

EXPERIENCING WAR

Edited by
Christine Sylvester

Experiencing War

This edited collection explores aspects of contemporary war that affect average people – physically, emotionally, and ethically – through activities ranging from combat to drawing war.

The aim of this work is to supplement the usual emphasis on strategic and national issues of war in the interest of beginning to theorize war from the point of view of individual experience, whether the individual is a combatant, a casualty, a supporter, opponent, recorder, veteran, distant viewer, an international lawyer, an ethicist or an artist. This volume presents essays that push the boundaries of war studies and war thinking, without promoting one kind of theory or methodology for studying war as experiential politics, but with an eye to exploring the possibilities and encouraging others to take up the new agenda. It includes new and challenging thinking on humanitarianism and war, new wars in the Third World, gender and war thinking, and the sense of the body within war that inspired recent UN resolutions. It also gives examples that can change our understanding of who is located where, doing what with respect to war: women warriors in Sierra Leone, war survivors living with their memories, and even an artist drawing something seemingly intangible about war – the arms trade.

The unique aspect of this book is its purposive pulling together of foci and theoretical and methodological perspectives from a number of disciplines on a variety of contemporary wars. Arguably, war is an activity that engages the attention, the politics, and the lives of many people. To theorize it with those lives and perspectives in mind, recognizing the political contexts of war, is long overdue.

This inter-disciplinary book will be of much interest to students of war studies, critical security studies, gender studies, sociology, and IR in general.

Christine Sylvester is Professor of International Relations and Development at Lancaster University, UK, and the recent recipient of the annual Kerstin Hesselgren Chair in Sweden.

Series: War, Politics and Experience

Series editor: Christine Sylvester

Experiencing War

Edited by Christine Sylvester

Experiencing War

Edited by Christine Sylvester

First published 2011

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
an informa business*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2011.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.

© 2011 Christine Sylvester for selection and editorial matter, individual contributors; their contributions

The right of the editor to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Experiencing war / edited by Christine Sylvester.

p. cm.

1. War – Psychological aspects. 2. War and society. I. Sylvester, Christine.

U22.3.E858 2010

303.6'6—dc22

2010018474

ISBN 0-203-83999-4 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN: 978-0-415-56630-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-56631-5 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-83999-7 (ebk)

To Swati, Sungju, Lyn, and Cami

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
1 Experiencing war: an introduction	1
CHRISTINE SYLVESTER	
2 The passions of protection: sovereign authority and humanitarian war	8
ANNE ORFORD	
3 Gendered humanitarianism: reconsidering the ethics of war	28
KIMBERLY HUTCHINGS	
4 Wars, bodies, and development	42
BRIGITTE M. HOLZNER	
5 Ruling exceptions: female soldiers and everyday experiences of civil conflict	64
MEGAN MACKENZIE	
6 Experiencing the cold war	79
HEONIK KWON	
7 On the uselessness of new wars theory: lessons from African conflicts	94
STEPHEN CHAN	
8 Dilemmas of drawing war	103
JILL GIBBON	

9	Pathways to experiencing war	118
	CHRISTINE SYLVESTER	
	<i>Index</i>	131

Contributors

Stephen Chan is Professor of International Relations, and former Dean of Law and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He is the author of numerous articles and several notable books, including *Out of Evil: New International Politics and Old Doctrines of War* (2005), *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence* (2003), and most recently, *The End of Certainty: Towards a New Internationalism* (2010). He is also a published poet and a martial arts master.

Jill Gibbon was born in Australia and moved to the UK in 1979. An artist, activist and art historian, she reverses the usual focus of war art on the war zone by drawing the military-industrial complex. She has a BA in graphic design from Leeds Polytechnic, an MA in art history from Keele University, and a PhD in reportage drawing from Wimbledon School of Art/University of Surrey. She teaches Arts and Humanities at the Open University.

