and the ways in which their agency is frequently denied or marginalised. Demonstrating how militarised masculinity is being re-articulated against the feminine in the wake of growing involvement of women the paper reviews two cases of women soldiers previously discussed in the literature (Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England), as well as the more original case of Faye Turney. Through these three case studies, iterations of the masculine and feminine are shown to be co-constitutive, with the militarised masculine identity simultaneously disrupted and constituted by the inclusion of its feminine ‘other’. The paper ends with a challenge to the perceived stability and coherence of the militarised masculine identity, confronting the need for, and subversive potential of, feminist engagement with masculinity directly.

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Despite a general shift in the social sciences away from essentialist claims of man and masculinity as innately violent, and woman and femininity as nonviolent, warfare has appeared to remain intrinsically connected to masculinity and peace to femininity<sup>2</sup>. The military remains to be viewed as a (near) all-male arena where masculine bodies are disciplined and transformed into soldiers, and boys are 'made into men'. During basic training physical strength, aggression and bravery are privileged and identified as specifically 'male' characteristics. In comparison, the feminine is identified as weak, passive and fearful, simultaneously in need of protection, and to be protected against (for fear of 'contaminating' the privileged militarised masculine identity).

In recent years, however, women are joining the British and American militaries<sup>3</sup> in increasing numbers, and taking on soldiering roles alongside their male counterparts. Building on two case studies of women soldiers already discussed within feminist IR, Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England, and introducing the more original case of Faye Turney, this paper seeks to demonstrate how such inclusions of the 'feminine' simultaneously disrupt and reinforce the militarised masculine identity. Unlike much of the existing literature on women in the military this paper neither forwards the claim that the inclusion of women has led to a new constitution of the militarised subject, nor does it conclude that nothing has changed. The focus instead is on

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<sup>2</sup> Specifically within the feminist peace movement see for example, Betty A. Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985); Sara Ruddick, "Pacifying the Forces: Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace", *Signs*, 8(3), 1983, p. 471-89; Jean Bethke Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5(3/4), 1982, p. 341-8 and *Women and War*, Revised Edition (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> From herein whenever the term 'military' or 'militaries' is used it can be assumed to be referring to the contemporary militaries of the UK and US unless otherwise stated.

militarised masculinity itself. In what ways has the militarised masculine identity adapted to the inclusion of female soldiers? What is at stake by feminists focusing their attentions on the militarised masculine identity rather than the feminine soldier?

The paper begins by demonstrating the ways in which iterations of masculinity and femininity are co-constitutive. The militarised masculine identity relies on the performances of its feminine 'other' for its own perceived coherence and stability. Turning to the case studies of Lynch, England and Turney the paper unpacks the ways in which the narratives that frame these three women work to both reveal the contradictions inherent in the militarised masculine identity, while at the same time providing new terrain on which militarised masculinity can be re-articulated. Like iterations of the masculine and feminine, the seemingly paradoxical and mutually exclusive narratives surrounding each of the women do in fact rely on one another for their construction. The paper ends with a challenge to the perceived stability and coherence of the militarised masculine identity, confronting the need for, and subversive potential of, feminist engagement with masculinity directly.

### **The feminine as constitutive**

Despite the military's traditional reputation as an exclusively male zone, women and femininity have, in reality, always already been included. For centuries militaries have had women in tow as 'camp followers'; 'soldiers' wives, whores, man servants [and] maids' (Enloe, 1988 [1983]: 1), performing tasks essential to any large military force but considered ideologically peripheral to its primary function – combat (ibid., 3). Throughout the twentieth

century British and American militaries have more formally brought women into the 'military family'. Today there will be military nurses in the on-site medical centre, officers' wives providing support to newly married wives of infantrymen, and, just outside an overseas base, you may well find dozens of 'massage parlours' and 'hostesses' waiting to satisfy the 'needs' of young, healthy men stationed far away from the comforts of home<sup>4</sup>.

The feminine bodies of the military wife, nurse and sex worker however do not only help sustain the day-to-day running of a large and complex organisation, but are also essential for the informing and reinforcing of the militarised masculine identity. Drawing on Judith Butler's work on performativity (Butler 1999 [1990], 1993), militarised masculinity, like any gendered identity, is understood as neither stable, nor ever fully attainable. Instead it is an 'identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted...through a *stylized* repetition of acts' (Butler, 1999: 179). The gendered, militarised body therefore is performative inasmuch that it has 'no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (ibid., 173)<sup>5</sup>. However, as gender (and thus militarised masculinity) is a norm that can never be fully internalised, gendered identities/militarised masculinity rely on their/its constant re-enactment. Re-enactment takes place both through the identity's own performances, for

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<sup>4</sup> Both Katharine Moon in *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) and Cynthia Enloe in *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora Press, 1988); *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (London: Pandora Press, 1989) and *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (London: University of California Press, 2000), explore the militarisation of sexual relations between (often racially or ethnically 'other') female sex workers and male military personnel.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting at this point that Butler makes explicit that there is no "doer behind the deed" (Salih, 2002: 65), nor is the act of 'doing' gender carried out by a "volitional agent who is free to select his/her gender "styles"" (Butler, 1993: 7). For a more detailed discussion of this, and performativity more generally, see Butler, 1993 (especially the introductory chapter) and Salih, 2002.

militarised masculinity this could be in combat or the formal and informal training practices, and the performances of others. Feminine bodies within the military that mother, care, nurse (performances of 'acceptable femininity') and provide sexual satisfaction ('(un)acceptable femininity') will therefore work to reinforce the 'masculine' performances, and thus identity, of the (near) all-male soldiers.

