Sounds of War: 'Deaf'

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This is an exerpt from *Sounds of War: Aesthetics, Emotions and Chechnya* – an E-IR open access book by Susanna Hast.

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Deaf is about a boy named Sharpuddin. I found Sharpuddin in A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya by Anna Politkovskaya (2003). In September 1999, Sharpuddin, along with hundreds of others, escaped while helicopters circled above. Behind was Grozny, ahead was Ingushetia. Sharpuddin was perhaps six years old. A thin, sad-looking boy, Sharpuddin said that it was nice to be deaf. "The deaf can't hear any of this. And so they're not afraid" (Politkovskaya 2003: 37). In 1999, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that there was no safe exit for those who wanted to escape Chechnya. There could be no humanitarian aid because of intensive bombardment. The report calls Russia's "fight against terrorism" a collective punishment on the Chechen population (Médecins Sans Frontières 1999). The report states: "The inhabitants of the north who have fled to the south of the republic to escape the bombing of Grozny, Urus Martan, Atchoi Martan, Cernovodsk, and Samachki find themselves on the move again when the villages in the south are attacked by Russian aerial bombings or missiles" (Médecins Sans Frontières 1999). While I am obsessing about music, sound, hearing, and listening, Sharpuddin is unable to hear. But even if the deaf do not hear, they have an experience of sound. As Oliver Sacks (2000) writes, even the most profoundly deaf can hear various sorts of noises and be sensitive to different vibrations. Maybe Sharpuddin became deaf because of the war, but for him deafness is a blessing in disguise in the war zone. His hearing loss enables him to defy the soundscape of war and thus creates a crack in the affective emotion-scape of fear.

"Deaf"
On the field there's a man staring at me
He kneels down, is he hurt, does he bleed? I don't need, I don't need, to cover my ears
But I feel, I feel the earth, underneath The life I have
Who could understand
what silence means to a boy like me

On the field the wingless birds play hide and seek
What I see, is fire sweep where the heartless breathe I don't need, I don't need, to cover my ears
But I feel, I feel the earth, underneath The life I have
Who could understand
what silence means to a boy like me

On the field, all alone, the man is gone
In my dream so is fear, haven pure sweet Hunted down I face the life
and sing to heal
I don't need, I don't need, to cover my ears The life I have
Who could understand

what silence means to a boy like me.

War is also a sonic experience. Sound is central in the war experience of soldiers and civilians (Daughtry 2015). Sound itself can be violent, but sound also organises life in a very fundamental manner. Sharpuddin's war experience was different. He could not be harmed by sound the way those who hear can be, yet being deaf means he is vulnerable in other ways. Sharpuddin's story makes me think: What does war sound like? I will return to this question in Chapter five.

Rationale of the Book

For a lonely band of human rights activists, Chechnya represents one of the greatest human rights catastrophes of the post-cold war era (Gilligan 2010: 1).

This book is about emotions and war in Chechnya. War, here, is not investigated through statistics, official reports or the unfolding of events, but through the aesthetics of non-combatant experience. In this study, I use autobiographies and films as sources of insight into war and emotions, accompanied by some interview material. The focus is on human capacity, and in particular, human capacity through compassion, dance, children's agency and love. This is not an ethnographic study, but a research project which looks into emotions as they are expressed in art. Emotions are understood as embodied, and instead of a history of emotions in war, this study is an encounter with ideas and insights which easily remain outside the radar in International Relations. Methodological and theoretical discussions occupy much space in this book because of the experimental nature of the work and the elusiveness of human experience.

This introductory chapter, Deaf, explores aesthetics as theory/practice/methodology, and discusses bodily awareness and songwriting as research methods. Chapter two, Condemned to Hope, provides the context of the study – the history of war in Chechnya, namely the wars of 1994–1996 and 1999–2009 – and it discusses briefly Chechen culture and the danger of 'othering' when portraying and stilling Chechnya and Chechens.

Chapter three, Pit, discusses compassion through the autobiography of doctor Khassan Baiev titled The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire, which he wrote in 2003 after fleeing Chechnya to live in the United States. Baiev treated civilians, Russian soldiers and Chechen rebels alike, alongside female nurses who stayed in Chechnya even after their families left. In this chapter, I explore the concept of compassion at length because the emotion of compassion is the driving force for this study and thus frames the book throughout. Chapter four, Alia, continues with compassion, but engages it through visual and auditory means, using the documentary film Barzakh and the motion picture 12, complemented by interview material at the end of the chapter, as sources. The chapter focuses on Chechen dance as a corporeal expression of hope and compassion.

Chapter five, Fifteen Thousand, looks at the agency of children through two documentary films: The Children of Beslan and The 3 Rooms of Melancholia. The chapter argues that children in their daily lives participate in making and shaping political reality. Chapter six Lonely Night, returns from film to a narrative source and investigates another autobiography, Danser sur les Ruines (2006), written by a young Chechen female journalist Milana Terloeva (real name Bakhaeva) who studied in France as well as in Grozny. Terloeva's story is exceptional in its openness to the role of love in the everyday experience of young people sur les ruines, in the ruins.

Memoirs such as Terloeva's and Baiev's can trouble public narratives (see Dyvik 2016) as they express intimate stories of compassion and love in a war zone. The same can be said about the films which visualise the everyday experience and the mundane. The everyday is a space of resistance, not necessarily visible or valuable to an external audience, yet it is in the everyday experience that dominant scripts of war and peace are resisted (see Motta

and Seppälä 2016).

The concluding chapter, Lie, is divided into two parts. The first part ties together the empirical chapters on compassion, dance, children and love and discusses collective emotions. The second part reflects on the ethics of researching war through aesthetic sensing, proposing that the world can be viewed from new angles with body-based methods and performative politics. At the very end, I introduce the concept of Musistance – musical resistance.

