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"*Where is War*? *We are War*." Teaching and Learning the Human Experience of War in the Classroom.

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Abstract

How do we teach and learn the human experience of war? How far removed is this experience from a classroom? This article uses these questions as the starting point for an investigation into the presence/absence of war experience, the effects of narratives distancing war, and the consequences of challenging these narratives. It draws on the experience of an undergraduate module at the University of Kent that investigates the human experience of war in which students were asked to reflect on the question of distance between those living "war experiences" and their lives in a small British city. Unexpectedly in 2015, several students argued that this distance was the lecturer's construction. By making war personal – without any of them having experienced a "warzone" – the students chose to argue that war was also their experience. This response directly challenges an established narrative in International Relations that the West has been essentially at peace since World War II, a narrative that obscures the fundamental role of war experience in the lives of ordinary citizens. It leads to a broadened understanding of war experience that has important conceptual, political, and normative implications in the study of war and on our political responsibility in the everyday.

Introduction

International Relations (IR) and war studies, particularly in their critical forms, have shown an increasing interest in the role of experiential knowledge of war and violence. With the work of authors such as Christine Sylvester (2011, 2012) from an IR perspective, Carolyn Nordstrom (1997) from anthropology, and Megan Mackenzie (2012) and Swati Parashar (2014) in feminist approaches to security, there is a growing and vibrant literature on how war can and should be studied "up from people" (Sylvester 2012, 484). Attention to the lived experience of war allows for the complexity of this experience to disrupt orderly narratives and theories that have largely dominated IR. This is a complexity that needs to be cherished rather than shunned, this approach argues, as it is essential not only to improve our understanding of the *social* reality that is war but also of the potential paths to conflict resolution and transformation (see Lederach 2003).

Little however has been published on how experiential knowledge can be brought into the classroom. How do we teach war experience in a cold but safe seminar room of a UK (or other Western) university to a class of students who usually have no direct experience of war? The first aim of this article is to address this question by examining whether there is indeed a distance between classroom and warzone, how it is constituted, and whether and how it may be bridged. These questions are central to the third-year undergraduate module, "Humans at War," taught at the School of Politics and International Relations of the University of Kent (UK) since 2013. Its aim is to introduce students to the key ontological, epistemological and methodological challenges of experiential knowledge in general, and of war in particular, and help students critically engage with testimonies of war. Students are asked to analyze a testimony of their choice (in any format from written to video, passing through body art) for their final assignment. Each year, a theme has emerged organically during the three-hour weekly seminar sessions and in the testimonies chosen by the students: one year the discussions tended to revolve around the ethical problems of speaking for the "subaltern" (Spivak 1988); another on the testimonies of war through and in bodies (Scarry 1985).

In 2015, several students challenged the notion of distance between themselves and "those experiencing war," choosing to analyze their own person as locus of war

experience. Although none of the students had actually experienced "War" in terms of combat or presence in a warzone, they argued that they had nevertheless experienced war (no capitalization, no quotation marks) and should be understood as having experiential knowledge of war. In a powerful example of what bell hooks (1989) calls "talking back", they took up a position that shifted the learner/teacher roles between students and lecturer. Particularly interesting for this article, hooks (1989, 2) states that talking back is not "talking about ideas but about that self – that me – which we are told is private, not public." The student-authors of this article talked back by revealing something about themselves in a move so powerful that they had to be heard and engaged with.

This article is thus the result of an ongoing dialogue between the lecturer (Harmonie Toros) and the students (Yasmeen Omran, Lucie Merian, Alex Guirakhoo, Joe Gazeley, and Daniel Dunleavy) on whether there is a distance between war and us, how to understand it, and what are the consequences of challenging the narrative establishing this distance. It began in the seminar room, was developed in the students' essays, and later through 1000-word contributions that the lecturer invited students to write for the purpose of this article. The (now former) students further wrote responses to very constructive reviewer comments that have been integrated in the article. The article is thus fully co-authored with the students.

This paper is divided in four parts. The first section will examine how the module constructed this distance between zones of war and zones of peace based on a position adopted widely in both the traditional and critical IR literature. The second section exposes how students challenged this geographic and temporal distance through their embodied narratives – narratives of their individual bodies, virtual bodies, and collective bodies. These five individual narratives are presented as vignettes without analysis in this section. The third section will examine how this "talking back" challenges the dominant narrative of the field of IR that creates a clear distinction between wartime and peacetime, between those who have experienced war and those (like us) who live in peace. Specifically, we argue that war experience has to be understood as going beyond the exceptional and needs to be recognized in the everyday and, more controversially, beyond trauma and pain. The final section examines the implications of eliminating the distance between classroom and warzone

and its implications for what counts as war experience. It will engage with whether it is important to maintain a hierarchy of war experience and on what criteria it should be based, on the dangers of normalizing and even romanticizing war, and on the implications in terms of the responsibility that comes with enlarging our understanding of war experience.

Other People's Wars

Distance can be measured in terms of place and time, as well as in terms of class, wealth, community and other physical, socio-economic, and discursive divides. Here we focus on two forms of distance which students appeared particularly determined to challenge: geographic and temporal distance. What they were pushing against was the widespread assumption in IR that they could not be bearers of war experience as contemporary citizens and residents of the West who had never traveled to "warzones." Indeed, the "West" has long been presented as a peaceful place: war happens elsewhere or a long time ago. One of the clearest examples of this discourse can be found when open warfare broke out in former Yugoslavia. In the words of then US President Bill Clinton, the war brought back "horrors we prayed had been banished from Europe forever" (quoted in Campbell 1998, 52). Indeed, the central question asked in Western capitals was "how can this happen in Europe?" The widely chosen response was that Serbs, Croats and Muslims were animated by ancient hatreds they had yet to overcome, unlike Western Europeans who had succeeded in doing so post-1945. By redrawing the borders of the "peaceful West" and leaving former Yugoslavia on the other side of this new border, the answer was thus to re-establish a safe distance between "them" (and consequently war experience) and us (Campbell 1998). Europe and the Global North remained war-free.

