Abstracts – organised by session

Session 1a – Soldiering and Sensory Practice

John Hockey: The Sensory Phenomenology of UK Infantry

This paper is based on ethnographic data accumulated during three months participant observation with UK Infantry in the contexts of barracks, field exercises in UK/Canada and operations in South Armagh during the most recent conflict with the IRA. The paper will be theorised using the work of the social geographer Lefebvre (1991) on space and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962) on embodied perception. Data will be portrayed focusing on the sensory practices and perceptions of infantry when on patrol: how they move, see, hear, smell, and touch. The paper will emphasise that these sensory perceptions whilst physiological are also fundamentally social, constituting an example of ‘body pedagogics’ (Shilling, 2007) in action.

Erella Grassiani: Numbed Senses in Occupation: the case of Israeli Conscripts

One of the most underestimated experiences of soldiers is boredom. Most soldiers around the world are bored most of the time they serve, especially in instances of occupation. Within occupations most soldiers stand guard, perform patrols, and man checkpoints (and not, as most believe, participate in combat on a daily basis). What does this boredom, in combination with factors such as routine and frustration mean for soldiers? What does the often monotonous work they have to perform do to their senses? In this paper I will focus on the case of Israeli soldiers working in the Palestinian Occupied Territories and I will argue that the senses of these soldiers are numbed on a few different levels. This numbing, as opposed to the heightening of the senses that is often described within warfare, is a product of the circumstances of military occupation; processes such as prolonged boredom, routine of the work they have to perform, frustration about the kind of work they do and many more. I will use ethnographic data that I collected during my fieldwork in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel to show how soldiers go through processes of emotional, physical and cognitive numbing that often accumulate into a moral numbing. In this latter state soldiers often cannot distinguish moral processes of emotional, physical and cognitive numbing that often accumulate into a moral numbing. This can in turn lead to violence and harassment by soldiers, directed at, in the case Israel, Palestinian civilians. A direct relation will thus be made between the circumstances of military occupation, the numbing of the senses that they establish and moral behaviour of soldiers.

Pip Thornton: The Meaning of Light: Seeing and Being on the Battlefield

In a blackout we adjust our sights by touch and cup our smoke against the desert: waiting for the light.

At long last the barrel scrapes into place and the night is instantly exposed. I cover my ears and watch.

In the distance a fitful city crouches, seared eyes raised to the floating are above: waiting for the strike.

On the battlefield, the states of darkness and light can mean so much more than the (dis)ability to see. While night-time has - since wars began - been used as a tactic, providing the cover of darkness both for defence and attack, it also affects soldiers’ bodies in other more intimate ways, heightening the use of other senses such as touch and smell, instilling exhilarating and/or debilitating fear and necessitating teamwork, trust and bonding between colleagues. In certain theatres of war, the introduction of artificial light into the darkness spells danger; glowing cigarettes and torchlight rigorously controlled with ‘light discipline’, and while burning oil wells or the fireworks of aerial bombardment can be a spectacular experience for some on the battlefield, the power of illumination (whether floodlights, aerial illumination etc.) also serves to control and secure spaces and bodies in other parts. In the dark the basic human functions which are so vital to the effectiveness of the individual soldier and the unit as a whole are compromised. Hygiene, health, warmth, safety – even sanity - are all threatened by darkness, the fundamental ability to turn on a light being impossible during black out conditions. Even the natural light which comes with dawn can be double edged; at once relieving the uncertainties of dark, but also revealing the potentially horrible realities of battle (Fussell).

This paper sets out to explore how the cultural and strategic certainties of light and dark become ambiguous in the bodies and spaces of the battlefield; the arguably innate binaries of light/dark, good/bad, sight/blindness, safety/danger are challenged and can even be harnessed by technologies of the battlefield such as illuminating shells, night vision and even vibrating belts which negate the need for nocturnal map reading. Using various auto-ethnographic examples of experiences in Iraq in 2003 (based around the above poem), the paper will also engage with current debates on verticalities (Adey), affect (Anderson) and the securing of space (Weizman, Elden), as well as haptic geographies (Paterson, Gregory) and ‘somatic war’ (McSorley).
Marion Naeser-Lather: Smelling fire. Sensory experiences of German soldiers in Afghanistan

“To understand Afghanistan, you have to see, hear, smell and taste it”, an officer of the German Armed Forces told me. Yet what do perceiving and understanding in situations of war mean? War implicates, as Butler (2010) states, the selectiveness and reconfigures affects, inscribing itself into the soldiers’ bodies and consciousness.

The aim of this contribution is to describe the perceptions of German soldiers in Afghanistan and thereby also to shed light on the sensory configuration of the meaning of war. For this purpose I want to address the following points:

i. How are war situations experienced by soldiers on the ground? Which senses become predominant? How are the meanings of perceptions constructed? In this context I also want to discuss extreme sensory experiences and their contradictory effects: traumatization and, on the other hand, addiction which manifests itself in sensation seeking and the fascination of weapons and violence.

ii. Proceeding from the concept of the sensuous self (Vannini/Waskul/Gotschalk 2012) and Zahaviv (2006) phenomenology of the body I also want to explore how an individual and a collective bodily situated knowledge on war is formed by sensations. How are the (sensuous) self, feelings and worldviews shaped and changed by somatic experiences and by memories of them? In what way are these processes modified by mediation, i.e. when soldiers are filming and photographing during combat? Does this situation lead to the emerging of a double perspective of distance and immersion?

iii. According to Butler (2010), the cultural formation of perceptions frames their intelligibility and also the recognition of the persons encountered in war situations as human beings or as threats. How are the country of deployment and its inhabitants perceived and in which way do conditioned expectations, prejudices and emotions influence sensations? What role does the colonial priming of the senses during preparation exercises and through soldiers’ camp gossip play in processes of recognition vs. Othering? How do sensations form normative concepts, and how is this reflected in the language soldiers use to describe their experiences?

Session 1b – Sensory experience and (post-)war landscapes

Eugénie Shinkle: Affective Landscapes & Everlasting Wars: Jo Ractliffe’s As Terras do Fim do Mundo

When the Angolan civil war ended in 2002, it left behind a landscape littered with the debris of war, and riddled with landmines – next to Afghanistan, Angola is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Photographer Jo Ractliffe’s 2010 project, As Terras do Fim do Mundo, documents a landscape that has been rendered largely uninhabitable by more than 10 million land mines that still lie concealed beneath the ground.

Ractliffe’s images are not classical depictions of the battlefield, nor do they include conventional signs of the aftermath of war. There are few people in her photographs, few buildings or roads, little visible evidence of the devastation wrought by more than three decades of civil conflict. These are eerie, inhospitable places. Their spatial dimensions are ambiguous – alternately open, featureless and verging on the abstract, or hemmed in by crabbed vegetation. Unlike conventional images of landscape, they do not invite the viewer to enter their space – instead, they embody a kind of silent refusal.

In Spectral Evidence, Ulrich Baer has remarked on the tension that is created when the documentary landscape idiom is put to work on a reality that can’t be seen. Examining photographs of Holocaust sites, Baer reflects on the tension ‘between the print’s landscape character as a setting for experience and memory and the abstracted depiction of inhospitable terrain’. A slightly different tension is at work in Ractliffe’s photographs, which are not simply sites of remembrance: the land slowly recovers, but the threat that lurks beneath the earth is invisible and ongoing.

The presence of this ongoing threat is embodied in Ractliffe’s landscapes not simply through the visible representation of destruction, but in/as a palpable sensation of unhomelessness and dread. Her landscape photographs, in other words, do not act simply as positivist documentations of fact – they also incorporate forms of sensorial knowledge, seeking to invoke sensations of unease and displacement as lived experience in the viewer.

Landscape preferences are invariably subject to social, cultural and historical shaping. At the same time, however, such preferences are derived from survival mechanisms that are inherent in the human species. Drawing on ideas from evolutionary psychology (biophilia hypotheses) and geography (Jay Appleton’s ‘prospect-refuge theory’) this paper will examine how certain visual and spatial strategies in Ractliffe’s photographs engage the viewer both rationally, and at the level of a sensorial or affective understanding of place.

These strategies, which include empty, featureless vistas and occluded horizons, embody a refusal of the most basic requirements that we expect an environment to satisfy: the ability to provide shelter, sustenance, and safety. Ractliffe’s landscape photographs go beyond the straightforward representation of violence or its
aftermath: they suggest to the viewer what it might feel like to inhabit landscapes in which the spectre of war remains long after the conflict has ended.