The book grows theoretically deeper with each chapter. I begin with the idea of enactivism which argues that the mind and body are ontologically one. This concept frames the entire study and is both the starting point of my art-based method and the reason I study emotions through art and the body. I develop enactivism further by using the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's (2010) work to explore the difference between emoting and the feeling of emotion. In Chapter three I investigate the bodily basis of compassion, and in Chapter four I continue towards kinaesthetic empathy, adopted from dance research. Furthermore, I discuss the role of synchrony from research in neuroscience, and present it here in order to show how compassion relates to bodily movement. In Chapter five I explore developmental psychology in order to discuss the emotions of children.

Each chapter begins with a song and a reflection on the songwriting process. The song's purpose is to offer an alternative, auditory experience of the research report. Yet, the chapter is not reducible to the song and neither is the song representative of the chapter – the song and the chapter are in conversation with each other. The musical part of this book is proposed as one possible way to structure and convey the world of embodied, emotional and insightful experience. The lyrics are not composed of ideology or political messages, but thoughts and feelings which emerged during the research process. The songs act as a tool of dialogue between the researcher and the researched. I hope the songs will work as a source of embodied insight into the twilight zone of our creative processes. Rather than offering a new methodology or guidelines, this research attempts to dismantle disembodied ways of producing knowledge. The value of the musical shape of research can be evaluated by the reader/listener.

This research is indebted to Feminist Security Studies which opened the path to analysing security and war from the perspective of everyday life (Wibben 2011). I follow the work of Christine Sylvester, who argues that the body is the locus of powerful war experiences (2011: 1). Linda Åhall and Thomas Gregory (2015) point out that the definition of war used in International Relations scholarship is dispassionate and rationalist, resulting in war being viewed as a force-on-force battle. "Emotions are constitutive of war and politics," they state (Åhall and Gregory 2015: xvii). Research on war experience, though crucial in situating war as embodied, has tended to focus on pain and suffering (Dyvik 2016). As Elina Penttinen (2013) writes, in the context of the oppressive and destructive larger structures of war, joy, love and self-healing can seem irrelevant. Yet, war contains all aspects of human life, including creativity. As Leena Vastapuu (2017) writes in her research on young female war veterans in Liberia, hopes and dreams keep individuals afloat through their daily struggles.

This book does not focus on pain and suffering, but on healing and connection. Survivors of violence often rely on self-healing for recovery, especially in war when conventional structures of healing are damaged or destroyed (Mollica 2009). Stories of survival can be central in healing from trauma (Mollica 2009, see also Penttinen 2013). Yet, there is a conflict between a need to offer and receive validation, and a need to forget and the fear of stigmatisation (Lewis Herman 2011). Clarissa Pinkola Estés, in her famous book Women Who Run with the Wolves (1996), explores beautifully, through storytelling and folklore, the instinctive powers of women, including intuitive healing and the ability to tend to their own creative fires. This means that human beings are not reducible to their traumas. This book attempts to show this by presenting stories of everyday struggles during war while shedding light on human capacities. I do not mean to say, however, that everyone possesses the capacity for self-healing or resistance. I must emphasise here that it is not my intention to promote strategies of resilience or personal responsibility over the need to address systemic injustices or structures of power. But I am curious about the ways in which people have experienced a meaningful connection with others in spite of, or because of, the suffering caused by war.

When stories are shared, life experiences become validated by the possibility of telling and listening. When shared, stories can be remembered. Stories are a primary way of explaining intentions and actions, producing meaning and

making sense of ourselves and others (Wibben 2011). Stories change, they are recreated and their authenticity can be questioned. But it is not the authenticity of stories that interests me, but the aesthetics of stories and the way they make identities which connect and divide people. Stories and memories make people and war alike. Narratives about identity, the state, borders, grievances, the other, and so forth enable the willingness to wage war. Narratives about forgiving, healing and surviving construct the self, but also families and communities. Without stories of Chechen war experiences, people would remain statistics and their lives disposable (see Enloe 2014b). We would not know how individuals became empowered and how they changed their lives and their environments. To make lives visible, names known and stories heard is to make life non-disposable. Yet there always remains the risk of re-silencing and abstracting. Even the most inclusive narrations will be exclusive. Most of the stories from Chechnya will never be heard.

The stories we choose to write can become violence, especially if they contribute to what Erin Manning calls stilling (2007). Bodies need to be stilled in order to be characterised (2007: xvii). This means that bodies and politics are stabilised in the name of a larger system like the nation-state or the body- politic. The counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya turned male Chechen bodies into potential terrorist bodies which could be abducted, tortured and killed. In Chechen culture, the female body has been stilled through honour (more on honour in Chapter six). Female bodies must live up to the ideals of their communities. Stills are choreographed and composed to set boundaries for people and their imaginations.

To escape the still is to move, and to move out of the frame. I explore in Chapter four how Chechens dancing contradict this stilling and stabilising of bodies. When dancing, the body is active, taking space, communicating emotions. The dancer chooses to be seen. The dancer is not escaping war; not hiding in a cellar; not tortured; not sitting still and quiet as a hostage; not being held in fear, cold and hunger in a pit. The dancer can be suffering, in pain and afraid even, yet, the potential for healing and joy exists in the possibility of self-expression. In Chapter three, I introduce a story of everyday politics that transforms a still in which female bodies are protected by males. A politics of touch emerges in which the corporeal action of women becomes an embodiment of compassion not only in war, but within the framework of a patriarchal society. In Chapter five, children are no longer passive and still representations of fragility, but have their own stories to tell. In Chapter six, the intimate relationships of young women and men are de- stilled from patriarchal structures and a more self-defining agency – a politics of love – is found.