The feminine is thus shown to be constitutive of the (militarised) masculine subject<sup>6</sup>. By tracing the borders of the militarised masculinity the feminine maps the limits and possibilities of its construction, giving it the appearance of a stable and 'natural' identity. At the same time, the feminine's seemingly oppositional logics allow the 'masculinity' of the performances to be reinforced, thus re-articulating the militarised masculine identity.

### **Including the feminine**

Women however are increasingly joining the British and American militaries in non-support, non-caring roles. Feminine bodies are becoming visible not as male soldiers' wives, girlfriends and nurses, but as soldiers themselves. According to recent statistics, 15% of the US military deployment in the 2003 war in Iraq was female (Sjoberg, 2007: 84), and in Britain around 9.4% of the armed forces are women, with some reports suggesting that up to a fifth of the service personnel deployed in Afghanistan are female (Bone, 2008). Despite not formally being allowed to enter into positions on the 'front line', women soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan are not shielded from 'active'

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<sup>6</sup> This statement can of course be inverted – 'the masculine is constitutive of the feminine' – the broader point being made is that you cannot speak of the masculine *or* the feminine without implicitly speaking of the other.

warfare and the risks associated with it. 'More American women have fought and died in Iraq than in any other war since World War II... Some 600 have been wounded, and 104 have died' (BBC News, 2009). Female military personnel are returning from service abroad in body bags or with scarred skin and lost limbs – the visible markers of war previously assumed to mark and represent only male warrior bodies. Pictures of war veteran Major Tammy Duckworth, who lost both her legs when her Blackhawk helicopter was shot down in Iraq, serve as a reminder that it is not just male bodies fighting and male bodies being wounded; it appears women too are becoming part of the 'warrior brotherhood'.

It would appear therefore that feminine bodies are no longer relegated to the sidelines of war; no longer only responsible for the patching up of soldiers' battle wounds, mending of spirits, and providing sexual comfort to young men stationed abroad. Instead, feminine bodies are found side-by-side with men and engaged in combat. Alongside the growing numbers of women soldiers, there has been mounting media attention. Indeed, since the inception of the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a number of women soldiers have taken centre-stage in high-profile military stories. Private Jessica Lynch 'starred' as the all-American heroine who 'went down fighting', was captured by enemy combatants, and became the first female subject of a US Special Forces rescue operation (Howard, 2004: 95). In comparison, military police officer Lynndie England was the 'she-devil' (Riddell, 2004) who tortured and sexually abused male detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq. In the British military there was Faye Turney a 'sea survival specialist' (Salkeld, 2007) and one of fifteen British military personnel taken hostage in 2007 by Iran. Unlike the women

who fill the roles of military wife, nurse and prostitute, these women occupy previously exclusively male spaces that assume bravery, strength and the possibility (even likelihood) of violence.

The inclusion of feminine bodies in traditionally understood 'male' roles of soldier and torturer should serve to disrupt traditional understandings of femininity as peaceful and in need of protection. While the soldiering bodies of Lynch and Turney take on the protecting role, the detainees in Abu Ghraib who were subjected to England's sexual abuse needed protection from her. Unlike the 'acceptable' (and '(un)acceptable') performances of femininity carried out by the military wife, nurse, and prostitute that work to reinforce the masculine warrior-soldier identity, the 'masculine' performances of the feminine bodies of Lynch, England and Turney should signify an 'undoing' of prescribed gender codes. Thus, the disrupted feminine identity embodied by the three women threatens to trouble and make fragile our understandings of the masculine warrior soldier identity.

But to what extent is militarised masculinity really disturbed by such inclusions? Is it possible that another narrative is running alongside this disrupting one; a narrative that works to rearticulate the masculinism of warfare and the military, emphasising femininity's 'otherness'? Returning to the three female soldiering examples stated above, I will now unpack the ways in which their presence should have troubled understandings and constructions of militarised masculinity and to what extent discursive and performative practices ensured the (militarised) masculine/feminine binary was re-inscribed.

### **Jessica Lynch: 'Female Rambo' or helpless victim?**

Private Jessica Lynch was one of 33 American soldiers in the 507<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Maintenance Company who, on 23 March 2003, were ambushed in Al Nasiriya, Iraq, after a wrong turn during battle. In all, eleven soldiers were killed and seven, including Lynch, were captured. When reports first emerged of Lynch's capture, the *Washington Post* ran a story claiming she had 'emptied her weapon' and 'did not want to be taken alive' (Howard, 2004: 92). Such stories appear to counter understandings of women as meek and peace-loving, and blur the lines between the masculine protector and feminine protected. The inclusion of women soldiers, such as Lynch, should disrupt the zones of distinction between men/women, war/peace, protector/protected, that the militarised masculine identity and the military itself relies on (Pin-Fat, 2005: 33).

