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War Craft: The embodied politics of making war

This article makes the case for examining war from a 'making point of view' (Bunn, 2011). Makers and their material production of and for war have been neglected in our accounts of war, security and international relations. An attention to processes of making for war can reveal important things about how these international processes are lived and produced at the level of the body. The article focuses on the particular phenomena of martial craft labour – the recreational making of 'stuff', including hats and pillowcases, by civilians for soldiers. To explore embodiment within this social site an ethnographic method is outlined that enables the reading of objects as embodied texts, the observation of others in processes of making, and the undertaking of making by the researcher. Analysing embodied registers of aesthetic expression and the social values that attend such crafting for war reveals how this making is a space through which intimate embodied, emotional circulations undertake work for liberal state and military-institutional logics and objectives, obscure violence, normalise war and produce the military as an abstract social cause. Beyond the immediate empirical focus of this article a much wider political entanglement of violence, embodiment and material production necessitates a concerted research agenda.

> *Suicide Vest: Component part of suicide vest. This element comprises the handmade empty vest made out of dark green fabric which has been hand stitched and one side sewn to create a compartment to place objects in. Hole created in the centre to place head through. Single strap sewn at the four corners of the base of the vest. One side of the vest has been cut open. Part of: Suicide Vest with 5x ball bearing sheets and 2x grenades. Catalogue number: MUN 6329.1 Department: Exhibits IWM London* (Imperial War Museum Catalogue, n.d)

Introduction: War from a making point of view

The 'Taliban suicide vest' that is part of the collection of the Imperial War Museum in London, UK, is housed in a glass case, surrounded by an assortment of objects chosen to speak of contemporary war. In the same area of the museum there is a motorbike that had been ridden by escaping Afghan "insurgents", and the twisted metal of a vehicle destroyed in a car bomb attack in Baghdad in 2007. These items populate the exhibit along with myriad other items of equipment, weapons, uniforms, insignia and 'souvenirs and ephemera'. Gazing at the suicide vest I noticed the angular shape, the unhemmed, frayed edge of the head opening, and the hand sewn seams. I felt a moment of surprising familiarity. I recognised the uneven, snaggled hand stitching because I had sewn things just as badly myself. I looked at the vest through the eyes of a maker.

This article explores war from what social anthropologist Stephanie Bunn (2011) calls "a making point of view"; one that allows insight into the relationships between embodied

practices of production, the "tacit knowledges" to which they give (aesthetic) form (p.24) and the power formations entailed in these processes. As Richard Sennett (2008: 8) suggests, by looking at the processes involved in making things we can learn about ourselves, selves that are sites of the political. A making point of view offers an entry point into the "small happenings" (Atkinson, 2013b: 60) of 'big' geopolitical processes and illuminates how these processes are lived and made at the level of the body.

An examination of war from a 'making point of view' enables this article to make two contributions that, firstly, advance our substantive understanding of embodiment and war and, secondly, develop strategies for navigating the methodological challenges of researching embodiment. Firstly, the article addresses the omission of makers and making – material production – in accounts of war, security and international politics, revealing how embodied material production is an important space for understanding the circulation of violent relations and logics that make war possible. Literature on everyday spaces of militarisation, war experiences, and war, embodiment and emotion has tended to omit 'making bodies'. I reflect on the questions that these missing makers might prompt, and consider the insights they might yield. I contend that in addition to the immediate focus of this paper there is a wider politics, and economy, of violence, embodiment and material production that should be addressed.

This article, as a first intervention in this area, explores the politics of 'civilian' recreational crafting for the military as an intimate (Pain and Staeheli, 2014; Probyn, 2010) form of "craft labour" (Banks, 2010) that I term martial craft labour. It focuses on the making of two objects, a Ribbed Watchman's Hat that has been made and distributed 30,000 times to soldiers in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) through the Hats for Israeli Soldiers project, and a pillowslip following the style of those made for the Sewing for Soldiers project which is one of many initiatives that were set up to distribute pillowslips and pillows to deployed US soldiers. Analysing embodied registers of aesthetic expression and the social values and gendered relations that attend crafting for war reveals how such making is a space through which intimate embodied circulations of the material and the emotional obscure violence, normalise war, abstract the military to a seemingly apolitical social cause and contribute to wider state logics and imperatives. This focus elaborates on the embodied workings of what Alison Howell terms "martial politics": the ways in which "war-like relations…and knowledges that are 'of war'" do not encroach on a peaceful civilian liberal order (as the concept of militarisation would hold), rather there is an "indivisibility of war and peace, military and civilian and national and social security". Martial politics constitutes the violence that is "enacted on those who are racialized, Indigenous, disabled, queer or otherwise constituted as a threat to civil order" (Howell, 2018: 117-18). I trace how the gendered embodiment of martial craft labour constitutes the violence

of war and occupation in various ways. These include intimate circulations through which the recreational and the warlike, the familial and the national, the comforting and the violent, home and war exist as simultaneities.

The second contribution made by the article is the development of a method for researching and writing about embodiment. An attention to bodies and embodiment in relation to the particularities of war, security and international relations has been a relatively recent and a burgeoning area (McSorely, 2013; Wilcox, 2015; Dyvik and Greenwood, 2016). As Catherine Baker has observed, writing about embodiment is an act of compression, abstraction and translation (2016: 120), an interpretive endeavour that requires the researcher to mediate between that which is fleshy, felt and lived (often by others), and the page. This mediation raises epistemological challenges (see, for example, Dyvik, 2016). This article learns from and develops the strategies of anthropologists who have engaged with material objects and the embodied processes and social values of their production. Taking 'a making point of view' on war and embodiment, I argue, impels the researcher to do some making themselves. As Bunn describes, "learning to make things does not just involve learning a skill, it also brings with it an understanding of many of the social and cultural values attendant on artefacts, including aesthetics, notions of 'fitness for purpose' and meaning" (Bunn, 2011: 26). The article proposes an ethnography of making which involves an iterative process that can include 'reading' objects, observing processes of making, and engaging in that making oneself.