Isla Forsyth: Pirates of the High Sands: The implementation and enactment of covert warfare in WWII

The desert, its heat shimmers suggestive of an oasis of water, has always been known as a place of mirages duping desperate people. This unnerving of and mistrust in the senses was in particular exacerbated in the Middle East, where, as Satia (2008) explains, the British Empire had long felt it could not see clearly in the shimmering haze of desert plains. Yet, in WWII this rich cultural imagery of the desert, this sense of blindness was exploited by the British military through small, mobile, covert armies operating deep behind enemy lines. The first of these forces was the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), set up by the desert explorer, geophysicist and soldier Ralph Bagnold. The LRDG - nicknamed the ‘pirates of the high sands’ - raided enemy camps, destroyed equipment, captured prisoners, surveyed and mapped enemy territory hundreds of miles from the front line, penetrating deep the enemy’s supposed secure positions. Thus, the LRDG waged a psychological war; appearing and disappearing succeeding in creating a sense that the British were everywhere and yet nowhere. In order to effectively execute these covert operations LRDG soldiers became closely acquainted with the desert, their senses attuned to a battlefield of sand, wind and stars. This paper entwines two narratives the first beginning in 1926, when a young British soldier posted to Egypt, Ralph Bagnold, filled his hours of leave by renouncing the delights of Cairo to live laborious days exploring time and space, adapting motor cars in order to travel faster and further into the unmapped interior of the Libyan desert and the second in 1941, when a young British soldier posted to Egypt, Cyril Richardson, serving in the LRDG was captured behind enemy lines in the Libyan desert. Told through personal experiences recorded in war diaries and memoires the implementation and enactment of covert warfare in the LRDG is revealed to be a moment in warfare where sight and sound, terrain and atmosphere, biology and technology were marshalled and entangled in the process of militarising an environment and altering the ethics of battle.

Eileen Rositzka: Cinema’s Corpographic Warfare: Sensing the First World War through Film

Nowhere is the relation between war and senses more evident than in the soldier’s experiential relationship to the field of battle, which encompasses both the abstract symbolic logic of cartography as well as the sensuous engagement with sight, smell, hearing and touch. In many ways, the corporeality of war is based on the remapping of landscape through the soldier’s body, which geographer Derek Gregory calls “corpography”. It is this fusion of physicality and space that makes bodies both vectors and objects of military violence.

And it is this positioning of the body on which the cinematic depiction of war is based: In the war film genre, the use of cartography demonstrates war’s conflict of visibility by first creating an illusion of overview and omnipotence, and contrasting it with the literal disruption and disillusionment of the soldier in battle. I conceive this as a “corpographic” procedure that is employed to engage the spectator both cognitively and physically in the film.

In visual terms this includes the display of geographical maps as objects, the use of camerawork and editing to establish or disrupt a specific filmic space, as well as graphic inserts and texts designating the historical time and space of the depicted events. In acoustic terms, the corpographic experience of the battlespace is more closely linked to the affective dimension of fear due to visual disorientation. Acoustic coordinates signifying distance or subjective intimacy can measure the location of the body, and its state can also be articulated on the level of extradiegetic sound.

Corpography is a form of ‘embodied soldiering’— similar to what Kevin McSorley calls an emerging aesthetic regime of ‘somatic war’. McSorley argues that contemporary war documentaries are marked by a direct appeal to the bodily sensations of soldiering. I maintain, in contrast, that the close representation of sensation and the physical risk of battle is also prominent in films that take the extreme battle experience of World War I as their focus. All Quiet on the Western Front, for example, conveys the brutal disillusionment of young German soldiers, worn out and haunted by the horrors of the trenches. As battle continues, they become almost indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape. Their living bodies have to find and fight their way through a dead space of mud, corpses, shattered weaponry, and shell craters. It is through the soldiers’ physical and yet spectral presence that the lifeless trenches become perceivable as an animated spatial network, as a chaotic mixture of sensations through which characters and spectators share the experience of disorientation and bodily re-orientation. In Paths of Glory this notion is taken a step further: In contrasting the equally limited perspectives of soldiers and generals, the film frames war in a moral and metaphorical sense of corpography, thereby portraying the inflexibility of military structures. The military body, in its movement through space, is depicted as an extension of landscape and architecture, which itself embodies either sovereign power or human loss.

In both films the settings of battle form the ground on which the specific somatic experience of war can emerge as a spectatorial experience - a sensory experience that conveys the constant re-territorialisation of the (soldier’s) body on several levels of cinematic staging. Therefore, the use of certain audiovisual patterns can be conceived as corpographic warfare, re-mapping the theatres of war through the body.
Gilly Carr: Sensing soldiers: the uninvited guests who overstayed their welcome in the Channel Islands

When war is sensed through apparitions in locations of military occupation 70 years after the event, how can we begin to make sense of such accounts? (How) can academics outside the field of anthropology theorise sensory (and extra-sensory) experiences of ghosts of war meant in a literal sense? Must the language involved remain ambiguous and vague, refusing to differentiate between the metaphorical and literal (e.g. Till 2005), or should we shy away from such topics altogether in order to be taken seriously?

The perception of the ghosts of past war and trauma is documented in the recent anthropological literature (Kwon 2008, Long 2010, Ulturgasheva 2012), but should historians, archaeologists, and those who work in heritage studies concern themselves with such ‘intangible heritage’?

These questions will be explored through the case study of the British Channel Islands, which were occupied by German forces from 1940-1945, and where ghosts of German soldiers are believed by many to haunt the concrete bunkers where once they lived and worked. The earliest reports of sightings date to the 1950s, but seem, if anything, to have grown with the second and third generations. While the first generation saw the living soldiers – and later, their ghosts - in the streets and in their houses, the second and third generation tend to see them in concrete bunkers. Perhaps coincidentally, many of these bunkers are also the sites of occupation museums, or have been restored using time-capsule realism; both of these ubiquitous re-uses of bunkers has involved filling them with mannequins of the German soldiers in uniform. These soldiers are depicted in a way that conforms to nostalgic Occupation ‘myth’, which itself has changed with different phases of memory at different times, as has the identity of occupation ghosts.

Is this form of omnipresent heritage presentation of the ‘uninvited guests who outstayed and continue to outstay’ their welcome’ affecting the perception of reality of later generations? Or is this simply a form of postmemory, where the connection of later generations to the event which affected both their parents and themselves is ‘mediated not through recollection but through imaginative investment and creation’? Or can we even make a case for continuity with older folkloric beliefs? But do these interpretations imply that the ghosts do not ‘really exist’ – and how problematic is such a statement?

Session 2a – Violence, Aesthetics and Late Modern Wars

Kevin McDonald: British fighters in Syria: social media, the visual and scapes of affect

It is frequently observed that the war in Syria evidences not simply the violence typical of ‘new wars’, but also the reshaping of public and private, affect and subjectivity at stake in new forms of social media. This paper explores the structures and scapes of affect being generated through the social media use of a small number of British fighters in Syria, with a particular focus on images and videos being communicated through these practices. Drawing on contemporary analyses of visual communication and experience, this paper highlights the importance of social media as a medium to constitute intimate co-presence, and examines the extent to which these fighters are involved in communicating ‘sensation’ rather than ‘meaning’. The paper considers the implications of this form of communication, both in terms of the types of social scapes constituted, and in terms of implications for paths into and out of action shaped by an imaginary of violence and the extreme. In the Syrian case this analysis offers insight into the attraction of deterritorialized violence when compared to the imaginaries of violence associated with nationalist actors in the Syria conflict.

Julia Welland: Liberal Warriors and the Concealment of Violence

To a greater or lesser extent, the obscenity and violence of war has always attempted to be concealed whether through formal channels of censorship or through the language that surrounds war. While the brutality and bloodiness of the Gulf War was rendered un-visible through the fetishisation of military technology and weaponry, today such concealment is achieved through the ‘writing out’ of violence and barbarism from the soldiering figures that enact warfare. Complicity in, and the perpetration of, obscenity in war appears as ‘outside’ or ‘other’ to contemporary western soldiering subjects – what I call, ‘liberal warriors’. However, in the aftermath of an IED explosion – in the torn flesh, mutilated bodies and chaos and confusion that follows the detonation – the visceral and violent ‘realities’ of war return at full-force and in full visibility. This paper will appropriate Avery Gordon’s epistemology of ghosts and hauntings in order to unpack three ways in which this moment of violence has been ‘read’ so to ensure violence remains disconnected from liberal warriors and remains something a liberal warrior is only ever subjected to, rather than complicit in. Tracing the ways the violence of an IED is presented as emerging with no relationality, through colonial logics that render it ‘beyond the pale’ of imagination, and the ways in which a liberal warrior is familiarised and personalised through the Imperial War Museum’s War Story exhibition, violence in the figure of a liberal warrior remains un-visible. However, paying attention to ghosts and hauntings also allows for the revelation of the ways
in which not only is the brutality and fleshiness of violence always already present in a liberal warrior, but that it is integral to its constitution. The paper ends therefore with a discussion of how it is in the very performances that separate a liberal warrior from the brutality of an IED that the bloodiness and barbarism of war once again emerges.

