

Wartorn Britain

**How do former British armed forces personnel locate state
violence within their personal lived experience?**

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Ethnographic Documentary
in the Faculty of Humanities

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18,158 Words

Abstract:

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Ethnographic Documentary in the Faculty of Humanities.

Title: Wartorn Britain: How do former British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience 2013?

In my thesis film and text I explore how former British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience 2013. The film takes its title from the general condition of a nation that is constantly at war, producing and exporting state violence. In the film, this collective condition is explored through a portrait of one veteran of the recent Iraq war, now returned to his home in Blackpool. We see how he locates past experiences of violence and follow him through intimate settings with family and friends, as well as public settings, where veterans and the military are honoured and celebrated. These scenes provide insight into how violence is remembered, forgotten and denied in personal and public spaces and the ambiguous combination of complementarity and tension between the personal and the collective relationship to state violence in Blackpool. Whilst an individual may identify with the dominant collective discourse, at the same time they can express a variety of views directly related to their own experiences. There are several possible emotional reactions to situations of state violence, which may be held contemporaneously. Some emotional reactions may be seen as an attempt to seek balance in their emotional state and in relations with others. To relate to the other with remorse or love on a human level can balance othering practices of hating and creating monsters.

Guidance for the Reading and Viewing of Thesis

The principal output of this research thesis is the documentary film, *Wartorn Britain*, this text is complementary to that film. This text is divided into two main chapters, one to be read before the viewing of the film and one to be read after. Chapter One is a literature review and examination of the key concepts explored in the thesis. The reader is then asked to view the short documentary film *Wartorn Britain*. Following this, in Chapter Two, I consider some specific examples from my fieldwork of individuals' everyday lives and their recollections of state violence. These are compared with the fieldwork observations of the social and collective human activities and behaviours associated with the commemoration and celebration of the military.

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Prologue: Doing State Violence

Every war, when it comes, or before it comes, is represented not as a war but as an act of self-defence against a homicidal maniac

(Orwell, 1937)

He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster.

(Nietzsche, 2002: 69)

In creating and doing state violence and war, many monsters, or as Orwell describes them, 'homicidal maniacs' are created. Nietzsche suggests that when we create monsters to fight, we make monsters of ourselves, this at least is the danger. This applies to the British state and others making a monster of Saddam Hussein and his state, or the British soldier making monsters of the Taleban or Arabs in general.

This idea of 'creating the other' led me to rethink how I should 'define' violence, especially violence as a human behaviour or action. Conflict is inherent (as cause and as an effect) in almost any violent behaviour; it creates an interdependent relationship which makes the participants at once closer and more distant. Behaving violently is a contested act at almost every level, yet it is a common, perhaps universal behaviour. This is echoed in the recent work by Michael Jackson, *Lifeworlds*:

.... violence like storytelling, occurs in the contested space of intersubjectivity, its most devastating effects are not on individuals per se but on the fields of interrelationship that constitute their lifeworlds.

(Jackson 2012: 169)

My research question is how do former British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience? This prologue summarises the principal output of my research, a short documentary film. I then consider my personal, professional and academic motivations for producing this film and how this research is relevant and important academically and more widely.

It is difficult to find a day in modern history when Britain was not at war (Mallinson, 2011). The principal output of this research, the documentary film, *Wartorn Britain*, takes its title from this general condition of a nation that is constantly at war, producing and exporting state violence. In the film, this collective condition is explored through a portrait of one particular veteran of the recent Iraq war, now returned to his home in Blackpool. The film pays particular attention to how he locates past experiences of violence and follows him through intimate settings with family and friends, as well as public settings, where veterans and the military are honoured and celebrated. These scenes provide insight into how violence is remembered, forgotten and denied in personal and public spaces.

The film also explores Blackpool's role as a place of spectacle and performance and how performances relating to soldiers and war may enact public support for veterans, the military or for war. I then consider how such public performative rituals deny or acknowledge the personal experience of veterans.

I chose to site my research in Blackpool as my home town, albeit one from which I have been absent for more than 20 years. I shall now examine some personal motivations and histories for conducting this type of research in the place where I grew up. My maternal grandfather and his brother served in the British Army just after the First World War in the British wars and occupations in India, China and Mesopotamia, present day Iraq. In those same years, my paternal grandfather served in the Irish Republican Army, in the Irish war of independence, against the British state. My

personal history of military matters is therefore a somewhat contradictory one, and one which finds itself outside of the dominant public discourse.

As a boy, I dreamed of a military hero's return to my town, stepping down off the bus, dressed in my officer's uniform. By fourteen, I had put this behind me as I had many different opportunities opening up, including going to university. As an adult, I followed my mother into a professional career in social work. I was continually struck by the everyday violence which so many people live. After some years, in my own way, I 'went to war', volunteering in post-war areas in the fields of peace and international solidarity. I met regularly with soldiers and the police, whose occupation was to do violence, and from these encounters came my interest in research with military personnel.

Much of my work was in the non-western, post-colonial spaces of Indonesia. The military's public discourse mostly adhered to current liberal discourses of nation-building and good governance. The military officers and soldiers I talked with in less formal settings were refreshingly candid on their role to civilise the native or just take over control of the place because the natives were less able. It was then surprising to find that they also had mixed emotions and often reflected critically on their role. I had assumed their feelings and empathy for those they were oppressing would have been numbed or completely erased by military service. Over time, I came to believe that these mixed emotions and reflections were due to the face-to-face human situation they were in, where publicly constructed discourses meet everyday reality. I therefore imagined that ethnographic fieldwork with soldiers would offer opportunities to reflect critically on state violence and how it is constructed and disrupted within the everyday.

The very place researchers choose for studying war is shaped by their notions of what constitutes, and does not constitute, political violence.

(Nordstrom, 2004:58)

I chose to locate my research in my home state, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I chose it in part because it chose me but also because the UK is a state that produces a large amount of military state violence, most of which takes place in more exotic locations. I did not wish to locate the fieldwork in those other places where Britain does its violence. I wished to avoid the war-zone restrictions on effective independent research and the bias of being embedded with 'my own side' in a place controlled by military media relations processes. I also wanted to avoid the temptation to produce a glamourised representation of violence, which such war-zone sites encourage. I wanted to focus on the place where the violence came from.

This choice to locate my research in the UK, with soldiers who had returned from war, located my research in time, as well as space, as a study of aftermath and remembering. Issues of personal and collective memory regarding state violence and its perpetrators would be brought to the fore. The behaviours or actions that constitute state violence itself were not directly observable for the purposes of this research. However, the current everyday lives of these ex-soldiers included the aftermath of doing state violence. I would be observing this aftermath. I also hoped ex-soldiers would have more freedom to express their own experience of doing violence, since they would no longer be under contract to the military and would have some physical and spatial distance from the intensity of the military experience.

I was interested in using film as an ethnographic methodology, because of its capacity to be powerful and accessible. It is a more accessible medium than written ethnography, which tends to remain within an elite academic circle. It can be a powerful experience to expose one's life on film and film-making offers an intensely experiential process of learning and reflection, where both participants and researcher may be engaged, challenged, supported and have agency. It is important to remember however, that this is by no means guaranteed and participants may be manipulated and subjugated within a methodology of ethnographic documentary film as within written ethnography.

Chapter 1: British State Violence and the Military

In order to explore my principal research question - how do British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience? - I will look at the following issues in this chapter:

- The centrality of othering in the definition of violence as a human behaviour, the role of othering in British anthropology's efforts to explore British state violence.
- The status of state violence in relation to memory, memorialisation, denial and acknowledgement in the public and the private.

1.1 Other People's Violence

The British Army - Securing Britain in an uncertain world.

(M.O.D. Website, 2013)

Make no mistake; we're experts in the application of violence

(Cabaniss, US Marine Colonel, 2011)

It is rare that a violator sees himself as simply taking; rather he is the aggrieved party

(Jackson, 2012:171)

Within the context of the state violence of the British military, I shall now examine how the ownership of violence is contested and othering becomes central to how violence is defined. I

should clarify, however, how I am using the term 'state violence' here. In the literature of political science and international relations, 'state violence' is usually defined as a state's use of violence against its own citizens, as opposed to 'warfare', which is one state's use of violence against another state or organised group. Thus in the case of the United Kingdom, 'state violence' generally refers almost exclusively to Northern Ireland, or prior to 1926, Ireland. But in my view, these distinctions are based on arbitrary political and legal norms. Violence is a human behaviour; an act performed by people upon other people, whatever the context. Perhaps more importantly for this thesis, the military and soldiers themselves do not make such distinctions; military tactics and personal experiences are commonly shared and compared between Northern Ireland and Iraq. I therefore use the term to mean any violence organised by a state and carried out by people on behalf of a state against other people.

As the perpetrator of violence on behalf of the state, the British military remains closely tied to its imperial legacy. Some brief facts about the British military are illuminating in this area. As of 2012, Britain has the fourth largest military budget and is the fourth largest weapons trader in the world, after the US, China and Russia (Perlo-Freedman, SIPRI, 2012). British military forces are currently deployed in more than 80 countries around the world (M.O.D. Website, 2013). Around 10% of soldiers in the British Army are foreign or Commonwealth citizens (M.O.D. Website, 2014).

“The organised use of legitimate violence remains a type of human activity unlike any other” (Ben-Ari, 1995:15). Binary oppositions such as legitimate and illegitimate violence are created to separate state violence from other violence. Generally, public discourses within a state do not identify the violence done by its soldiers as violence. As the quotation from the promotional leaflet cited above suggests, the British Army brings security not violence, to counter the 'uncertainty' of the rest of the world, the other.

The actions of politically disadvantaged, or unrepresented, people are commonly labelled violence; the acts of those in power, the authorities and the arms of the state, less frequently so .. natives in northern India killing English women and children (and armed men, including civilian administrators and military personnel) in 1857 are guilty of violence, but not the English torching whole villages and localities, and hanging dozens of untried inhabitants of suspected areas.