In IR literature, this position can be found across the field. In one of the most important articles putting forward the Democratic Peace Theory, Michael Doyle (1983, 323) stresses liberalism's "striking success in creating a zone of peace and, with leadership, a zone of cooperation among states similarly liberal in character." Realism strongly rejects the Democratic Peace argument, but acknowledges, as John Mearsheimer (2010, 387) did just a few years ago, that "Europe remains at peace." On this point, much critical IR is on the same page. For example, in his *Theory of World*

Security, Ken Booth (2007, 145) points at Europe as transforming after World War II from the "cockpit of war into a zone of peace and integration."

This postulate of a war-free zone has translated in the recent war experience literature into an assumption that war experience was to be sought elsewhere or from people – combatants, refugees, humanitarians, journalists - who "bring the war back home." Indeed, the literature on war experience calls on researchers and academics to find ways to bridge the gap between war theorizing, occurring in universities mostly in the West, and war experience, mostly occurring elsewhere. Nordstrom and Antonius Robben for example argue that "at some level … to be able to discuss violence, one must go where violence occurs, research it as it takes place" (Robben and Nordstrom 1995, 4). This assumes a distance between the researcher and the violence – a distance the researcher has to bridge, a place elsewhere one has to travel to.[1] Sylvester (2012, 492) laments that IR is "a field that has historically eschewed fieldwork for philosophical, historical and statistical analyses that place the researcher at some physical and psychic distance" from its subject of enquiry, such as war, and urges researchers to overcome this distance including through interviews, "a methodological and epistemological move of reaching towards other bodies and thereby moving… the space–time–knowledge relation between researcher and researched" (Sylvester 2012, 492). She then echoes Gayatri Spivak's (1988) warning that interviewing "disadvantaged populations" can make the researcher's voice drown out that of the research subjects. Again, this assumes that war experience is held by others – disadvantaged populations living elsewhere or from elsewhere.

Guided by this dominant narrative, when designing and running a module on "war experience," Harmonie believed that some of the central questions to be addressed were: Do we, (mostly) Western students and lecturers, need to go "elsewhere" to access war experience? How do we bridge this distance and what are the ethics of seeking to access the war experience of others? Is this necessary? Is this possible? Is this not the worst kind of voyeurism? Or, on the contrary, is failing to at least attempt to empathize with those living through war not a shameful apathy? In lectures and seminars, we debated the difficulty if not impossibility of ever "wearing another

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[1] This can also be within Western countries but it still requires travel to "other" neighborhoods to meet with "other" people.

person's shoes," as well as racial and gender prejudices that continue to mar the academy's as well as journalism's and popular culture's engagement with war and war experience. We also met with journalists and academics who had indeed "gone there" asking questions about security, interview techniques, and power differentials.

Unexpectedly, the five students co-authoring this paper challenged the very foundation of these questions by arguing – not necessarily explicitly at first – that this geographical and temporal distance with war was a construction that Harmonie was knowingly or unknowingly imposing on lectures and seminars. While not contesting that the West has witnessed a dramatic reduction of inter- and intra-state wars within its territory, they rejected the claim that they had to look elsewhere or amongst others to find war experience and posited themselves as detainers of war experience worthy of testimony. This challenge emerged from very different narratives, but they all focused on bringing war experience to the here and now, focusing in particular on bridging or indeed cancelling temporal and geographic distance between them as researchers and research subjects. These experiences are presented in the next section as raw vignettes written in the first person by each student-author. The analysis of how these testimonies challenge the current literature on war experience is offered in section three.

Talking Back

Yasmeen Omran

On January 2015, just after the Charlie Hebdo attacks I flew home after holidaying for a week in Amsterdam with my partner. I vividly recall how he suggested we use the biometric passport scanners to get through immigration and how I insisted on staying in the queue and going up to the counter to have the officer stamp our passports together. When we were both called up, I did not expect that my simple decision to have a person check me through rather than a machine would have led to my profiling as a terrorist, to us being separated from each other within a minute of crossing immigration, to being interrogated for two hours without the right to remain silent under the Terrorist Act 2000. After the officers handed me a brochure explaining what was expected from me now that I had been taken under this law, I was not

informed of what I had done wrong just that my compliance was necessary for them to keep the country safe.

In those two hours my nationality was doubted, my ethnic and religious heritage deconstructed, my bags and possessions searched, my loyalties questioned and my relationship with a white English man scrutinized. What I was experiencing was so surreal after years of television and online newspapers fooling me to believe that it could never happen to someone like me. For me, this experience and these procedures have always been mediated by those in power; I had never actually encountered accounts of those who had fallen victim to these measures through profiling. For the first time in my life I felt unwelcomed in my home and hyperconscious of my identity in a Western state at war with terrorism. I found as a Muslim and Arab, I no longer needed to inhabit or have roots in states of war or dress in my religious garments to be placed in the box of potential terrorist. My identity and my appearance had condemned me to fight for my right to simply exist within this state without some sort of ulterior motive. Although I may not be living in a state of military war, I realised I was living in an ideological one and I carry this fear and the memory of those few hours with me every day.

Alex Guirakhoo

Revolutions are powerful, organic social phenomena that carry the potential to drive change and transformation in communities. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 is no different, and grew from the deeply rooted grievances of a portion of the population that strived for change to the status quo. Due to the political instability in Iran with the rise of Islamic theocracy, my father and his family willingly left Tehran in order to pursue life in Vienna, Austria. I, along with many others around the world, am a direct descendant of this wave of mass emigration from Iran. Our bodies persist as a retainer of not only our proud Persian culture and heritage, but also of the impact that this sudden revolution had on the international system and perhaps more importantly: the individuals within it. Though I have been physically removed from Iran, its rich history, culture, and people have been central in shaping my understandings of both self-identity and worldview. I feel a sense of pride in retaining and developing my cultural connections through various means such as language, traditional holidays,

and media. While, to a certain extent, identities may be forged by history and background, self-awareness and self-determination simultaneously play a large role in shaping our everyday being. This has fuelled my interest in understanding and learning not only the experiences of my father and his family, but also the stories of those that remained. Being Iranian, to me, is more than just a nationality. Rather, it is an embodiment, a demonstration, one example of the sheer power and ability of war and conflict to drive societal change, spread culture, and influence international structure.

