Sounds of War: 'Pit'

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Pit was the very first song. I wrote it in the winter of 2004 after I listened to an audio recording of*The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire* by the Chechen surgeon Khassan Baiev (et al. 2003). There was one story which ran through my spine and froze my body into listening carefully: Baiev was kept in a pit after being accused of helping a Russian doctor escape. Amazed by the story, I wrote *Pit* in one go, with a very clear melody pumping through me. Baiev was a plastic surgeon, who got his education in a medical school in Siberia. But during the war he had to perform all types of procedures in the hardest of conditions. As a doctor, Baiev could use his hands to save lives, and his hands embodied his compassion. But Baiev was also saved several times himself, often almost as if by a miracle. To me it seemed like compassion was returning to him in the form of strangers who saved his life. This is what the song is about. We have done different versions of this song, and Baiev himself has listened to at least one version commenting “sounds great” via Twitter. This book includes the acoustic version, in which I play one of the guitars.

“Pit”

Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods

Seek the salvation Look, not to the light

But, in to the eyes of the stranger To the friend

You don’t know Why he’s here But he is

And he takes And he holds And he saves

Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods
Alone in the pit, in the dark, in the woods

When Baiev was young he spent summers in Makazhoi. There his father told him and his brother Hussein stories about their ancestors and clan, or *teip* which consisted of some 100 families, about the deportations and stories of blood feud. The memories of those stories and the beauty of the mountains would sustain him later during the darkest moments of his life. “I still see those two black eagles soaring in the sky, and a shiver runs down my spine” he says (Baiev et al. 2003: 41–2).

Vulnerable Compassion

All too often compassion is taken for granted, and that leads to lack of vision in terms of how compassion is emoted in the body, and how compassion can manifest. Goetz et al. (2010) argue that, as an emotion, compassion can be grouped with love, tenderness and caring, but due to its social nature it is a separate emotion. The authors emphasise the separation of compassion from the emotions of fear and sorrow; yet, it does not mean that compassion and sorrow could not alternate or mix in the emotional experience. Compassion is often used interchangeably with empathy, and it is hard to say where compassion ends and empathy begins, or vice versa. For Goetz et al. (2010), empathy signifies a capacity to recognise the other’s emotions while sympathy signifies feeling with somebody else. Brené Brown (2012) sees sympathy as feeling *for* and empathy as feeling *with*. In this case, sympathy is a shame trigger because it signals that the one feeling sympathy is somehow better than the other. In fact, according to Brown (2012), shame resilience is all about empathy. Sympathy, instead, resembles pity. Emma Hutchison (2014) aptly describes pity as a top-down approach to aid in her study on images from the tsunami that hit Asia in 2004 – pity is based on inequality and is thus problematic.

Compassion is often conceptualised as recognition of the other’s suffering and the wish to alleviate it – an emotion with an action tendency (Goetz et al. 2010; Ure and Frost 2014). But I argue that there can be compassionate action without conscious feeling of compassion, and compassion without a specific action tendency. Moreover, since emotions are a crucial part of perceiving the self, compassion plays a part in the construction of the self as the individual moves and relates to others in the world. This means that instead of looking at compassion only as directed outside (as empathy or the need to alleviate others’ suffering), compassion is integral to the constant becoming of the self.

Even if action tendency is a rather popular way to conceptualise compassion, Brown’s (2012) way of separating empathy from compassion is more convincing: whereas empathy is a skill set, compassion signifies a deep spiritual belief about how to live life. For Brown, compassion is a relationship between equals, not a relationship between the wounded and the healed. As such, compassion is more like a *state of life*, but still, like other emotions it is triggered by internal and external stimuli, experienced in the bodymind with varying intensity. Compassion as state of life can be explained through the parable of *Bodhisattva Never Disparaging*, from *The Lotus Sutra*, in which the Bodhisattva greets everyone humbly and is slandered because of his con- viction to treat everyone as an equal (266–268). Bowing to everyone, his compassionate movement in the world represents this deep spiritual belief about how to live life. The *Bodhisattva* demonstrates respect towards others and bows even to those who beat him. Bowing is then his visibly manifest action tendency of compassion. He eventually turns the slanderers into supporters. In the parable there is no separation between the victim (with no agency) and the compassionate party (with agency) – or the healed and the wounded – but there are people who choose to behave in a certain way towards others. The Bodhisattva does not discriminate between those who do and do not deserve his compassion. Pity is not part of the Bodhisattva’s model because when pity is evoked a sense of superiority manifests. The Bodhisattva does not select those worthy of his compassion, nor does he seek revenge upon the wrongdoers.