(Pandey, 2006: 3)

What is highlighted by Pandey and others is that defining violence is highly contested, politically, socially, culturally and legally. Violence is most commonly understood as something external to ourselves, created and done by the other, not something internally generated by ourselves or our society.

The other statement quoted above, from a US Marine Lt. Colonel addressing his troops about to enter a combat area in Afghanistan disrupts the usual othered definitions of violence. This statement explicitly owns violence as his group's behaviour and his own action. Within my fieldwork, I sought to observe othering in operation, most prominently at the public or collective level, and at the personal level in order to see how it is maintained and how it is disrupted.

We are professionals in a discipline which chose the wrong side a long time ago .. to be an anthropology which no longer serves the interests of the oppressors it must be one which actively serves those of the oppressed. We must make a decolonised anthropology positively the 'anthropology of liberation'

(Gordon, 1991: 153, cited by Sluka, 2000a: 13)

However, although, Anthropology may still be on 'the wrong side', there is an established and increasingly developed subfield of the anthropology of violence (Collins 2009, Schmidt & Schrader, 2001, Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2003, Waterston, 2008) which includes some works on state violence (Sluka 2000a). There is a significant group within this subfield, who aim to practice 'a relevant and politically engaged anthropology which observes, witnesses and records, but also seeks to confront, expose and oppose human rights abuses' (Sluka 2000a:13). They also aim to construct ethnographies as "sites of resistance", "acts of solidarity", and to find a way to "write against terror" (Sluka, 2000b: 1). Sluka argues that to write against state violence is an important means of decolonising the discipline and that "We are in the midst of a transition away from studying victims toward studying perpetrators of state violence" (2000b: 11). Research with perpetrators can also avoid some of the practical and ethical dilemmas of placing the burden of remembering and mimetically reproducing the violence onto the victim (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2003: 460).

Robben claims that anthropology can offer us methodologies to witness and record, but also seek to confront, expose and oppose human rights abuses through state violence. I am not sure that I can aim so far with my research since there are serious ethical considerations to take in account, notably the protecting of participants from criminal prosecution. Furthermore, to remain focused on human rights as such entails a legalistic approach which I believe is too narrow. However, I do believe that anthropology can offer us methodologies to understand and address the experiences of victim, survivor and perpetrators of state violence, in other words, war. Such methodologies may offer ways to seek acknowledgement of violence and provide signposts to reconciliation.

The anthropologists cited above are North American and focus primarily on the US as the exemplar of Western state violence. British anthropology is the academic field within which this ethnographic

research is being produced, so it is relevant to explore how British anthropology may deny British state violence and in doing so identifies the other as the violent one.

In reviewing the literature within British anthropology, it is clear that it avoids reflection on its relationship to British state violence. It is important to note such avoidances and consider whether British Anthropology is engaged in a kind of forgetting in relation to both its historical and current relationship to British state violence. The Human Terrain System of the US military caused great debate in the USA and Europe on Anthropology's relationship to the state and state violence. In contrast, there was no debate, and I have been unable to find any texts in British social anthropology which refer to the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (DCSU) in the UK Ministry of Defence, which included British and British-trained anthropologists, linguists and social scientists (Forte, 2010). The violence of other states is researched by foreign academics working in British anthropological institutions, whilst British state violence seems to be forgotten. Professor Michael Carrithers at the University of Durham felt compelled by the invasion of Iraq to write his 2003 journal article, "Anthropology as a Moral Science of Possibilities". He stated that he wrote it in the hope that "anthropology's moral guidance" might be applied to the instance of the Iraq war. The article begins; "I write in 2003, hardly six months since the American invasion of Iraq" (Carrithers, 2003: 443). Throughout the article he only refers to US state violence. There is a silence, a forgetting of the violence, humanity and moral agency of the 46,000 British military personnel who directly took part in the invasion of Iraq and Britain's historical legacy of violence in the region.

This silence or forgetting by British anthropology may be viewed as political bias favouring the state that significantly funds it, (UoM, 2013), as Gordon suggested, "serving the interests of the oppressors". British anthropology does display a tendency to other violence, in its willingness to research the violence of other states. At the University of Manchester, violence is studied within anthropology, but not British state violence. There are research topics, such as armed conflict in the

former Yugoslavia, which are silent on the violence done there by Britain (see Jansen, 2002, 2009, 2013). Anecdotally, I have met two University of Manchester postgraduate students who planned to do research with British military veterans, but neither succeeded, one actually finding it easier to go to the US and work with American veterans. When there is such a dearth of previous research, no ethnographic sites and no literature on a subject area, it is difficult to embark on new research in the field.

I stated in my proposal that I was very keen to see British anthropology more engaged with the anthropology of violence, state violence and the experience of the soldier as perpetrator. Following fieldwork, I think that it is even more important for anthropology to disengage with the interests of the oppressor and its colonial heritage. The perspective of anthropology can be extremely valuable in exploring violence and its aftermath at the collective and individual level, both for victim and perpetrator, and can also be influential in creating positive social transformation processes that are wider than narrow legal or political ones, encompassing the everyday and collective needs of all those affected in the aftermath of war.

1.2 Memory and Denial: Lest We Remember

Carolyn Nordstrom is an US anthropologist who carried out fieldwork abroad in areas of war and armed conflict. In her home country, she noticed the lack of understanding of the realities of war at the time of preparations to invade Iraq in 2002 and 2003: 'I first thought the erroneous views, commonly propagated were a result of lack of information'. But after speaking publicly, she found that, 'the offence was speaking of these things' (Nordstrom 2004: 27). Nordstrom asks, 'Why should we be trained that the horrors of war are too horrible to speak, too awful to tell' (2004: 32). She has used the work of Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (2001) to understand these processes.

Cohen (2001) provides a broad historical review of the violent acts involved in atrocities and suffering and seeks to conceptualise personal and social systems of denial. In part, he uses the work of Hannah Arendt and her claims that the same mendacity and self-deception ingrained in Eichmann's character were integral to the whole of German society (Cohen 2001: 82). Cohen cites Arendt's work on language rules where murder and killing are 'special actions' or 'deportations' (Cohen 2001: 82). Similarly, the British and their allies in Iraq use terms such as 'collateral damage' for the killing of civilians, or 'rendition' for kidnapping and torture, 'reconstruction' and 'nation building' for military occupation.

Cohen makes a useful distinction between knowledge of and acknowledgement of violence. For example, we have knowledge of the violence being done in Iraq or Afghanistan currently, but we do not acknowledge it as ours. Sympathy, empathy and identification are important in making us first see and then act against violence. Acknowledgement entails identifying the motivations of both sides to the conflict and a fuller acceptance of one's own role. Victims of violence in war have been shown to value acknowledgement and 'truth' over legal judgement and sanction. For this reason, Cohen favours transitional justice mechanisms such as Truth Commissions, witnessing and speaking to the acts, literally and figuratively 'digging up graves', 'opening wounds' and acknowledging the past (Cohen 2001: 222).

There are many different processes of denial, knowledge and acknowledgement surrounding British state violence. David Benest, a British military historian, reviewing atrocities in British military counter-insurgencies shows that from Kenya to Northern Ireland, in Iraq and Afghanistan, atrocities, those 'excesses' of violence, are both ever-present and ever-absent:

The truly disturbing aspect of this study is the manner in which senior officials of both the military, civil service and government,

thought it expedient to steadfastly refuse to face the facts when atrocities took place.

(Benest 2011: 74)

Such denials of atrocities contribute to the 'othering' of violence, so that any violence which I do was actually created and caused by the other (Feldman 1994: 406). Essential to this denial of our own violence is 'the demonology of the colonizer' (Feldman 1994: 413), the ability and need to demonise the other, highlighting, exaggerating and inventing their violence and making them responsible for our violence.

However, as McClintock has observed, "Imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere" (1995: 5). It was within the United Kingdom that imperial state violence was willed into being to serve elite national interests. As a former imperial power, Britain has carried strategies of state violence across time and space from colonial to post-colonial battlegrounds, from Kenya and Malaysia to Ireland and Northern Ireland (Sluka 2000b: 232) and it has exported violence again and again to Afghanistan and Iraq. British armed forces now often work under the authority and systems of the US armed forces, yet they demonstrate their distinctive imperial history and experience. Counter-insurgency is an excellent example of this violence and denial 'Made in Britain'. Dominant public discourses describe the British military as experienced and qualified for continuing military interventions around the world based on their colonial experience and expertise. British soldier memoirs cite the experience of British military operations in Northern Ireland as a positive asset to their work in Iraq (Henessey, 2010). British colonial counter-insurgency is self-described as fighting for the 'hearts and minds'¹ of the local population, but when stripped of its othering and denial, it is

¹ 'Hearts and Minds' was the name first used for British military counter-insurgency operations in Malaysia. Even on a narrowly military analysis the counter-insurgency expertise of the British military is highly questionable. There is strong evidence that the British were slow learners and could not transfer techniques successfully from one 'theatre' to another (Mumford 2012: 1). Successes were based on quantity rather than quality (Branch 2010: 7); in other words, the British were involved in so much end-of-empire violence they had to have some success along the way.

“best understood as a highly decentralized form of warfare targeted at civilians” (Branch 2010: 4).

There are a variety of state policies engaged in denial, actively avoiding the bringing of the war back home: political gagging orders on armed forces veterans, the military's near monopoly on investigating itself, the memorialisation of our own suffering and the silence or denial of the suffering of the other. The Iraq invasion was politically contested in the UK and its aftermath led to the establishment of the Iraq Inquiry with unprecedented scope and public hearings. The inquiry ran from 2009-2011, publication of the report has been delayed for three years, due to politico-legal sensitivities (The Guardian, 2013).

There is a striking contrast between our level of knowledge and acknowledgement of deaths of British military personnel and the deaths of Iraqis. By and large, the British national media focus is on violence done to British people. The BBC website hosts a comprehensive searchable database of all British military deaths in Iraq, The 179th and final entry in the database reads:

Private Ryan Wrathall, 21, from Surbiton, Surrey, was serving in the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, when he died on Thursday. He died from a gunshot wound at the Contingency Operating Base. The incident is being investigated, but it is understood nobody else was involved.