Alan Ingram: Geopolitical aesthetics: art and the Iraq war in the UK

This paper draws critically on Jacques Rancière's discussion of aesthesis to consider the diverse ways in which artists registered and engaged with the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Focusing on the experiences and practices of artists from Iraq and Britain, it considers how the war was enacted and contested aesthetically through a variety of tactics and techniques but also in relation to particular communities of sense. It explores in particular the role of spatiality in the different dispositifs of art through which art has been created, performed, exhibited and received in relation to the war. The paper then draws further on Rancière in order to specify some of the multiple, complex and ambiguous ways in which art may be considered to be not just political, but geopolitical.

Robert Burgoyne: The Violated Body and Affect in Zero Dark Thirty

The figure of the body in narratives of war has long served to crystallize ideas about collective violence and the value or futility of sacrifice, often functioning as a symbol of historical transformation and renewal or, contrastingly, as a sign of utter degeneration and waste. As a number of recent studies have shown, the power of somatic imagery to shape cultural perceptions of war has had a decisive impact on the way wars have been regarded in history, and has often influenced the conduct of war as it unfolds. In this presentation, I consider the film Zero Dark Thirty as a particularly complex figuration of the body in war, one that is marked by the imagery of degradation and loss, as well as by an almost enchanted sense of performative violence in the Navy SEALs raid on Bin Laden’s compound. Drawing on the recent work of the literary scholar Sarah Cole, I distinguish themes of enchanted and disenchanted violence in the film, and consider how they are entwined together. The presentation explores questions such as the cultural importance of embodied violence, its symbolic weight, and the stark challenge it presents to ethical authorship and spectatorship.

In depicting the violated body as ground and as emblematic expression of the war on terror, for example, Zero Dark Thirty shapes its imagery, especially in the first third of the film, around the degradation and waste produced by war. Breaching the protected zone that has formed around the war on terror, the film provides an unrelenting treatment of embodied violence, depicting an alternating series of harsh interrogations and devastating terrorist attacks in a kind of expanding, widening loop. The film presents the felt experience of violence - the intimate experience of constant threat and response - as key to the period, with violence extending over broad geographic zones, penetrating daily life, defining and shaping the life and the actions of the main character, Maya.

The imposing power of the violated body in Zero Dark Thirty might be seen, then, as a particularly resonant expression of disenchanted violence, as the depictions of interrogation and torture that dominate the first third of the film accentuate its dehumanizing and degenerative nature. Hard lighting, urine soaked cells, plain and unaccented camera work - these scenes have an unadorned visual directness. The last third of the film, however, unfolds under the sign of what Cole calls "enchanted violence," as the crack Navy SEALs team attacking Bin Laden’s compound moves in concert with central command, operating from a finely calibrated plan of attack supported by a vast technological apparatus that converts intelligence into force. In contrast to the harsh realism of the torture scenes, the night-time raid here offers a new, visually lush but realistic aesthetic, with the night vision goggles of the SEALs team providing images of the raid that are aesthetically compelling and unique.

Drawing on the power of violence to create a disturbing, innovative work, Zero Dark Thirty expresses in a new way the close connection between aesthetic form and the history of violence that the war film evokes and appropriates.
Session 2b – Witnessing and War Work

Katie McQuaid: The ‘Human’ in Human Rights: Affective Rights Work Amongst Congolese Human Rights Defenders

Upon fleeing the complex and violent conflicts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, men, women, youth and children are remaking their worlds as refugees in Uganda. Amongst them are a number of young people who are known as la voix des sans voix, the “voice of the voiceless”. These are Congolese human rights defenders forced to flee violent persecution for their rights activism in Eastern DRC, fighting for the voices and rights of their communities to be heard, defended, and respected. Growing up in a region wracked by complex and enduring violent conflicts, corruption and impunity, this paper explores the lived affects of rights work in which the defenders themselves are transformed as they come to embody ‘human rights’. For many in the DRC ‘human rights’ – les droits de l’homme – are understood as people; those who strive to protect and defend them in a landscape of violence and fear where “the population protects people”. This paper examines the affective everyday lives of the young people who are not only translators/mediators of rights work, but come to be reified as ‘human rights’ within such states of emergency. Rights work in the process, for these defenders, becomes “my nature, it is in my blood”.

Emerging from violent crises these Congolese ‘human rights’ defenders act through a frame of potentiality, collectivity and action within a dynamic but oppressed civil society. They engage in acts of witnessing, research and writing as they draw upon rights discourses to contextualise, challenge and denounce the mass-scale upon which the rights of their communities are being repeatedly violated. This does not act only to constitute them as political subjects; they are not just people who act to defend rights, but also come to represent and emulate the texts that they deploy. They are human rights in the imaginations of the population of Eastern DRC.

Based upon long-term ethnographic engagement with Congolese human rights defenders forced to flee into Uganda as refugees, this paper directs our attention to the voices and sensory experiences of these living embodiments of rights, justice and protection. It firstly examines the ways in which the danger and intense vulnerability caused by defending rights is lived and felt, and then turns to explore what it is they call “that heart of human rights” that emerges from the varying trajectories into rights work that ultimately shapes the selves, actions and agency of these extraordinary young people as they become human rights defenders.

Karen Wells: Seeing, feeling and believing: the place of touch and sight in the discourse of witnesses to Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission

This paper analyses the sensory discourse in the transcripts of witnesses to Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2002 – 2004). In particular it focuses on the importance of the senses of sight and touch in constructions of truth. The relationship between seeing and believing and the evidential quality of the visual are long established traditions in Western visual culture. This paper explores the extent to which visual evidence (I saw it) is deployed in witness discourses in the Sierra Leone TRC to establish a foundational truth that the concept of Truth and Reconciliation Committees depend upon. If the visual is at the centre of the idea of bearing witness in the Western tradition, a second sense, touch, was central to how the war was prosecuted in Sierra Leone and how its traces are visible in the number of amputees who survived the war. The paper analyses how these two senses feeling (touch) and seeing (sight) were deployed in witnesses’ statements to the TRC to evidence their truth.

Tim Markham: The Appearance of the Journalistic Body in War Reporting

War reporting was historically a glamorous profession, with a rarefied mystique linked to the elusive nature of its practitioners and their craft. But with the proliferation of communications technology and the urbanisation of warfare, both correspondents and the conflicts they cover have never been more visible. The result is that we’re beginning to understand this journalistic genre as a line of work – perhaps one which is riskier than most others, but also comparable in its routines, petty frustrations and workplace relations. The awkwardness associated with this shift from ineffability to exposure is nowhere more evident than in the emergence of the war reporter as corporeal. Distinct from the tradition of nobly writing oneself out of one’s stories, an idea connected to the fantasy of distanced objectivity, the journalistic body appears in ways that sit uncomfortably with the myths of the war reporter as corporeal. Distinct from the tradition of nobly writing oneself out of one’s stories, an idea connected to the fantasy of distanced objectivity, the journalistic body appears in ways that sit uncomfortably with the myths of the trade: a body that experiences fatigue as much as fear, boredom as much as urgency, and smells and sounds associated with the indignities of day-to-day professional life as much as moralised, valorised forms of human suffering experienced by victims of war.

Pervasive technology also means that combatants and the civilians caught up in conflict are increasingly producing their own media, with professional journalists running the risk of being reduced to metareporting the insistant, woozy picture of war emanating, in the case of Syria, from YouTube. Journalists have responded to this precisely by adapting to the visibility now accorded them, alongside everyone else in an ever-more competitive attention economy. They’ve done this by placing themselves at the centre of their stories, a transition not always easily achieved, but one which makes the most of their now accessible bodies. The heat of the sun, the sound of mosquitoes, the heft of kit and the whiff of colleagues might explode the
romantic unknowability of the trade, but it offers new possibilities for performances of authenticity and complicity with audiences in an age when trust in the media has shifted decisively from institutions to individuals.