The Bodhisattva way of compassion is related to spirituality. What I mean by spirituality is a strong belief in the connection between lives and a sensing of the world in terms of deeper structures than political or economic. Spirituality can be about faith in laws (of life, of God, of tradition) but encompasses an open-ness, a sensitivity, a vulnerability. The Bodhisattva was not praised for his behaviour. He was not rewarded and thanked. By bowing to everyone without exception, he pushed the boundaries of appropriate conduct and was persecuted. The point is not in imagining a person whose compassion is of such magnitude he can tolerate all kinds of abuse, but to theorise a view of compassion which departs from spirituality, a sense of connection to life around us.

Compassion is tied together with vulnerability. Vulnerability is the prerequisite for social relationships. Vulnerability enables both hurt and compassion. As Judith Butler (2004) writes, the body implies mortality, vulnerability and agency, and it has a private and public dimension. The body is exposed to gazes, touch and violence; and the body is at risk of being the instrument of all this. The vulnerable body is of the essence to studies on violence and war experience. Bodies which are violated in so many ways in war are the vulnerable bodies. In the media, these are often female bodies and children's bodies; they are dead bodies or mutilated bodies. At the least, they are visibly suffering bodies: traumatised, sad, scared, tired, hungry and so forth. The more we see the vulnerability of the body, the more real war becomes to us and – as it is assumed in the logic of humanitarian reason – the more we feel for the distant others.

But I propose a complementary perspective: vulnerability as openness to the world. A person who is frail yet not weak – one who possesses a sense of agency while being acutely aware of life's fragility. Adopting from Brown (2012), being vulnerable means being willing to be seen by others. For Brown (2012), vulnerability is the starting point of many positive emotions, and she further argues that without vulnerability there is no empathy. I would continue that compassion is the willingness to be seen by others and *to see others as well*. Vulnerability takes courage because it entails a risk: there is something, often much, to lose. In war or in a repressive or violent environment/relation- ship, the risk and potential harm is even greater. Thus, the vulnerable body is twofold. One side is the victim, exposed and hurt. The other side is the same vulnerable body, the same precarious life, but active, not passive, in the war and (post-)war contexts. Still exposed, still hurt, but letting people come close. In Later, I will discuss how Khassan Baiev (et al. 2003) redefined his openness and what it means for him to be an honourable Chechen man by writing about his personal life and emotions, and sharing his intimate secrets.

Performative Compassion

Often, compassion is seen as a potential model of moral behaviour – a political virtue. If compassion is trainable, as Martha Nussbaum (2003) sees it, it is not merely a corporeal sensation. Compassion is also a moral choice and not simply a natural reaction to suffering (Von Dietze and Orb 2000). But according to Nussbaum, some are sceptical of compassion's virtues because they see it as too ambiguous, too unequal, too narrow. Compassion can lead to victimisation and inequality just like it can be a route to solidarity. Julia Welland (2015) is likewise critical of compassion when discussing soldiering. She writes that compassion is an emotion which can obscure and divert attention, separate and divide. She problematises soldiers' experiences of compassion in relation to the acts of violence they commit and celebrate. Compassion seems to comfort the soldiers, and it becomes a way for them to feel good about themselves. Welland argues that announcement of comp- assion can conceal the ongoing violence and obscenity of war. The first problem here is a lack of consideration for the soldiers' possible traumas (see Van der Kolk 2014), and the second is a reading of compassion that is merely discursive and performative.