The boundaries of the militarised masculine identity are traced by an excluded feminine identity. Relying on the absent and denigrated 'other' of femininity for its own coherence and stability, militarised masculinity is rooted as much in *not being* weak, vulnerable, or in need of saving, as it is in *being* strong, powerful and heroic. For a woman to transgress the borders that define her, she risks rupturing the excluding and dividing lines that define militarised masculinity (Pin-Fat, 2005: 44). The Jessica Lynch story – the story of a 'female Rambo' and an 'American hero' (ibid., 27) – should unsettle militarised masculinity by disrupting the boundaries on which both femininity and the militarised masculine identity rest. 'As a woman, Lynch defied conventional notions of a soldier, and as a soldier, she defied society's definition of a traditional woman' (Sanprie, 2005: 388).

However, the discursive structures surrounding the capture and rescue of Jessica Lynch do not solely frame her as a courageous female-warrior. In fact a number work to 'right' the paradoxical nature (a feminine soldier) of Lynch's social construction. Howard and Prividera (2004) describe how Lynch's identity is 'civilianized, sexualized and victimized' in order to move Lynch from 'serving soldier' to 'civilian victim'. Lynch is first civilianised through the 'naming process'. In numerous military and media reports Lynch is referred to not as 'Private Jessica Lynch', but simply as 'Jessica'. Through the exclusion of her military rank Lynch is rhetorically stripped of her military identity. Instead, references to her 'pre-war civilian identity' – her dream to become a kindergarten teacher – supersede her soldier identity, 'reifying traditional and dichotomous notions of gender'. Reports emphasising her physical stature and perceived frailty further distance Lynch from her militarised warrior identity (Howard, 2004: 92-3). In a *Time* article, Lynch is described as 'pale, skinny, with thin straight legs that look as if they would snap' (ibid., 93). Lynch's soldier identity is once again obscured in reports of her rescue that detail her first 'hiding' under her sheet before being 'whisked' away – descriptors unfitting for a soldier-warrior and far more consistent with feminine archetypes (ibid., 92).

Secondly Lynch's identity is sexualised with her repeatedly described as 'cute', 'young', 'attractive' and 'blonde'. Such descriptions are 'consistent with societal evaluations of women based on perceived beauty rather than intelligence or skill'. Reports also frequently emphasised the possibility (even probability) that she could be sexually abused (ibid., 93).

Lastly, Lynch is constructed as an 'innocent victim' opposed to a 'captured soldier'. Although Lynch was proclaimed a hero by the media and military, she was so only because she was a victim. Unlike heroes who succeed or save others, Lynch was a hero for surviving, for living to be saved by the 'real' (masculine) warrior hero, and for fulfilling the expectations of a woman victim. Constructed as a particular type of hero, Lynch 'is a hero for being an object, not a subject' (ibid., 94). In the process of 'Jessica's' rescue, the American public is reminded who their 'real' heroes are (ibid., 96) – the *male* warrior-soldier.

It should be noted at this point that the 'facts' of Lynch's capture and rescue have since been widely dismissed as false, with Lynch herself criticising the way in which the military exaggerated accounts of her rescue and recast her capture as a patriotic fable (Kirkpatrick, 2003). However, despite these later revelations, the dominant narrative of the 'Jessica Lynch Story' remains one of a young *girl* rescued by the (masculine) US military.

By recasting Lynch's multifaceted woman/soldier/POW identity as feminised, victimised and in need of saving, Lynch's subjecthood is removed. Instead, Lynch becomes the body, the object, the terrain, upon which American militarised masculinity can be re-enacted (Masters, 2009: 36). Lynch's hyperfemininity emphasises the male rescuers' hypermasculinity, while her passivity allows them to perform their 'protector' identity. Throughout her capture and rescue, Lynch was defined by what was done to, and for her, not for what she did herself. Despite her status as an American hero, Lynch has little agency in her story. Her own actions and status as an agent is marginal to the narrative; she 'was an object about which stories were told' (Kumar,

2004: 309-10). Just as military wives, sex workers and nurses are rendered voiceless and without agency through the discursive and performative practices of the military that privilege the (near) exclusively male realm of combat, so too is Jessica Lynch. As the (feminine) 'face of the war', Lynch's own wartime acts and achievements are rendered invisible through the foregrounding of her femininity.