But what does this mean how publics sense war? This paper argues that access to this multisensory, phenomenologically banal experience of war reporting does not enhance audience engagement with conflicts – though, in an important sense, nor should it. The journalist who appears readily and bodily offers access to a world that is more immediately habitable, but habitability is distinct from engagement. Rather than chiding audiences for their degraded attention and fickle appetites, and against the presumption that the purpose of war reporting is to collapse the distance between viewer and viewed, the paper suggests that we investigate audience encounters with mediated conflict primarily as sensory, rather than sensory and as such authentic, or sensory and as such superficial. This then opens the way to thinking about war in terms of different modes of being in the world, some political and others not, some visceral and others indifferent.

Session 3a – Sensory Distinctions and Deceptions

Christiane Wilke: The Optics of Bombing: International Law, Civilians, and Burdens of Distinctions

The distinction between civilians and combatants is fundamental International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This distinction is not only required by IHL, but it also buttresses the justifications for many current conflicts: humanitarianism, liberation, and regime change. The NATO mission in Afghanistan, for example, relies on distinctions between civilian and combatant, between “local villagers” and insurgents. Civilian casualties undermine the rationale of the mission. Civilians, however, are a residual category in international law. IHL defines combatants and obliges them to carry their weapons openly and to wear uniforms and a “distinctive sign recognizable at a distance.” Civilians are the people who are not combatants, who don’t look like combatants. Yet NATO officers in Afghanistan persistently report that they are unable to tell if a person is a civilian or a combatant. How do different actors see civilians? What does one do to appear or look like a civilian?

This presentation asks what the insistence on being able to visually distinguish distinction between civilians and combatants achieves rhetorically, and how these distinctions are made in practice. I draw on a case study – the airstrike on two abducted fuel trucks near Kunduz in September 2009 that became the subject of at least seven investigations and triggered a major political crisis in Germany. Many people were killed in the airstrike, and the different investigations – relying on different methods of seeing, counting, and accounting for civilians – came up with strikingly different casualty figures. This case has been subject two at least seven different investigations that established casualty numbers ranging from 50 to 179, with estimates of civilian casualties ranging from zero to 113.

Through a close reading of available reports, I show the epistemologies, the visual strategies, and the ways of seeing/knowing on which actors rely to establish the civilian or combatant status of those who were killed in the attack. How did NATO officers see, feel, and otherwise sense the presence of civilians? How do Afghans perform or show civilian status – for themselves, or for relatives that were killed in the attacks?

The case study allows insights into the “hierarchies of credibility” (Ann Stoler) and visibility regarding the status and affiliations of Afghans killed in NATO air strikes. It also shows that the burden of making oneself visually distinctive has shifted from combatants to civilians. This shift resonates with gendered ascriptions of civilianhood as well as with colonial histories of warfare, visuality, and status recognitions.

The inquiry into the visual strategies of spotting and performing civilianhood raises larger questions about one of the fundamental categories in IHL. The civilian – the one who bears no distinctive sign – is not only in danger of being killed, but also in danger of being discursively erased or rhetorically mobilized in their death.
**James Robinson:** War, deception and the ‘clutter’ of the senses: exploring the ‘more-than-visual’ dimensions of military camouflage practice

Throughout history, acts and technologies of camouflage and subterfuge have long played an important role in the performance of warfare. From Trojan horses to dazzle ships, khaki uniforms to the use of digital camouflage patterning in present-day Afghanistan, camouflage has become an integral part of the deceptive sensory environments of the military battlefield. When we think about camouflage, we often tend to focus upon its inherent visual qualities: its capacity to hide, merge, conceal and disrupt the visible presence of an object, a place, a war-making technology, or an individual combatant from the eyes of an ‘imagined’ or ‘real’ enemy. While most academic and popular narratives on the use of camouflage draw attention to these visual facets, they often over-look the more complex, multi-sensual, tactile and embodied ways in which camouflage and camouflaging is deployed on the battlefield. This paper seeks to go beyond the visual by disentangling these complex embodied and ‘more-than-visual’ dimensions of camouflage. In doing so, it considers a whole series of questions: What senses are targeted and manipulated by camouflage? How can camouflage techniques and strategies themselves incorporate particular transformations of the sensory capacities of the armed combatant? What challenges does technological innovation and development pose not only for the shifting of the sensory environment of war, but also for the adaption and performance of camouflage itself?

**Solveig Gade:** Choreographies of War – on Anri Sala’s Video Installation *1395 Days without Red*

Running, stopping, sweating, breathing heavily, listening, preparing herself to continue, and off she is, running again. The movements and the rhythm of the woman anxiously making her way down the boulevard, informally known as Sniper Alley, are tightly choreographed by her fear of the invisible snipers positioned in the hills surrounding the city. One false step and she is dead!

Albanian artist Anri Sala’s video installation *1395 Days without Red* (2011) is but one of the rising number of contemporary visual art works addressing the sensory experience of war. Shot in today’s Sarajevo with a cast consisting mainly of survivors of the 1992-1996 siege, the work is a silent re-enactment of the infamous siege of Sarajevo, experienced from the perspective of the besieged population. Thus functioning as a journey into the collective memory of the population of Sarajevo, the film unfolds in a sensory, non-verbal register that, as the artist himself has phrased it, directs out attention to “how the body remembers”.

Deploying Sara Ahmed’s concept of the spatial politics of fear (Ahmed, 2004), this paper will scrutinize how the fact that the world, i.e. the besieged Sarajevo, has become a space of perpetual danger shapes the movements and the rhythm of the bodies in space. In order to further capture the impact the war-inflicted space has on the subject – i.e. how the besieged population is being reduced to prey due to the fact that the battlefield has moved into the city-scape and transformed it to a literal hunting ground controlled by invisible snipers – I will turn to Grégoire Chamayou’s concept of manhunt (Chamayou, 2010). Finally, drawing on Judith Butler’s concept of affective responsiveness (Butler, 2009), I will examine the way, the work addresses the beholder, and I will discuss the work’s ability to question the boundaries, or perhaps better: the distribution of the sensible, that determine what we can see, hear and thereby acknowledge as life worth living.

The overall aim of this paper is to propose that, read through the lens of sensory theory, the re-enactments of war-related episodes that seem to constitute a crucial trend in visual art these years, may serve as a basis for doing what I would refer to as sensory war historiographies. That is, historiographies that, emphasizing the sensory aspects of war, would allow us to experience war from the perspective of the subject that seems unable to make herself verbally intelligible to us. Historiographies that would invite us to reflect critically on the distribution of the sensible, defining friend and foe. Historiographies that, due to the juxtaposition of past and present brought about by the works’ re-enactments, would encourage us to address similarities of former wars and today’s wars. Such as the fact that the status of Sarajevo as a local hunting ground during the siege might serve as a metaphor for the way the whole world, due to among others drone warfare, seems about to be transformed into a global hunting ground these years.
Session 3b – Veterans, Intimacies and Sensory Aftermaths

Salih Can Aciksoz: Being-on-the-Mountains: Affective Afterlife of War

*Being-on-the-Mountains* is an assemblage. It is a military assemblage of intense collective experiences that hundreds of thousands of conscripted young men who fought against Kurdish guerillas in Turkey and Northern Iraq as conscripted soldiers have passed through in the course of one of the longest lasting ongoing armed conflicts in the world. This assemblage shapes embodied soldier-subjects’ engagement with the world, leaving its traces on their bodies and subjectivities, and finding unexpected ways to permeate their post-military lives to turn nationalism into something palpable.

This paper centers on the disabled conscripts of the Turkish Army to analyze how disabled veterans viscerally remember *Being-on-the-Mountains*, and how the narratives of these embodied memories construct, reproduce, and performatively reenact their masculine subjectivities in relation to the issues of embodiment, ethnicity, and national identity. The data for the paper comes from twenty-nine months of multi-sited fieldwork, during which I collected disabled veterans’ life histories and conducted ethnographic research in a variety of settings including veterans’ grassroots organizations, military hospitals, religious rituals and political protests. The paper illustrates how disabled veterans’ military service, warfare, injury, and healing experiences are brought to the present not only through the work of ordinary or traumatic memory, but also through their visceral memories, pleasures and pains, and ordinary affects. At a time when there are more “low-intensity” conflicts in the world than ever before, violently shaping and reshaping constructions of gender, power, and memory, this paper offers crucial insights into the affective connections between masculinities, militaries, and nationalism.