(BBC Online, 2013).

No official figures are recorded of the deaths of Iraqi people. The British campaigning organisation, *Action on Armed Violence*, uncovered intricate state systems of denial specific to 'body counts' in Iraq, reported in their publication *State of Ignorance* (Rappert & Moyles, 2010). Using internal government documents, they showed that the British state was assiduous in its refusal to establish an effective system of data collection on Iraqi casualties, despite having the resources, opportunity

and practical need to do so. The official position that the numbers of Iraqi casualties was 'unknown' privileged state bureaucrats to make the dead and the violence done to them 'unknowable'. Any independent attempts to quantify the violence could neither be confirmed nor denied by officials, as there was no official data with which to compare them.

Independent estimates of Iraqi civilian and military deaths as a direct result of the invasion and armed conflict have almost become a literary sub-genre in academic and anti-war activist circles. *Costs of War*, a multi-disciplinary online platform for academics estimates Iraqi civilian deaths after the invasion at between 123,000 and 134,000 (<http://costsofwar.org>). Figures of over one million are cited if sanctions, in place from 1990 to 2003, are considered (Ali and Shah 2000). It is relevant to the issue of denial to remind ourselves of this period of the conflict. The decade-long 'no-fly zone' established following the 'Gulf War' is internationally recognised as an act or declaration of war. These sanctions are in fact a systematic programme of state violence denied.

Using terms like the 'Gulf War' and the 'Iraq War', we engage in othering and denial across space and time. Such terms only include the place where the violence was done, not the place the violence came from. The start and end of these wars are defined by British and allied soldiers being at risk of violence on the ground, the start and end has less regard for whether violence is being done by Britain and her allies to Iraqi people. This is not semantics but rather the everyday lived experience of people in Iraq for over 20 years (Al-Mohammed, 2010).

The success of these strategies of othering and denial of British state violence may be seen in the responses of the British public to the blunt instrument of opinion polls. A poll in June 2013, just after the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, found that nine percent of the public estimated there had been between 100,000 and 500,000 civilian deaths. Fifty-four per cent estimated there had

been less than 5,000 civilian deaths. (ComRes 2013:5).²

In considering state violence, there are many dualistic notions by which violence is defined and remembered; legal or illegal, atrocious or acceptable. It is important to understand where these oppositions come from and their role in othering, denial and remembering. Legally defined, there is legitimate and illegitimate state violence. Atrocities and human rights violations arise out of this binary. These are the illegal, illegitimate and unacceptable acts of state violence. Examples include torture, extra-judicial killing, and violence against civilians. 'Atrocities' are a legal as well as a social construct. The legal opportunities to prosecute or debate 'atrocities', leads to a focus on these extraordinary acts of state violence, the ordinary acts of state violence, economic sanctions, mass aerial bombardment, military occupation may be forgotten. Pandey, Arendt, Cohen and Benest may focus on 'atrocities', extremes of violence, and recognise that the extraordinary is quite ordinary, yet in doing so may overlook the suffering of 'ordinary' violence. The vast majority of the 'less than 5,000' or '123,000 to 134,000' or 'more than 1,000,000' unknowable civilian deaths refer to people who died as a consequence of the legitimate practices of war as defined in international legal and military terms. Such a focus on illegitimate state violence undoubtedly influences both personal and collective memories of war and other forms of state violence. My grandfather as a soldier in India may or may not have burnt villages, the illegal act of British state violence that Pandey has described. He did however sit legally and with discipline in a barracks in Calcutta with thousands of other British troops guaranteeing British dominion over South Asia.

² Such polls provide food for thought on the attempts to incorporate the perceived moral or legal failure of the Iraq war into public discourses promoting permanent war and the securitisation of the UK. "About half (51%) agree that the removal of Saddam Hussein was not worth the lives of 179 British soldiers and again half agree (52%) that the Iraq war cannot be morally justified on humanitarian grounds given the number of Iraqi civilian casualties. Furthermore, rather than make Britain safer, about two-thirds (69%) think that Britain's participation in the Iraq war has increased the threat of a terrorist attack on British soil". (ComRes 2013:5)

Within an immediate post-war context, there is a focus on the illegitimate violence of soldiers. Much of this is from the human rights community, as there is the opportunity to pursue states and soldiers in the courts under international law for illegitimate violence. There is little possibility to address legitimate violence: the international community still struggles over useful and legitimate transitional justice mechanisms of the kind that Cohen advocates.

What I have spoken of generally as denial, Cohen's and Nordstrom's work, is revealed in more nuanced ways within 'memory studies' in anthropology and other disciplines exploring the human activity of remembering. For Argenti and Schramm (2010), personal and collective memories of violence interact to produce knowledge:

inchoate, individual experiences of political violence - devoid as they often are of structure or narrative sense - coalesce into an accepted body of knowledge individual memories contribute to social memory, before social memory can once again - shape individual subjective experience in the dialectic of self and society?

Argenti and Schramm (2010: 1)

Argenti and Schramm here identify the lack of narrative sense to individual experiences and that the development of a narrative is part of entering into social memory. Several studies relating to civilian populations, victims of domestic internal political violence, develop this theme in relation to silence as an expression of their lived experience. Argenti and Schramm (2010: 257) identify similar though distinct traits; “neighbours often reconstruct their lives through strategies of silence”, (Argenti-Pillen, 2003), what Cole (2001:224) describes as “directed forgetting”.

The less studied state perpetrators of external, international violence are also associated with such strategies of silence, withholding certain memories from their own families and society generally.

The subtleties of silence are paramount when considering the personal level. The long journey to acknowledgement of violence is seldom made, acknowledgement being the active and shared knowing of violence between people. This journey, which Cohen suggests is necessary for reconciliation³ is certainly the road less travelled.

“War and memory are inextricably bound. Mobilization for war often involves a collective mobilization of memory about past injuries.”
(Gusterson, 2007: 160)

It is important in this research to consider the concept of collective memory which, as Gusterson states above, is overtly mobilised in support of war. The human geographer, Derek Gregory in his work, *The Colonial Present*, helps us to see that the places that we think we know are merely constructs in a collective memory.

“America”, “Israel”, “Palestine”, “Afghanistan”, “Iraq” were jointly (not severally) produced through performance of imaginative geographies in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on NYC and Washington DC on Sept 11 2001.

(Gregory, 2004:23)

In Gregory’s view, “America” is not a place; it is a word representing universal values, threatened

³There are rare occasions of state acknowledgement of 'illegitimate' violence. A recent example is Britain's acknowledgement of colonial era torture in 2013 in a legal case brought by Kenyan victims which was decades in the making. It remains to be seen whether this legalistic acknowledgement amounts to reconciliation. It is relevant to this study to note that this process excluded individual perpetrators, with the state taking on the role of the accused and eventually, legal acceptance of guilt. In effect, the British state has acknowledged the guilt of the individuals who perpetrated the violence on its behalf, without giving them any opportunity to speak for themselves <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/06/britain-maumau-empire-waiting>

by a monolithic universal Islamic terrorism.

“Britain” is also produced through the performance of imaginative geographies. Victoria Basham conducted several years of fieldwork with people in the British armed forces in the UK. In her 2013 book *War, Identity and the Liberal State*, she identifies the myths of “Britain” and the role the military plays in their construction.

British military practices are structured around a national military myth that allows the state and its armed forces to control land, resources and people at “home” and across the globe because of its role in defending the UK from constant threats. It materialises itself through notions of a British nation maintaining strong but carefully used armed forces; a British national identity that favours welfare over warfare, and a British national and military identity established around a “healthy civil-military divide” that ensures that the UK is protected from militarism.

(Basham, 2013:15)

Soldiers are often unprepared for the reality of war and state violence underlying such myths. In war and military occupation, everyday life continues but at the same time is twisted unrecognisably by violence and power over others. In April 1945, “the Judge Advocate of the American Forces in Europe revealed that he had to deal with around 500 rape cases involving American soldiers each week” (Bourke, 2000:4). Such realities are strongly denied, so that even other soldiers do not imagine that soldiers in the Second World War did this. Generations of future soldiers pay the price of this denial and manipulation of collective memory by not expecting war to be that way, and not expecting that they might behave that way.⁴

4 In 2006 the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor stated in the case of the British state, "There was

We see powerful interests within the state and elsewhere who do not want acknowledgement of state violence and do not want it to shape our collective memory and individual memory. Therefore people with personal memories of state violence, both victims and perpetrators understand immediately that there are expectations that their experiences are not to be spoken of. Clearly we see the potential for disruption in the personal everyday lives and memories of perpetrators and victims of state violence. Cohen and others accept the need for caution in the translation of personal 'psychological' processes of memory to the societal or collective level. Societies and 'the collective' do not function as individuals do. It is clear though that there is a two- way influencing or shaping of memory the personal at once shapes and is shaped by the collective and vice versa.

This is an important reason for conducting research with soldiers. Within the everyday lives of soldiers and veterans, opportunities appear for other stories to be heard outside the confines of national myth-making. As Bourke identifies:

If shared narratives of actual killing were only latent in memorialisation, they did develop in a site apart from the public square. The covert representation of violence was at the heart of military establishment and, after the war, flourished in ex-servicemen's clubs and associations.

(Bourke 2004: 483)

It is these more personal and private encounters that this research aims to explore and describe.

a reasonable basis to believe that crimes within the jurisdiction of the court had been committed, namely wilful killing and inhuman treatment. In 2014, a dossier, detailing allegations of beatings, electrocution, mock executions and sexual assault, was presented to the International Criminal Court with cases of more than 400 Iraqis, representing "thousands of allegations of mistreatment amounting to war crimes of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment". Reported in The Independent Newspaper Online, 12 January 2014

1.3 Ethnographic Encounters with Soldiers

Research with state perpetrators of violence is a new and relatively unexplored field but it is an area of increasing interest in anthropology (Sluka, 2000b). I now examine how fieldwork to produce an ethnographic documentary is a useful approach to this subject and review some of the issues relevant to ethnographic encounters with soldiers.