Researching the Aesthetics of War Experience

In researching emotions in war experience, I have chosen to focus on in-depth analysis of a few selected sources. My approach is framed by aesthetics, to which I found my way through the work of Roland Bleiker (see also Ankersmit 1997). Aesthetics is not only the study of art, but everything related to meaning-making. It is not the purpose of an aesthetic analysis to produce descriptions of the world ‘as it really is,’ but to bring out the insight that art offers through an interaction of sensibilities and thought (Bleiker 2009: 32). Aesthetics redirects thought towards the yet unknown and unimaginable, because it does not rely on conscious thought alone, but thought which is connected to bodily senses and sensations, emotions and the non-conscious.

Whereas mimetic forms of representation attempt to capture the political as realistically as possible,

An aesthetic approach, by contrast, assumes that there is always a gap between a form of representation and what is represented therewith. Rather than ignoring or seeking to narrow this gap, as mimetic approaches do, aesthetic insight recognises that the inevitable difference between the represented and its representation is the very location of politics (Bleiker 2009: 14).

Bleiker (2017) identifies research on aesthetics as more than research on art as exploring different ways of writing and sensing. He refers to “opening up thinking space” as the core of aesthetics (262). As part of this process, one can write differently in order to think differently. At the same time, aesthetic analysis needs to be accompanied by self-reflexivity and transparency, because like any perspective, aesthetics also excludes. Choices have to be made. Research practices set the frames which shape the knowledge we produce. In these choices, power is necessarily

located and exercised.

In this study, exclusion means, at least, exclusion of systematic ethnographic work. As a mother of two young children, I could not travel for extended periods. Moreover, building trust (both ways) is a long and complicated process especially in the current political climate of fear in Chechnya. This fear affects also the Chechen diaspora. When I finally decided to travel, I was advised against it because it was not safe. In early 2016, President Kadyrov's position was unclear, and journalists had been beaten at the border of Ingushetia. Fortunately, I was able to meet and interview some Chechens in Europe. But I did not want people to have to relive their traumas, so I did not ask difficult questions. I also did not want the children present to hear difficult conversations. I also had to leave out some discussions because the content would risk revealing individual identities.

For the interview material included, I have chosen to use pseudonyms without the location or date of the interviews. These precautions might seem extreme, but during my interview with Ali and Said (2017), it became clear there was a real danger to those who criticised the regime. This might not be in the form of a personal threat, but a threat to the entire family and clan. I asked for permission to publish critical statements after the interviews because interviewees repeatedly voiced their concern when I was taking notes.

Thus, the choice here is an aesthetic analysis of autobiographies and films, with some supplemental interview material added. As Bleiker (2017: 261) advises, "An aesthetic approach to the political has to avoid the hubris associated with the idea that we can advance the kind of grand theories that offer objective and overarching explanations of the world." This research is not meant to be generalized. I do not present one big discovery but rather pieces of a very complex puzzle. This research makes visible new aspects of war and war experience, and situates compassion, love and children's agency at the centre of analysis. I adhere to Bleiker's call for aesthetic engagement to become "political and politically disruptive in the most fundamental way: by challenging the boundaries of what is visible and invisible, thinkable and unthinkable and thus of what can and cannot be debated in politics" (2017: 262).

I view the autobiographies and films analysed in this study as art and art is political (see Lindroos and Möller 2017). As Butler and Bleiker argue, "Art becomes political because it can challenge how we see and conceptualize the world around us" (2017: 112). Art is a sensory experience for the creator and the spectator and a means of political ordering and transformation. The authors of the autobiographies I analyse witnessed war first-hand, and the documentarists captured the aftermath through their camera lenses. Filmmakers sometimes exposed themselves to personal risk entering the (post-)war zone without permission. Such documentary films also relate to debates on the spectatorship of suffering and humanitarianism (see Hesford 2011; Kotilainen 2016). Yet, the films chosen here do not rely on macabre aesthetics – visualisations of violence – but rather the more mundane imagery of human suffering. Because of the lack of violent scenes, the films leave room for perspectives on agency beyond victimhood.

The motion picture 12 I analyse in Chapter four is a "witness of conviction" (Gibbon 2010: 105) and it reflects on how the Chechen wars have been dealt with, or rather not dealt with, in Russia. Such witnesses of conviction, or of "inner knowing," as Jill Gibbon explains (2010: 105), do not have to be eye witnesses. The idea of art as a witness of conviction comes from war art which became popular around 1917, and which derived from the romantic idea of art as the source of authentic values. Here art is not seen as a witness of the authentic, but a witness which can disturb established narratives and bring forward new insights. Sometimes the insights come from an absence, sometimes from a presence. Yet, the absence of visual representation is not necessarily an absence at all (Chowdhury 2016: 42). There can be an auditory presence, or a presence which comes forward by suggesting the unknowability of experiences of violence. For me, researching war is a negotiation between what is knowable, visible, audible and what is not. Somewhere between the sensual experience, curiosity and doubt, insight emerges. Like Bleiker (2009), I prefer the term insight to knowledge, for it is more open-ended and leans more toward the senses. Knowledge is often interpreted as rational and instrumental in ways which exclude intuition and emotion. For me, insight is in the present – it is experiential and lived corporeally.

Autoaesthetics

This study investigates the politics in-between the representation and the represented, and it 'reoccupies the political'

(Seppälä 2017) by situating the researcher as a political subject. To reoccupy the political is to perform and create art – to receive and to give. I have documented my artistic journey as much as I could on social media and YouTube. I try to make visible the pain and pleasure of performative politics by refusing to conceal my presence (Daigle 2006). In fact, it turned out to be impossible to 'just write about Chechnya,' because every single day I did research I had to negotiate difference and otherness. I could never escape myself, nor the ethics and aesthetics of othering.