There were three women in total in the company ambushed on 23 March. Private Lori Ann Piestewa, a Native American, died at the scene having sustained injuries during the explosion and collision. Specialist Shoshana Johnson, a black single mother, survived the attack and like Lynch was taken prisoner. Why then was it 'Jessica' who was pictured on countless newspaper and magazine covers? Why was 'Jessica' the lead story on every American news station? Firstly, despite racialised 'others' often positioned as the object of rescue missions<sup>7</sup>, Lynch's blond hair and blue eyes fitted the mould of the 'all-American girl', 'damsel-in-distress' (ibid., 300), in need of rescue perfectly. Lynch became symbolic of the US feminine protected in ways that the racialised 'other' women, Piestewa and Johnson, could not so easily. Secondly, unlike Lynch who, despite earlier reports claiming she went down fighting, did not fire one round of ammunition after her gun jammed, and 'went down praying' to her knees (BBC News, 2003), both Piestewa and Johnson were actively involved in combat. While 'Piestewa was killed in action, the

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<sup>7</sup> The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have both been framed by discourses of protectionism and rescue, and repackaged as cases of humanitarian intervention. In these narratives the US and its allies are positioned as the benevolent (white, masculine) protectors, defending both the feminised and racial 'others' from brutal dictatorships, *and* (white) women and children back home from terrorism and 'weapons of mass destruction'. (For a more detailed explanation of these discourses see Iris Marion Young. 2003. "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29(1). Pages 16-30 especially.)

quintessential military experience' (Howard, 2004: 94), Johnson fired a number of rounds herself before being taken captive. With her physically 'feminine' appearance and absence of actual combat, Lynch easily makes the transition from 'warrior' to 'woman'. Piestewa and Johnson however do not do so as effortlessly. So as not to compromise the masculine 'warrior hero' image, Piestewa and Johnson are rendered secondary to the story, foregrounding not their actions but their relationship to Lynch (*ibid.*, 94-5), the innocent *girl* in need of rescue.

### **Lynndie England: Sex abuser or sexually exploited?**

Standing behind a pyramid of naked and hooded Iraqi detainees, with one arm around Charles Graner, Lynndie England grins. In another photo she holds prisoner on a dog leash round the neck. England is pictured again, smiling again, while she cocks her fingers into a gun shape and points them at a prisoner's genitals. Just as Jessica Lynch's blond hair and blue eyes became the benevolent face of the war in Iraq, England's grin and reports of the sexual torture she engaged in came to represent the 'obscene underside' of America's 'war on/of terror' (Masters, 2009: 39).

While torture is by no means a new phenomenon in warfare, and Abu Ghraib was not the first time American troops have been accused of wrongdoing, what was to prove so shocking about this particular episode were the faces of the abusers – three of them were women (Sjoberg, 2007: 58). Military police officers, Megan Ambuhl, Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman, along with four male others participated in, and photographed, the physical and sexual

abuse of male<sup>8</sup> Iraqi detainees. One woman in particular – England – appeared to capture a disproportionate amount of media and public attention.

By engaging in sexualised torture, even seeming to revel in it, England produces an image that runs counter to perceptions of femininity as ‘maternal, emotional and peace-loving’(Sjoberg, 2007: 1). As a woman, it is expected that England is the one who should require protection, not the one from whom others should be protected (Sjoberg, 2008: 7). In war, just as in everyday society, it is women, not men who are expected to be the victims of sexual violence. For a woman to be the perpetrator is to turn deeply gendered assumptions upside down. By simulating the same type of violence that the Pentagon claimed Jessica Lynch was subjected to at the hands of Iraqi guards, England serves to invert the terms of Lynch’s public narrative (Froula, 2006). England maps her own femininity onto the bodies of the Iraqi prisoners, rendering them obedient, subservient and passive, and, in turn, takes on the (masculine) identity of master and torturer. By participating in the very sexual humiliation that her feminine gender is usually victim to, England’s actions should create confusion and rupture our understandings of femininity

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<sup>8</sup> While the Taguba Report into the abuses at Abu Ghraib confirmed the physical and sexual abuse of female detainees, including ‘Videotaping and photographing male and female naked detainees’, and photos depicting a ‘male MP [Military Police] guard having sex with a female detainee’ (Taguba, 2004, 16-7), none of the photos released to the media in 2004 featured any female prisoners. (It is interesting to note that the Taguba Report states that the male MP guard is ‘having sex’ with a female detainee as opposed to raping her, how this could be inferred from the photo is not made clear.) While there have been repeated calls for the release of all 2,000 photos both the Bush and Obama administrations have declined to do so, with Obama in May 2009 stating that to do so would be to ‘inflare anti-American opinion’ (Obama, 2009).

(Eisenstein, 2007: 37), thus disturbing the boundaries and limits that work to construct militarised masculinity<sup>9</sup>.

When Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defence at the time, declared that to show all the photos of the torture and abuse would be to allow them to 'define us' as Americans, he recognised the significance of the photographs. The Abu Ghraib photos did not just reflect the abuse that went on within the prison walls, but also constructed an interpretation of what it was to be an American (Butler, 2005: 825-6), of what it was to be a man or woman. To see a young woman, only twenty years old, participating in the sexualised violence that was meted out on the detainees, to see her in what had always assumed to be an exclusively male torturer's role, was to radically trouble gendered assumptions. By trespassing into the 'masculine' domain of aggression, sadistic violence and sexual abuse, England should disrupt the distinguishing borders between the (militarised) masculine and feminine. It follows that a feminine body (England) that engages in masculine performances (torture) ought to cause our own understandings of gender to be troubled and should not allow the re-inscription of militarised masculinity against a non-violent femininity.