When young men enter the military, attempts are made to shape their identity to produce and become a person capable of performing violence on command (Connell 2005: 259). Here they learn that they are the agents of the state with a prerogative to engage in legitimate violence. They are trained and taught when, where and with whom it is correct to do violence. How does this impact on them emotionally? How do they remember, forget or deny the violence they were involved in?

'The body is a more or less neutral surface or landscape on which a social symbolism is imprinted' (Connell 2005:44). The physical body of soldiers is strongly determined by 'militarised masculinities'. It becomes an instrument and identifier of their work, in terms of physical fitness, regulated appearance of hair, clothes, symbolism and modification. The concept of 'militarized masculinities' is explored by Chisholm (2009), drawing particularly upon the prior work of Morgan (1994, 2005). The term draws its origins from the socialisation of soldiers that occurs in the military and how the key symbol of masculinity continues to be the warrior (Chisholm, 2009: 2).

In his ethnography of British Army recruits and soldiers, Hockey (1986:123) identifies an overriding ethic of 'look after your mates' within the basic organisational structure for ordinary soldiers. This serves to motivate participation in duties, moderate behaviour and strengthen identification with the military, this identification being most strongly connected with close colleagues, far more than the need to identify with the organisation as a whole. Thus when soldiers report that they do what they do 'for their mates', they are reproducing their military training and

military structures. The consequences of such a structure for locating violence are several. Such micro-organisational norms can control individual excessive violence, due to group responsibility for actions. Hockey further indicates that in the case of unprepared and unclear combat or occupation scenarios, such organisational norms mean excessive violence may become increasingly common.

Soldiers are isolated from civilians, creating a sense of being exceptional, which is in turn designed to produce a person who can go to war at any moment. This isolation increases the male bonding. Morgan (1994: 169) argues that this geography is represented in a spatial sense through guarded military camps where there is a protection of the soldier from the outside. These spatial separations, coupled with socialization activities of being a soldier, produce a soldier well-bonded with other soldiers and estranged from civilian society (Chisholm 2009: 3). Such effects are magnified in a foreign territory and especially one labelled as a 'war zone', due to security measures and personal fears of the unknown. Soldiers are severely confined and controlled in a situation of military occupation. They are 'trapped' in their own secure compounds, only able to venture out in the community in heavily-armed groups, unable to communicate except through interpreters. In such a context, the local community, culture and people are largely unknowable to them. The military occupation of land such as the occupation of Iraq by force is itself an act of violence with permanent consequences not only for the body, identity and self of the persons whose land has been invaded but also affecting the body, identity and self of the perpetrator (Morgan 1994, Robben 2010, Chisholm 2009).

The brutalisation and trauma people may experience when employed in military service and military occupation is reimposed to its place of origin in Britain on a personal level in the body of the returning British soldier. 'Veterans' are lauded in the public discourse of the state and the media, tales of heroism and suffering are eagerly produced for public consumption. Such ideal types, of

warrior or victim, are difficult for soldiers to identify with personally, though they may try. At the same time, we do not want them to tell us what war is really like, nor often can they, due to the traumatic or dissonant nature of many experiences. Given this, we would expect that silence is a common response to military and war experience (Bourke, 2000, Feldman, 1994), the returning soldier a stranger in the family home is a familiar story (Allport, 2010).⁵

Former armed forces personnel face many challenges when they return to civilian life. There are many expectations upon them, to fit within certain civilian and family roles, to be a hero or victim. One thing they are not expected to do is violence. In the UK, former armed forces personnel are over-represented as convicted perpetrators of violent and sexually violent crime. The commission of such acts back home is not correlated with having seen combat, it correlates with having been a member of a military organisation (Bourke 2000, Howard League for Penal Reform 2011).

In public narratives, the veteran victim comes a close second to the warrior hero in public perception. The veteran as the perpetrator of violence is collectively denied whilst at the same time it is common for individual veterans of armed warfare to be anxious or traumatised when thinking the impact on other people of the violence they have done. (Brook, 2010:163, Beattie 2000:Preface). Soldiers within a state may be more often described as 'saving lives' or being 'victims of violence'. This can occur but as Bourke (2000), states, “the characteristic act of men at war is killing, not dying” (2000:i). Bourke's statement is a useful reframing of a soldier's occupation or actions, the purpose of the skills in which they are trained. During a war around 10% of soldiers serve in combat roles. Soldiers are more commonly involved in supporting killing and other acts of violence, or creating the threat and fear of violence through military occupation.

⁵ I avoid discussion of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a medical institutional response to military veterans' experiences of violence used since 1980. It is undoubtedly a politicised concept and the medical utility of PTSD as a diagnosis is widely contested, with McHugh & Treisman (2007) concluding that the concept of PTSD has moved the mental health field away from, rather than towards a better understanding of the natural psychological responses to trauma. For individual veterans, a diagnosis of PTSD is often a necessary gateway to service provision, such as medical care, war pensions and other welfare benefits (Brook, 2010:127)

Woodward and Jenkins, in their 2011 study with British military veterans, sought to avoid preconceived notions of identity and constructed a research process which allowed the British military veterans to define themselves. Central to their methods were in depth qualitative interviews using photo-elicitation with participants selecting their own personal photos to discuss. Through this process they were attempting to avoid predetermined categories of identity such as race, class and gender.

Whilst these military personnel could be seen, en masse, to be enacting 'the colonial present' (Gregory, 2004) through the application of political will on a grand scale as agents of the state, they are also, individually and very personally, labouring with all that this brings – destruction, death, physical and mental injury.

Woodward and Jenkins (2011: 117)

Woodward and Jenkins (2011) highlight the personal construction of identity, which they argue is less about race, class and gender than it is about what soldiers do, executing acts, using skills and competencies in which they have been trained. It is these acts that are formative of individual military identities. In a previous work Woodward considers how the military training structure of 'mateship' may be an organisational construct but on a personal level it is a strong kinship and the central justification for violence.

“People have asked me if I'm OK after the war, after killing people and all that shite. Well, I'm fine thanks. It was my job. It was for the men who fought alongside of me”

British veteran quoted in Woodward (2008: 363)

Woodward and Jenkins found a variety of personal strategies operating to deny or forget violence.

Some interviewees had developed strategies to accommodate experiences of trauma, danger and violence. One soldier did not want to remember them and kept his memories of that time and place safely boxed up and out of sight.

Woodward and Jenkins (2011: 252)

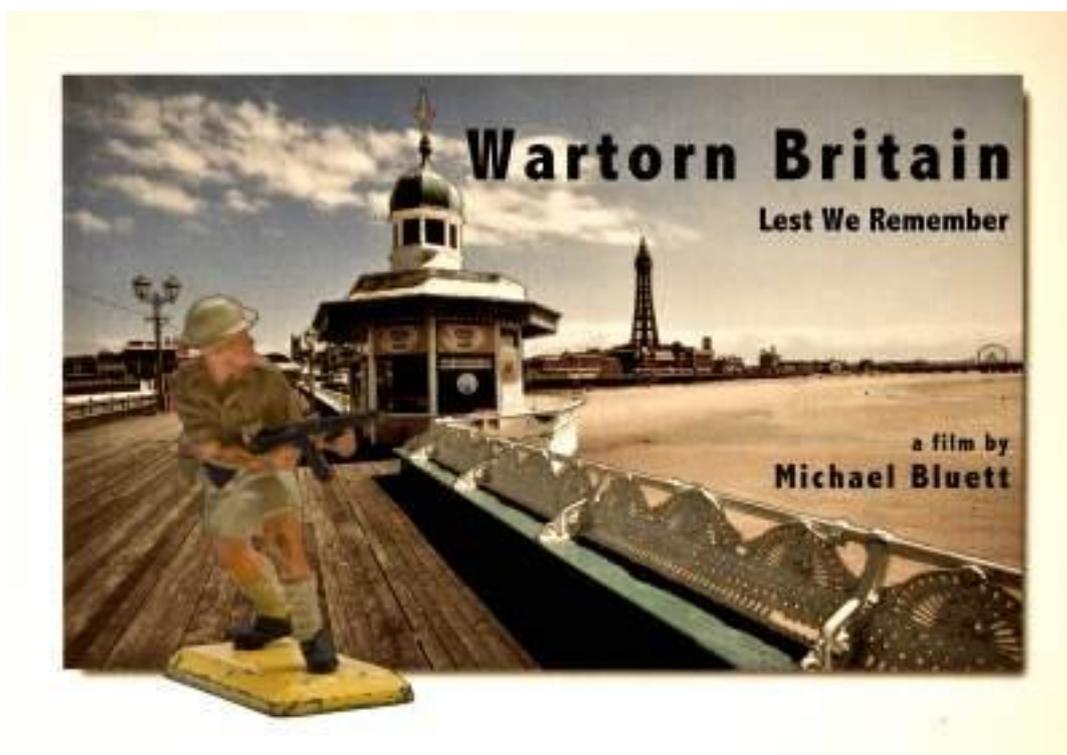
Considering an ethnographic approach to research with perpetrators of state violence, Woodward and Jenkins usefully remind us that these ex-soldiers are human individuals who, whilst acted upon by powerful external demands to remember, forget and deny in a certain way, they carry their own internal feelings and needs to deny, forget and remember.

In this chapter, I have considered what may be the main issues around how British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience, the othering of violence and how this operates within memory, remembering, forgetting silence and denial. I explored the historical processes shaping contemporary British state violence, how institutions and social relations in Britain are shaped by it, torn by it. I have then considered the usefulness of ethnography with the soldiers who do state violence, as a method for understanding how they locate state violence within their personal lived experience.

Please now watch the Film *Wartorn Britain* (27mins).