But rather than calling it autobiography, storytelling or narrative politics (Bleiker and Brigg 2010; Daigle 2006; Dauphinée 2007; Inayatullah 2011; Inayatullah and Dauphinée 2016), I use the term autoaesthetics. Auto- aesthetics refers to the role of the self in research, but in addition to the autobiographical self, it focuses on the aesthetics of performance and vulnerability. Because this study blurs the boundary between science and art, it allows encounters with a world we do not normally see (Dauphinée 2013). It does not involve simply writing from the inside but producing aesthetic sensations that go beyond writing.

Autoaesthetics is intimate and rigorous artistic scholarship. Theory is not somewhere outside of me. As a researcher, I join with and journey with the research material. I am a political subject who always returns to the intimate. Not only do I write the body and the body's journey in, but I research and express the results corporeally and melodically. To be precise, I had to resort to performance because so much of the body could not be written in this book. Because of these choices, I have also had to reflect on the ethics of my aesthetics. Previously I would contemplate how distanced my academic writing was from the lived experiences of my research subjects. Now I have to consider what my dancing and singing does – what feelings, meanings, and ideas my artistic creations potentially produce.

Writing the self in reflexively means acknowledging the relationship between the self and the other. The danger, I have discovered, is the almost paralysing thought that one's research may never be ethical enough. Sara Ahmed (2004c) discusses, in the context of whiteness studies, the declaratory nature of self-reflexivity, in which a declaration of one's shame about being a racist is assumed to make one non-racist. That is, by declaring my guilt over my privilege, I relieve myself of that guilt. Andrea Smith (2013) is concerned that rather than creating political projects to change structures of domination, confessions of privilege become political projects in and of themselves. Emphasising one's privileged position can be counterproductive and may even construct privilege and hierarchy rather than dismantle it. There is a danger in using solidarity and the discourse of privilege as an identity project – ethical reflection may have the effect of making me feel good about myself. Tiina Seppälä (2016) has chosen to write about her privilege, not to confess or declare, but to show how some of her research practices changed when she tried to unlearn privilege. I share that intention.

I decided to continue with an art-based approach even at the risk of producing something unethical, because that same risk is embedded in all forms of expression and all means of exchanging insight and knowledge. I am accountable for any mistakes to Chechens first and foremost.

Art-Based Research

This is a multidisciplinary and artistic study that takes a stand for seeking out insight wherever and however it comes about. When I wrote songs about the wars in Chechnya in the winter of 2014, I did not consider songwriting a research method, nor did I realise that I was following an established practice of art-based or creative research design, such as those developed in the field of Critical Security Studies (Salter and Mutlu 2013). If the main research challenge is a puzzle, it can be addressed with all means available. As Bleiker (2003: 420) writes, "A source may stem from this or that discipline, it may be academically sanctioned or not, expressed in prose or poetic form, it may be language based or visual or musical or take any other shape or form: it is legitimate as long as it helps to illuminate the puzzle in question." Thus, the musical, the narrative and the theoretical will hopefully blend into a meaningful mixture that interests readers inside and outside academia.

Sometimes art-based methods are not viewed as 'real' research (MacKenzie 2008). However, art-based method allows for more creative freedom to engage with both the research topic and society because the researcher can experiment with different forms and shapes, some of which may be more approachable to a wider audience. Art-based research also invites the reader to get closer to the author (see Manovski 2014). Knowles and Cole (2008: 29)

describe arts-informed research as “bringing together the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies with the artistic, disciplined and imaginative qualities of the arts.” Art connects people, encourages empathy and advances a more respectful and dialogical society. In this project art is present in all aspects, from the research process to the final products. This research project is an example of “thinking in, through and with art” (Borgdorff 2011: 44).

Art-based method, also called artistic research, performative research or practice-as-research, means that art is not extra or secondary, but central. The art-based method encourages speaking with the body and using non- textual communication. Since the study itself examines the body in lived experience, a mere textual representation would be inadequate. In academic writing, ‘rational thought’ is often privileged in an attempt to contain violence in representations that sustain our immunity and distance from it (Daughtry 2015). Thus, there are ethical and political implications in writing differently (Daigle 2016). This does not mean we should abandon academic writing but, rather, we should take into account that it is not the only means of scholarship available.

For me, this project has been a process of unlearning: in music I can abandon explanations, jargon and objectivity by concentrating instead on the politics of passion and art. This politics of art is meant to reveal human potential, above all. Like Jacques Rancière (2008), I am critical of a cause and effect relation- ship between art and political change, because there is no fixed continuation of sensing from the product of art to the spectator’s experience. As Rancière puts it, art’s influence is not based on the mediation of messages, offering of role models or warning examples. Art affects through organising bodies, and by defining ways of being together and being separated. Art’s influence is, then, not based on ethical immediacy or mediation of representation, but aesthetics. Aesthetic influence ruptures any linear connection between art and audience; that is, there are no predefined sensorimotor consequences in an aesthetic experience. Aesthetic influence is then a conflict in different orders of sensing, and conflict is the essence of the political. The political, for Rancière, is more than a struggle for power, it means action which moulds the sensual settings within which shared properties are defined. A politics of aesthetics gives birth to new capacities and challenges – what is seen as possible. It is not so much the content, but the form of art which makes it political, and this applies to the art I have created.

The shapes and forms of art expand what is seen as possible in scientific inquiry. The songs re-situate bodies and redefine capacities in unpredictable ways. They rupture the tissue of the senses by demanding different perceptions and feelings. I mix and confuse styles, moods and sensory sources on purpose. In the songs, victims of war become more than victims, and the researcher becomes aware of the passions which are deemed inappropriate. Art is not fiction which enters the real world – it is the real world.