To these ends the article unfolds as follows. Firstly, the absence of makers and material production in accounts of war, security and international politics – and particularly theorisations of embodiment in these areas – is identified. The case is made for why an attention to embodied processes of making war is necessary. Secondly an ethnography of making is proposed as a way to gain traction on these processes. Thirdly, the empirical payoffs of doing so are set out through an exploration of the intimate embodiments of making for war in the case of martial craft labour. Fourthly, a shorter discussion of aspects of the method 'in application' precedes the conclusion.

Missing Makers in War, Security and International Relations

In *Maneuvers* Cynthia Enloe memorably asked "how do they militarize a can of soup?" (2000: 1) and scholars have posed and answered versions of this question as they pertain to an array of everyday objects, and the wider practices, spaces and subjectivities of the social. The focus on militarized 'stuff' therefore forms part of a wider attention to the (re)production of war and the ways in which war animates society. The logics and values which normalise, celebrate and prepare society for martial violence have been traced and analysed in, for example, food brands

(Tidy, 2015), civilian fashion (Tynan, 2013) and myriad broader 'popular' (Martin and Steuter, 2010) and "public space and culture" (Giroux, 2004). Doing so has necessitated the 'reading' of everyday objects and processes as texts of war, revealing how enabling and underpinning martial logics operate in and through them.

Such analyses typically explore how completed or finished artefacts can be 'read' for meaning, are used and consumed (by embodied subjects), how they circulate, and what they signify. We understand that Enloe's (2000) can of soup is encountered by the notionally-civilian body in the supermarket aisle and consumed both literally and figuratively. Enloe makes note of the "marketing specialists", the "designers and dieticians" (2000: 1-2) who, we presume, had the bright idea to make a canned tomato soup laced with rocket-shaped pasta, viewing the consumer's "fascination with militarized products as natural" and militarized values a "corporate resource". But there is a missing step here, as "knowledge about making artefacts is an essential complement to the knowledge of the social contexts of their use" (Bunn, 2011: 23). In other words, we have focused on processes of consumption but have been less attuned to those – intricately connected – of production. What of the embodied, material practices of "they" who militarize the can of soup? (Enloe, 2000: 1). What of the illustrator who responded to the marketing specialists' brief and designed the rocket-themed label or the engineer tasked with producing rocket-shaped dies for the pasta? What "tacit knowledges", "understandings of aesthetics and belief, articulated and understood through bodily practice" (Bunn, 2011: 24) might we find if we pause to consider these 'making' bodies?

Whilst scholarship has paid relatively little attention to the ways in which the 'stuff' of war, security and international relations is brought into existence, the same cannot be said for the body. Although underlying ontologies vary, and the relationship between the discursive and the fleshy have been conceptualised in different ways, 'the body' and embodiment has been extensively theorised as a 'made' site of the political (inter alia Foucault, 1977: 138-9; Butler, 1990; 1993; Ahmed, 2000; Bordo, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Harraway, 1991). A more specific strand of embodiment literature has emerged within that which pays attention to the "daily and mundane" (Parashar, 2013: 615; Basham 2013) of war, security and international politics. A guiding ethic of this work has been making people central to the study of war and its attendant logics and practices. Understanding war through people's "variable compositions, emotions, and experiences" (Dyvik, 2016: 56) entails an analytical focus on those things that are encompassed by concepts such as embodiment, emotion and corporeality (Sylvester, 2013; Parashar, 2013; McSorely, 2013; Wilcox, 2015; Dyvik, 2016; Parashar, 2013; Åhäll and Gregory, 2015). Correcting the erasure of people in the theorisation and study of war (previously understood and analysed purely as a domain of state institutions) involves putting bodies 'back in', and

accounting methodologically and conceptually for what McSorely terms "politics incarnate" (2013: 1). Considering these two areas – objects and embodiment – together, there has been little attention paid to bodies engaged in the active, lived and productive 'making' of the 'stuff' of war. How the process of making both makes 'stuff' and simultaneously 'makes' bodies, and the reciprocally productive relations between that which is made, the embodiment of the maker and that of other bodies, remain concerns that have hitherto been unexplored.

What sort of questions would arise from an attention to 'making' bodies? Returning to the 'suicide vest' with which this article began, recent work on international relations and embodiment has theorised the body strapped into an explosive vest at the moment of a suicide bombing as a productive site that challenges the socially and politically produced borders of the body (Wilcox 2014). For Lauren Wilcox, "the suicide bomber as such exists at the point of concealment of a bomb on, in, or about the body of the bomber". Such a cyborg body is "an amalgam of flesh and metal, biology and technology" (2014: 72). Here, one half of the cyborg, the "metal" and "technology" of the explosive vest, appears to be without relevant origin or history; it arrives ready-made and in the sense that it joins with to become the cyborg body it is consumed, or, at least, it only becomes politically visible, a thing of power, at the moment of joining with a human body that it will detonate. But this "technology" is a thing (hand) 'made'. If we look at a suicide vest such as the one in the Imperial War Museum (Figure 1) from a maker's point of view its origin – its production – becomes impossible to ignore. This is a political and an embodied production; a body made the "technology" and the body of the bomber was being called into being as such long before the moment of cyborg 'becoming'.