Daniel Dunleavy

"Deich schilling" (ten shilling in Irish Gaelic) is a 1966 coin produced by the Irish state to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising. The coin was a gift from my mother for my 21st birthday, who had previously received it from my grandmother to remember the year of her birth. The coin features on one side Cú Chulainn, a mythical Irish hero, and on the reverse Pádraig Pearse, a revolutionary member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Both of them died for Ireland – Pearse executed for his role in the rising and Chulainn by tying himself to a pillar of stone as his enemies advanced. Such sacrifices transcend time for me as they are congruent with the sacrifice of Christ. As a Catholic I empathize with the sacrifice of Cú Chulainn and Pearse, that their deaths can be viewed in the same light as that of Christ, and that they were righteous dying for the greater good. On a more spiritual level, I embody and experience their sacrifice through faith. In experiencing their sacrifice, I fully embody their righteous motivations for war; namely, self-determination and the freedom to express Irish culture and language. I find comfort and a sense of belonging in membership of a wider Irish community that share these motivations, and that later found expression in an independent Republic of Ireland. I think this was the very purpose of the rising, to bring Ireland together in a truly Gaelic culture to form a national independent family. For me, this transcends the borders of the Irish state. I live in Britain, but belong to Ireland. I do not experience war in terms of the gun, but nevertheless reduce the chasm between me as a student of conflict and those directly experiencing war, by truly embodying the motivations of war through faith.

Lucie Merian

My great-grandfather was a prisoner of war (POW) during WWII. My family has kept all the letters he sent home. He was Staff Sergeant (Maréchal des Logis-chef) and was arrested before being sent to a *Stammlager* (prison camp). There, he worked for German families in two different farms until his liberation in April 1945. Prison camps are rarely spoken of in WWII accounts, as concentration camps and resistance movements overshadow them. Thus, my great-grandfather's letters gave me a new and interesting insight into another aspect of WWII. Moreover, this testimony has enabled me to understand the impact of WWII on civilians in the "France Libre" zone, and how much they tried to keep a normal life.

I never really imagined the impacts of WWII on the places I know. Some of the letters give such a precise account of the life in Pauillac during WWII that I could actually visualize war there. Somehow, I always thought WWII happened in France but always "everywhere else." The letters as a personal testimony of WWII had a greater influence on my vision of the distance between the war and I because it was from a relative. I never met my great-grandfather, but seeing a picture of him for the first time in my life gave me an insight into how history and my own family were linked. As only two generations separate us, his letters were a very powerful emotional trigger for me to imagine what his life was. Moreover, in many letters he talks about my grandmother, which enabled me to discover more about her childhood. It also made me understand better how much her father's incarceration impacted on her life. For example, when she got old and she had Alzheimer's disease, many times when she was confused about reality, she thought she was actually in a train taking her to a camp in Germany. In spite of these letters, I still cannot say that I have experienced WWII in the conditions of a POW, but I feel closer to it than with just a "classroom knowledge" of WWII.

Joe Gazeley

Call of Duty (COD) promotes the idea that a soldier's job is to arrive in a geographical space, murder everyone and move on. This is a macabre form of wish fulfilment rooted in American frustration with failures in Iraq and Afghanistan despite their overwhelming military strength. Although brute force has failed to achieve

objectives in the real world, COD creates a virtual space in which extreme violence really is the answer. In the game there are no complicated and difficult 'hearts and minds' campaigns, and the US can make full use of its overwhelming strength to destroy its enemies without any moral recrimination. This brought me to reflect on the problems with presenting a hyper realistic but flawed representation of war. This flawed realism could potentially lead to and/or exacerbate flawed public perceptions of conflict. The accuracy and attention to detail of the game clouds its flawed assumptions and missing elements, and gives the whole package an undeserved aura of authenticity. The game also paints a very simplistic moral picture and does not recognize, let alone engage critically with, the moral issues of killing and maiming. Enemies are always clearly identified, armed and hostile with their faces covered. They are never wounded and never suffer anything but a clean death. This is part of a deliberate choice to remove the consequences of war and violence from the game, which is premised on an enjoyment of the act of killing, which would be impossible if any consequences were ascribed to the act itself. This shying away from consequences coupled with an overemphasis on the military in war mean that whilst COD may have achieved impressive immersion and surface level realism, its deeper narrative about the nature of war is highly inaccurate. COD is a simple goodies/baddies story of the war on terror but it is very interesting as an example of the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves. COD is not what war is like, but it perhaps shows how we are comfortable thinking about it.

War is here; War is now

These are very different experiences. However, they all call into question the construction of war as "over there" or "a long time ago," and reveal an intimate connection to war. In this section, we shall analyze how these testimonies engage with war, how they make claims to qualify as war experience, and how the current literature fails to allow space for such experiences to be understood as war experience. Drawing on the work of Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton (2011), we then argue in favor of a broadened understanding of war experience to include those that can emerge from "the everyday" even in the West, as well as experiences that are generative *not only* of pain and suffering. To begin with, it is important to analyze the testimonies' claims to war experience in detail.

Yasmeen and Alex challenge the construction of geography separating "us" from war, while Daniel, Lucie, and Joe challenge the notion that they cannot experience something that "happened" in another timeframe – either in a distant past or in a virtual reality. For Yasmeen, war travels with her wherever she goes, as she has become war. Alex lives war experience *because* of the geographical distance from his father's country, Iran. It is his birth in exile – his physical birth but also his birth as a member of the Iranian exile community – that creates this link he feels to war. In Daniel's case, great temporal distances are bridged through the "Deich Schilling" – from the 500 BCE death of Cú Chulainn to Pearse's sacrifice in 1916 to today[2]. Similarly for Lucie, by reading the account of daily life in her family village she is able to connect with her family's war experience and "see" war happen in Pauillac as she never did before. Finally, for Joe war is fixed in a continuous present through his playing of Call of Duty, a "now time" (Edkins 2013) which is six hours long, allowing for a deep, immersive experience of war.

These experiences are also largely embodied or mediated via bodies. Alex's existence as a human body is what links him to war, and it is his body that "persists as a retainer of not only my proud Persian culture and heritage, but also of the impact that this sudden revolution had on the international system and perhaps more importantly, the individuals within it." For Daniel, it is the physical gesture of "turning the coin" between the engraved images of Pearse and Cú Chulainn that brings him to feel the sacrifice of these two men for Ireland. "I directly experience their sacrifice, fully embodying their righteous motivations for war," he says. This is not only an individual bodily experience but also one that makes him feel part of a collective body of Catholics. Indeed, he experiences Cú Chulainn's and Pearse's sacrifice also "during Mass, when Catholics relive and experience the sacrifice of Christ through the Eucharist." Thus, it is as part of this broader collective body as well that Daniel experiences the Irish war. Similarly, Lucie feels war through the collective body of her family – her great-grandfather, her grandmother – and through the knowledge of their experiences. She describes the letter as a very "powerful emotional trigger"

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[2] The actions of Cú Chulainn and Pearse and their connection to the sacrifice of Christ are discussed at length elsewhere (see for example Moran 1997, 194).

brought about by an intergenerational connection strengthening her understanding of the collective body of her family.