While both the media and the public paid significant attention to Lynndie England, it were the questions surrounding her femininity and womanhood

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<sup>9</sup> Although I recognise that gender does not operate exclusively, and that it always intersects with discourses of race, class and sexuality, the limited scope of this paper means that I cannot further explore their effects. An article that does so particularly well however is one by Melanie Richter-Montpetit ("A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of the Prisoner 'Abuse' at Abu Ghraib and the Question of 'Gender Equality'". *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (2007), 9(1): p. 38-59). In it Richter-Montpetit unpacks the ways in which the three women's involvement in the torture of detainees may have disclosed certain (gendered) social contradictions, but has simultaneously worked to reinforce particular racial and heteronormative scripts.

that were foregrounded. In looking at women's violence in global politics, Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) have identified three narratives that women are frequently framed within, rendering them without agency and bringing their own femininity into question. Women who engage in proscribed violence are portrayed as nurturing or vengeful 'mothers', pathologically damaged 'monsters', and 'whores' whose violence is inspired by sexual dependence or depravity (Sjoberg, 2007: 12). Lynndie England's actions at Abu Ghraib were framed by the monster and whore narratives – she was not a woman who exercised agency in her decision to engage in the abuse, but was a psychologically depraved monster who was sexually controlled by the 'ringleader' of the abuse, her then-boyfriend, Charles Graner. The monster narrative explains England's violence as biological and pathological deviance from prescribed feminine norms so that she cannot be held responsible for her actions as her womanhood has gone awry (*ibid.*, 36-7). The whore narrative sexualises and fetishises the violence, painting England as sexually overactive and used by Graner in the abuse he himself orchestrated. The whore narrative is visible in media reports that focus on England's sexual relationship with Graner, often described in graphic detail, despite it being secondary, if relevant at all, to the story (*ibid.*, 83). Frequent reports state that England was 'like a plaything for him', and that 'she'd do anything he told her to do' (McKelvey, 2006).

Invoking these narratives serves a dual purpose. By denying England's agency in her actions, ideas about femininity as caring and peaceful remain intact, and while the narratives isolate violent women, 'they do so on gendered terms, which characterize the women perpetrators as not only

aberrant, but aberrant because of their flawed femininity' (Sjoberg, 2007: 13). Femininity is once more understood as something that is both innocent and in need of protection, and as something potentially dangerous to be protected against.

Sjoberg and Gentry draw our attention to the ways in which England's agency is continuously denied or marginalised, however by doing so they appear to implicitly assume that men are always represented as having the capacity for agency. However, particular men are frequently precluded from exercising meaningful agency (for example, the 'crazy', 'fundamentalist' terrorist). With regards to political violence the idea that women are denied agency, while men are granted it seems to rely too much on a neat distinction between men and women. Agency can be effaced through any number of gendered, racialised, civilisational or sexualised processes. It is likely that England's status as white and western (read, 'civilised') meant she was represented as having greater capacity for agency than the detainees' statuses as non-white and 'Oriental' (read, 'uncivilised')<sup>10</sup>.

It is not only the media and public's fascination with Lynndie England that tell us something about understandings of gender. The relative silences surrounding the male abusers, and, to a lesser extent, Megan Ambuhl and Sabrina Harman, are also informative. Despite nearly two thousand photos of the abuse existing, England appears as a frequent and central character in a number of those released by the Bush administration. Cristina Masters points to England's 'butchy' appearance, 'with her cropped dark hair, boyish features

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<sup>10</sup> Melanie Richter-Montpetit's article (see previous footnote) would again be useful in unpacking some of these racialised and sexualised processes.

and androgynous body', opposed to the specific acts she performed, as a reason to why she was made to stand out. Lynndie England's body already told a story of difference and deviancy, making it possible to single her out not just from the six other torturers but from the US body politic as a whole (Masters, 2009: 38).

Just as Jessica Lynch was civilianised and came to represent America, its values and way of life, Lynndie England was 'othered' from the US public. Her physical appearance and engagement in torture called into question not only her womanhood, but also her 'Americanness'. Representations of England disconnected her from the wider US public, with Bush and Rumsfeld explaining the abuses as the work of 'rogue' soldiers, a 'few bad apples' (Enloe, 2004). 'Real' femininity could now be constructed in opposition to England as she took on the identity of the 'other'. 'Othering' Lynndie England not only had the effect of ensuring gendered assumptions of femininity remained undisturbed, it also – like the military wives and nurses – provided another body for militarised masculinity to be rearticulated through.