The gathering of the materials for the vest (from where?), the selection of fabric (a heavy, close weave, probably cotton), the choice of colour (dark green), the cutting of a hole "in the centre to place head through" (IWM, 2016) (jagged, unhemmed), the setting of ball bearings into resin and alignment of the blocks between parcel tape, and the stitching of these taped packages into the compartment of the vest, are all things that invite questions. These questions can reveal "much more than just the mechanics of skill and technique" (Bunn, 2011: 24). Why was the stitching irregular? How and why did the maker match the colour of the thread to the fabric? Why did they choose the colour of material that they did (Guillaume, Andersen and Vuori, 2015)? Who was the maker and what moments of their everyday and broader shape and space in their life did this project occupy? Did they work on this around other duties, in solitude or with others? Were there multiple makers? Did the maker(s) know the intended wearer or were they making the vest for themselves? *What did it feel like and mean to make this vest?* In this paper I begin questioning processes of making with observations and enquiries such as these.

Whilst this article focuses on one social space of embodied production (martial craft labour), looking at war from a making point of view provides a way in to a wide array of embodied processes of production in varied spaces and political contexts, necessitating a broader research agenda. The mechanised and standardised production of the material stuff of warfare – from weapons to uniforms, to rations and so on – is a recent and uneven development and many of these processes of production remain very much 'embodied'. We are used to the idea that most of the things of war are made in 'factories' by 'manufacturers'. The phrase 'arms manufacturer', for example, typically evokes corporate rather than corporeal entities but this disguises the embodiedness of many industrial processes. As anyone who has watched the hit documentary strand *How It's Made* knows, there is always "a worker" – a body, a person – in even the most mechanised industrial processes of manufacture. Writing on technology and war, Martin van Creveld (2010: 225) describes how war is now a "contest between machines that are served, maintained, and operated" by people. In this depiction, the technologies of war somehow exist without being brought into existence. The process of making those machines in the first place is missing, something that is also undertaken by human bodies, bodies whose "tacit knowledges" (Bunn 2011: 24) materialise the political. Through this article I hope to initiate an ongoing encounter with the wider embodied politics of making (for) war.

[FIGURE 1]

Towards Embodied Method: Ethnographies of Making

How might we approach war from a making, and a maker's, point of view? Here I suggest connected, organically traversed, iterative strategies that can include 'reading' objects for the processes, bodies and knowledges that made them, observing others in the making process (taking various direct and indirect forms) (see, for example, Gowlland, 2015) and engaging in and observing that making oneself (Bunn, 2011; O'Connor, 2005; Atkinson, 2013a; Atkinson, 2013b). For this project I found myself moving between and drawing on forms of all of these strategies in a non-linear manner.

The focus of this paper is handmade war in the context of 'civilian' recreational crafting, and within this the specific phenomenon I term martial craft labour. This entails civilian recreational crafters within the broader craft revival, typically women, who turn their knitting and sewing skills and time to produce items for use by soldiers. This is explored through two examples, a Watchman's Cap knitted for members of the Israeli Defence Force and pillowslip sewn for deployed US soldiers during the wars and occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Acquiring and reflecting on the craft skills and social values involved in making these items, making them myself, and reading these objects, the process and their context, I seek to understand the

embodied martial politics of craft labour. I draw particular attention to the gendered embodiments and relations of martial craft labour but the embodied social relations I examine here are also simultaneously of class, race, and sexuality.

Immersion in the social space of the recreational craft revival formed a setting for understanding the specific phenomenon of martial craft labour through the research strategies of reading, observing and making. As noted above, for this article I learned from the strategies of anthropologists engaging with material objects and the embodied processes and social values of their production. These approaches are typically grounded in ethnographic immersion. Bunn's ethnography of felt making was grounded in her four year apprenticeship with makers in Kyrgyzstan (2011: 28). Atkinson's (2013a) ethnography of glass blowing was grounded in a single day spent with glass blowers in London, UK. Techniques such as visual ethnography, in which images of the making process and the finished object are analysed, can also be used (Gowlland, 2015). At the broadest level my ethnographic engagements with martial craft labour were grounded in the embodied skills in knitting (and to a less advanced level, sewing) that I had learned over a lifetime but which were a concerted focus during the five years prior to commencing this research. I was taught the basics of both sewing and knitting as a child and came back to these skills as an adult, taking up knitting in 2012 as a therapeutic practice to sooth the stresses of a PhD (a productive irony, of course, given this 'escape' has now found its way into my work). My process of learning to be fluent in the craft of knitting was grounded in a particular social space, the primarily online world of the recreational craft revival (see a discussion in Bratich and Brush, 2011) characterised by YouTube tutorials, 'indie' designers and teachers, craft blogs and websites.

This is a social space populated by both younger makers for whom the handmade is a nostalgia-tinged recreational endeavour and middle class aspirational creative economy, and an older generation who still remember, and to a degree perform – albeit in a recreational context – knitting and sewing as necessary skills (particularly for those who could not afford to buy ready-made clothes) in a time before the mass production of cheap fashion (Luckman, 2015). In terms of its "patterning of gender relations", its broadly drawn "gender regime" (Connell, 2005: 6), the recreational revival of knitting, sewing and cognate crafts such as crochet has been predominantly but not exclusively something done by women and tied to ideas of femininity through domesticity.[i] This gendering is of course nothing new - knitting, sewing and similar have long histories as gendered 'handicrafts', with the labour involved in them valued (or not) in particular ways along gendered lines (Hughes, 2012) or not even counted as labour at all (Scates, 2001: 29).

It is important that recreational crafting was a social space in which I was embedded so that the method was an exercise in observing and writing an iteration of 'myself', and through this self-observation translating (Baker, 2016) that which I had previously or might otherwise have experienced as tacit and felt into something that could be written. I was an observing myself as a recreational crafter who turned their skills and time to making things for war. This strategy revealed, for example, the language of "social and cultural values" (Bunn, 2011: 26) within the recreational craft revival. There is, for example, the notion of 'knitworthiness' (not everyone is 'knitworthy' – deserving of a hand-knitted item) and the practice of charity crafting (making items for charitable uses, commonly hats for chemotherapy patients, warm accessories for the homeless and hats for premature babies). These notions entail a set of ideas concerning the value of handmade items and the intimacy and care of creating things for others who are in some ways deserving.