Joe lives his war experience in COD not through a collective body but through the virtual body of an avatar – an avatar that is micromanaged into a "macabre form of wish fulfillment… in a virtual world in which extreme violence really is the answer." He is uncomfortable with this virtual body and questions its assumptions and practices, but while living in the continuous present of the game is nonetheless drawn into the experience of virtual fighting. Finally, Yasmeen's war experience is violently rooted in her body as it is her body that has become the locus of war. It is her body's Middle Eastern appearance, her body's suspicious proximity to that of a "white English man" that place her in war. No matter where she is, what she does or wears, her body is perceived as a potential threat and thus subjected to the war experience of search and interrogation, all with the threat of physical detention or exclusion constantly in the balance.

This connection between war and the body is important and is at the heart of much of the literature on the human experience in war. Sylvester (2012, 483) argues that "to study war as experience requires that the body come into focus as a unit that has war agency." Indeed for Sylvester (2012, 485), war's "actual mission' is "injuring human bodies and destroying normal patterns of social relations," and for Elaine Scarry (1985, 67) "reciprocal injuring is the obsessive content of war." Here, however, is where the narratives above largely differ from the reflections that have so far dominated discussions on war experience. Although the students experienced war through their bodies (understood as "individual or aggregations with differential spatial and knowledge relationships to the practices of given war" (Sylvester 2012, 485)), only Yasmeen's war experience can be associated with violence and trauma.

Yasmeen's experience indeed fits well within a growing strand of literature that examines what Louise Amoore calls the "Algorithmic War," waged by state institutions and private industries through the "algorithmic computing applications, biometrics, risk management systems and surveillance technologies" that in the War on Terror, "target individual bodies, designate communities as dangerous or risky, delineate safe zones from targeted locations, invoke the pre-emptive strike on the city

streets" (Amoore 2009, 50). Her war experience has thus been already recognized as such in scholarship that examines how the post-Cold War period is characterized by an overlapping of geographies of war with, on the one side, the increased role of non-state armed actors with transnational agendas and, on the other, "war-like architectures of self/other, here/there, safe/risky, normal/suspicious" that through the War on Terror are "played out in the politics of daily life" (Amoore 2009, 49; see also Heath-Kelly, Jarvis, Baker-Beall 2014). Yasmeen's experience can thus fit as "war experience" based on the current literature as, although war is largely seen as "over there," there is a growing realization that some of us live war because of *who* we are and not *where* we are.

What does this make of the other four experiences? Can they also be understood as war experience? According to Swati Parashar (2013, 625), "war questions ought to include: who is inside the war and who is outside." If Yasmeen is inside war because of the overlapping geographies of the War on Terror, are Daniel, Lucie, Alex, and Joe also inside war? The remainder of this section will examine how, although some literature has examined the intrusion of war beyond war zones, the experiences of our student-authors are largely not reflected in this literature. Research and reflections on war experience have investigated war beyond the battlefield in two ways, both of them examining the connection between war and the "everyday."[3] The first examines how the pain, suffering and trauma of war permeate beyond the battlefield and find their way in the everyday of those who have lived in warzones or have left war zones. The second examines how the everyday is a reflection of war and its violent order. We shall examine each in turn and show how, although these literatures have made important headway in broadening IR's understanding of war experience, they still fail to grasp the experiences examined in this article. We shall then use Barkawi and Brighton's notion of war as generative to argue that the borders of war experience

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[3] It is very difficult, and some would argue inadvisable, to define "the everyday." As Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard (2001, 33) point out, one should likely deliberately leave the term undefined because "the everyday is something that is close and familiar to us, something that is invisible but ever-present. In this sense, it is almost undefinable, being that realm of the routine and humdrum which we take for granted." Although there is a growing and very stimulating literature on the everyday in IR and security studies (see for example an *International Political Sociology* forum edited by Xavier Guillaume 2011 or the work of the late Lisa Smirl, 2011), this section will examine how it has failed to take into account experiences such as those presented in this article.

need to be expanded even further. The final section of this article will then examine the unsettling but potentially important implications of this broadening move.

Thus, war experience literature has examined the relationship between war and the everyday through an investigation of what happens to "ordinary" bodies – not only to those of exceptional heroes, villains, or token civilians. Parashar (2013, 620) points out that:

> The beginnings of war are in the banal, in the everyday acquisition of tribal lands and forests, in daily encroachments on the property of the poor, in the brutality of the police and security forces, in a sudden suicide bomb attack that visits people's lives as they go about their mundane daily chores. War bodies have stories that are rooted in the everyday.

These stories of the everyday, however, are almost invariably stories of pain and suffering. Indeed, although Parashar, Sylvester, and others recognize that "injury may not be the only way people experience war" (Sylvester 2012, 493), the stories they tell are almost exclusively those of pain, trauma, torture, or rape (Scarry, 1985; Rejali 1994; Edkins 2003). So when talking about the need to examine war in the everday, Parashar (2013, 618) for example says: "War does not appear extraordinary for the thousands of people who live inside wars and confront the gory images and the sight of blood and bodies on a daily basis."

This focus is certainly warranted considering that, as Barkawi and Brighton (2011, 135) convincingly argue, "fighting is that which thematically unifies war in general and in particular—''war'' with ''wars''— and no ontology of war can exclude it." Fighting and its repercussions onto individual and collective bodies is what make war, no doubt. But the question being asked here is whether war makes things other than pain, suffering, and violence. Some mention of experiences other than pain and suffering is made in the literature. However, when joy and pleasure are alluded to, they are investigated as the remarkable response ordinary individuals can have to violence and suffering, by engaging in "life amidst death, survival amidst destruction, music, drums and celebration amidst sounds of explosions" (Parashar 2013, 619). Thus, life, survival, and celebration are not generated by war here, but rather by

humans responding to the pain and trauma of war. It is not war that generates these as war is seen as only capable of generating injury, pain and suffering. This would exclude the experiences recounted in this article as "war experiences." Furthermore, these responses are limited to human responses in warzones. The generation of love and communion beyond warzones is not taken into account.