Versions with and without English Subtitles can be found at this link

<http://cargocollective.com/MichaelBluett>



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Chapter 2: Ethnography

No narrative does more than create a necessary illusion of fusion or balance between personal lifeworlds and the transpersonal world we define by such abstractions as society or state.... *Every person's story remains therefore irreducibly his or her own, imperfectly incorporated into the collective realm.* Yet it is precisely because personal experience remains on the margins of state discourse and ideology that it may become, in any society, a critical force that perennially unsettles received wisdom and challenges the status quo.

Jackson, 2012:188

The quote with which the film begins is presented here, in italics, within its wider context. I chose to use this quote as it can be understood in several different ways. First, it can be understood to signal the giving of ownership of their own stories back to my participants and as an attempt to mitigate any misrepresentation that I may have created through lack of skill or political bias. Second, the quote is intended to indicate that the film itself is my own story, my own narrative and not the story of the participants. Finally, it highlights Jackson's point of the importance of narrative and our own storytelling as a potentially critical force.

This chapter focuses on fieldwork and filmwork, the experiences from which we construct narrative/s. There are three sections, the first a description and analysis of my fieldwork methodology. The second begins by considering definitions of violence by exploring which stories, events and images in the film can be defined as violence. I then use these examples to interrogate the theoretical and historical framework outlined in Chapter One with regard to the othering (2.2.1) and remembering (2.2.2) of state violence. The final section is an analysis of the power dynamics of visual representation of victims, particularly children, using the case study of 'Sprite' from the film.

2.1 Fieldwork

2.1.1 The Selection of Persons in Space and Time

My fieldwork took place between April and August 2012 in Blackpool & the Fylde coast area, North of England. As such, my fieldwork was separate from acts of British state violence in Iraq both in time and space. In this first section of the chapter, I describe and analyse this process of choosing the people, the place and the time for my fieldwork.

2.1.2 The People

People were eligible to be part of my fieldwork by meeting three main criteria; currently living in the Blackpool and Fylde coast area, ex-members of the British Armed Forces, and finally, present in Iraq as a member of the armed forces during the 'Iraq War' (2003 – 2010). To increase the number of those eligible, I allowed flexibility to include the 'Gulf War' (1991), and the 'Afghanistan War' (2001 – present). Another eligible group identified itself during the selection process, ex-members of the armed forces who had worked in Iraq (or Afghanistan) in private sector 'security and protection' work after leaving the state armed forces.

I made contact with people via several routes; my own personal network, Blackpool town council members and staff, veterans organisations and social media sites. Several were not eligible as they were still currently members of the British armed forces (3). Others were willing to talk with me and work with me on my research, but did not wish to participate in a film (7). The method of film may have been a significant factor in limiting participation.

2.1.3 The Place

The location of Blackpool, my old home town, was strongly supported by my university supervisors

for reasons of 'identity'. Blackpool and the Fylde coast is a major conurbation of around a quarter of a million people. Key military sites include; BAE Systems, formerly British Aerospace in Warton, Weeton British Army Barracks, Blackpool and Fulwood British Army Barracks, Preston. Blackpool town centre is famous nationally as a historical tourist destination, with a working class identity. Blackpool's strong identity as a place of spectacle and performance recommended itself to film and to my ethnography. As I was to discover its role as a host for events and spectacle meant Blackpool plays a leading role in veterans' events in the North of England and also nationally.

The North of England has always been the main recruiting ground of the British military and memorialisation is very present. The war memorial in Blackpool was unveiled on Armistice Day, 11th November 1923 and, as we see in the film, occupies a commanding position on the seafront promenade in Blackpool's tourist centre. It is a cenotaph, an "empty tomb", erected in honour of those whose remains are elsewhere. The memorial records the names of the military dead who came from the Blackpool and Fylde coast area. It has depictions of war scenes, the soldier and the fallen, and phrases such as 'In Memory of Our Glorious Dead'. There are additions for subsequent wars, such as 'The Falklands Conflict'.

In the film, the President of the Blackpool Royal British Legion confidently proclaims that; 'Blackpool is the home of the ex-service' for which he has good justification. Veterans groups in the Blackpool area are extensive. There are over ten ex-services organisations operating in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast and an active umbrella organisation, the Fylde Ex-Services Liaison Committee (FESLC). In recent years this committee established the Fylde Memorial Arboretum and Community Woodland, featured in the film.⁶ The strength of the veterans groups and memorial activities seems to be based on an interplay of the presence of veterans in the North and the tourist

⁶ This is the only war memorial arboretum in the UK outside the National Memorial Arboretum. The stated aim of the Arboretum and Woodland is to; "provide the Service Associations, and also the people of Blackpool and neighbouring areas, with living memorials to remember their fallen comrades and loved ones in surroundings of peace and beauty". <http://www.feslc.co.uk/fylde-memorial-arboretum.htm>

infrastructure and promotion of events in Blackpool. FELSC has had a 'massive input towards the successful annual celebration of Veterans Week, now renamed National Armed Forces Week', with 'many associations from throughout the country having their annual reunions in the town' (FELSC, 2013). Blackpool won the right to host the national event for the 2008 Veterans' Day, as part of its annual "National Veterans' Week" which ran from 21st to 29th June 2008. Blackpool local government, the tourist industry and community interest groups work together to develop events across the calendar in order to extend the tourist season. The promotion of Veterans' Day, and its extended Blackpool counterpart 'Veterans' Week' can be seen to fit this business development model. Many economic opportunities arise from an event which attracts upwards of 55,000 people, both local and visitors. The midsummer date for Veterans Week, in late June, is a better fit for a seaside break than the date of the official Armistice agreement of the First World War on 11 November. However, despite the inclemency, several veterans in my fieldwork identified it as the more authentic event for war veterans.

The name of Veterans' Day was changed to Armed Forces Day in 2009, in order to 'raise awareness and appreciation for those on active duty' (FELSC Website). This is significant as evidence supporting critical theories of the securitisation of the liberal state and the promotion of permanent war. It marks a new phase in the co-option of memorialisation for a new political agenda of permanent war, where we must support and honour our troops in the 'past, present and future', as it says on the shop front. This is the antithesis of the post-Armistice sentiment of remembrance Sunday of 'Never Again'. Furthermore, this transformation took place shortly after the final withdrawal of soldiers on active military operations in the UK, in Northern Ireland. Operation Banner the British Army's longest military operation which ended in 2007. It may have been too politically sensitive to begin a national state sponsored celebration of soldiers on active duty while their boots remained on UK soil. Northern Ireland continues to be a disputed territory for the celebration of Armed Forces Day.

During Armed Forces Week in Blackpool, 2012 there were special ceremonies to remember and honour members of the armed forces held at both the cenotaph and the arboretum, both shown in the film. These were attended by veterans and their families and by members of the local civil and military hierarchy. Commemorations were made of those who had died recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. Relatives of a local soldier, killed in Afghanistan in March 2012 during my fieldwork, attended the arboretum service featured in the film.

Several other sites are featured in the film. Supporting Our Brave (SOB), the museum, shop and veterans' welfare centre, featured in the film, grew out of these memorialisations. In 2010 Blackpool again won the right to host Armed Forces Week. This then-empty shop was used as a publicity and management venue for the Week's events. As examined earlier, the veterans support aspect of Supporting Our Brave was unplanned, growing out of spontaneous requests for help from veterans and their families who came to the events.

A different event held in the more affluent south of the Fylde coast was the Lytham St Annes Wartime Festival, August 2012, features in the latter part of the film. Held at Lytham Gardens, by the seafront promenade, this Festival had a Second World War theme and featured 1940s era music and entertainment as well as military re-enactments. There are many scenes in Darren's house and garden, in the Fylde coast area, about 300 yards from the sea. Every scene in the film which I shot was within a mile of the sea.

There were some opportunities to film group discussions of violence and military life, in spaces where these occur, social clubs, bars, welfare organisations, homes. These were limited as I did not get group agreement for involvement in the film. There were also relatively fewer Iraq and Afghanistan veterans involved in veterans organisations, which had an aging membership. Future fieldwork could identify spaces younger generations occupies.

2.1.4. The Time

As stated previously, memory is to the fore in this ethnography, because of the historical nature of subject matter and because of the issues of denial. This had a significant impact on the film-making process and the resulting film. The behaviour or action that I was researching, violence, is not present. I relied on informal filmed testimony for much of the input. There are also observational aspects to the film, documenting the participants' everyday life and relationships.

The fieldwork occurred nearly ten years after the 2003 invasion of Iraq in which Britain played a key role and 22 years after the 'Gulf War'. The main character in the film was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) six years after serving in Iraq in 2004.

In my estimation, the fieldwork methodology was appropriate to the aim of producing a film document which fulfilled the main aims of my proposal. However, there were significant challenges to participation in a film. From initial contact, potential participants were presented with the research as 'making a film'. Therefore saying 'no' to a film meant saying 'no' to the research. As stated, more veterans were willing to take part in research in other forms, note taking and observing, even audio recording. Therefore, in future research it could be wise to consider a 'mixed media' approach.

The public spectacle of creating collective memories of war is easier to access, and fortunately was heavily present in the chosen fieldwork location. This reflects my argument in Chapter One, that public discourses dominate whilst the personal or individual memory of war is hard to locate.

2.2 Film Violence

This section examines some of the real and fictional violence from the fieldwork which were observed and selected for inclusion in the film. In this chapter, I also reference violence reported during the fieldwork which is not in the film. Some of it was not used in the film because it did not fit the narrative of the film. Other parts were not used because the informants wished to remain anonymous.

As a starting point, it is interesting to list the acts or threats of violence reported or visible in the film. I have made an attempt to identify if these are visible or reported, real or fictional, actual or threatened.