Songwriting

Human beings are musical and have a special musical memory. In Musicophilia, Oliver Sacks (2008) writes that, with few exceptions, people are able to perceive music and its nuances like melody, rhythm, pitch and harmony. Moreover, musical experience is emotional, visceral, and muscular. Our bodies follow the narrative of a piece often non-consciously. Amazingly, we are able to recreate music in our minds following the original pitch and tempo due to a special musical memory. This musical memory enables Alzheimer’s patients to remember music even when they have lost their autobiographical selves (see Sacks 2008).

Assal Habibi and Antonio Damasio (2014) write that music has a profound impact on the human being. Music can alter neural systems, such as those associated with auditory and motor processing, but it also affects the regions of the brain responsible for regulation processes (homeostasis). Music induces feelings which are informative and nourishing at the individual level, but it can also act at the collective level. Habibi and Damasio (2014: 93) hypothesise that “music can engage innate physiological action programs and, by doing so help restore the physiological state to a range of relative homeostatic balance.”

The aesthetics of music is a non-fragmented experience. “There is no musician here and instrument there and music somewhere else and audience out there taking it all in” (Merrell 2003: 137). To take this further, when we listen to music we integrate tone, timbre, pitch, melody and rhythm non- consciously so as to experience music (see Sacks

2008). Music permeates the scene and beings in it. When we analyse music intellectually, we can distinguish different components, but when we enjoy music aesthetically, we hear its totality, even if we appreciate certain elements more than others.

Songwriting became my method accidentally. In fact, it was not a conscious but an intuitive choice. Put another way, doing without thinking or planning created the method. The amateurish songwriting is visible in the unconventional structures of many of the songs. Not knowing how to write music was an opportunity to write and compose freely in the beginning. Learning to write music, I discovered a new way of experiencing research. Reading Sacks, I realised how there is nothing peculiar about the attempt to experience the world through melodies. Borrowing Patricia Leavy's (2015) concept, music is a shape in the research process. Incorporating music, scholarship emerges in a different form, and the songwriting itself shapes the content and how it is received. Because music is passionate and playful, it has the power to restructure thinking and disrupt established hierarchies. Considering the role music plays in human life, my choice to sing, record and perform becomes political.

Songwriting is poetic writing that goes beyond the textual. Songwriting allows the unspeakable to be said. Non-linguistic elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, mood, tempo and tone always live in the moment as a corporeal exchange of meanings and feelings (Hast 2016). The words I write are whispers of my body – my bones, skin, nerves, blood, cells and organs. Sound alters my body and consciousness, and hopefully others' too. My words may be interpreted and misinterpreted in any number of ways, and even my own mind changes the meanings depending on the situation or my mood.

The songs here are not representations of Chechnya, or Chechen war experience. They are a body swinging to rhythms and a mind travelling to known or unknown places. I am not the voice of the victims of war. I am not even a messenger. As Cynthia Milton (2017: 132) argues, "art is not bound to truth." Art investigates competing narratives and can thus contradict official histories. The music I created does not attempt to grasp the victim's truth, but it does raise questions about commodification and exploitation (see Lindroos and Möller 2017). Art does not have to be a presentation of something (reality or truth), it is a presentation of itself. This means, according to Lindroos and Möller (2017), that art can have the capacity to be a witness through the very act of its presentation. The songs I have written are an important part of this research, but they also stand alone as 'just music.' There is a curious entanglement of art as witness in this research, witnessing which I have not entirely figured out. Film is a witness, the autobiographies are witness testimonials, and I, myself, am a witness. Witnessing permeates all levels.

The playfulness of music-making is my way of practising "feminist resistance to abstraction" (Wibben 2011: 2). Through the act of composing and songwriting, I resist the dualisms of body/mind and knowledge/emotion. I rely on interoception (sensory signals originating inside of the body), exteroception (observing the outside world) and proprioception or the kinaesthetic sense (movement and relative positions of the parts of the body) to ensure an awareness of the felt sense, the lived experience (Merleau- Ponty 1964). That the lived body is both conscious and non-conscious is the epistemological foundation of this research. By singing, I hope to reach the felt sense of the listener, and for the listener to become a participant in an exchange of emotions. When performed and heard, the songs negotiate power relations in that they help determine how and what we know. The songs bring pain too: the pain of storytelling and aesthetic pain. Singing about war or scientific findings is not easy. There is awkwardness and vulnerability embedded in the project which I cannot escape – and perhaps, should not escape. I return to this discussion in the conclusion.

Songwriting begins with the body; it makes the body move and the moving body makes the songs. Songwriting is also an emotional endeavour and it can feel like being haunted by something. Sometimes we write from our own dark places even when we write about others (Lamott 1995). Songwriting is necessarily personal but it carries with it the possibility that some aspects of the research subject will become more visible. To quote McNiff (2008: 37),

Art embraces ordinary things with an eye for their unusual and extraordinary qualities. The artist looks at banal phenomena from a perspective of aesthetic significance and gives them a value that they do not normally have. This way of relating to things may have more social significance than one might at first imagine.

When I was at a loss with the need to domesticate 'knowledge' about war, I found a way out through music. When I was unable to unemotionally intellectualise and analyse someone's war experience, I could express the way I needed to and explicitly with emotion through music. As I composed and wrote the lyrics, I formed a different relationship to my research material and learned different ways of thinking by composing. The search for a chord or a word; the rehearsal and repetition, had a profound impact on my capacity to appreciate the mundane. When I began cooperating with Timo Rehtonen and other musicians, the artistic process took a cooperative turn. My collaborators had no knowledge of my research (or interest, necessarily), but they were making this music with me and were thus part of the research process. I could bring professional musicians into that same dialogue and process of producing embodied sensibility and thought on war, healing and Chechnya. I found new audiences outside the academic context by bringing the music to public events, clubs and a music festival. I have begun calling such performative politics musistance – musical resistance, a concept to which I return in the concluding chapter.