Welland (2015) calls compassion seductive and performative, as it works as an announcement of one's own virtue. Compassion can be viewed as a political/performative act, but such a view comes from the idea of emotions as disembodied – emotions as the mind's creations and property. We are no longer interested in how the person emotes and feels, but only with the construction of stories. The problem here is the linear causality drawn between emotion and action tendencies. A self-serving discourse on compassion is not the same as the *emotion* of compassion (the felt body state). It is not necessarily compassion at all which drives a soldier to find comfort in *thinking* about compassion as part of the self – one has now entered the world of ideas.

The third problem is that the divisions Welland refers to do not come from compassion as such but compassion entangled with other emotions, like anger or resentment, lack of compassion, pity or shame. Feelings of shame can be the trigger for performing compassion. Emotions can be, and are, performative, but they are more than that, because the bodymind is more than the conscious part of it: it entails automatic and non-conscious processes alike. This is why I do not analyse how people proclaim themselves as compassionate in their actions, but rather, I try to follow the stories and images of bodies in movement, which I believe take the researcher more toward the difficult terrain of emoting than the stories of and for the self.

Lauren Berlant (2004: 1) writes, "There is nothing clear about compassion except that it implies a social relation

between spectators and sufferers, with the emphasis on the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its subsequent relation to material practice." I have a different conceptualisation of compassion, one not based on a division between spectator and sufferer. I also challenge any linear relationship of compassion to material practice. The more we turn away from a narrow definition of compassion, the more deeply we need to look for the embodied, material and spiritual manifestations of it. Rather than taking compassion as a social and aesthetic technology of belonging (Berlant 2004), I am interested in it as an emotion related to a deep spiritual belief about how to live life which arises in the body. This approach sees compassion as the cure rather than the disease because it is based on the embodied view of compassion, the kinaesthetic exchange between bodies. It also allows us to incorporate many different acts and sensations of compassion, for example, the art of asking. Asking for help is at once courageous, vulnerable and compassionate because it allows the other person to be generous, to help and to feel compassion as well.

Body Creates the Lived Political

The body does not move *into* space and time, it *creates* space and time: there is no space and time before movement (Manning 2007: xiii, emphasis in the original).

In early attachment between a parent and a child, touch is important. A child seeks physical contact and cuddling, and the caretaker provides it spon- taneously. As the author and activist Eve Ensler (2013: 1) writes, "A mother's body against a child's body makes a place. It says you are here. Without this body against your body there is no place." Without a body against a body, there is no place. It is between bodies where politics takes place, too.

The lived political is the lived body, something we experience in daily life rather than politics as out there within institutions or processes outside our embodied reality. What is so political about the body is how, like Manning eloquently writes, bodies create space and time by moving in it. The political emerges as the body nudges, rushes, falls or gets up. The space changes when a body enters it, or when the body leaves. The body's presence is always temporary, there can be only visits. The everyday is a stage too, and war is a stage on which the victim's body is violated, often resulting in trauma. Trauma changes the body – trauma is physiological as much as it is psychological. Bessel Van der Kolk (2014) writes that the entire body responds to trauma, thus the act of telling one's story is usually not enough to help the individual suffering from trauma. The hyper-vigilant body needs to learn that the danger has passed. Trauma changes how mind and body manage perceptions, not only how we think and what we think about but also "our very capacity to think" (Van der Kolk 2014: Chapter two). When a person manages to escape the danger, she regains her senses. But when one is unable to escape, the brain continues producing stress chemicals, thus the body keeps sending signals of danger even when danger has passed. For the victim's sense of agency, the experience of having escaped is important for the healing process. In Chapter five, I discuss how children express agency as survivors making sense of a traumatic event. These children were trapped for several days, witnessed the deaths of friends and family members, but found their way out alive.