A list of the violence in the film in running order

	Description of Violence	Definition of violence
1	British Indian Army occupation of Baghdad and Mesopotamia, 1917 (Archive)	Physical act of state violence (visible)
2	British Army occupation of Basra & Southern Iraq, 2004 (Archive)	Physical act of state violence (visible)
3	Iraq veteran with grenade	Physical act threatening/doing violence (reported)
4	Darren disarming man with grenade	Physical act of state violence (reported)
5	Soldiers running towards a wedding party	Physical act of state violence (reported)
6	Stop and Search of Iraqis at night	Physical act of state violence (visible)

7	Iraqi prisoner beaten to death by British soldiers	Physical act of state violence (reported)
8	My grandfather and his brother being British soldiers in India, China and Mesopotamia	Physical act of state violence (reported)
9	Blackpool town centre attacks by Yobs (News Report)	Physical act of violence (reported)
10	Army boxing match (Archive)	Physical act of (state) violence (visible) (consensual)
11	Sniper positions around mosque photo	Physical act of state violence (visible)
12	“We killed her dad”	Physical act of state violence (reported)
13	Filming the children of killed father (Archive)	Physical act of state violence (visible)?
14	Armed rebellion on the streets	Verbal threat of violence
15	Hundreds of civilians killed by German Devils, (Archive - American WWI propaganda poster)	Physical act of state violence (fictional)
16	World War 2 Battle re-enactment	Physical acts of state violence (fictional)

This list-making exercise is a good way to address the definition of violence. We find there is no single answer. The list demonstrates the contested nature of violence as a human behaviour.

Definition may be difficult for reasons of severity, politics, culture or aesthetics. The definition may be different according to the views or memories of ‘perpetrator’, ‘victim’, observer or researcher.

The list would certainly be different if it was written by the veterans whom I worked with. Are soldiers in a street doing state violence or protecting the weak?⁷ Can the act of filming of Iraqi children (description 13) be described as state violence, a violation of their rights? Some might

⁷ According to Clarke, M (2010); “One of the best definitions (of the work of a soldier) is that a professional, legitimate soldier is there to protect those who are weaker than him, or her, self.”

choose to include the "shooting of guns by guests at the wedding party" as an act threatening violence. Included in the list are examples from the public and personal archive video and still photography which I gathered during my fieldwork.

As we see from the list, there are threats to British soldiers, but no visible or reported British casualties. The Iraq body count of the film is 2 dead Iraqi people (civilians?) and 0 dead British soldiers. This is a deliberate and clumsy attempt to reflect the reality which is up to one million (unknowable) Iraqi people dead and 179 British people (soldiers) dead. Additional body counts include the four fictional deaths visible in the Second World War re-enactment battle and hundreds of propaganda deaths of civilians killed by German devils.

Many of the incidents listed are the consequences of military occupation creating the fear and threat of violence. In the public realm, these are commonly referred to as 'protecting the weak' rather than a type of violence. Within soldiers' personal lived experiences, such state violence is located, defined and remembered in conflicting ways.

2.2.1 Violence and Othering in Blackpool: Fighting in Someone's House

I have suggested that ex-soldiers lived experiences of violence are both constructed to other violence and to disrupt othering processes. It remains unclear that being an ex-soldier predisposes one to construct or disrupt othering processes to a greater or lesser degree. What is clear is that there is a stronger and more personal attachment to issues of violence, both personal experiences and public narratives.

Narratives of the violent other are constructed all around us in the film. Starting with some simple examples of constructed fictional narratives of violence which seem specifically designed to other

violence. The American First World War era poster of German Devils counting dead babies seems to be very extreme, and in a current context, unbelievable propaganda. It is powerful to hear in the re-enactor's story that it was considered a literal truth by the Second World War veteran. This constructed other is then disrupted when he actually encountered German people on the battlefield and saw they did not have horns or a devil's tail. The ex-soldier re-enactor makes the logical argument that such othering propaganda functions during (and prior to) any armed conflict, despite the fact that after the war the political leaders 'deal with' (make open their relations with) and therefore rehabilitate the image of the foe. The re-enactor says that he has seen this happen with the British in regard to the Germans and the people of Northern Ireland, and he expects the same to happen again with Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the film, we see the same 'folk devils' created domestically in the local newspaper reports alluded to the posters on a news vendor's stand: 'Yobs hunted for town centre attacks' and 'Metal theft yob caught on CCTV'. In such narratives, some people just like us (yobs) are cast as a homogenised monstrous other, dehumanised through the use of verbs like hunted and caught. Such techniques are very effective in influencing how any of us locate violence within our personal lived experience. I would argue they are a key influence in Darren's description of "ethnic or religious groups breeding their way into the Western world" (Darren, shed scene). Darren showed and related to me much anti-Muslim, anti-Taliban and anti-Arab propaganda that he had taken from the media and social networks. He feels that he and 'his kind' are losing Britain to a foreign other and that current political parties and policies are encouraging this. This lack of political representation leads him to suggest that Britain may be heading for "armed rebellion on the streets"⁸. Darren is clear that

⁸ This apocalyptic prophesy resonates with real and imagined histories; "Wracked by social disorder, austerity and disillusion, Britain was exhausted - and it was the return of those men who had fought for their country who seemed to be a root cause of the trouble." (Allport 2010:3). Allport summarises descriptions of returning veterans in 1940s post-war Britain, where returned veterans agitated for better living conditions and in turn were portrayed as the violent outsider. Darren's anger or frustration seems to be directed at an amorphous 'Muslim immigrant' grouping and at the 'powers that be' who are allowing or encouraging Britain to fall into wrack and ruin. Both of these could be targets of

being a veteran gives you a particular view. He locates these views as being expressed in discussions of veterans at the Royal British Legion club. He suggests that “there are too many ex-military” who feel unfairly treated and marginalised in society and such veterans would play a role in such a rebellion. He identifies his own and fellow veterans capacity for violence in the context of self-defence of an idealised Britain.

A rebellion implicitly suggests an attack on the state. For Darren, the liberal state and its acceptance of human rights is a threat to some of his conceptions of Britain. He views human rights with suspicion and investigations of British state violence as unfairly targeting ordinary soldiers such as himself. He views ordinary soldiers very differently from the military leadership, a common sentiment amongst veterans whom I met. Darren denounces the beating and killing of a civilian prisoner (Baha Mousa) by British forces. He focuses responsibility on the military hierarchy for poor leadership in the case of his regiment and the specific killing of Baha Mousa. Darren’s structural analysis of the situation is that military hierarchies bear more responsibility than the individual soldiers who do the violence. It is also a convenient form of othering, when his peers and therefore himself are investigated and judged, he focuses responsibility for the violence on another part of the state apparatus. Such a defensive measure is understandable when evidence suggests that the ordinary soldier is more at risk from such legal proceedings than his superiors. In the human rights legal campaign on the killing of Baha Mousa and the ensuing military court martial, the only person convicted was an ordinary soldier (junior NCO rank of corporal). The verdict of the public inquiry and the court martial of one soldier does not meet Cohen’s description of, and desire for, acknowledgement. The human rights legal campaigns, public inquiries and military controlled legal process limits it to judgement rather than acknowledgement.

his rebellion. The analogy to the Iraq Insurgency is striking. The 2004 Insurgency was fuelled by the disbanding of the Iraq military by the US lead occupiers. These are the men in Darren’s medal story, who queued at the bank waiting months to receive severance payments. It was one of these men who carried a grenade.

Evidence from these trials and inquiries suggest that mistreatment of prisoners and interrogation techniques amounting to torture were not uncommon. Other informants, who did not wish to appear in the film and remained anonymous, described themselves and their whole unit as using techniques which are legally defined as mistreatment and torture. They described it as being done ‘according to procedure’ and ‘humanely’, they did not seem to realise what they were describing to me would be considered illegal. The violence was organised in shifts and soldiers rotated between prisoners. This professionalisation of violence is to be expected within a military setting, both victim and perpetrator were depersonalised in their relation to each other. The soldier talking about the violence showed no emotional reaction. It seemed like someone talking about their job, not a job as in a shop dealing with difficult customers, perhaps more as someone would describe working with animals and managing a herd, the prisoners did not seem to be perceived as having agency. The control the soldiers had over the prisoners, who were hooded and tied, seemed absolute. Here, rather than othering the violence onto the prisoner, the soldier seemed to have an unchallenged view that there was actually no violence occurring, just a bureaucratic process.

In other encounters, there was acceptance that violence was done, but it seemed that the more personal responsibility, personal choice and personal emotion involved, the more likely the soldier was to define it as their own violence. In one example, an ex-soldier reported that there had been a stand-off between British soldiers and an armed group. The British soldiers were able to take control of the situation when reinforcements arrived. The soldier detained a man who had been shouting abuse and spitting at him and his colleagues and as he took him away, he “roughed up” (physically assaulted) the prisoner on the way to the British base. The soldier felt that he had lost control and expressed regret and a wish to apologise for his treatment of this prisoner. This same soldier also described taking part in the mistreatment (amounting to torture) of prisoners, described previously. But he did not regret this and described it as humane, as it was sanctioned within a military context. The two examples did not seem to differ in extremes of violence, though the

prolonged nature of the sanctioned mistreatment perhaps seemed more extreme. The difference to the soldier seemed to be around his personal responsibility and emotional state. He was angry (and scared) during and following the confrontation with the armed group and this anger left him less in control, more undisciplined. He felt a personal responsibility because 'roughing him up' was not an order. This supports Arendt, Cohen and Feldman's propositions that being relieved of personal responsibility by the state encourages a loss of ownership of and emotional involvement with violence.

During the fieldwork, one veteran, a senior NCO, with over twenty years' experience described his own theory of violence. He constructed a binary of disciplined and undisciplined violence.