The second strand of literature looks beyond trauma and direct violence by examining how the everyday can be understood as a reflection of war and its logics. Indeed, Michel Foucault's (2003, 15) famous inversion of Clausewitz's aphorism argues that "power is war, the continuation of war by other means," as it "perpetually [uses] a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals" (Foucault 2003, 16). It is politics that inscribes our everyday with war. Thus, for Foucault and others (such as Henri Lefebvre), "the everyday sustains under the veneer of peace the work of war even after its formal end" (Favret 2005, 608), such that there is "no grounds for peace" (Favret 2005, 617).

Such a position can be found reflected in a variety of critical approaches to IR, from historical sociology to feminist critiques to IPE. Charles Tilly's (1983, 1985, 1990) work is central here in connecting war and today's state system and demonstrating in a detailed historical analysis how war, and in particular "the state's extraction of resources for war," is central to our citizen-state relations. It is war that has "hammered out [these] bargains between statemakers and the subject population" (Tilly 1983, 5). On the economic front, authors such as Couze Venn (2009) examine how our neoliberal political economies are based on a "zero-sum economic game" that

> requires new mechanisms that attempt to ensure relatively docile, if not compliant, populations in the form of massively intrusive surveillance, new forms of subjugation using new tools for the government of conduct and new forms of 'sovereign power', the latter operating in many countries in the shape of state-terrorism-supporting kleptocracies (Venn 2009, 225-226).

Such mechanisms and relations can only be based on values that promote a "reinvented racism and nationalism, stiffened by militaristic values, that is, by a return of the 'discourse of race war' congruent with all forms of the exclusion and objectification of the other" (Venn 2009, 226). Finally, feminist IR and security studies has examined how war bleeds into everyday gender relations as "there is a continuum of violence running from bedroom, to boardroom, factory, stadium, classroom and battlefield, 'traversing our bodies and our sense of self'" (Cohn and Ruddick 2003, 7). Hypermilitarized masculinities dominate social relations with men constructed as "naturally linked to warfare" – and thus power and decision-making – and women as "naturally linked to peace" and thus excluded from power (Yuval-Davis 1997, 94).

War thus impacts on the everyday beyond the bodily injuries and traumas it leaves behind in survivors. Its logics enter our political, economic, social and intimate relations in our everyday. However, despite the important contribution made by this literature to understanding the permeability of war beyond the battlefield and crucially beyond direct violence, we still believe that this does not allow for the testimonies analyzed here to be understood as "war experiences." Indeed, if the first strand of literature investigates the traumas of war in the everyday, the second strand examines the domination and the "relationship of force" in the everyday. In both approaches, war is seen as generative only of violence – direct, structural or cultural (Galtung 1969). But the stories of Daniel, Lucie, and Alex do not appear to be stories of violence – war in their case appears to be generative of (what is at least perceived as) a positive sense of self and community, of joy and communion with others. Can war generate such experiences?

Here we turn to the work Barkawi and Brighton to investigate more closely what they understand as war's generative power. Crucially for our purposes, they do not limit this to the generation of trauma and violence:

> While destructive, war is a generative force like no other. It is of fundamental significance for politics, society and culture. War occupies historic junctures and switchpoints, the birth and demise of eras (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 126).

This implies that in the "marriage of war and the everyday" (Favret 2005, 606), war can also be generative of joy, love (understood in the broader social sense), and of a communion of beings. By this, we are not referring to the pleasures highlighted by the historical work of Joanna Bourke in *An Intimate History of Killing* (1999, 2) with her "focus on the joyous aspects of slaughter." Nor are we talking about the pleasures some derive from the aesthetics of warfare, such as Vietnam war veteran Tim O'Brien (1991, 77) when he reminisces of the "fluid symmetries of troops on the move, the harmonies of sound and shape and proportion, the great sheets of metal-fire streaming down from a gunship, the illumination rounds, the white phosphorus, the purply orange glow of napalm, the rocket's red glare." Finally, we are not examining the everyday "almost as a dream of endless and redemptive warfare, an attempt to get back to war" (Favret 2005, 617) as it offers the possibility "of putting one over the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, poly-morph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries" (Certeau 1984, 40). Our testimonies are neither a romaniticization of war nor a glorification/eroticization of violence.

Indeed, our argument that these testimonies are testimonies of war is both simpler and politically and normatively more difficult. It is simpler because we are arguing that "war punctuates daily life, but without obvious suffering or pain" (Favret 2005, 614); that the everyday must also mean the nonviolent and the non-traumatic. We agree that "war is not a disruption of the 'everyday'… Instead, it can be captured in daily and mundane lived experiences of people and in powerful emotions that constitute 'self', community and the 'other'" (Parashar 2013, 615), but believe that this goes beyond the focus of most research on war experience that examines how "war bodies are brutalized in the construction of enemy identity" (Parashar 2013, 622). The latter understanding of war experience is reflected in the case of Yasmeen whose body is temporarily excluded from the population as a potential threat, but it excludes the four other testimonies.

To include the other testimonies as part of war experience we need to accept that the everyday goes beyond everyday violence. It needs to include "the gamut of social practices, bodies, discourses, and theories – the good and the bad, the obvious and the obscure*, the 'collaterals' and the fighters and the spectators* – that compose the social

institution of war in its many manifestations" (Sylvester 2013, 673 emphasis added), but go beyond those listed in the italicized clause to include bodies, practices, discourses and most importantly social relations of love and communion. It requires that we understand the everyday as being more than "a text that illuminates… the reproduction of relations of domination – gendered, economic, social" (Guillaume 2011, 446), to be a text that illuminates all types of social relations in war.