Dr Brenda Hollweg: ‘Only then did I come close’: intimacy as resistance in three recent war documentaries

This paper engages with resistant forms of intimacy as inscribed in three recent war documentaries, Brian Hill’s *The Not Dead* (2007), Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro’s *Body of War* (2007) and Ari Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir* (2008). Through a series of interviews with war veterans, these productions foreground war as an inhume battle played out on the body, affecting the physical as well as mental health of those who participated in it. In diverse ways war veterans act as “intimates” who are capable and willing to provide their audience/diegetic characters with information unobtainable through the formal (partly censored) channels of news productions. This is knowledge of a particular kind, gained through intimate encounters with the “enemy”, the personal experience of having killed somebody or being sent on a failed mission, but also through dreams, fantasies and hallucinations. The visceral, corporeal and “horrorism” of war is highlighted; likewise, the cruel effects war has on the human body and memory (amnesia, bodily dysfunction, PTS) and its affective dimensions (forms of vulnerability, shame or guilt, occasionally intimately connected to feelings of intense loyalty towards one’s country). Typically, these three films oscillate between inscriptions of outer and inner life: military intrusion and affective disclosure, the public rhetoric/ritual of war and the private isolation of the war veteran, the distant battle and the face in a close-up etc. The intimate relationship that exists between these forms of knowledge is used strategically by these filmmakers to seek to influence judgment and to appeal to an-other – the audience – in his or her common humanity. By means of dialogue, interpellation, voice-over, verbal and visual lyrics, animated scenes or recourse to an experimental aesthetics inner lives are made visible and generic borders crossed. Can these films resist “the public rhetoric of citizen trauma” (Berlant), which has become so pervasive and competitive in contemporary Western societies? My reading is informed by poststructuralist feminist theory, theories of embodiment and feminist philosophy (Cavarero, Butler, Haraway, Spivak et al) who foreground the relational nature of subjectivity and intimate disclosure.

Sarah Bulmer and David Jackson: Encountering the Sense-Worlds of War Veterans

As Elaine Scarry argues, the ‘record of war’ survives in the bodies of the people who are killed, injured, altered and transformed by it. An often neglected aspect of this is the sensory effects of war, which remain long after wars officially end. In this paper we explore the sensory experiences of war veterans and ask what it might mean to take these seriously in research. To touch upon these sensory experiences is far from straightforward. We argue that sense-worlds are simultaneously interior to ourselves, beyond language and expression, and inherently social. Drawing on Erin Manning’s ideas around a ‘politics of touch’, we argue that sensory experience is always relational. Crucially sense-worlds must be expressed and felt by another in order to be recognised politically. In this regard, sensory experience might be seen as inherently dialogic, posing a challenge to the dominant modes of academic investigation and representation.

Putting the sensory experience of veterans at the centre of our research potentially challenges the form of academic activity. We argue that much academic practice erases the sensory experience and that this is particularly true of research into war veterans, particularly those with PTSD. This paper investigates the challenges of taking sensory experience seriously by breaking from the mould of traditional academic representation. It takes the form of an open, exploratory dialogue between Sarah Bulmer, a feminist, anti-militarist, university lecturer who is also hearing-impaired, and David Jackson, a former Royal Marine, counsellor of war veterans and co-founder of the organisation Veteran to Veteran, which promotes ‘veteran-led’ research.
Between us we explore the boundaries of the sensory experience of war, and the role of research activity in taking such experiences seriously, particularly foregrounding the struggle to express, understand and respond to sensory experience. In the dialogue we begin by exploring the regulatory mechanisms within society which seek to discipline, categorise and pacify the sensory experience and narratives of veterans. Then, drawing on David’s own experience of war, we interrogate some of the core assumptions surrounding such categories as embodiment, sensation, and intelligibility, and the ways in which such categories might be transformed through veteran-led research. We argue that to engage with sense seriously is to reach towards, to be present, and to be embodied. You have to be there to feel the effects of the encounter. The objective of the dialogue format is precisely to enact this transformation.

Keynote:

Ryan Bishop and John Phillips: Remote Sensing: Auto-Offensive Technologies

The emergence of communications technologies, involving kinds of telephony, telegraphy and broadcasting, stimulates the possibility that kinds of sensorial phenomena may be experienced at vastly increased distances. But also, by drawing attention to the mechanisms that underlie sensory experience in general, such technologies reveal the tautology that informs remote sensing: sensing is always remote; a layer of distance is always required for something to become an object of sense.

In this paper we approach the issue of sensation in conflict in two related spheres:

1. Diverse traditions have implicitly or explicitly taught that sensation—and at length consciousness itself—should be considered in terms of defence. From materialist encounters of the 18th century to the neurological science of the 20th century sensate experience is presented as the first line of defence against a potential surfeit of threatening forces. The sensorium in war is thus particularly endangered and vulnerable to failure.

2. A main tendency in especially military tele-technological advancement (including nanotechnologies such as smart dust and synaesthetic ones such as Project Transparent Earth) involves attempts to replace the senses with technological instruments that simulate or otherwise replicate sensing at increasing distances.

The implication (which these sensory spheres share) involves the apparently paradoxical situation according to which a sensory mechanism must become vulnerable for it to be able to function at all. The field of conflict is therefore permanently compromised at the level of sensate interaction by an inevitable confusion between offense and defence.
Session 4a – Military Life and Militarism

Debbie Lisle: Producing the Whole Soldier: From Venereal Biopower to Well-Being Politics

This paper explores the militarization of everyday life by looking at the techniques through which modern armies govern the non-fighting behaviour of soldiers. Militaries have always produced and governed the conduct of soldiers outside of the battlefield, and soldier-subjectivities have always exceeded the dispositions required for battle. This paper is specifically interested in a shift from minimalist interventions ensuring the physical fitness of soldiers to more comprehensive and invasive techniques targeting every aspect of a soldier’s life – his/her physical fitness, mental health, social relations, professional development, family life and well-being. Drawing from Foucault’s notions of vitality and Michael Brown’s work on venereal biopower, this paper looks beyond what it means to ‘make life live’ and looks instead at those techniques ostensibly aimed at making military life flourish. I am particularly interested in how the American Army’s ‘Morale, Welfare and Recreation’ (MWR) programme produces self-managing modern subjects with the skill-sets, attitudes and dispositions most suited not only to modern military culture, but also to the contemporary Neoliberal order. Certainly the MWR offers its comprehensive guidance, training and support structures to enhance the well-being of its soldiers, but in doing so, it also renders those subjects – as well as their families and friends – more amenable to further governance and intervention.

James Eastwood: Military asceticism: Israeli military ethics and the formation of soldier-subjects

This paper will explore the relationship between ethics and militarism in Israel through an analysis of the ascetic, embodied techniques used to form soldiers as subjects. Ethics is often held to exist in a simple antagonistic relationship to war in which an emphasis on the former entails a diminution of the latter. However, such a perspective ignores the crucial contribution which ethics makes to processes of subject formation when it is understood, pace Foucault, as the exercise of the self on the self and a reshaping of one’s being in relation to truth. When ethics is considered in this way, it is possible to see how military experience can be channelled through ethical work to produce a subject dependent upon war for self-actualisation. Ethics in the context of Israeli militarism has been used not as a means to reduce the level of violence employed or to ensure compliance with international norms but instead as technology to produce soldier-subjects.

The paper will be based on several months of fieldwork in Israel/Palestine comprising interviews and participant observation. Drawing on and critiquing Foucault’s understanding of ethics as a form of the ascetic “care of the self”, it will discuss the ways in which this process of ethical subject formation is necessarily sensuous, embodied, affective, and intimate. It will analyse the pedagogical techniques developed by the Israel Defence Forces to achieve these effects and in particular will analyse the role of body as a site of ethical work, the importance of affect in producing ethical subjects, and the contribution of gender in generating militarist identities. In particular, it will draw on empirical material relating to the use of interactive theatre, outdoor games, and soldiers’ testimony as educational tools in the IDF, and on the pedagogical approach employed in pre-military academies for high school graduates in Israel. It will also reflect on how contemporary modes of warfare – especially population-centred counterinsurgency and the use of drones – have privileged and accentuated these trends in Israel.

Noa Roer: Seeing Soldiers: Civilian Militarism and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art

A large price list plaque at the entrance hall of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art lists admission fees to the museum venues and thus presents a schematization of the social order of those invited to look at art. Residents and students receive a mild reduction; children, seniors, and enlisted soldiers pay half price; holders of a specific credit card are sponsored by their credit company; and soldiers in uniform may enter free of charge. This last detail denotes the military uniform as a cultural commodity, as it welcomes visibly militarized bodies into the museum space. In its prominent place at the entrance of an influential cultural institution, located across the street from the headquarters of the Israeli Defense Forces, the list reflects the fundamental way in which militarism participates in Israeli art and visual culture.

The price list plaque, and the culture that it is part of, do not fit the description of the more common, praetorian type of militarism. Yet its function resonates with Alfred Vagts’ definition of the term, where militarism is understood not in relation to the military proper, but as excess, as “a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes” (13). It is, in fact, a visual instance of what sociologist Baruch Kimmerling termed “civilian militarism,” a cognitive form of militarism that can very well exist alongside democratic rule. Following Kimmerling’s understanding of civilian militarism as a central organizational principle of Israeli society, my interest lies in militarism as excess and in its manifestations in the realm of the visual.