Disciplined violence was violence which soldiers were trained and ordered to do, undisciplined violence was that which was illegal; violence against a wife or girlfriend, or against civilians in the UK or Iraq. Control of emotions or emotions unduly influencing behaviour and actions seemed key to this binary. Military training and military sanctioned violence and their emotional triggers were brought into play to do this. Military training persuaded soldiers to love their comrades, love them enough to be willing to kill to protect them. It also persuaded them to hate or at least be angry enough to do this violence. This theory and military training expects young men and women to be able to control and manage their anger, hate and love. At the same time, processes of othering confuse and blur their understanding of what is violence. The senior NCO described undisciplined violence in the context of ex-soldiers who had left the military having a tendency to do violence, particularly in domestic contexts. A key service Supporting Our Brave is involved in is an outreach service to veterans in prison, many for violent offences.

As we see a professionalised and 'disciplined' approach supports the othering and denial of violence. Language as always is an important tool in this. FIBUA (Fighting In Built Up Areas) is the acronym given to urban warfare, street and house clearance, a practice of state violence which

predominantly targets the civilian population. The reality of the violence is lost in the phrase 'built up area'. Darren tells a military joke which subverts this acronym to something humorous, human and emotional, FISH (Fighting in Someone's House). Whilst joking on such matters can easily be characterised as unfeeling, FISH seems a more honest acknowledgement of the in/humanity of the situation than the technical jargon it subverts. Fighting In Someone's House is a more humanising phrase, there is a home there and there are people in that home. Humour is a non-official discourse which can disrupt the professionalisation of violence and the othering and denial this promotes.

The structural violence of occupation brings an endless variety of everyday violence, oppression and suffering, of which fighting in someone's house is one. The armed street patrols, checkpoints and searches by day and night, seen in the 2004 archive footage, become a permanent way of life, a professional discipline bringing stability to a place of violent uncertainty, as the British Army describes it. The example of the Wedding Party story is one such patrol encounter. Told by Darren as a story of his first experience of 'action', of being fired upon, it has the humorous ending of mistaken identity of wedding guests who were shooting celebratory gunfire into the air. In the story Darren and his mate are very afraid and also excited; this is the novelty for Darren. Understanding the outcome of the story, there is little for the British soldiers to fear, they are observing a wedding. The wedding guests did have real reason to be afraid, as Darren says, the 'groom nearly got his head blown off'. Here foreigner ignorance and misunderstanding is another layer othering the local person. The violence of the British soldier is transferred onto people celebrating a wedding recasting them as the putatively violent other, as terrorists and enemy combatants.

Military occupation impacts on all aspects of everyday life, but at the same time life goes on and is constructed to meet people's daily needs and wants, not the grand narrative of the saviour or occupier, victim or terrorist. It is within some of the daily details of life that Darren seems most disturbed. Showing photos from army patrols on the streets, he points out the rubbish on the ground

around the bins. He states “I could never get me head round that”. No reasonable explanation is apparent so he seems condemned to condemn an entire people as being lazy and wanting to live in squalor. Perhaps the refuse disposal and collection system is different and therefore a little unfathomable for us foreigners. Perhaps narratives which include several land wars, 12 years of war by international sanction and a semi-dismantled state might explain the poor street hygiene systems and local people’s inability or lack of interest in maintaining them. Such ideas are difficult to fit into a veteran’s narrative.

Similarly Darren struggles with the everyday reality of humanitarian relief. A common ‘humanitarian’ action of the British military is the G5 patrol, still known colloquially as ‘hearts and minds’ operations. These were regular patrol operations which could include the distribution of basic living items, food, water, blankets. Darren’s experience of this humanitarian relief is not what he expected. He explains that they did not accept these gifts gratefully; they often requested other or better things or simply wanted money. When remembering how individuals in Iraq show free will and exercise choice over which items they wish to receive, it creates confusion and anger in Darren. He states; “helping that lot out were a waste of time, ungrateful they were”. I suggest this demonstrates the othering of structural violence such as military occupation. Darren is confused within everyday interactions that he is not treated as ‘the good guy’. The problem is not the military occupation but rather the ungrateful, insanitary and violent action of the occupied. This ‘lack of gratitude’ is a disruption to his narrative of ‘helping’, he is clearly upset and says; ‘it makes me blood boil just thinking about it’. More than being threatened or attacked by an enemy, it is the Iraqi civilians’ refusal to be grateful victims which is the greatest challenge to the soldier narrative.

The story of the girl and her sibling, whose father was killed by the British military, does not other or deny the violence done. Darren seeks to participate in the personal and collective responsibility for this killing. Why does he do this, when he was not even in Iraq when her father was killed? Is it

overridden by the geniality of children and every human's capacity to relate to the basic importance of a family life, the importance of the loss of a parent to a child? Perhaps to relate on a human level eases the pressure caused by making monsters of so many people. When we make monsters, we make monsters of ourselves, as Nietzsche observed. Perhaps if we make a victim, an innocent of others, we can also make ourselves a victim, an innocent.

We have seen from the examples in this section that othering processes are complex, particularly at the personal and everyday level. The grand narrative othering of the war and political propaganda operates as expected, and can have a deep effect on the personal and the everyday. At the personal level, within different recollections, such propaganda is sustained (breeding their way into the Western world, Wedding Party, Preferring to live in squalor), perverted (armed rebellion), subverted (Fighting in someone's house) challenged (ungrateful civilians) and abandoned (we killed her dad).

Whilst in this section we have dealt with Darren's reaction to the killing of the girl's father, there is a further issue of the act of filming or photographing child war victims as an act of violence in itself. This issue of the appropriation of innocence, by soldier, filmmaker and audience is explored more deeply in the Case Study at the end of this chapter.

2.2.2 Remembering Violence: 'I'd rather not...'

This section considers some fieldwork examples of memory and the interaction of personal memory and public memorialisation. I consider the public memorialisation of veterans, war and state violence and how these are maintained and disrupted in the everyday experiences of soldiers in the film and how these examples inform theoretical constructs of denial and other theories of remembering outlined in Chapter One.

The genesis of the shop and organisation Supporting Our Brave (SOB) tells us much about public remembering of war and the military. Ray, the manager of SOB explains that Blackpool won the right to be the national host for the new Armed Forces Week and the empty shop was loaned as a coordination and visitor information point. Ray says this ‘opened up a can of worms’, as many visiting veterans presented themselves in need not simply of tourist information but of help with significant problems in their lives. The aim for Armed Forces week was to remember and celebrate the contribution of the Armed Forces in the UK; the unplanned consequence was the unmet welfare needs of veterans. As argued in Chapter One, there is silence or denial of the death or suffering of the other. What is more, the suffering of local British soldiers is treated in a superficial way and it is actually not the main focus of public memorialisation and celebration. This is an example of how the public and politicised discourse is disrupted when faced with the everyday lives of real people. Veterans were not able or willing to be merely spectators at their own celebration and memorial. Gathering them together in large numbers produced a different narrative, one in which remembering itself was a welfare concern.

SOB and the way it operates are informed by this disruptive genesis. Ray says it is very different now from how it had been originally planned out, not least that it was planned as a temporary site to support a one-off spectacle.

There are however many signs amongst veterans of conformity with methods of denial and forgetting. Mirroring the BBC website on the national level, inside the shop each individual British military person from Blackpool and the Fylde who was killed in Iraq and Afghanistan are memorialised in the shop on A4 sheets with photos. Ones from earlier conflicts, the most recently being the Falklands are already cast in metal around the base of the seafront cenotaph, the empty tomb. There is no mention, superficial or profound, of the violence done *by* the British military, no names of Iraqi people or others killed or who suffered due to British state violence. They are

unknown and unknowable in these public memorialisations.

In the case of Darren and his remembering at a personal level, as with othering we see a variety of responses, much richer than the public memorialisation. There are several violent incidents which Darren seems happy to remember and talk about. On our first meeting, he arrives prepared to tell his 'grenade story'. He has photocopies of the news report and his official recognition, the award of a 'Mention in Dispatches'. Here he performs the official public remembering of war, of a heroic deed in the face of a violent enemy. In an informal setting, he is happy to tell a more unofficial story, the exciting anecdote of the first experience of being under fire, with a wedding party. This is problematic in terms of official remembering, such stories serve an anti-war or 'folly of war' trope. However, Darren does not tell it in such terms; he remembers and tells it as an exciting 'almost' combat story, full of fear, adrenaline and camaraderie. The shared experience of the event with his mate comes across in the storytelling, how they were both grinning with excitement. This is what the construction of 'mateship' is for, to be ready to die for or kill for your mates. For Darren, this story represents 'proper soldiering', going to war and seeing combat. We see from the humorous ending that Darren is aware it was not 'real combat', but whilst they were in the moment of that experience, the emotions and shared feelings with his mates were the same as a 'real combat' situation. It is clear from Darren's expression and body language that he lived it as combat and relives it the same.

In the section on othering above, the most upsetting incidents that Darren was able to talk about were regarding his 'humanitarian' encounters with 'ungrateful' civilians. His upset at retelling this story leads to his 'rant' about people "breeding their way into the Western world" and his prediction of violent armed rebellion by veterans. But having given vent to his feelings, his frustration at his own anger is apparent and he wishes to silence this talk and the emotions it raises in him:

Anyway, right, rant over. How are my pegs working out?

What do you think? Sod the world at war, now. How are my pegs?

Darren in Shed (scene from film)

This encounter was prompted by my questioning in the shed, but the heated discussion first occurred in the private shared space of the Royal British Legion in the company of other veterans.⁹ The quote above is Darren's plea to change the subject and his conscious refocusing onto the moment and his carpentry practice, the pegs that he is crafting for his throne. This is an example of the descent into the everyday, the coping mechanism to survive and transcend the experience of violence, which Veena Das describes in her 2006 work, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. It also fits with the concept of directed forgetting (Argenti & Schramm, 2010) and Cohen's conception of denial. These are alternative conceptualisations of a practice at the individual level, which could be well described as 'getting on with something more worthwhile'.