Although this argument may seem rather obvious – the everyday must include the ordinary, "the good and the bad, the obvious and the obscure" – it is politically and normatively uncomfortable to argue that war can build relations and identities that are neither traumatized nor violent and exclusionary; that war can generate and create love, care, and community without these being built against another; that even though war was/is fought against another, it can also create ties that build us, that strengthen us, that bind us in ways that are not necessarily violent. Daniel feels Irish through the sacrifice of Cú Chulainn and Pearse, not through a sense of anti-Englishness. Lucie feels greater love toward her family not in anger against German treatment of POWs or of occupied France. Alex is proud of his Iranian heritage but also feels in communion with those who stayed in Iran after the revolution. Joe on the other hand rejects the violent, dehumanizing logics of Call of Duty – the "pleasure of killing" logics that the gaming industry is selling; he refuses to be bound in exclusionary logics.

Thus, by talking back, students pointed to the need to recognize that war is not only something that happens over here or a long time ago. Their stories go further and claim that war is also something that goes beyond trauma and violence. They demanded that the lecturer recognize that war not only interrupts individual's continuity through trauma, "making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 136) as in the case of Yasmeen and to a certain degree Joe, but that it can also reveal continuity and make them play roles in which they do recognize themselves. Their investigation of war in their lives led to discoveries that were not only non-traumatic (with trauma understood as "the unassimilable and unnarrateable trace of history destined to self-repetition" (Favret 2005, 618)) but to a certain degree brought with it a sense of relief of self-discovery

and of communion with others. It is a simple, yet powerful and uncomfortable argument that has important implications. It is to these implications that we now turn.

Hierarchy, Experience and Political Space

The argument that war experience is not only something that happens over there or to others but something that happens to us and furthermore that it is not only to be sought in pain and trauma but also in love and communion is problematic conceptually, politically, and normatively. Conceptually, it may dilute war to such an extent that anything can become war experience emptying it out of any meaning and value. Politically, it risks supporting the romanticized version of war that already has more supporters than it needs in dominant political and cultural discourses. Normatively, it could lead to a dangerous – even offensive – equivalence between the experience of those who suffer unimaginable pain in war and those who simply find something of themselves in their link to war, as is the case of several of our testimonies. It may take up their space and drown out their voices. We will examine each of these in turn before we question whether it is necessary to re-establish some hierarchy between war experiences, between those who suffer in war and those who experience war without pain, and the implications of broadening war experience in terms of political responsibility.

As Barkawi and Brighton (2011, 130) note, if war is connected to "'everything else,' … a theory of war would 'amount to a theory and history of everything.'" If everything can become war experience how can one distinguish between war experience and simply experience, war history and history? Conceptually, war would thus be emptied out of any meaning, which is why Barkawi and Brighton insist on the need to have fighting as the core of any ontology of war. But just because "fighting is as definitive to war as cash exchange for economy" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 135), does not mean that war experience it is limited to fighting. Indeed, "[e]conomics as a discipline after all has not been limited to or necessarily centered upon the study of cash exchange" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 135). This leaves open the possibility of different experiences – experiences that are connected to fighting but do not have to be about fighting itself. We argue that these experiences do not necessarily have to be about pain and suffering either. To be sure, finding the borders of what counts as

war experience and what does not is not a simple matter. These are permeable, blurry categories and many experiences will be open to debate. However, this is true of all social categorizations. Thus, although we accept that we are stretching the borders of "war experience," we do not believe that we are over-stretching it beyond recognition or emptying it out of all meaning.

We may however be lending support to the dominant romanticized discourse of war. Feminists have long critiqued how war is presented as an unrivaled experience of brotherhood, a unique locus for heroism, where the best of us are revealed (Yuval-Davis 1997; see also Riley, Mohanty, and Pratt 2008 for an anthology of feminist approaches of war). Indeed, in the university module from which this article originates, every year commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the British Army invariably tell students how the relationships they build in war are unrivaled, how they love their fellow soldiers more than anything in the world, how they long to go back. O'Brien (1991, 77) calls it "a kind of largeness… a kind of godliness." By allowing war to generate love and communion such as that felt by Daniel, Alex, and Lucie, are we falling into this trap of the romantic war that despite the pain can create wonders unrivaled in peace? O'Brien (1991, 68) himself warns that

> if at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. As a first rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil.

What distinguishes our argument here from the romantic vision of war that has been served for millennia is that we are not saying that the love and communion that can be felt in or through war offers the slightest "bit of rectitude … from the larger waste." The feeling of belonging Daniel or Alex feel is not being offered as a sign that the wars they are connected to were "worth it" after all. Lucie's strengthened bond to her family does not make World War II virtuous in any way. Recognizing it as war experience does not mean setting their experience *up against* those of victims of the same wars in an attempt to "balance out" the latter's pain and suffering. Our argument

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is that such experience needs to be recognized, but far from us the notion that it should be used to counterbalance pain and suffering.

We also recognize that war has long been used by political actors to generate feelings of belonging and community – feelings often used against the "other" as part of a politics of violence and exclusion. "National identities are almost always fighting identities" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 140), identities that as Parashar (2013, 622) notes are often built upon brutalized war bodies "to convey political messages of who belongs and who is the 'other,' how communities are constructed and how affect can be generated." We worry about taking part in the "production of retrospective certainties" – of "normative certainties that make polities possible" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 140). Again however what is made of these war experiences needs to be differentiated from what is understood as qualifying as war experience. Broadening the range of experience understood as war experiences could lead and has led to these experiences being appropriated for violent and exclusionary discourses. This means one has to be wary of these discourses, not that war experience should not be broadened.

If we accept these as war experiences, are they to have the same value of the other war experiences, those of war survivors for example? Yasmeen crucially asks whether "certain experiences are more valid than others?" And "if so, whose voice is considered more valuable or more authentic?" Although distance may be reduced between "us" and those living in war, is there still not a hierarchy that is intrinsically linked to how far we are or have been spatially and temporally from a warzone? Interestingly, several of the students co-authoring this paper felt the need to re-establish such a hierarchy at the end of their contributions, in what appears to be an unwillingness to equate their experiences with the experiences of those who have witnessed, engaged in, or been subjected to in direct violence in warzones. Indeed, it is important to note that as part of the module students were exposed to testimonies of such direct experiences through meetings with soldiers, non-state armed actors, as well as journalists, diplomats and humanitarians working in war zones. Lucie notes that despite reading her great-grandfather's letters she cannot say "that I have experienced war but my knowledge of it is definitely deeper because I have a different angle on war." Similarly, Daniel feels the need to specify that he has not

experienced "war in terms of the gun" as if to ensure that the reader knows that he is only making a modest claim to war experience, one that "only partially reduces the chasm between me as a student of conflict and those directly experiencing war." This distinction between direct experience and their seemingly indirect one remains important to them.