What does war sound like? Can it sound like funk music? Khassan Baiev, a Chechen surgeon, whose war experience I discuss in the following chapter, needed something to calm his anxiety as he worked to save people's lives and limbs. Sleep-deprived and exhausted, he used breathing and exercise to calm his nerves. His father had suggested that he listen to music – not slow songs but music with a strong rhythm. Baiev followed his father's advice and played this type of music between operations until one of the nurses complained that it was not appropriate because people were suffering. Others might think they were having a good time. Music has a way of inciting emotions, and shame can be one of them. In this case, being perceived as enjoying oneself or having fun amidst war became shameful even though it brought relief.

Embodied Insight

Mark Johnson (2007), who has researched how bodily experience gives rise to reasoning and conceptualisation for some 30 years now, suggests that aesthetics is the key to understanding the visceral origins of meaning. For Johnson (2007: x), aesthetics is broader than the study of art or aesthetic experience, it is "the study of everything that goes into the human capacity to make and experience meaning." As Johnson argues, cognitive neuroscience is offering us proof of how non-conscious thought and feeling are at the core of reasoning and meaning-making. Mind and body as ontologically one means that thought emerges via the recruitment of various sensorimotor capacities. This is why I write about the body of the researcher, and thus try to dismantle disembodied research methods. Such methods disregard the body and see the mind (separate from the rest of the body) as doing the analysing and conceptualising work.

The body of the researcher is an active tool in meaning-making. Insight is then produced in-between bodies. The embodied insight then does not come from the self alone, but from a sensibility in relation to the other. The body of the researched affects my body; thus, I am not in complete control of that bodily exchange.

The body enables and restricts what and how we observe, know and process. According to Damasio (2010), body mapping, to which I will return later, underpins the self process in conscious minds and the representations of the world external to the organism. The ability to know the outer world depends on the ability to know the inner world. Research is learning, and learning does not take place in a brain independent of (the rest of) the body. Thus, I am looking at learning beyond the dualism of mind and body. Learning is not just the cognitive processing of symbolic information (numbers, words, shapes, etc.) taking place in the brain (Anttila 2013); through the process of sensing and emoting in interaction with others, learning changes the body. Our conscious awareness of our bodily processes arises when the body is in pain, sick or experiencing pleasure, but most of the time we can be unaware of our bodies. Likewise, we are often unaware of how the body learns, perceives and communicates. But it is possible to become mindful of the body, to direct attention to bodily experiences and changes in the body's state (Anttila 2013).

Singing is an embodied method – it necessitates the use of voice, breathing technique, volume and bodily exercise. But there are many other ways I have utilised the body while researching. Since this book is about the sounds of war, I have tried to pay attention to different sounds. Listening to a film without watching it is one example. The soundscape without images helps bring focus to the embodied insights coming from senses the researcher might easily ignore, such as hearing. Without visual stimuli it is difficult to ignore the sound of a helicopter flying around, for

example. Sounds make one remember, they are sonic somatic markers. Listening is a way to see further. I have tapped and clapped to the rhythms of the films I have analysed. I have danced. I have used mirroring/mimicking, synchronous movement and kinaesthetic empathy as theory and as practice; that is, I have tried to embody that which I have seen. I have not simply watched films, but I have moved with the people in them as part of an embodied methodology. I return to this in Chapter four.

To read and sense with the body is to read and sense with emotion, without separating thinking from emoting. Davies and Spencer (2010) argue for what they call radical empiricism which refuses an epistemological cut between subject and object, and acknowledges that emotion in fieldwork can be used to inform the research. But it is not only fieldwork that needs to rethink the role of emotions in research. The disregarding of emotions in research is associated with the construction of emotions as gendered and feminised – emotionality as a sign of weakness (Parashar 2011). Positions, experiences and emotions make us the readers and interpreters we are. Des Fitzgerald (2013) even sees emotions as having an important role in the neurosciences and psychology – fields which study emotions.

By attending to emotion, I found my way to the root of a research finding. To attend to emotions is to take emotional/intuitive insight seriously. For me it meant battling despair and perception bias when my attention was directed towards the negative, threatening and dangerous. It meant observing physical changes in order to stop at crucial moments to re-read or re-watch something that moved and affected me but that I struggled to write about. It meant looking into my own lived body as a site of insight. Sometimes I cried, sometimes I laughed, sometimes I noticed my pulse change, or my body shake or twist. Very often I felt anxious or excited. I became a witness to violence and was at times unemotional, and at other times oversensitive. When I analysed a play dealing with the school siege of Beslan (Hast 2017), I left the theatre feeling empty, without having shed a single tear. I realised that the absence of visual and linguistic representations of suffering in the play were in fact a presence of non-discursive emoting. From concerns over my own emotionless state, I became curious about children's emotions and how they might be embodied.

When minding emotions and sensations, the research argument does not always manifest in language but remains lingering inside the skin, on the surface of the skin, on the tip of the tongue, within the cramps of the stomach, with the changes in breathing, with the sweaty armpits and cold fingers. The body's experience is always temporary. There is no return to the moment of sensing once it has passed. Yet, the momentary lived experience is the source of knowledge and insight. Because there might never be a linear link between the sensory input and the argument, it might be necessary to come up with different means to let knowledge flow from body to body more directly and with more vulnerability. Ahmed (2017: 13) writes about sweaty concepts which emerge from a "description of a body that is not at home in the world" and "a bodily experience that is trying." Eliminating the effort and the sweat is an academic aim – we have been trained to tidy our texts from the personal struggle.