Masters states that the *saving* of Jessica Lynch, and the *sacrificing* of Lynndie England, was necessary for the re-inscription of dominant masculine representations of US sovereign power (Masters, 2009: 38). Following this, I make the claim that the bodies of Lynch and England, and the actions performed by/to them, is necessary for the re-enactment of militarised masculinity. While Lynch was the beautiful and helpless young girl who needed rescuing by masculine warrior heroes, England was the evil and sexually deviant non-woman whose distorted femininity transgressed from gender norms, the US military and the wider body politic. England then was

not feminine, but nor was she identified in military terms. Instead she was represented as an aberration, othered from the gender her body signified and the military institution her job implied. 'Real' femininity and 'real' (male) soldiers could then be constructed and reinforced in opposition to her difference.

### **Faye Turney: Protective soldier or protective mother?**

On 23 March 2007, 15 British Royal Navy personnel from *HMS Cornwall* were surrounded by the Navy of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards off the Iran-Iraq coast and subsequently detained. Twelve days later on 4 April all 15 were released. Of the 15 held hostage, there was one woman, Acting Leading Seaman Faye Turney. Throughout her capture and in the days following her release Turney's face was on the front of every national newspaper in the UK, and her dual identity as soldier and mother the subject of fierce debate.

Numerous media reports appeared to invert the conventional protector/protected binary by drawing attention to the fact it was Turney's husband, Adam, left at home in England with their three year old daughter. Despite being in the Royal Navy himself, Adam Turney is placed in a supporting, rather than warrior, role in this story, undergoing what one commentator described as, 'the terrible ordeal of knowing his wife is in danger but being powerless to protect her' (Kirby, 2007). This narrative situates Adam Turney in the role of a 'camp follower', remaining behind the 'front line' and responsible for the caring and nurturing tasks that his young daughter demands. Unlike traditional understandings of military families where the man is absent for months at a time while the woman remains in the home, in the

Turney household it is Faye who leaves, Faye who flies thousands of miles to a warzone and Faye who faces real and imminent danger. Meanwhile it is Adam who assumes the role of caretaker and (male) military 'wife'. While Faye's feminine military body is engaging in the 'masculine' performance of combat, Adam's masculine military body is responsible for the 'feminine' tasks of care-giving and nurture. Both feminine and militarised masculine identities are troubled when such gendered performances disconnect from their signifying bodies. It would be expected that in this narrative militarised masculinity should not be being re-inscribed but is instead subverted and disturbed through bodies that reject gendered norms.

During her time in captivity, it was also reported that Turney demonstrated bravery, 'risked beatings', and was a great comfort to fellow members of her crew (Hughes, 2007). Through these performances Turney is portrayed again as assuming a protecting, rather than protected, role. In an interview with Able Seaman Arthur Batchelor, headlined, *Faye Saved Me*, conventional understandings of masculinity as brave and strong, and femininity as weak and helpless are reversed. While Batchelor sits 'scared stiff' and 'cried like a baby', Turney puts her 'neck on the line' to 'protect and look after' her fellow captive (ibid.). Unlike the Jessica Lynch story that emphasises her vulnerability above that of the rest of her company, Turney's vulnerability is rendered less visible through her assumption of a protector's identity. The inclusion of Turney's feminine body in this particular military operation has appeared to have resulted in the inversion of masculine and feminine performances. It is the male captives who are vulnerable and scared, while Turney stands alone as the (feminine) protector. This subversion of one of the

core features of the militarised masculine identity ruptures assumed distinctions between explicitly masculine and feminine behaviour. Relying on such distinctions for its own intelligibility, militarised masculinity should, in turn, experience an undoing of its perceived cohesiveness. Turney's feminine inclusion should destabilise militarised masculine identity.

Faye Turney was not however portrayed as an invulnerable warrior-soldier. Her bravery was frequently attributed to, or associated with, the fact she was also a mother. Turney was not brave and a protector because she was a soldier, it was because of her strong maternal instincts. Arthur Batchelor attributes the fact that he looks 'young' as to why Turney felt a compulsion to 'look after' him (Hughes, 2007). Even when taking on the explicitly masculine role of a protector, Turney is unable to rise above stereotypical and essentialist assumptions regarding her feminine gender. Just as mother narratives are invoked when trying to explain women's violence, so too are they used when explaining Turney's bravery and courage. It is Turney's motherhood that defines her actions, which are understood as 'sacrifice...caring for others...responding to others' needs'. Turney's bravery and assumption of a 'protector's role' is because of her (female) psychological compulsion to assist and support others, especially men (Sjoberg, 2007: 34). Performing the supporting and caring tasks that are traditionally associated with the home and private sphere, Turney is seen to continue operating within a woman's 'field of honour' (ibid., 33). Thus, Turney re-inscribes the borders that trace feminine and militarised masculine identities. Identifying Turney as a 'nurturing mother' opposed to 'brave soldier' serves to divorce Turney from her military role, locating her instead in a supporting position.