In my contribution to Sensing War I would like to examine the ability of visual art to articulate this excess to its audience, by presenting three art objects that specifically address the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in their attempt to give shape to the underlying militarized framework of the Israeli cultural arena. A processed aerial photograph by Meir Gal covers the museum structure in white paint, mimicking security censorship procedures and aesthetics; a cityscape painting by David Reeb presents a view of the military headquarters as seen from the museum sculpture garden; and an oil painting by Zoya Cherkeskaya titled “Free Entrance to Soldiers in Uniform” addresses the price list plaque directly as it portrays a group of baffled soldiers in front of a sculpture of a man eating his own feces. In my presentation I...
will compare the three perspectives presented in these works, and their different tactics of subversion, in order to sketch the complex relationship between the artistic and the militarized scopic regimes of contemporary Israeli society.

Melanie Friend: The Home Front

The Home Front images, taken over a four year period (2009-12), reflect on ‘the perennial seductiveness of war’ analysed by Susan Sontag, but as experienced on the home front, rather than in the conflict zone. Through its focus on air shows, the work aims to inspire reflection on the normalization of war in our culture – on how militarization is ‘woven into the fabric of civic culture’.

Air shows are a ‘fun day out’ for the family. On the ground, tank rides are on offer and armed forces’ recruitment drives afford children an opportunity to indulge in their fascination with guns. There are elements of fantasy and the carnivalesque here and a clear ‘disconnect’ between this ‘play’, and the actual effect of weapons. At air shows seductive civilian aircraft displays are interwoven with military; nostalgia for World War II is evoked by the presence of ‘war birds’ such as the Avro Lancaster bomber, followed by ‘shock and awe’ displays by contemporary fighter jets such as the Tornado, recently deployed in Libya and Afghanistan. As Robin Anderson writes in her book A Century of Media, A Century of War, ‘“World War II has become the frame of reference that confers legitimacy to war”.

In The Home Front photographs the beach and the landscape become uneasy, surreal spaces, temporarily ‘militarized’ by the fleeting presence and roar of fighter jets: the sky is ‘anything but reassuring’ as discussed by Pyrs Gruffyd in his discussion of the loss of innocence of the sky following WWII. The context of an air show can differ radically: it may be merely entertainment for one, but can evoke fear and terrifying memories for another. One of the inspirations for The Home Front was the experience of Luarda, a four-year old Kosovar girl photographed in a Macedonian refugee camp for my earlier publication No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo. After being airlifted to the UK, Luarda was traumatised by her first experience of the Red Arrows flying over her new home, the town of Southport, Merseyside. ‘Luarda was terrified’, said her mother, Shqiipe. ‘She pointed up at the planes and cried out “NATO! UCK!” We had to explain to the local people that we were from Kosova’.

There were several personal contexts such as this which inspired The Home Front, although the most compelling reason to focus on the military culture of air shows was as a critical background to the wars in which the UK government has been involved in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Session 4b – Objects and Sensory Engagements

Holly Furneaux: Sharing a Sense of War: Small Souvenirs of the Crimean Campaign

Fragments of medal ribbon, flattened out bullets, pressed flowers gathered in truces, sketches of camp life . . . These are some of the portable objects and representations sent home in the letters of British soldiers during the Crimean war (1854-6). In this paper I consider these objects, and the ways in which they are contextualised by the correspondence of officers and soldiers of the ranks as a tactile means of sharing at least a small part of their war experience with their families. Typically such objects are presented as ‘souvenirs’ or ‘memorials’ of a particular battle, and of the sender’s survival; sometimes they are sent as gifts to mark domestic occasions such as a much missed sister’s birthday. They offer an insight into the daily sensory experiences of soldiers. In widely recurring sketches of tents and huts, for example, military men seek to realise, and make familiar, their lived experience of the campaign for those at home. Through an exchange of objects posted between home and front line, I think about the overlaps between civilian and soldier sensory experience, and the determined effort to maintain continuities of touch and feeling between these spheres in wartime. I draw upon the work of Susan Stewart to think through how such souvenirs operate as repositories of experience for soldiers and civilians, and I use histories of nineteenth-century collecting practices and of ‘trench art’ to consider the relationship between the chosen collected object, and art and craft produced by soldiers. I will also explore the often troubling connections between souvenir and spoil, asking questions about the value attached to these objects - memorial, emotional, economic, triumphalist - by soldiers and their families.

Audrey Reeves: Pleasurable War? Sensorial Experiences in American War Museums and the Commodification of Wartime Heritage

This paper exposes the role of American war museums in promoting positive understandings of American involvement in warfare through the use of theme park strategies involving pleasurable sensory experiences in the museum context. I argue that, as tourism experiences become increasingly commoditised, so do sites of wartime heritage and memory. Pressured to compete against evermore titillating and seductive tourism attractions, wartime heritage sites now commonly adopt theme park strategies – strategies that seek to maximise consumption, pleasure, and (in the language of marketing experts) ‘consumer arousal’. Such strategies lead visitors, many of them children, through sensorial experiences that present warfare as exciting, family-friendly, and fun. These experiences include riding flight simulators, climbing in military aircraft, having lunch in a World War II ‘Victory’-themed cafe, buying war-themed clothing and toys, and taking part in kissing
Account of the sensory and embodied experience of participating in warfare may be overlooked by official histories which have often focused on troop disbursements and wider tactical issues. Meanwhile, public memorials have been increasingly problematised as ‘crystallised’ forms of forgetting, detached from the lived mnemonic and commemorative practices of the soldiers and veterans themselves. Recent material culture studies of conflict have advocated archaeologies of the contemporary past in order to examine marginalised or neglected histories of human-object interactions during wartime.

This paper will argue that creative ceramic practice has the potential to act as a medium where such hidden narratives of sensory experience can be disinterred and materialised through a process of museum engagement, making and display. This will be illustrated by discussion of the ‘3 Rifles Commemoration Project’, a collaborative initiative with eleven Wearside-born soldiers from Third Battalion, The Rifles. Undertaken as part of the author’s doctoral research on the nineteenth century Sunderland pottery collection at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, the project aimed to explore how ceramics might address the soldiers’ everyday experiences in Afghanistan during Operation Herrick 11 in 2009-10.

Although there is a precedent in the collection for the commemoration of historical military campaigns, these pieces tend to be of a jingoistic nature, largely ignoring the individual experiences of soldiers and sailors. Through an object-centred focus group using the collection, and reminiscence activities with artefacts contributed by the soldiers themselves, this project sought to engage the participants as active agents in the creation of new ceramic artwork.

A series of dialogues emerged which revealed how the soldiers had negotiated the traumas and rigours of the tour and its aftermath through a range of often quotidian and rhythmic person-object interactions and practices. For example, most of the soldiers had carried amulets or lucky charms in the form of crosses, St Christopher’s medallions, twigs snatched from trees before patrols and, most commonly, laminated family photographs kept behind the ceramic plate in their body armour. All the soldiers vividly described the poignant experience of receiving parcels from home, known as ‘morale’. One soldier recounted how he had passed time by periodically soaking and re-shrinking a ‘grow Jesus’ water-expandable figurine sent by a stranger. Another brought a domestic paint brush to the session which was inscribed with a tally of the number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) he had found with it while route clearing. On returning to the UK, several of them had commemorated fallen comrades through extensive tattoos, often featuring the names of the deceased.

Some of these potentially ephemeral stories have been recreated and materialised in ceramic, forming publicly accessible ‘heritage sites’ when displayed alongside elements of the original museum collection. Here, it is argued, rather than constituting monumental sites of reinterment, these objects have become transformative ‘gathering points’, or loci, capable of articulating the collection, the community (including the participants) and the artist in an empathetic and sensory dialogue.