How can such a distinction be made? Indeed, what distinguishes Yasmeen's experience from that of the others is not distance (temporal or geographic) from a warzone, as she is as far from a traditional warzone as they are. There may be however a distinction to be made between those who can look away from war experience – for Daniel, leave the coin in the drawer, for Joe stop playing COD, for example – and those who *live with* war in their everyday life, unable to extract themselves from it. Here, Yasmeen's war experience may itself represent a qualitative difference: She cannot stop being perceived as the "potential terrorist other." Racist logics of state power have inscribed her body in ways that can only be deleted by a radical political and social transformation away from the architecture of enmity referred to by Amoore. She cannot extract herself from war. However, Alex cannot stop being of Iranian descent and more specifically part of the Iranian exile community which marks him. Lucie always returns to her village of Pauillac, now a locus of war for her and Daniel cannot stop being Catholic or feeling the sacrifice of Irish nationalists. War, as examined in the previous section, constitutes us in ways that affect all our relations – political, economic and personal.

The difference may be then between those who seek out war experience and those upon whom it is imposed. Lucie chose to read her great-grandfathers' letters and attempt the empathetic step toward him. Daniel chose to investigate Cú Chulainn and Pádraig Pearse; Joe chooses to play videogames and which types to play. Yasmeen, and to a certain degree Alex, have no choice: their war experience is imposed on them, indeed inscribed on them as their bodies are categorized either as dangerous others or simply as members of an exiled community. The former live in a present in which they can bring in war; the latter live in present in which war exists whether they want it or not. The notion of choice however is problematic: identities are not simply chosen by individuals but are rather the result of a complex sea of social relations in which individuals navigate.

The difference may in the end stand in the violence of the experience – not only direct violence, but also structural and cultural violence. Yasmeen in particular is violated by war experience while Daniel, Alex and Lucie are arguably enriched by their experiencing of war. Joe is ambivalent about his experience as COD seems to tell him something about what he is not. It may be the amount of violence that the experience entails that requires some degree of recognition in listening to different experiences of war. This should not be conceptualized as a hierarchy, as hierarchies of pain often become violent delegitimations of someone's pain and suffering. It may simply be the recognition that there are those who have experienced something of war *and suffered* and those who have simply experienced something of war.

Such a hierarchy is important if we believe that space in politics (whether in its study or its practice) is finite. If political space is infinite, we are simply adding new voices, new experiences to the landscape of what is understood to be war. If, however, political space is finite, we may be taking away space from those who have suffered from war, those who most often have less privilege and therefore less access to this political space. Reinstating a hierarchy between war experiences of pain and suffering and war experiences *tout court*, allows us to be modest in our claims to political space for such non-violent, non-traumatic experiences (in this case, those of all but Yasmeen) and to recognize the primacy of the experience of suffering and the need to listen to it.

Finally, this distinction between those who experience and suffer from war and those who simply experience it also raises the question of political responsibility. If we too live through war, does our responsibility go beyond simply that of trying to understand what happens to others? Does it turn into a responsibility of engaging directly with the politics of war? Embodying war experience arguably brings with it the right to intervene – we know thus we can speak – but also the duty to engage – we are one of those who know, thus we *must* speak. In particular, one may argue that those of us who have experienced something of war but *have not suffered from it* may actually have an enhanced duty to engage. Precisely because we can look away, lock up the coins and letters in a drawer, shut down the PlayStation, because we are not struggling to survive on a daily basis, we may have an enhanced duty to engage with

the politics of war and violence, with the politics of exclusion and injustice. This means that we can no longer claim ignorance or incomprehension when faced with the war experience of others – "how can someone do that?" – because we, our family members, our friends have done this. Daniel's Irish brother Pearse sacrificed himself, Lucie's grandfather was a POW in Germany, Alex's father left revolutionary Iran, Joe returns to his virtual war, and Yasmeen continues to cross borders with the always present risk of being taken aside and questioned about her allegiances. If we acknowledge ourselves as detainers of war experience, we may now have the duty to recognize ourselves and our close ones as victims and perpetrators of the same kinds of violence of those we have tried so hard to exile from our lands and our imaginaries. For example, it may require us to challenge the discursive race war identified by Venn and the architecture of enmity lamented by Amoore.

The authors of this article acknowledge a complex relationship to political action and to this notion of responsibility. Alex states that

> in the past, I prided myself in thinking that 'political agnosticism' was the most nuanced way to approach my beliefs. However, events in my personal life in addition to developments in the international landscape have changed my viewpoint. Merely standing by without a firm stance does very little to bring justice to the horrible experiences of those who are touched in a very physical and personal way.

He is still seeking ways to translate his change of position into action. For Lucie, thinking about war experience made her realize "that war can be emotionally, temporally and geographically much closer than we think in the first place." This has not changed her goal of wanting to work in "the field of international solidarity, for a human development NGO" but has brought her to believe that "making peace over there is tantamount to making peace right here, right now." Meanwhile, Yasmeen continues to use

> the privilege to discuss my experience on several academic platforms, and by contributing an alternate voice to this field, I view this to be a form of political engagement. The lack of testimonies by those who wrongly fall victim to these

anti-terror policies has lead me to believe that these voices need to be provided the space in academia as well as in the media to eradicate the misconceptions that these policies are not harmful to the average person.

For Joe, it is important to contribute to the debate "about the level of societal engagement with war beyond the battlefield" – such as in widely played videogames. Finally Daniel, when asked about whether and how considering himself as a retainer of war experience affected his sense of political responsibility, offered a powerful apology to his classmate Yasmeen.

> I am ashamed to say that I failed to respond to Yasmeen's experience of war. I failed to challenge British security policy on the war on terror. As a retainer of war experience myself, despite never entering a warzone, I should have empathized with Yasmeen's experience of war, which, in contrast to mine, took place in an actual zone of war. Indeed, the prime legal logic of the war on terror is that war is everywhere, and is not confined to distinct geographical locations. Despite experiencing how war can impact the human person for myself, I failed to challenge a policy that discriminated against Yasmeen and her boyfriend for simply being who they are. I think this demonstrates what a significant testimony of war Yasmeen's is. Yasmeen suffered, I fell silent and war was normalized. To be the barer of war experience brings a duty to engage. I failed to act when I should have. I am so sorry.