The constant attention paid to Turney's motherhood civilianises Turney in a similar way to Lynch. Reports frequently referred to her as 'Faye', or the 'mother captured by Iran' (Salkeld, 2007), while commentators debated the possibility or problems with her dual identity as mother and soldier. Turney was rhetorically stripped of her (potentially masculine) military identity, leaving in place her identity as mother, wife and feminine. In the interview Turney gave to *The Sun* newspaper on her release, the story is littered with photos depicting Turney in civilian dress alongside her daughter and husband. Attention is paid to how Turney 'burst into tears' on seeing her family for the first time and 'apologised' for what she had put them through (Moult, 2007). Such descriptions are far from compatible with the (masculine) warrior soldier image, being consistent instead with gendered stereotypes of women as emotional and family-orientated.

Despite Turney taking on the role of protector towards some of the younger members of the crew, she herself was framed as the most vulnerable in a number of reports. Throughout, and during the aftermath of Turney's capture, media stories were preoccupied with the possibility of a sexual assault. Turney's own fears of rape made front page news – 'I feared being raped by Iranians' (Moult, 2007) – despite her having been released and confirming no such assault had occurred or been attempted<sup>11</sup>. Fixating on the potential sexual vulnerability of a woman soldier implicitly suggests a softer and more

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<sup>11</sup> This fixation with Turney's potential sexual vulnerability and the focus on her own fears of sexual assault, carry implicit racial and civilisational assumptions. As with Lynch, it is implied that the uncivilised and barbaric Oriental 'other', prone to sexual excess, will be unable to fight their sexual urges when confronted by a captured and helpless (Western) female. Not only does this serve to privilege white Western (militarised) masculinity over the (militarised) masculinity of the Oriental 'other', but it also (as do the pictures depicting UK and US female soldiers in full combat gear juxtaposed with pictures of burka-clad women in the Middle East) advances an 'us'/'them' dichotomy.

breakable physicality, and questions their suitability or the military. All three women discussed in this article have had their sexual vulnerability debated. It was feared that both Lynch and Turney would be subjected to sexual abuse whilst captured. In the case of Lynch this debate is ongoing despite Lynch herself stating she has no recollection of a sexual assault, and Iraqi doctors explicitly stating that there was no physical evidence to suggest one had occurred. England too was framed in a discourse of sexual vulnerability despite her own engagement in sexual torture. England was described as a sexual 'plaything' for Graner, who took pictures of himself having anal sex with England and manipulated her into being "sexually wild" with him (McKelvey, 2006). England's sexual dominance over the detainees is backgrounded in comparison to her perceived sexual subservience to Graner.

By emphasising Turney's role as mother and wife, and focussing on her sexual vulnerability, Faye Turney's soldier identity is stripped and her civilian identity moved to the foreground. The discursive shift from a feminine body in a soldiering role, to a feminine body as mother and wife, allows for the re-assertion of militarised masculinity. Boundaries that risked blurring through the incorporation of women in soldiering roles are redefined and reinforced through the identification of women soldiers as first wives, mothers and feminine, and secondly (if at all) as soldiers.

### **Co-constitutive narratives**

There are then two Jessica Lynches – the masculine soldier/hero, and the feminine girl-next-door; two Lynndie Englands – the sadistic sex torturer, and the sexually controlled naïve young girl; and two Faye Turneys – the brave

and courageous protector, and the maternal and sexually vulnerable wife and mother. Pin-Fat and Stern refer to the tension between these two aspects of identity as an '(im)possible constitutive dynamic' (Pin-Fat, 2005: 28). Full representation of the three women's identities is never possible as the masculine/sadistic/brave soldier-identity must always rely on, and be constituted by, the girl-next-door/sexually controlled/mother feminine-identity, and vice versa (ibid., 29). Thus, the seemingly paradoxical and mutually exclusive narratives surrounding each of the women do in fact rely on one another for their construction. Just as the feminine informs and reifies the military masculine identity, the narrative of Private Jessica Lynch, trained soldier, deployed to Iraq, runs alongside the narrative of petite and pretty small-town 'Jessica' in need of rescuing by America's hypermasculine warrior soldiers. The story of Lynndie England as a monstrous sex abuser runs underneath the story of a young girl 'infatuated with a volatile, manipulative man' (McKelvey, 2006). The account of Acting Leading Seaman, and hostage, Faye Turney runs intertwined with the mother who feared sexual assault from her captors.

While militarised masculinity risks disruption from the inclusion of feminine bodies within the military, and the troubling of gendered stereotypes this creates, it simultaneously relies on this disruption for its identity to be re-inscribed. As an identity that exists only so long as it is 'doing' or 'performing', militarised masculinity relies on the difference and 'otherness' of 'feminine' bodies and performances for its re-enactment. While feminine bodies in soldiering roles may at first look like a threat to such a distinction, particular discursive structures frame them in such a way to rearticulate 'real' militarised

masculinity in opposition to the confusion bred by 'gender decoys' (Eisenstein, 2007: 37), such as Lynch, England and Turney. In effect, without troubling the militarised masculine identity, there is no opportunity for it to reassert itself. Like the military wife, prostitute and nurse, women soldiers are permitted in the military, however, discursive structures ensure they will never *be* the military (Enloe, 1988: 15).