Darren's rant and redirection to his pegs was the time that Darren got most upset about telling stories of violence. There were other incidents which he did not even begin to tell. In an understated manner, which people tell me is typical of the English, Darren states that he would 'rather not' speak of the worst of his memories of violence in Iraq, the ones that sometimes make it hard to sleep or concentrate. Clearly he remembers them, as they have disturbed his sleep over many years. But they are his secrets, his own memories. Such unspoken memories are based on profound experiences which shape our identity, experiences which are never spoken of, their unspoken nature re-shaping us once again. Upon repeated questioning in the shed, Darren takes his time before being unable to speak, searching for a way to tell. This is the denial of which Cohen speaks. But at the personal level, denial seems too harsh a word, too close to deceit and lies. There is something of horror and

⁹ There is a short scene of Darren with a group of veteran friends at the 'Legion'. I had limited access to this space and not to the discussions that went on later.

shame in it. Darren's response mirrors the public memorialisation and the discourse that stories of war are, as Nordstrom told, 'too awful to tell'. What is our reaction to Darren's statement, his admission of denial? Do we sympathise or condemn him? Do we try and imagine specifically what it is that he is refusing to speak of?

2.3 Case Study – Child Victims and the Ethics of Representation

This case study explores the contention that the (mis)representation of victims of war is itself an act of violence. I contend that the display of victims of violence who are denied agency or control in that representation is a violation of some of their basic rights and amounts to mistreatment of that person and that this is also a violent act. The key issue here is a denial of agency or control in their own representation. It is very dangerous territory to accuse a researcher, filmmaker or artist of violence in producing their work. However documentary filmmaking does already acknowledge that protagonists have the right to informed consent, which is a level of control over both the process and output. Within my own ethical guidelines agreed with the university, this informed consent has to be given from the outset and can also be withdrawn at any time, including after the completion of the film.

The photos and videos of the Iraqi children are taken informally by British Army soldiers. There was no informed consent. There was no common language in which to seek consent. The images were taken on the street, but there is no argument for public filming or photography as consent. The British Army is an occupying military force, which owns the streets, there can be little or no choice on the part of Iraqi people when confronted with British soldiers. Furthermore, there are wider ethical or political reasons to not accept such comfortable representations, which speak to the key points of this thesis of denial and othering of violence.

Nor do I have the informed consent of the children. The children have no way of giving consent to their representation in this film before, during or after the filmmaking process. These are not bystanders in the film's narrative. Although they are passively recorded, they are key protagonists in the story; it is their father who was killed. These children have no agency or control either in the original process of filming or in the transfer of those images into my own film. I have used their images in the film, anonymously. I will now outline my intentions and ethical basis for doing so. Within the edit of the film, we see Darren at home describing his feelings of collective responsibility; 'We killed her dad'. He points to a photo of the smiling girl. The film cuts to a video of the girl playing with British soldiers. It is an obvious edit to allow the audience to contemplate the child's loss and her innocence in playing with the men who killed her father, allowing the audience to consider how bad the soldiers might feel in this situation and this edit was encouraged in my supervision. Still I did not feel comfortable with this. I was angry because these are images of perpetrators playing with the children of their dead victims and the production of these images was controlled by the perpetrators. Images of soldiers with children in occupied spaces are frequently used as propaganda.

I think we need to question whether we have the right to see this girl, to receive any satisfaction or relief from the use of her images in a one-sided expression of the violence and responsibility involved in the killing of her father. I consider it an act of violence, to photograph and film her smiling face looking into the camera, as the soldier puts his helmet on her head. He talks to her and she talks to him, but neither of them understands one other. There is also an overriding desire to represent this other in some way. In reviewing the fieldwork I gained more understanding of the "contested space of intersubjectivity" and the interrelationship of all involved in violence (Jackson, 2012:169), on whichever 'side' they are on, and their 'right' to speak of their relationship with the other.

The editorial construct or compromise in my film was to overtly mask the girl's face using digital techniques. The masking is for anonymity for standard ethical reasons. Further than this it is a questioning of agency and control in representation, and how unknown and unknowable the other is in this interrelationship.

I follow these masked images of 'Sprite' with the image of another Iraqi child. In Baghdad, in 1917, a child is looking at a camera and its operators. The relationship between camera and child is more formal, the subject of the shot is not the child but the British Indian Army marching victoriously behind her. The child lingers in their look and I feel accused within this look, asking us what has changed in 100 years, what have we learnt? For me, this presages the quiet silenced looks of the children and adults at the British War memorial unveiling in 1923 which close the film, where expectations of an end to all war gather insubstantially in the air.

Throughout each section of this chapter on the film and fieldwork we have seen how everyday life is shaped by dominant public discourses of silence, denial and ignorance of violence, but at the same time everyday experience powerfully acts to disrupt or contradict them. The example of the genesis of SOB is an excellent example of this. Within everyday life, there is the capacity to negate an entire people's humanity. A person can accept that they 'prefer to live in squalor' and at the same time, to see the beauty in 'the seven-domed mosque' and enjoy ice cream on a "friendly street".

Back home, there is the capacity to perform the dutiful role of war hero and retell the story of your Mention in Dispatches, and also to threaten armed rebellion and to admit that your sleep is disturbed by memories too difficult to tell, whilst telling of your responsibility in the killing of a child's father. The lack of narrative or logic to the personal stories and everyday experience certainly give them the ring of truth. In the aftermath of war, at home in the UK, soldiers describe the 'wider world', the geopolitics which brings about British state violence. They do this sometimes by upholding public discourse and memorialisation with performances of othering and denial, and sometimes by subverting them with humour, emotion and forgetting.

Chapter 3 Conclusion: War Stories

My research question was how do British armed forces personnel locate state violence within their personal lived experience? The film and this accompanying text provide a partial response to this question. As a starting point, this research has identified that an individual veteran can locate state violence in strikingly varied ways.

My research has found that othering and forms of remembering akin to denial predominate in relation to state violence. At the collective level, the dominant discourse seeks to other the subjects of state violence. At the personal level, it is possible to see competing discourses, even within one individual. Whilst an individual may identify with the dominant collective discourse, at the same time they can represent and express a variety of views through their own experiences. It is suggested that there are several possible reactions to extreme emotional situations, and some of these may be an attempt to seek some balance in their emotional state within interrelations with others. To relate with remorse, empathy or even love on a human level eases the pressure caused by othering, which makes monsters of so many people. To paraphrase Nietzsche, when we make monsters, we make monsters of ourselves. Perhaps also if we make a victim, an innocent of others, we can also make a victim, an innocent, of ourselves.

This research suggests that soldiers suffer due to the institutional and social attempts to co-opt their 'identities' for military and political purposes. Recruits generally start with an unrealistic view of war, that they are going to help people or destroy a monstrous other. Within the research we see an individual feel emotions of love, hate and anger towards Iraqi people. Such emotions exist contemporaneously. This cocktail of emotions is the result of military training and deployment as a military occupier. As recruits and throughout their service, soldiers are presented binary views of violence as a human behaviour, that they can do violence in a disciplined or legitimate way.

Soldiers are trained to love their comrades, to love and wish to protect them and be willing to kill or

die for them. They are also made ready to hate or be angry enough to do this violence to a potential enemy other. It is shown in the fieldwork that after personal experience of soldiering and state violence, such simplistic notions are disrupted.

Soldiers suffer as veterans because they are expected to perform a public role supporting their state and military and the violence it carries out. In doing this many of their personal experiences are denied. These findings have implications for the way state violence is organised within the military and how it is remembered and constructed within the collective memory. It also speaks to the experience of leaving the military and veteran support to former armed forces personnel.

This research demonstrates that the personal lived experiences of former soldiers are a valuable site to research state violence and that British state violence is an under-researched area within Anthropology. Anthropology is an appropriate discipline within which to carry out such research and British anthropology could examine its approach to, and denial of, British state violence. It would be good if British anthropology could offer opportunities for such research and many argue that it has a responsibility to do so.

Is it possible to conduct research with perpetrators and gain an understanding of the impact of violence on the victim? In hearing the voice of the perpetrator we cannot assume to 'represent' the victim, but if we accept the human interrelationship and intersubjectivity of violence, we can say that perpetrators' voices speak to, not for, the experiences of victims. There are significant risks that victims will be misrepresented when they are voiceless and do not have agency within a piece of research. It would be useful to explore research methodologies which include both victim and perpetrator whether separately or in dialogue. This could also directly contribute to processes of acknowledgement. This is a widespread aim within the transitional justice work in the aftermath of war, of which Arendt was an early witness, Cohen is an advocate and Feldman a critical observer. I

am wary of supporting such grand schemes, which have wider agendas than the interests of victims, or even the interests of perpetrators.

The limitation of this research for me lies in its ambiguity to the victims of the British state violence it explores. Exploring and acknowledging the human experience, the humanity of the perpetrators of state violence is beneficial in seeing the intersubjectivity of violence. Within such a contested space as discussion of state violence, such exploration can be similar to some propaganda. The silence of the victims can resemble the denial of their voice.

Regarding my own ethnography, I embarked on this research with former armed forces personnel in my home country, with a view to then conducting similar research in Indonesia. This is a circuitous route which I may never complete. I think it has been a good grounding to carry out research at home, prior to similar research in other countries. One specific future research project arising from my own fieldwork would be to arrange a meeting with Darren and the ex-Iraq military man carrying the grenade whom Darren disarmed. To see where they both are 10 years on and how they locate violence in their everyday lives, how they experience their military past and their veteran lives. The narrative of this incident, with its potential to resonate on many levels, could make it a rich ethnographic encounter.

Conducting this research has been a process of discovery and a creative journey for myself. It has suited me well professionally and personally in being an opportunity to reflect upon my experiences of working with people experiencing the aftermath of state violence. The voice of victims was the focus of my previous work and I welcome this balance. Locating the research in the UK and focusing on British state violence has been worthwhile as I said, but at the same time a difficult test of my skills, understanding and personal identity. However, the process of filmmaking, particularly editing, has felt creative as has the process and discipline of ethnography. I am very satisfied to

have carried out an in-depth research with one main participant, since this has validated ethnography for me as a vital endeavour and a refreshing and creative progression of my academic and professional experience in the social sciences and NGO work. I feel better equipped to take my next steps.

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