Conclusion

> [C]lassrooms are often counter-hegemonic spaces within which futures of the past are radically altered. (Shapiro 2011, 114).

Writing this article has been an extraordinary journey for its authors, students and lecturer alike. It has been a journey of intellectual, pedagogical, and emotional learning, far beyond what we expected. Intellectually, we have learned and argued here that the common understanding of war experience in IR needs to be broadened. War experience cannot only be about what happens over there, to others, or long ago in this supposed "peaceful" West we inhabit. It must also be recognized in what

happens here – through a very violent war, the War on Terror, which inhabits our streets, our airports, our schools, and our newspapers – and through the social relations that have also been generated by war in our everyday. We have pushed this further to argue that war cannot only be understood as generative of pain and suffering and must also be seen as capable of generating joy, love, communion, and belonging. The ordinary, everyday, even banal experiences offered by several of the student-authors are also war experiences.

We recognize that this broadening is problematic and can be dangerous. This article has examined how it can be accused of emptying out the notion of "war experience" so that it becomes devoid of meaning, but have argued that by ensuring that the experience is connected to fighting, without necessarily being about fighting, one can ensure that it remains conceptually meaningful although no doubt blurred and debated. We are worried also that this broadened understanding can lead to a romanticization of war in which fighting becomes "worth it" as it can lead to a "constructive" legacy, but believe that this danger of how a broadened understanding can be instrumentalized is not a reason to reject this broadening move but rather comes with the need to beware of any such instrumentalization. We are also worried that we are dispossessing those who have suffered in war by taking up political space with our experiences. We have therefore argued that a hierarchy of experiences needs to be maintained and suggest that it try – as well as it can – to distinguish between those who have experienced war *and* suffered from war, and those who have experienced war without incurring pain and suffering. Finally, we have argued that experiencing war, rather than shutting us into our experience, opens us up to others and comes with a political responsibility to act, speak, study, and engage with the politics of war. We believe that as beneficiaries of Western privilege – to differing degrees, with some of us far less than others – we have a duty to engage in politics, also because we know something about war, because war is also in our lives. We are all determined to try to do better, despite being conscious that we are likely to see more failures than successes.

Despite all these drawbacks in recognizing these experiences as experiences of war, we believe this broadening is an important move for four reasons. First, it offers a more complete understanding of war and its capacity to permeate our social relations.

If we want to study war, we need to be able to recognize its reach. This means looking beyond bodily injury, PTSD, and transgenerational trauma, while still recognizing the primacy of these expressions of war. To counter war, we need to know it better. Second, ignoring war's reach into our lives reinforces the problematic (and often violently racist) understanding of our lands as "civilized lands of peace" where violent enmities have been overcome by "our superior civilization." We are thus engaging in an exercise of "war/truth [that] enables the tracing of the intimacy between the battlefield and the wider social, political, and cultural field war helps constitute" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 127), by challenging the dominant war/truth that separates a peaceful civilized "us" from a barbaric and warring "them." We are saying we know something of war too, while recognizing that others – often with less privilege and access – deserve greater space because they know something of war *and* suffering. We recognize that this is a difficult balancing act but still believe that breaking down this us/them dichotomy based around our peace/their war is a necessary political move.

It is necessary because it creates a political responsibility in us as detainers of war experience. By "writing war back into the polity – in engaging war in society – we make a potentially democratizing move, wresting knowledge of war from the sphere of political authority and the knowledge complex around it" (Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 142). This further democratization of war experience – beyond that already undertaken by the war experience literature so far – arguably could leave "war" less a the mercy of those political leaders intent on instrumentalizing it for violent exclusionary purposes. Such a transfer of power comes with greater political responsibility – which is the final advantage we see in broadening our understanding of war experience. Indeed, maybe the most important goal of the teaching and learning of politics is the teaching and learning of how to become more responsible political agents. Recognizing war's presence in our lives we believe helps us become more responsible political agents.

This entire reflection came as a result of students "talking back" to their lecturer, leading to a powerful moment of learning for the lecturer. It was a moment of education for her both in terms of what the students said and of how they respectfully and subtly challenged a person who had symbolic and effective power over them. It

demanded that Harmonie accept a certain loss of power and control. In the words of Jacques Derrida (in Derrida and Ferraris 2001, 64):

> One has to accept that 'it' [ça] (the other, or whatever 'it' may be) is stronger than I am, for something to happen. I have to lack a certain strength, I have to lack it enough, for something to happen. If I were stronger than the other, or stronger than what happens, nothing would happen. There has to be a weakness.

This requires "a certain disarming quality in one's relation to the other" as well as the acceptance that "*there* is someone, something, that happens, that happens to us, and that has no need of us to happen (to us)" (Derrida in Derrida and Ferraris 2001, 63 emphasis original). It is a pedagogy that in the words of Gert Biesta (2013, 9) favors "weakness over strength" – a pedagogy that "is indeed willing to take the beautiful risk of education" (Biesta 2013, 140). Thus, Harmonie has learned to listen to students more carefully, to seek knowledge in what they speak, in what they have to teach, rather than merely a confirmation that they have learned what she has taught them.

Establishing such a relationship of trust takes time and requires interaction in small groups that allows all parties to engage in an honest dialogue – commodities that are increasingly hard to come by in contemporary university environments. Indeed, this push back from students occurred in a module designed to allow far greater space for discussion than is usually accorded in undergraduate modules. The module, "Humans at War," is structured in weekly three-hour sessions and the extended time slot allows Harmonie time to deliver short lectures interspersed with small and large group discussions and supported at times by video or movie clips. Generous funding by the university also allows for several guest speakers every year to offer a 30-50 minute talk to students, followed by more than 90 minutes of discussion *with* students about their war experience. This module would not be the same without such support in terms of time, space and finances, and the possibility for talking back may at least in part be derived from this.

Finally, this has been an emotional journey, in the classroom as well as in the writing and review process. The invitation by the anonymous reviewers to think further on our political responsibility led to an important reflection for all us, culminating in Daniel's powerful apology. We have learned from our stories and from each other's stories. We have learned about the extent of our care *and* the extent of our indifference. We have learned that being the detainers of experience and knowledge is not free, but rather is a difficult choice as it requires to question the role *we* play in war and what *we* can do transform it.

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