This approach works with an understanding of embodiment not as a thing that occurs "elsewhere" but a concept "that requires acknowledgement within us" as subjects engaged in reading and writing embodiment (Dyvik, 2016: 58). No research is without its violences but, to put it bluntly, it would have entailed a significant erasure to assume that me – a white, female, European researcher - sitting down and stitching together a 'suicide vest' could tell us anything about the embodied politics of the one in the Imperial War Museum. This positionality could, however, be an entry point into understanding the working of embodied production of and for violence in the name of the liberal order (to which the suicide vest maker and wearer are cast as a threat). Although a full discussion of the navigation of these relations of power are beyond the immediate scope of this article, it is key to note that ethnographies of making must be underpinned by a recognition of positionality and power relations, and are not a quick fix. The method requires extensive immersion in the 'field' with the field necessarily encompassing the everyday, the 'here' and the self. The focus on the researcher self can reproduce power asymmetries – in the case of this article a white western perspective comes to be the focus through the existence and embeddedness of the researcher in this social space. If the objective, as here, is to study the production of western liberal violence then this focus does have utility, but it can only ever offer a very partial view.

It was through my pre-existing embeddedness in the world of recreational craft revival that I became aware of the Sewing for Soldiers and Hats for Israeli Soldiers projects. Whilst I was already immersed in the social context of the recreational craft revival the same could not be said for the specific practice of martial craft labour. It was here that other strategies became particularly important as I learned to be and became a crafter newly applying their labour to this end. Reading objects that were produced through the martial craft labour of others,

observing other makers and engaging in making and observing my own practices became central. Because martial craft labour, like the broader recreational craft revival, is predominantly a social space manifesting online (through websites, blogs and social media) the 'reading' of objects made by others and observation of the context of that production, its language of "social and cultural values" (Bunn, 2011: 26), were conducted online. This involved forms of the visual ethnography described by Gowlland (2015). For example, both the Sewing for Soldiers and Hats for Israeli Soldiers websites include images of objects that have already been made and shipped to soldiers (see Figure 2) and these images were important both to inform my own making and as a access point to objects made by others.

Martial Craft Labour: The intimate embodiments of making war

This part theorises observations elicited during an ethnography of making two objects:, a pillowslip (Figure 3) following the style of those made for the US-based Sewing for Soldiers project and a Ribbed Watchman's Hat (Figure 4) that has been made and distributed 30,000 times to soldiers in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) through the Hats for Israeli Soldiers project. Analysing the embodied registers of aesthetic expression and the social values that attend crafting for war reveal how, through such martial "craft labour" (Banks, 2010), intimate embodied circulations of the material and the emotional work to obscure violence, normalise war, abstract the military to an apolitical social cause and service state logics and imperatives. In developing this analysis I draw upon Pain and Staeheli's (2014) work on violence and intimacy. They characterise intimacy as intersecting sets of relations across spaces, interactions and practices. These relations unite the proximate and the personal and the distant or global. Because it traverses the "interpersonal, institutional and national" (2014: 345), intimacy is "a fundamental part" of "national, global and geopolitical processes and strategizing, international events, policies and territorial claims" (2014: 346). As such, paying attention to intimacy can illuminate the "indivisibility of war and peace, military and civilian and national and social security" that is martial politics (Howell, 2018: 117-18).

There are many organisations encouraging the hand-crafting and organising the distribution of pillows and pillowslips for US soldiers and they were at their most active during the years that the US had large numbers of troops deployed occupying Afghanistan and Iraq. I focused on the initiative publicised through the website Fine Stitchery.com and its Sewing Cyber Sisters - Sewing for Soldiers pages. The website, which was at its most active in 2009/10, invites readers to "Remember: We are the Land of the Free because of the BRAVE!!!!" (Power, n.d). It describes how the organiser has

…worked tirelessly for several years now to supply soldiers in war zones with small amenities and treats and personal necessities to make their lives a little better and to show how much we all appreciate the sacrifice they're making. She is distributing the pillowcases with pillows that are also donated - soldiers are not issued pillows and do not have access to this small creature comfort once they are in their field quarters. We hope that these bright colors and whimsical prints [see Figure 2] will add a touch of cheerfulness and act as a reminder of home to the soldiers (Power, n.d).

[FIGURE 2]

The website of the "grassroots project" Hats for Israeli Soldiers (Koppel, 2017), describes the knitting pattern the project distributes to makers as one the coordinator developed "when my knitting group wanted to make hats for IDF soldiers. Since then thousands of hats from around the world have been knit, mailed to me and distributed to soldiers" (Koppel, 2017). The knitting pattern (Koppel, 2017) states that the "soldier hat" will "help warm up an Israeli soldier – body and soul". The project's website contains transcriptions of thank you notes sent by hat-receiving soldiers and pictures of them smiling to the camera, often in groups, with thumbs up, sometimes adopting humorous poses and sometimes carrying weapons. One photo, the main static image on the sidebar of the website, shows a soldier supposedly firing a weapon whilst lying in the snow and wearing a hat that resembles that produced by the project's pattern. Otherwise soldiers are depicted looking fairly relaxed and engaging with the camera rather than concentrating on tasks that might be more typically imagined as 'soldierly'. Blog posts inform readers how much the hats are appreciated, update on latest shipments to soldiers and convey the most recent rounds of thank you notes and photos. The hat pattern itself is for a plain hat in 2x2 ribbing, which can be knit flat or in the round. The instructions state "you must use machine washable plain black worsted weight yarn – this is in order to comply with both the soldiers' requests and army regulations. Look for a yarn that is soft, warm and non-felting. Superwash wool is best, acrylic of a wool/acrylic mix is okay" (Koppel, 2017).