Aesthetics is an exercise of the body; it is meaning-making through aware- ness of sensory experience. These meanings are not mimetic representations of reality, but relationships with the world, encounters with the other. The body knows, remembers and feels, and I take emotional/intuitive insight seriously. Emotion brought me to movement, and the impact of Chechen dance on my body helped me to develop the embodied method. Dancing became a way of researching embodiment and this happened because I no longer separated thinking from the body.

Dance is all about the body. It is a non-linguistic yet often narrative form. A dancer can begin to remember herself, and grow to remember something lost (Monni 1995). Muscle memory is a deep automatic memory, but movement itself is a journey of investigation. We can find ways of being through the practise of art. We can – and do – think through the body. Yet often, like Merrell (2003) points out, we view our bodies as 'other' to the self, the self's possession. But we already have the knowing body, the remembering body. The lived body is a site of knowing (Green 2002; Rouhiainen 2008), and movement is at the root of our sense of agency – it generates our sense of time and space (Sheets-Johnstone 2011). As Merleau-Ponty (1964: 5) writes, "The body, in turn, is wholly animated, and all its functions contribute to the perception of objects – an activity long considered by philosophy to be pure knowledge." Yet, this knowing is, to a great extent, automatic and non- conscious. It would be impossible to function if one had to be consciously aware of everything. This goes for research as well. Most bodily sensations are

unattended to, yet they influence the way the researcher perceives and makes sense of the external world. So rather than being aware of all kinds of sensations, the embodied method means not writing emotions and sensations out. As a researcher, embodied insight comes from not denying the existence of the living body in the research process.

Body and Mind as One

So far, I have written about the importance of aesthetics and sensing with bodily awareness, but to make embodied insight a research practice, body- mind dualism must be overcome. My thinking about emotions and aesthetics has been greatly influenced by Floyd Merrell's (2003) concept of bodymind. Bodymind is body and mind together, as a singularity. Bodymind does before the mind becomes aware. This means that instead of thinking that the body affects the mind, and the mind affects the body, this singularity makes the two inseparable. To quote Damasio (2010: 200):

[…] the body proper remains inseparably attached to the brain at all times. This attachment underlies the generation of primordial feelings and the unique relationship between the body, as object, and the brain that represents that object. When we make maps of objects and events out in the world, those objects and events remain out in the world. When we map our body's objects and events, they are inside the organism and they do not go anywhere. They act on the brain but can be acted upon at any time, forming a resonating loop that achieves something akin to a body-mind fusion.

The body-mind connection is quite amazing. Take phantom pregnancy, for example: all the possible physical symptoms of a pregnancy, but no baby (see Ramachandran and Blakeslee 1998). The causes and mechanisms of phantom pregnancy are unknown, but the condition means that the mind can cause the body to develop signs of pregnancy. If the mind can do this, what else can it do to the body? Conversely, what can the body do to the mind? Or, what do they do together?

Evan Thompson (2007: ix) suggests that there is a "deep continuity of mind in life." Where there is life, there is mind. This means that mental life is also bodily life and situated in the world. This approach is called enactivism, and it was originally coined by Varela, Thompson and Rosch in The Embodied Mind (1993). It is characterised by multidisciplinarity, combining neuroscience, phenomenology, biology, psychology – and here the study of politics. Giovanna Colombetti draws on phenomenological philosophies and likewise understands the body though enactivism. Enactivism refers to embodiment: "the mind is enacted or brought forth by the living organism by virtue of its specific organization and its interaction in the world" (Colombetti 2012: xiv). The body here does not mean only the sensorimotor system (which links sensory input to motor action) but a living body which includes the viscera, the circulatory system, the immune system and the endocrine system – these are all related to the functions of the mind. The enactive approach helps to frame the mind and body as ontologically one, and one in the world. Thus, embodied insight is an enacted bodymind.

The above discussion implies that if we abandon the separations between mind and body and emotion and cognition, the nature of emotions like compassion become less clear. Is compassion felt somewhere in the body? Does compassion manifest in certain action tendencies? Can compassion be triggered by sensing the emotions or movements of another body? And how much thinking is involved? To unpack some of these questions, it helps to separate emoting in the body from the conscious feeling of emotion. This does not mean another body-mind separation, but recognising emoting as a process. The separation is then about non-conscious and pre-discursive felt sense, and the conscious processing of the felt sense. I explain this next with the help of Antonio Damasio's (2010) work.

Emotions and Emoting

Emotions emerge interpersonally, circulating between bodies and signs, delineating and binding together bodies and nations (Ahmed 2004a; Ahmed 2004b). What Ahmed means is that emotions do not simply belong to the individual, they are not a property nor do they reside in a person; but they move, in time and space, in a rippling effect. This means emotions are shared collectively, and are integral for understanding war. But how to study emotions in International Relations? Marysia Zalewski (2015: 35) wonders if an affective method is too problematic, and asks:

“Unless writing a poem or a novel, can one represent a sense of emotional and affective intensity?” Bleiker and Hutchison (2008b) propose that, indeed, aesthetic insights are particularly suited to capturing emotions, because the emotions of a person cannot be easily known or communicated authentically. Art does not have to represent objects or events as realistically as possible. It can instead communicate emotional relationships. Aesthetic sensing encourages affective methods for it deconstructs the artificial border between objective and subjective sources of embodied insight.