Kathrin Hörschelmann, Divya Tolia-Kelly, Kathy Burrell and Ruth Wittlinger: Children at war: Emotional geopolitics and the representation of childhood in British and German museums of war

This paper considers how identity and difference are negotiated at affective and emotional registers in and through representations of childhood and war in German and British museums of war and/or military history. Based on an analysis of images and objects that represent war to children, and war through the figure of the child, we ask how the relationship between childhood and war is constructed in museum displays and imaginaries of war, how that relationship is emotionally charged, and which counter-narratives of both childhood and war emerge from those representations, from their critical reading, and from children’s own creative practices of producing memories of war. As all of the museums are tasked with

Christopher McHugh: Materialising the sensory experiences of war through creative ceramic practice and museum engagement

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opening up spaces for critical reflection and debate on questions such as the justification of state violence towards and military recruitment of young people, we ask how the citizenship of children is figured, configured and performed in relations of spectatorship, representation and participation in the museum encounter. Bringing recent critical work on governmentality, childhood and citizenship (Wells 2011, Robbins 2008, Giroux 2012) into conversation with theorisations of affect, emotion and the sensory regimes of war (Ó Tuathail 2003, Butler 2012), the paper further asks particularly what ethical and political questions arise from seeking to trace the absences and presences produced in differently choreographed imaginaries of childhood and war. We conclude by discussing how the conceptual, methodological and political questions arising from this analysis are shaping our ideas for a wider research project on “Embodied citizenship: Youth and the Cultural Politics of War in Britain and Germany”.

Session 5a – Technologies of Sensing War

Kathrin Maurer: The Friction of Sensing War: Ernst Jünger’s Photobooks

Ernst Jünger’s (1895-1998) visual style of writing is well known, many researchers have explored the photographic, filmic, and stereoscopic qualities of his poetic accounts on war experiences. Somewhat less well-know is the fact that Jünger also edited and published many photo books on WWI and other catastrophic events. In this talk, I would like to focus on his photo-book The Dangerous Moment (1931), which contains 111 photos, undated and un-located, but captioned by Jünger. The images show scenes of war, natural disasters, shipwrecks, explosions, fatal bullfights, and deadly sports accidents together with short clippings from newspaper articles reporting about various traumatic events. Its images of impending death aim to disrupt what Jünger has called in his introductory essay “On Danger” the logic of bourgeois security thinking, and the photographs should convey the moment of sudden deadly danger as a mode of existence in modern society. By closely investigating Jünger’s photo books as well as his theoretical statements about the relationship between photography and the sensation of pain, my paper aims to show how, on the one hand, Jünger functionalizes photography as a weapon (photography as a technological combat equipment in battleship, as psychological device that trains emotional coolness, and as symbolic weapon to project a new proto-fascist social order). On the other hand, by engaging into close readings of some of the photos, I also would like to explore how the images perform some resistance and friction towards Jünger’s authoritarian visual regime.

Holger Pötzsch: The emergence of iWar: Changing practices and perceptions of military engagement in a digital era

This contribution investigates the influences of new media technologies on perception and practices of warfare. Drawing on established conceptual frameworks such as virtuous war and diffused war, the presentation argues for the fundamentally ambiguous nature of the Internet and social networking technologies that facilitate democratic participation and political activism, but at the same time enable unprecedented forms of oppression, surveillance, and control. I develop the term iWar to account for such affordances and introduce five key dimensions of the concept – individuation, implicitness, interactivity, intimacy, and immediacy – before I connect these to specific socio-technological dynamics and their impact on practices and perceptions of warfare.
When, in 1989, Paul Virilio famously asserted that “war is cinema and cinema is war,” he was noting the prevalence of televirtual apparatuses in military contexts, and the escalating militaristic logic of cinema. For Virilio, the proliferation of screens in modern warfare was troubling, for it signified what he saw as the “disintegration of the warrior” into a hall of mirrors populated by digital displays, radar screens, onboard computers, and “self-navigating Sidewinder missiles fitted with a camera or infra-red guidance system.” Twenty-five years since Virilio sounded this alarm, today’s warrior guides her Sidewinder missiles to targets in Pakistan or Yemen from a cubicle in New Mexico, while televirtual technologies are now deployed to both see and kill their targets. Consequently, several scholars have suggested that drone warfare has transformed contemporary war into a “gamespace” in which “joystick soldiers” (Huntemann and Payne 2009) adopt a “Playstation mentality” (Cole et al 2010) that desensitizes them to the material realities and corporeal consequences of war. This gamification of war is only exacerbated by the absorption of commercial games into military practices, from America’s Army (a first-person shooter game employed by the US army for recruitment) to Virtual Afghanistan (a VR simulation game used as a form of exposure therapy to treat PTSD). Concurrently, designers of war-themed video games are turning to the military for content, technological refinement, and even financing—creating a culture of reciprocity that, for many, reflects the transformation of commercial entertainment into a tool of Empire designed specifically as a “training ground for...the post-human warfare of the future” (Lenoir and Latham 2003).

But contemporary military methods are far from “post-human,” as evidenced by the escalating frequency of PTSD among drone operators—violent memories emerging in their nightmares, scenes of warfare through a screen, now recapitulated in dreams. While the ever-increasing number of drone strikes was preoccupying the media, a second wave of domestic drones began appearing for primary surveillance. I began to work with a small spy drone in a research and participatory art project. Working in groups, we teach each other to navigate the drone, to look at it, using it at first to look at ourselves, and then for its intended purpose, to spy on others. This is an investigation in the kinaesthetics and proprioception of what McKenzie Wark calls vectoral power, a power constituted by flows of information which reconfigures relationships of distance and proximity.

The goal is a sensory and heuristic understanding of the technology, an interrogation that fosters an intimate relationship with the most de-personalizing apparatus. Militarized drones are on the cusp of being domesticated into powerful surveillance tools, a transformation that will touch every aspect of our lives. Black Mirror investigates drone culture, a technological symptom of the fantasy of social control and total surveillance. It is comprised of several components, installed together or singly: Video studies using footage shot with my own drone, a Parrot AR, either solo or in participatory groups, doing what it’s made for—looking at others. Poems written through the dictation function of the iPhone, which is also the remote control for the drone itself (the smart phone is thus a kind of drone). Dream maps composed of dream fragments gathered from survivors of military drones, from drone operators, the general public, and myself— the social dreams that underlie the manifest forms of reality.

For “Sensing War,” I’d like to propose a paper presentation on my research and theoretical conclusions. The topics with which this would fit include those of sensing bodies, scopic regimes and the distribution of sensible. The research in particular transits the subject of vectoral power, remoteness and affect, and drone spatiotemporality (what I call non-human time and nonhuman space).
Session 5b - War and the Body

**Tom Gregory:** *The Body in War: Violence, Vulnerability and the Mayland District Murders*

On the 15th January 2010, Spc. Jeremy Morlock and Pfc. Andrew Holmes killed an unarmed 15-year-old boy in the village of La Mohammad Kalay, Afghanistan before planting a grenade by the body to give the appearance that he had been attacked. Afterwards, they posed for photographs with the boy’s remains with other members of the unit before cutting off his small finger and placing it in a zip-lock bag as a souvenir of their first combat kill. Although most of the soldiers involved were eventually sentenced to prison for this and two other similar incidents, very little has been said about the nature of the violence they inflicted on the bodies of their victims. Recent scholarship in the field of critical war studies has called for greater attention to the body in war and the embodied experiences of those affected, with Christine Sylvester (2013: 5) noting that ‘war is experienced through the body, a unit that has the agency to target and injure others in war and is also a target of war’s capabilities’ (see also Bourke 2000; Brighton 2011; McSorley 2012; Scarry 1987; Wilcox forthcoming). Drawing on the work of the Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero, this paper will explore the violence inflicted by the so-called Afghan kill team, focusing particular attention on the ethical questions posed by a violence that ‘overshoots the elementary goal of taking a life and dedicates itself to destroying the living being as a singular body’ (Cavarero 2011: 12). I will argue that this level of violence is no longer concerned with questions of life and death but seeks to destroy the body as body, challenging the ways in which we have traditionally conceptualised the pain and suffering caused by war. This will help us to refocus our attention on the constitutive vulnerability of the body, as well as the processes of dehumanisation that leave certain bodies more vulnerable than others.

**Lauren Wilcox:** *Embodying War: Feminist/Queer Sense and Sensibilities*

The study of war, conflict and security has increasingly been attentive to issues of emotion, embodiment, experience and affect (McSorley 2013, Sylvester 2012, 2013, Wilcox 2014) around a common theme of writing that which is unrepresentable in interpretive frameworks that privilege the linguistic and the visual. Christine Sylvester in particular has highlighted the importance of theorizing embodied practices and experiences of war. Yet, there is no consensus or roadmap around the emerging networks of scholarship on emotion, embodiment, experience and affect as to how such theoretical and political insights should be incorporated into existing research agendas. In this paper I discuss recent work from feminist and other theoretical sources that are described under the heading of ‘affect theory’ to think about the potentials and pitfalls of developing research agendas and methodologies that take the embodied and embodying effects of war seriously. Specifically I am interested in developing a methodological framework for studying-writing about war and security that is deeply rooted in feminist/queer “sensibilities” in order to inform a series of case studies to follow. Works under discussion include Berlant (2011), Manning (2007), Ahmed (2000, 2004, 2006, 2011) and Puar (2007) who in various ways contribute to the development of a feminist/queer framework for thinking about political violence affectively that insists upon the mediation of affect rather than its autonomy, seeks to avoid the reification of bodies, seeks ways of moving from the privileging of the visual realm to broader sensory fields of the tactile, and takes the production of racial, gender, sexual and other differences seriously without falling into false symmetries.