These two items were chosen as exemplars of the broader contemporary western martial craft labour phenomenon. Sewing for Soldiers appears to have had a primarily US-based audience, whilst Hats for Israeli Soldiers emphasises that it distributes hats received from "around the world". These two examples are contemporary iterations of the better known historical practice of women knitting for soldiers, particularly during the First World War (see Scates, 2001), itself part of the wider production of the soldier and war as a social cause which dates back further (which I discuss below).

Earlier, I posed a set of questions we might ask about the suicide vest in the Imperial War Museum if we looked at it from a making point of view. Below I reflect on a similar set of questions with regards to the pillowslip and cap. These include considerations about the colour and character of materials used, how the making process fits within the life of the maker and who it might call upon them to be, what relationships exist and are constituted between the maker and intended wearer and what, overall, it felt like and meant to make these items.

Embodied Registers of Aesthetic Expression and Intimate Imaginations of Soldiering and War

As objects imagined for a particular use (Bunn, 2011: 26) both the Sewing for Soldiers pillow slip and Watchmen's Cap draw upon imaginations and "tacit knowledges" (p.24) that are grounded in understandings of embodied martial lives and wartime practices. The two objects manifest strikingly different aesthetic registers – the 'commando' style hat versus the "whimsical" pillowslip. In both cases, warmth, comfort and ideas of home are highly significant.

Aesthetic judgements concerning construction, colour, and material were read during the making process. The process of making involved an active choosing of materials that reiterated and instated the aesthetic norms I observed in similar objects made by others (see Figure 2). I opted for a "whimsical" (Power n.d) green cow print poly-cotton for the pillow slip and machine washable, hard-wearing wool – Cascade 220 Superwash – for the hat. These respective whimsical and utilitarian aesthetics call to imagination quite different moments in martial life. The hat evokes the soldier on a mission, or at least somewhere outdoors and "active" as the name "Watchman's Cap" suggests. The pillowslip evokes the soldier at rest, albeit in "field quarters" where military issue pillows are not provided. In this part I trace the intimate embodied imaginations of, and entanglements with, soldiering, war and violence that are tacitly produced in and through the aesthetics of the Sewing for Soldiers pillowcase.

The whimsical aesthetic of the pillowcase is striking and resonates with aspects of the war photographer Tim Hetherington's *Sleeping Soldiers* portraits. This project, according to Magnum (n.d) captured "[t]ender and intimate portraits of sleeping soldiers on tour in Afghanistan". *Sleeping Soldiers* has been remarked upon for its (at times uncomfortable) intimacy (Sliwinsky, 2015: 239) and "sleeping beauty" aestheticism (Dasgupta, 2011: 1). As Hetherington himself noted, the images also stood out for being atypical depictions of soldiers: "You never see them like this","[t]hey always look so tough … but when they're asleep they look like little boys. They look the way their mothers probably remember them" (Batty 2013). What also stood out to me about the images were the blankets, pillows and bed sheets in which the soldiers slept. Sargeant Mace is shown with a fluffy faux-tiger striped blanket. Forward Observer Murphy is depicted resting on a polka dot pillow slip. In the images these blankets and pillows are juxtaposed with

the soldiers own bodies, at times visibly sculpted and crafted themselves (by – we are invited to assume – the physical intensity of martial lives), and with military-issue kit.

[FIGURE 3]

War, the military institution, and martial life as imagined in these images and by the "whimsical" pillowslips of the Sewing for Soldiers project is somewhat of a departure from more usual idealised visions of martial space, practice and embodiment. If more common martial imaginaries conjure identically dressed soldiers, synchronised, alert, camouflaged, these alternative visions offer us soldiers in the indulgence of sleep, nestled against whimsical pillows. They are soldiers who can display individuality through an animal print blanket or a cartoon-themed pillow slip. These are soldiers who also think of and yearn to be reminded of home*; "*We hope that these bright colors and whimsical prints will add a touch of cheerfulness and act as a reminder of home" (Power, n.d). This is imagined as a childish home, casting the maker of the pillowslip in a quasi-parental,and specifically motherly role. When I was choosing fabric designs for the pillowcase the ones that matched the aesthetics of those in Figure 2 were those marketed as prints 'for children'. They tend to be bright, bold and cartoonish in design. They are, as the Sewing for Soldiers project notes, "whimsical".

We could 'read' the martial craft labour production of whimsical objects for soldiers as some sort of rupture. Clearly, the pillowslip as an object is a departure from that typically associated with martial bodies, experiences and lives. We might understand it as an unsettling reminder of the youth of soldiers and an expression of a societal unease with sending young people to occupy, kill and die. Perhaps the whimsical pillowslip entails an imagination of a soldier leaving their childhood home and childhood bedroom to join the military, but encountering the supposedly neat demarcations separating the childish/boyish/manly/civilian and military as uneven, messy and unstable. Making and donating the pillow slip could be read as a recognition of the horror of war and an attempt to ease this through comfort, albeit for those bodies protecting the liberal state and order and not cast as a threat to it.

As I made the item however, I found myself pondering further layers of meaning. Firstly, the production of the pillowslip calls upon the civilian maker to contribute to a project of weaponising sleep in such a way that the whimsical can directly contribute to the effectiveness of war waging. As the motherly maker of the pillowslip I was invited to imagine, invest in and help to realise not just a pillow fit for its imagined use but a martial body fit for its use as well. Effective rest in the soothing and home-evoking sleep world of the whimsical pillow could directly enable alertness, physical power and martial function (all elements of idealised martial masculinity). In this sense the gendered embodied resonances that link my making body to that

of the imagined soldier are concerned not just with crafting the pillowslip but also crafting the soldier, bodily, for war. In these ways the maker's work, and care, to insure the functionality of the soldier through the intimate space of rest, traverse quasi-familial (particularly quasi-maternal) efforts of care, immediate and distant spaces, and violent state and military-institutional imperatives. These circulations rely upon the gendered imaginations of civilian women and nostalgic ideas about 'home'. Women are assumed to be 'natural' care-givers and producers of comfort, something that can contribute to martial imperatives.