I do not think that the difficulties in studying emotions (with emotion) in International Relations is a problem of representation but a problem born out of the dualism of emotion and cognition. The dualism of emotion and cognition is easily overcome, for example, by looking into neuroscience. In fact, studies of emotion in the field of political science cannot escape the psychological and neurological nature of emoting. Affects and emotions call for a multidisciplinary approach (Saeidi and Turcotte 2011; Crawford 2014; Jeffery 2014). The argument is this: There is no separation between cognition and emotion; cognition is always already affective (Colombetti 2012). As Damasio (2010) argues, there is not even consciousness without feeling. According to Damasio, the self with a body, mind and past are known to the mind because they generate emotions and feeling. Feelings accomplish the separation between the self and that which is not the self. He calls these somatic markers emotion-based signals. We would not know who we are unless we had a constant emotional bond to the internal and external world. For William Connolly (2002), somatic markers make it possible to perceive and decide in a timely manner. Thus, we would not know what to do without somatic markers.

Damasio has studied patients with brain damage affecting their ability to make decisions. Because the patients could not associate emotions with their decision-making process, they engaged in endless cost-benefit calculations (Damasio 2009). Emotions are necessary for timely decision-making, but decision making is also partly non-conscious. Damasio (2010) and Jonathan Haidt (2000) acknowledge the importance of gut feeling, or intuition, in decision-making. A research on emotions then needs to acknowledge not only how important emotions are for decision-making in the lived experience of the research subject, but also how researching, itself, relies on emotions, and there is no escape from them.

Affect and emotion are commonly separated with affect being the non- conscious corporeal experience while emotion is conscious, anchored in language and meaning (Hoggett and Thompson 2012; Manning 2007). Colombetti (2014), who also separates affect from emotion, recognises that Damasio’s conception of emotion is broader than is typically assumed in affective science because it affirms that basic life-sustaining processes are continuous with mental processes. The reason I like to refer to emotion rather than affect, is that I take emotion as embodied all the way through both the conscious and the non-conscious.

Damasio (2010) separates the physical, non-conscious bodily process that is emotion from the feeling of emotion, which happens when the individual becomes aware. Emotions are automated programs of actions carried out by our bodies and manifested in facial expressions, postures and visceral changes. Feelings of emotions, instead, are “perceptions of what happens in our body and mind when we are emoting” (Damasio, 2010: 109, emphasis in original). What follows emoting are brain maps entering consciousness as images (visual and non-visual), that are perceiving what is going on in the body.

In using conceptions of emotion and emoting I want to emphasise corporeality in awareness and beyond it. In order to avoid the Cartesian body/mind distinction I will not try to draw a strict line between emotion and the feeling of emotion. I believe this is the essence of Damasio’s conceptualisation as well. The body speaks, the body knows, and the mind is enacted through the body. There is a deep continuity from mind to body and from body to mind, from emoting to the feeling of emotion and from the feeling of emotion to emoting. It is the bodymind as singularity.

Then how about the relationship between perception and emotion? Emotion affects the way we perceive, what we perceive, how we interpret what we perceive, what perceptions we store in our memories, and what we bring forth from our memories when need be. Emotions affect our brain and bodily processes, like cognitive processes such as memory and attention (see Damasio 2010). Emotions themselves are triggered by objects or events happening in the moment, or which have happened in the past and are being recalled. Images of what is happening or has happened,

or what one imagines, are processed as images in different regions of the brain.

Damasio (2010) explains that we perceive by engagement, not passive reception. Maps of objects in movement are assembled in the brain. The feeling of emotion is based on a special relationship between the brain and the body: the capacity to map one's own bodily processes as well as those of others. According to Damasio, emotions are communicated through the highly trained observation of postures and faces. He states that, "feeling attribution has nothing to do with language" (2010: 167). This is something to chew for a political scientist, but Damasio refers namely to person-to-person encounters of intersubjectivity in which the individual reads the body's cues to learn about the emotional state of the other person.

As already stated, emotions are not wholly private experiences, but are transmitted between individuals, even groups (see the concluding chapter for more on collective emotions). This is a social and biological process. Teresa Brennan (2004) argues that the transmission of affect changes the biochemistry and neurology of an individual; biology does not determine social life, but socially created affect can change our biology (also Crawford 2014). This is also called neuroplasticity: even the adult brain is plastic and changeable. In social neurology, which assumes that the social environment shapes the biology of an individual, neuroplasticity means that by observing the individual we can learn about collective emotions (Jeffery 2014). For International Relations, recognising that 'the personal is political,' means acknowledging that emotions are related to structures of power. Structures of power influence emotions and emotions can motivate the movements that change structures.

Emotions are felt and expressed through an interaction between biology, subjectivity and power. The prospect that emotional change encourages change in communities and society is an important premise of this study. As Swati Parashar (2011) argues, the emotions of the individual are not entirely controlled by power structures.

We perceive and sense our body emoting, and others' bodies emoting. The way in which emotion is a corporeal and interpersonal experience constitutes the basis for theorising a politics of emotion. Because this research analyses aesthetics, I can only learn about the bodymind of others through the aesthetics of the object-body; that is, a view from the outside. Through the aesthetic analysis I will not try to determine what someone is actually feeling (because this would be a mimetic reading), but what appears to be happening or what bodies seem to be doing.

As Colombetti (2014) writes, there are emotional expressions which are similar across cultures, independent of language. I try to address the difficulties of reading the body while still trying to read the body, because the body is there to be seen and I cannot close my eyes to it. Even though at times I emphasise the biological side of emotion, I am not saying that the human being can be reduced to neurobiology. I am equally curious about how the social moment influences different emotional worlds.

Although I rely on sensing the object-body in stories, images and sounds, my attempt is to show the importance of these lives for our political reality. And I do not end there. Text, film and music all act upon the spectator's body. Sharing stories of compassion is the politics of compassion. All the material presented here are acts upon the body, and hopefully will work to challenge our stubborn, often pessimistic, ways of thinking about human capacity. To enter the stories is to enter and imagine new worlds

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