**Synne Laastad Dyvik:** *‘War is better than Sex’: Embodiment in Soldier Narratives*

The recent attention to ‘the body’ in International Relations (IR) literature raises a series of new questions to be asked about war and violence. While ‘the body’ has always been an integral element ofwar fighting, it is only recently that IR scholarship has begun to take senses and affect seriously in its analysis of war. Analysing Norwegian soldier narratives, this paper contributes to this literature by arguing that, however welcome this ‘corporeal turn’ is, it is critical to examine ‘the body’ as always and already imbued with a range of gendered, racial and sexual inscriptions when examining how soldiers share their embodied experiences of war. In other words, embodiment should not be understood outside of its gendered, racial and sexual dimensions.

This paper is comprised of three main parts. Firstly, it situates the discussion within a longer history of analysis of soldier narratives. It outlines some methodological challenges in ‘reading the body of and in the text’ through interrogating soldier’s use of the concept of ‘flesh-witnessing’ (Harari 2008). Secondly the paper examines the scandal that unfolded in 2010 when parts of the Norwegian combat battalion ‘Telemarksbataljonen’ deployed in Afghanistan stated to a magazine that ‘war is better than sex’. Norwegian soldier memoirs written in the wake of this scandal explain these statements by citing sex as the only sensory experience that comes close to the feeling of killing. This paper discusses this statement, and soldiers’ explanations of it, both within the more general context of war, and in relation to the nurturing of a particular ‘warrior culture’ in this battalion in particular.

This statement also situates gender and sexuality as crucial to any conceptualization of embodiment. As Elizabeth Grosz reminds us, ‘There is no body as such: there are only bodies’. Drawing on a wide range of literature, in particular anthropological and feminist writings on embodiment and sexuality, the third and final part of this paper argues that the ‘corporeal turn’ should not only take seriously sense and affect in war, but also interrogate how these are enabled, mediated and transmitted through the dimensions of gender, race and sexuality.
Alison Howell: Turning Perceptions into Data?: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and Resilience Assessment in the US Army

This paper examines attempts to train soldiers in resilience and 'mental fitness' in the US Army. Through the techniques of positive psychology, and through partnerships with academic psychologists, the program aims to manage soldiers' perceptions of 'adverse events' by training them to be mentally agile, for example by training soldiers to 'stop catastrophizing'. The paper focuses on efforts to render soldiers' perceptions calculable through the collection of their responses to a mandatory online questionnaire that poses a series of questions about their physical, mental, social, family and spiritual fitness. The paper argues that the assessment is simultaneously crude and dangerous: it represents the largest psychological experiment in human history, and one that has the potential to re-define fitness from an embodied to a cognitive and emotional state through the establishment of a 'science' of psychological resilience. It thus raises significant ethical questions for soldiers and civilians alike.

Session 6 – Sensory Immersion and Targeting

Antoine Bousquet: Machinic Vision(s): War in the Age of the Target-Image

While the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the prosecution of the War on Terror has recently garnered much attention, so-called “drones” are the only the latest avatar of an array of technologies and practices of militarised perception that reach back long into the last century. Casting perceptual nets extending far beyond the biological senses of the human organism across the contemporary battlespace, military organisations have consistently found themselves at the forefront of key transformations in the scopic regimes of the modern era. So crucial has been the development of various techniques for the recording, transmission, and interpretation of perception that it can be ventured that no account of the operation of present forms of military power can be complete in the absence of an understanding of the practices of imaging that subtend them. This paper thus sets out to apprehend the progressive mechanisation of perception, starting with the invention of photography in the mid-nineteenth century and its subsequent integration within military operations. Deployed on air- and eventually space-bound platforms, photography soon became a vital component of the exercise of targeting from the First World War onwards through to the Cold War. Perhaps most significant to contemporary developments however are the effects upon the logistics of military perception of the advent of electronic imaging and its amenability to high-speed algorithmic processing. In addition to dramatically compressing the targeting loop in allowing for the rapid dissemination of images, the digitisation of imaging is at the heart of two distinct yet interrelated developments of momentous import. At one level, the processes and outcomes of imaging increasingly operate without the participation of any human observer as various computational apparatuses become entrusted with image interpretation and corresponding decision-making. Simultaneously, where human perception and input is still called upon, military operatives are increasingly immersed within synthetic environments in which imaging comes to overlay the entire field of phenomenological experience. It is to the articulation of these twin developments that we owe the emergence of a new scopic regime of machinic vision(s) that is drawing the world-as-image ever more fully into the ambit of targeting.
For several decades now, the work of German documentarist and installation artist Harun Farocki has traced the technological development of the images of war. His early film *Nicht Löschbares Feuer/The Inextinguishable Fire* (1969) on the Vietnam War and *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges/Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989) on the increasing interdependence of war and cinema, were followed by an examination of what he called “operational images” in *Auge/Maschine/Eye/Machine* (2000-3). Such images emerged in the First Gulf War and are characterized by being purely functional, i.e. they are read by machines and not intended to be viewed by human beings. More recently, however, Farocki has turned his attention to virtual images in war games. These images are constructed explicitly for human perception, and they serve to prepare recruits for military engagements. For years, texts of a factual or fictional kind were regarded as the most efficient way of generating the simulated experience of warfare. Even as the first sophisticated war games were developed around 1800, Carl von Clausewitz ranked texts over games as the best technology with which to immerse recruits in a virtual war matrix to prepare them for war.

The rise of the ‘military-entertainment complex’ has changed that. Today the leading military powers spend billions of dollars on various forms of war games such as *Virtual Iraq* and *Virtual Afghanistan*. But how do hi-tech virtual worlds generate actual experience? How do they organize perception and coordinate it with action? How do they experiment with the senses, and which kind of sensuous management do they seek to effect? These are the questions that Farocki examines in his four-partite video installation *Serious Games*. First displayed at the Biennale in Sao Paolo in 2010, the installation offers a careful probing of the aesthetic and political government of the senses that is currently taking place within the US military. In dialogue with Jacques Rancière and Judith Butler, my paper examines how Farocki reveals modern warfare as a sensuous management that involves various stages of dulling, sensitizing, and resensitizing – a process that binds together ludic poetics, sensuous aesthetics, and anaesthetics. Drawing on the links between experimentation and experience described already in the Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, and in Friedrich Schiller’s *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* as well as on historical war games such as Johann Ferdinand Opiz’ *Das Opiz’sche Kriegsspiel* (1806), I trace a history of different technologies of experience that in various ways have functioned as military training devices by way of a government of the senses. Finally, I show how Farocki’s observation of current immersive practices within the military realm functions not just as a subtle critique of the technological state of modern warfare, but also as an index into a broader change in today’s didactical practices that model themselves on a virtual management of the senses.

This paper sets out the motivating questions and initial analytic framing of my research in progress on the problem of ‘situational awareness’ within contemporary forms of (particularly U.S.) warfare. My focus is on the interfaces that configure war fighters to achieve ‘recognition’ of relevant subjects and objects, including the discriminations of us and them that are prerequisites for defensible killing. I’m interested more specifically in the logics and material practices of remotely-controlled weapon systems (particularly armed drones and weaponized robots). Drawing from reports in investigative journalism, military documents, and critical scholarship, I examine connections between the emphasis in military and security discourses on keeping ‘our’ bodies safe through so called network-centric warfare, and the project of cutting the networks that might bring our wars too close to home. These connections are multiply configured, as some bodies become increasingly entangled with machines, in the interest of keeping them apart from the bodies of others. I offer the beginnings of an argument regarding the inescapable tension between a commitment to distance, and to the requirements of ‘positive identification’ that underwrite the canons of legal killing. This tension holds not only for those involved in command and control of the front lines (the focus of the military’s concerns), but also for those of us responsible as citizens for grasping events in which we are, however indirectly, morally, politically and economically implicated. The empirical basis for the project at the moment is the archive of Flatworld, an immersive training environment developed between 2001 and 2008 as the flagship project of the University of Southern California’s Institute for Creative Technologies. I read the project through a frame inspired by Judith Butler’s theoretical analysis of figuration’s generative agencies, to try to articulate further the simulation’s discursive and material effects on the bodies that it figures together or configures.