[FIGURE 4]

Secondly, the aesthetic registers of the pillowslip can be read as a move to domesticate the soldier, erasing violence and making martial lives and conducts palatable to home audiences, reassuring those audiences of the ultimate peace and safety of the liberal state project. By 'domestication' I mean the ways in which soldiers are made to "fit" into "conventional ideological structures" "for consumption at home", ideological structures that make "war seem permissible and worthy" (Achter, 2010: 48). Crafting a pillowslip that resembles something one might make for a child invites the maker to imagine war as an innocent and playful endeavour. War imagined in this way might be not that much different from summer camp; a coming of age, and coming of citizenship adventure more about the 'becoming' of the child/soldier than the violence of war. Indeed, the Sewing for Soldiers pillowslips share an aesthetic with the craft genre of the 'summer camp pillowslip' that American craft-oriented mothers and grandmothers are invited to make for their children heading off to camp. On this reading the Sewing for Soldiers project and the items produced in its name are as much, or more about the preservation of a sanitised war and military that is acceptable and reassuring to home audiences. Whilst the pillowcase may seem to be an investment in the comfort of the imagined soldier, it can be as much about the comfort of the maker who can be assured that war isn't so bad after all and the worst thing the soldier might have to do is spend a few nights without a pillow.

Across these readings, imagined home fronts and war fronts are produced strongly gendered lines of citizenship. To return to Hetherington's sleeping soldiers, that "look the way their mothers probably remember them" (Batty 2013) – the pillowslips imagine the soldier as their mother might. The intimate circulation linking the soldier and the maker therefore constitutes the maker not just in a quasi-familial role but specifically in a quasi-maternal one. This reproduces the well-rehearsed tropes of the soldier as son of the broader nation of mothers and the pillowslip maker as therefore a mother figure to the ideal citizen – the soldier. Violence is beyond the legible concern of the nations' 'mothers'; instead in this role I was invited to focus on

nurture and support, emphasising care for the domestic, home-oriented concerns of the national family and not reflect on the violence that is an inevitable facet of martial life and the existence of the state. Whilst the maternal martial craft labourer is called upon to ensure that the soldier is physically ready for violence – to be involved in the project of weaponising the soldier body – the aesthetic of whimsy reassures the maker that any readiness they might enable is for something similar to a busy day at summer camp. Taken together all of this tells us something important about the circulations of intimacy and violence of martial politics, through which "war and peace, military and civilian and national and social security" are indivisible (Howell, 2018: 118). The comfort and security (in various forms) of western, liberal bodies constitutes the violence performed against those seen as a threat to this comfort, security and order. A deployed American soldier can enjoy the bodily comforts of home in ways that contribute to the violent destruction of other bodies and the erasure of homes in occupation. The maker whose labour is dedicated to the comfort of the soldier, can, in the bloodless imaginations of the whimsical object's use, be reassured of a peaceful liberal order that extends even to the imagined frontlines.

Social and Cultural values – Intimate labours of love, 'Knitworthiness' and the Soldier as 'Cause'

In this part I discuss the assumptions about social and cultural values that permeate martial craft labour, tracing this through the Hats for Israeli Soldiers Watchman's Cap. Through a discussion of the embodied processes of crafting items for others as a labour of love, and the notion of 'knitworthiness', I explore how social intimacy and deserving charitable 'good' are indivisible from state and military institutional imperatives and functions.

The process of making revealed to me how important it was to 'make' *for* someone. Like others who undertake recreational crafting, my production of objects is typically characterised by the notion of a 'labour of love'. I knit and sew for people who I care about, who I know intimately enough to be able to recognise what would look, fit, and feel right to them and for them. When I make I think about them, imagining, if I am making a garment, how the object will fit their bodies, thinking about how it will function in the lives they lead and how it will make them feel to receive and to use. To think in these ways requires that the maker know the recipient in some manner, connecting the sometimes more practical considerations of fit and function to the materialisation of the social ties that underpin a labour of love. A handmade object is a token, a reminder, of those bonds. There are imaginations of embodied lived lives, and resonances between them, brought together through modes of social intimacy that close geographical distance. These dynamics relate to something called 'knitworthiness' within the craft revival community which refers to the degree to which a recipient is worthy, or not, of receiving a

handmade item. This concept emphasises some reciprocation: the recipient should acknowledge the maker and in particular should understand the qualitative distinction between a handmade item and one bought from a shop, valuing the item and the act of giving. Making for someone is therefore in many ways the beginning of an exchange.

Charity crafting, making for a 'good cause' (either for a direct charitable recipient or making items to be sold to raise funds for charity), might seem to deviate from the above configurations. Yet, making for the homeless, premature babies, and animals in shelters (the typical direct recipients of charitable crafting) entails its own permutations of the logics of the 'labour of love' and knitworthiness; the recipients are deemed deserving. What are the political implications of claiming crafting for soldiers as a charitable cause alongside the likes of vulnerable babies and homeless animals and people? Rather than knitting for soldiers being an incursion into the otherwise civilian space of charity knitting, the very practice of charity knitting originated in a history of martial craft labour. Many American histories of charity knitting proudly trace its origin to knitting for soldiers in the revolutionary war (for example Gardner, 2006).Throughout the history of charity knitting, institutions of varying formality have invited women to be the providers of military comfort items and the labour for their production.[ii] These invitations call upon particular ideas and relations of femininity, family and intimacy as noted earlier. Above I described how the recreational craft revival entails particular forms of nostalgia for a time when crafting was necessity rather than recreation. Martial craft labour offers a repertoire for living that nostalgic fantasy. Moreover, whilst it is permeated by charitable claims to altruism, this necessity is grounded in ideas of dutiful civic reciprocity; civilian women are called upon to contribute directly to security (of the nation, state and therefore 'home') through assumed 'natural' role as givers of care and comfort. This occurred more explicitly historically (such as calls to support the war effort) but also tacitly underpins military charity crafting today. As the Sewing Sisters website reminds crafters "Remember: We are the Land of the Free because of the BRAVE!!!!".