### **Refocusing our feminist lens**

Reliance on the feminine constitutive other demonstrates the identity of militarised masculinity as already 'inherently unstable, incomplete and subject to change' (Pin-Fat, 2005: 35). The unsettling presence of the feminine body within the military simultaneously makes this visible and unseen. There is then, I believe, a need to address militarised masculinity, and masculinity generally, more directly.

Despite the potentially troubling inclusion of feminine bodies in soldiering roles for understandings of a clearly defined militarised masculine subject, its subversive potential is easily co-opted for the re-inscription of that very identity. Turning our feminist gaze to militarised masculinity as opposed to remaining fixed on women and femininity may well provide new opportunities for critical intervention. By making visible the ways in which the militarised masculine subject is constructed, its inherent contradictions and precariousness as an identity will be revealed. A feminist deconstruction of the militarised masculine identity may well also help in unpacking the

violences that occur within militaries, and by military personnel, worldwide<sup>12</sup>. In what ways do the constituting practices and discursive structures framing militarised masculinity, make particular violences – and on particular bodies – possible? Finding ‘ruptures’ in the militarised masculine identity<sup>13</sup> may help unpack some of these violences, as well as offering the possibility of subverting that identity.

There are those who are concerned that by turning our attention back to ‘man’ and ‘masculinity’ we risk once more sidelining women. Marysia Zalewski (1998) details some of these concerns in her introduction to *The ‘Man’ Question*, quoting Tania Modleski’s challenge of, ‘What’s in this for feminism and women?’ (Modleski, 1991: 5). Modleski argues that a focus on masculinity is detrimental to the feminist project and represents a shift away from efforts to illuminate the ‘causes, effects, scope and limits of male dominance’ (ibid., 5). However, as my earlier discussion detailing iterations of masculinity and femininity as co-constitutive sought to demonstrate, you cannot talk about masculinity without always already speaking of femininity. A renewed focus on men and masculinity then is not to place women and femininity in a marginal or supporting role, but is an attempt to trouble and problematise the seemingly stable categories of ‘man’ and ‘masculinity’.

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<sup>12</sup> Examples of this militarised violence include: the murder and sexual assault of Shidane Arone by Canadian peacekeepers in Somalia during the 1993 *Operation Deliverance*; the rape and murder of Louise Jensen in Cyprus, 1994 by three British off-duty soldiers; the murder of four military wives by their soldier-husbands in Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 2002; and, an ongoing inquiry into the death of Iraqi hotel receptionist Baha Mousa at the hands of British servicemen in Iraq.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Ruptures’ in the warrior-soldier identity that may occur are military recruits’ experiences of pain, doubt and fear; an inability to fight; and, post-traumatic stress disorder (Sandra Whitworth explores the effects of PTSD on the militarised masculine identity in, *Men, Militarism & UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*. 2004. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers and “Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” in Jane L. Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*. 2008. London: Zed Books).

## **Conclusions**

The military has traditionally been viewed as the quintessential 'male' experience, a place where boys are 'made into men', and bravery, strength and courage are explicitly marked as 'masculine' performances. The warrior-soldier identity is perceived to be constructed round clear demarcations of what it is to be 'masculine', and, what it is to be the despised and feared 'feminine'. The feminine however has always already been included in both the military and the construction of the militarised masculine identity. With no ontological status apart from the 'performances' that constitute its identity, the feminine provides the surface for militarised masculinity to reproduce on, through and around. At the same time, the ('(un)')/acceptable) performances of feminine bodies within the military work to map the borders of the militarised masculine subject, giving the appearance of a stable and coherent identity.

When a feminine body therefore takes up the previously exclusively male soldiering role and performs the implicitly masculinised tasks of combat and warfare, borders that used to distinguish the clearly defined gendered identities of femininity and militarised masculinity should begin to blur. Jessica Lynch, Lynndie England and Faye Turney are three women who have all engaged in performances considered disconnected from their signifying bodies. However, the stories told about the three women serve to both disrupt and reinforce the militarised masculine identity. Narratives surrounding Lynch, England and Turney simultaneously portray the women respectively as a female Rambo, sadistic sex abuser and protective soldier, and, as a defenceless victim, sexually exploited plaything and caring mother. While these paradoxical narratives appear mutually exclusive, they do in fact rely on

one another for their constitution. As an identity that needs continual re-articulation, the tension between the two opposing aspects of identity allows militarised masculinity to be first troubled, and then re-asserted.

The ways in which the potentially subversive presence of Lynch, England and Turney have been so easily co-opted for the re-inscription of the militarised masculine identity leads me to call for the feminist gaze to turn to militarised masculinity, and masculinity more generally, and address it directly. To do so is not to sideline women and femininity once again, but to destabilise the category 'man' and provide new possibilities for critical intervention. With ongoing reports of militarised violence, including violences perpetrated by UK and US military forces, both at home and in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is more pertinent than ever to unpack the ways in which militarised masculinity is constructed and its inherent fragility.

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