Brigitte M. Holzner is Director of Gender and Development for the Austrian Ministry of Development. Before that, she was a lecturer in the Women, Gender, Development program at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and a researcher on Indonesia and post-socialist countries. She has written most recently on 'Legal Pluralism in the Family Law: Implications for Development Policy' (2009), and 'Agrarian Restructuring and Gender – Designing Family Farms in Central and Eastern Europe' (2008).

Kimberly Hutchings is Professor and Head of the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics. She works on a range of areas within the field of international political theory, including feminist ethics, critical IR theory, and the relation between politics and violence. Her recent books include *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (2008) and *Global Ethics: An Introduction* (2010).

Heonik Kwon is a Reader in Anthropology at the London School of Economics. He is the author of several articles and the books *The Decomposition of the Cold War* (2010), and *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (2008), which won the Kahin Prize of the Association for Asian Studies. He is interested in cold war culture,

death rituals and the politics of memory, kinship in political history and theory, and the role of creative cultural practice in conflict resolution.

Megan MacKenzie is a lecturer in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Victoria, New Zealand. Prior to joining the department, she was doctoral fellow at the Belfer Center for International Security and the Women and Public Policy Program at the Kennedy School, Harvard University. She is the author of 'Securitization and De-securitization: Female Soldiers and the Construction of the Family', *Security Studies* (2009) and 'Empowerment Boom or Bust? Assessing Women's Post-Conflict Empowerment Initiatives', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2009), and has a related book in progress for New York University Press.

Anne Orford is the inaugural holder of the Michael D. Kirby Chair of International Law and an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow at Melbourne Law School, where she is also the foundation Director of the Institute for International Law and the Humanities. Among her books are *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (2003), the forthcoming *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, and the forthcoming *Cosmopolitanism and the Future of International Law*.

Christine Sylvester is Professor of International Relations and Development at Lancaster University, UK, and Kerstin Hesselgren Chair, Sweden, 2010–11. She has authored two books on international relations, including *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (2004), two on Zimbabwe, including *Producing Women and Progress in Zimbabwe* (2000), and the recent *Art/Museums: International Relations Where We Least Expect It* (2009). She has also edited *Critical Works in Feminist International Relations* (2010), a five-volume compendium, and has a book series with Routledge: War, Politics and Experience.

Acknowledgements

This volume features the work of a few of the many speakers that contributed to the Touching War programme I organized and directed at Lancaster University over a seven-month period in 2008–2009. I would like to thank the funders of that project: the Institute of Advanced Studies at Lancaster University, the Department of Politics and International Relations at Lancaster, and the Lancaster University Film Society. I wholeheartedly thank all the contributors to this volume and all of the following, most of whom participated in Touching War:

April Biccum
Bruce Bennett
Israel Butler
Helen Caton
Patricia Chilton
Feargal Cochrane
Rachel Cooper
Gerry Davies
Bulent Diken
Mervyn Frost
Lola Frost
Jennifer Glasse
Paul Gough
Patrick Hagopian
Mary Hamilton
Andrew Humphreys
Athina Karatzogianni
Adi Kuntsman
Mark Lacy
Vicky Mason
Cristina Masters
Chris May
Amalendu Misra
Kyoko Murakami

Jude Murison
Shuruq Naguib
Pat Noxolo
Malachi O'Doherty
Swati Parashar
Gale Parchoma
Sungju Park-Kang
Corinna Peniston-Bird
Elina Penttinen
Mike Roper
Cami Rowe
Peter Rowe
Laura Sjoborg
Dan Smith
Graham Smith
Annabelle Sreberny
Jayne Steel
James Summers
Denny Taylor
Lyn Warrenner
Michael Weil
Anita Wilson
Joseba Zulaika

The publisher and editor would like to thank the copyright holders for granting permission to reprint the following material:

Anne Orford, 'The Passions of Protection: Sovereign Authority and Humanitarian War' in Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (eds), *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York: Zone Books, 2010) p335–356.