The Hats for Israeli Soldiers project is described by its founder as a "grassroots project", evoking a spontaneous movement by 'the people'. The positioning of soldiers as a 'cause', at its basic level entails a set of assumptions about social good (in this case *the Israeli military is a good thing*), and the erasure of the many disquieting and unpalatable aspects of soldiering, war and the liberal state – namely its many and extreme violences (see Tidy, 2015 and Millar 2016). In the US context Millar (2016: 16) notes the "burgeoning group of 'morale' NGOs dedicated to 'supporting the troops' through the provision of material items". In the UK case Tidy observes how the location of the military within charity renders soldiers and the military "as a notionally apolitical social "cause"" (Tidy, 2015: 221), "a universal and non-contentious space of

conscience which transcends politics, populated by "heroes", service, bravery, and national virtue" (227).

In the case of the IDF Watchman's Cap the focus on soldiers and their *comfort* as a cause erases their broader raison d'être and the violence and occupation of the Israeli military context. One blog entry on the project's website describes how:

The young men [IDF soldiers] in the photo below work in a very unpleasant job, combing the field for bodies and body parts after something has happened.

Here the focus is on the "young men" and the implications for their comfort of undertaking a job that is "unpleasant". The "something" that has happened to cause people to be so destroyed that they are reduced to parts is unelaborated but apparently inconsequential other than as something that produces an unpleasant mess that the soldiers must tidy away. The state is absolved from violence as those who are a deemed a threat to its security (through virtue of their existence) seem to be vanquished by a force unseen. In this sense, violence is an inconvenience to soldierly comfort, originates away from the soldier themselves and the state they embody in an idealised form (they are responsive to it rather than its creating it) and is a problem that can be addressed with a warm hat.

The structure of charity crafting – making something for a member of a defined 'worthy' group rather than known individual recipient – initially felt confusing and uncomfortable because I could not reflect on my connections to an individual in the way that I was accustomed to during the making process. The absence of a known, socially proximate recipient did not foreclose imaginations of bodies and lived lives and, crucially, their social value however. The process of making revealed how knitting and sewing for an unknown soldier entailed a set of embodied social relationships, values and exchanges.

Rather than being anonymous and 'away', 'over there', the soldiers who receive are strongly 'present' as I made the hat. The faces of smiling IDF soldiers wearing hats identical to the one I was knitting grinned up at me from the printed hat pattern. They held my gaze. They looked very young and one of them had a gun. There are more smiling soldiers on the Hats for Israeli Soldiers (2017) website. They typically show small groups of mostly male but sometimes female soldiers, all of whom are very young. Mostly they smile at the camera. Sometimes they give a thumbs up, pull shapes, or huddle together comically pretending to be cold. Some of the images are 'selfies'. They show soldiers both indoors in military buildings or outside, often posing near tanks. The images are accompanied by messages, sometimes directly from the receiving soldiers themselves:

Hi, my name is Meir C. I am in training now in the Tzanchanim brigade and I got the hat that you made in a package for Lone Soldiers [without immediate family in Israel]. I just wanted to thank you for the personal touch that the hat adds. It really means a lot to me. Thanks!

These messages from (to some extent) anonymised recipients to a similarly anonymous plurality of makers fulfil a comparable social role to the thank you messages for handmade gifts that I am accustomed to receiving from my friends and family. On a basic level the photos and messages demonstrate knitworthiness in the sense that soldiers are (supposedly) grateful for the items they receive.[iii] These soldiers have demonstrated that they are deserving; they thank those who have sent them, affirm that they are necessary to the smooth function of military life and show them being utilised in the way the maker has been invited to imagine. They confirm that the exchange of comfort for security is being successfully achieved. However, the exchange goes further than this. The social intimacy that results from this exchange equates makers with family members of the soldiers who receive. In the case of the IDF's "lone soldiers" this is accomplished rather literally, as the scheme is envisaged to provide support for the soldier that their family are not present to provide, through a form of familial surrogacy.

The act of making, giving and receiving is therefore embedded in the production of quasi-familial social relations. It places the maker in the position of a surrogate family member; a surrogate *military* family member and specifically (as with the Sewing for Soldiers project) a maternal figure. Being the mother of a soldier carries attendant social value and privileges; it demonstrates an ultimate practice of citizenship and contribution to the state project of security. It is a gendered affirmative relationship with the military that carries authority (Belkin 2012: 3). The choreography of the broader transaction of making and giving invites the maker to imagine that any of the nameless faces might belong to 'their soldier'. The maker is called upon and offered the social privilege of encountering these soldiers – in their photos and through their notes – as a family might encounter them when they are home on leave; smiling, sociable and 'at ease', albeit undeniably coded as military and militarised bodies with attendant social value. Dinnen's (2016) analysis of the genre of "funny military music videos" is enlightening in this instance. The videos, Dinnen observes, demonstrate that the "cultural rhythm of the base is not separate from the cultural rhythm of "home"", "the videos themselves stage the domestic spaces of the camp (kitchens, showers), inviting a familiar (and perhaps familial) viewing of base space" (p.901).