1 Experiencing war

An introduction

Christine Sylvester

War is a repetitive politics of violence that crosses human history. No one is immune from its touch: there are pieces of war in peacetime and pieces of peace in war. Sadly, the practices of violent politics show few signs of letting up, giving up, or relinquishing a hold on the imaginary of international politics and over the lives of so many people caught up by it. This collection takes the last phrase of that sentence as its starting point: the lives of so many people. It draws our attention away from strategic and national interest politics of war to the prospect of theorizing war from a starting point in individuals, the ones who experience war in the myriad ways possible – as combatants, casualties, voyeurs, opponents, artists, healers, grave diggers, and so many other identities. What unites them all is the human body, a sensing physical entity that can touch war, and an emotional and thinking body that is touched by it in innumerable ways. But there are also many divides – cultural, religious, historical, national, generational, linguistic, gender, race, class that can lead to conflict. Difference exaggerated, invented, or politicized in the extreme can explode into large-scale armed conflict between groups that find others so “other” that they must be killed. Weapons and bodies then get aimed at other bodies, even if they are said to be aimed primarily at “strategic targets,” “pockets of resistance,” armed opponents and the like. A key characteristic of war in practice is that it engages and acts on bodies.

Judith Butler knows this. She advocates an approach to theorizing war, and to building a politics to stop it, that pays consummate attention to wartime emotions common to friend and enemy alike: mourning, grieving, feeling inexplicable loss. She asks:

What form political reflection and deliberation ought to take if we take injurability and aggression as two points of departure for political life ... [knowing] that there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know.¹

Historians who talk to warriors and veterans also know that bodies are the locus of powerful war experiences. Christian Appy hears a former Lieutenant General in the US Marine Corps struggle with his lingering Vietnam War emotions:

Trainor once wrote that the Vietnam War produced a “genie of anguish” that he had bottled up inside. Asked to elaborate he says, “Well, I still can’t go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” With these words he suddenly chokes up. A dam of emotion seems about to break, but within seconds he regains control ... “Deep down there’s a hurt and I don’t know what it is. I can’t control it. It’s always there and I think I’ll just live with it for the rest of my life.”²

The famous British war photojournalist, Don McCullin, writes books and exhibits his pictures from all the wars he saw through the lenses of cameras and felt through the skin on his body and pulsations in his brain. Writing of his time with the Biafran secessionist forces in 1969, McCullin offers a telling aside about taking food

and other things for the children of a man called Chinua Achebe, one of the genuine idealists on the Biafran side. He was a novelist, who wrote a book called *Things Fall Apart*. That was precisely what was happening now. He was a young man, an honourable man, a nice man. I remember the last time I saw him. He took the gifts without any emotion. He had cut off any feeling he may once have had for the one or two Westerners he thought really cared. I felt he was looking through me as if I didn’t really exist. And I could see that the ruin of the Ibo culture had made him feel exactly as I had when coming out of Hue [Vietnam] – totally shell-shocked.³

Not all bodies in war experience the “genie of anguish” – at least not all the time. A former soldier on the Vietnamese side admits that the war was very often a depressing experience. But he also says:

How could you allow yourself to be depressed when you saw people making their homes inside the hulk of a tank like this? [He points to one of his photographs of a Vietnamese family living inside the remains of a destroyed U.S. tank.] Looking at people like them, we knew our task wasn’t finished. They were the real source of our psychological motivation.⁴

Miranda Allison interviewed a woman in the Irish Republican Army of Northern Ireland who told her that joining up “was not a personal experience and it was not emotional. ... No, I thought very long and hard and I thought how best to achieve what I believed in, and I believed that that was the way forward.”⁵ Some people embrace war, get addicted to it, celebrate it, and keep lining up for it by displaying horrendous weapons at arms fairs or by becoming iteratively mercenary. They might live comfortably in the Green Zone of Baghdad or feed off it, willingly or most likely not, like Mother Courage did during the Thirty Years War, and like the kidnapped bush women had to do during the Liberian civil wars.⁶ Or they can isolate themselves from threats around them and thereby make the situation of their otherness very obvious: “The American military closed off streets near its bases in the city, regardless of whether they were vital thoroughfares ... The sight of barricaded roads was a daily reminder to Iraqis that they were under occupation.”⁷