Images of soldiers stand in for the unknowable end recipient, allowing the maker to imagine a *someone* to make for, and their lives, including – in the case of soldiers – their place within the broader imaginaries of war and operation of state security. What an image or a short message cannot provide can be filled in with common sense understandings of a soldiers' life and its

place within the nation and beyond. As suggested by the message quoted above, the notes and images from soldiers evoke a quasi-familial relationship between soldiers and makers that stand in for the social intimacies that run through practices of making for a known recipient. In the case of the Watchman's Cap this is tied together through a rather practical aesthetic aspect: all the hats look fairly identical – especially at the distance they are typically photographed. This invites the maker to wonder *Is that my hat…?* Understood in these ways, the process of making is embedded in social exchange and its attendant values, enacting an embodied dialogue of making and use/consumption.

Ethnographies of Making: A method for translating embodiment

It perhaps should not have been an unsettling surprise given it is embedded in the practice of *recreational* civilian crafting that martial craft labour is fun. The whimsical absurdity of the pillowslip, the joy of making something bold and colourful, the pleasingly peaceful rhythm of knitting a ribbed hat, and the fundamental pleasure of *making something* were all aspects I vividly experienced as fun. This is a reminder that martial craft labour is one of the many ways in which war is made into a form of fun that can be experienced and participated in by particular bodies – bodies that are not deemed a threat to the liberal order and living under occupation or bombardment or threat of drone strike. War, for some, can be recreation experienced as appealingly fun or even peaceful (for a discussion of fun in relation to war see Welland, 2018). This relationship with war contributes to its sense of normalcy and validity making it permissible. But more than this, embodied experiences of fun and peacefulness are the terms on which some are able participate and invest in the violence of the liberal state.

My experiences of the fun aspects of making for war, and more broadly what it felt like to undertake crafting for war, were likely very similar to any other recreational crafter responding to calls for martial craft labour, but there was one step that I did not share with them. Whilst many other makers will have posted their hats and pillowcases off to be distributed to soldiers, I did not. Doing so seemed incompatible with the political position I take in my work and in my life more broadly. During and after the making process I attempted to keep this decision uncomfortable and framed as a question: *should I send these items?* Ultimately however, this question could only ever function as a sort of thought experiment. This is because when it came down to it I do not consider soldiers 'knitworthy'. I was rejecting moves towards an intimate entanglement with these other bodies; I was not a fully willing participant in the intimate exchanges and power relations of martial craft labour. Martial craft labour relies on the maker accepting the presumption of knitworthiness.[iv]

I failed to spot this on these terms for myself. Someone else pointed out to me that my pretence of *"should I?"* masked an assumption that I could not myself articulate - that my supposed recipients were not deserving. This is significant for our understanding of how ethnographies of making might work as a method for researching embodiment. Going back to Baker's point that writing about embodiment is an act of translation (2016) this inability to articulate my sense of soldiers' unworthiness for handmade goods was the moment at which I ceased to translate. The simultaneous familiarity and strangeness of the act of crafting for war enabled a mediation between the embodied, the felt and the lived and the written page. My fluency with contemporary recreational craft was a 'language' that could be spoken in, and used to ask questions about, the less familiar space of martial craft labour. These were then mediated and relayed back in the form of academic prose. Put another way, the simultaneous familiarity and strangeness (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2016:117) was what allowed that which was 'felt' to be translated into that which could be written. This ruptured when my negotiation of the (to me) 'strange' space of crafting for war leaked into and made calls upon the familiar experiences of intimacy that underpin my own recreational crafting; the negotiation ceased to be sufficiently strange' to be translatable. As such, an important aspect that productively animates this particular method is the simultaneity of the familiar and the strange (Enloe, 2004; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2016).

The method proposed in this article is not suggested as a panacea for the challenges of researching embodiment, and particularly doing so within a wider research agenda on war, security and IR that pays due attention to the everyday and to people within the broadest and largest scale geopolitical processes. Rather, the intention is that ethnographies of making can contribute to an emerging set of existing cross-disciplinary strategies (Bulmer and Jackson, 2016; Dyvik, 2016; McSorely, 2016) for writing about embodiment, offering a means by which the neglect of makers and making bodies in accounts of war, security and the international can be addressed.

Conclusion

This article makes the case for looking at war from a making point of view. This, it has been argued, allows for the overlooking of makers and making in our accounts of war, security and the international to be addressed, revealing important things about how these international processes are lived and produced at the level of the body. To explore the possibilities of looking at war from a making point of view I focused on the particular phenomena of martial craft labour – recreational civilian making of 'stuff' for soldiers. In order to understand the political significance of this social site I developed an ethnographic method that allows for the reading of

objects as embodied texts, the observation of others in processes of making, and the undertaking of making by the researcher. Analysing embodied registers of aesthetic expression and the social values that attend crafting for war reveals how such making is a space through which intimate embodied, emotional circulations undertake work for state and military-institutional logics and objectives, obscuring violence, normalising war and producing the military as a social cause. Beyond the immediate empirical focus of this article there is a much wider politics of violence, embodiment and material production that warrant a concerted research agenda. Such an agenda can extend our account of people, embodiments and the everyday of war, security and the international, revealing how war is made at the level of the body.

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[i] The recreational revival of woodwork has emerged as a somewhat comparable 'men's' craft pursuit that is grounded in the image of the craftsman as heroically masculine (see Hughes, 2011: 440).

[ii] The role of martial craft labour does not end there with goods also becoming part of the political economic exchanges that are central to counter-insurgency and occupation. One news article quoted the following: "One American nurse in Afghanistan thanked Dykstra for the children's socks, sweaters, and caps she has been sending. 'It really helps the camaraderie,' the nurse wrote. 'If we give them warm clothing, their uncle is not so likely to shoot us.'" (Gardner, 2006).

[iii] An exploration of reception is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is far from clear how soldiers feel about receiving hand knitted or hand sewn items. As for anyone receiving an item of dubious aesthetics from a well meaning relative (or in this case quasi-relative) feelings are likely to be mixed.

[iv] We cannot know how often this presumption is accepted by makers and how often, as in my case, items remain unsent.