Attending to and acknowledging the body in all its visceral dimensions – the experiential knowledge – is essential for being in charge of one's life and for healing (Van der Kolk 2014). Peter A. Levine and Ann Frederick (1997) write that trauma has long been considered a psychological and medical disorder of the mind that ignores the two-way communication between body and mind recently discovered by neuroscience. The vulnerable body in war is often traumatised and thus disconnected. As Van der Kolk (2014) argues, trauma makes intimate relationships difficult, limits the imagination, brings numbness, traps and immobilises the person in fear, and often involves shame of what one did or did not do. But vulnerability's other side is that it entails the possibility of connection. The focus of this research is more on the healing and coping emotional-corporeal being, than in the causes and effects of trauma. The interest is in the aesthetics of vulnerability which bring forth embodied human connections. This necessitates directing the gaze from the suffering body to the possibilities of agency and positive emotions in war.

According to Damasio (2010), social emotions, as they appear to be dependent on education and the environment, seem like only a cognitive layer on the brain's surface. But compassion is more about the body than we might think. For one, the brain can simulate within its somatosensory regions certain body states as if they were occurring. Thus, even before an emotional change of body state actually occurs, the brain can produce a simulation of it. This

simulation does not concern the body of oneself only, but the bodies of others too. For Damasio, in this capacity to simulate lies the neurological basis of empathy. In the 1990's empathy became associated with the so called mirror neurons, which were revealed by studying the neural activity in the brains of macaque monkeys. The mirror neurons, involved in motor control, were activated also when observing another monkey execute an action (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004; Saarela et al. 2007; Kalat 2008). It is likely that mirror neurons exist also in the human brain; however, there is no conclusive proof of that to date. Yet, there is research to prove the existence of a neural basis of empathy, in other words, an overlap of neural activation between the self and the other (von Scheve and Salmela 2014).

Damasio explains that neurons in areas engaged with emotions activate regions which map body states and make the body move. Damasio (2010: 104) continues,

As we witness an action in another, our body-sensing brain adopts the body state we would assume were we ourselves moving, and it does so, in all probability, not by passive sensory patterns but by a preactivation of motor structures – ready for action but not allowed to act yet – and in some cases by actual motor activation.

For Damasio, the capacity to simulate one's own body state is the reason why it is possible to simulate the other's. If pity is the feeling of emotion in which the suffering party is separate from the one feeling pity (see Hutchison 2014), then compassion is something that connects, and that connection is in the flesh and more precisely, "the actions with which we can portray the movements of others" (Damasio 2010: 257–8). Hayes and Tipper (2012) have shown in clinical studies how the fluency of motor actions evokes positive emotions. They argue that rather than emotions evoking motor responses, motor action (also observing motor action) evokes emotions. Yet the process of simulating the body state of the other is not just a mechanical activation of motor representations in the brain, it conveys meanings, that is, an understanding through the body (see Gaensbauer 2011).

Colombetti (2014), adopting the concept from the philosophy of Husserl, suggests that empathy is about feeling the other's lived body (*Leib*) – an experiential access to the other's subjectivity rather than merely seeing the other as a physical thing or a material object (*Körper)*. Thompson (2007) explains that experience cannot be disclosed in its original first-person subjectivity from the second-person perspective of empathy. That is, the feeling is not primordially and bodily there, although the feeling can be remembered and imagined. To be more precise, in empathy we do not experience the other's body directly as our own body nor do we merely observe the other body. Even bodies through the screen, or in pictures and stories, excite our bodies (von Scheve and Salmela 2014). A person experiences kinaesthetic sensations while observing the activation of another body. This is not fusion but accompaniment (D'Aloia 2012), because I do not feel the other's sensations as my own (Colombetti 2014). I do feel them, but not as my subjectivity – my lived body – but as the other person's subjectivity.

Even though I am not researching the neural correlates of compassion, the neuroscientific findings prove the need to conceptualise compassion as a corporeal connection between individuals as much as a conscious feeling of an emotion. It is the bodymind at work, and it does not discriminate between bodily and mental experiences either conscious or non-conscious. Compassion is not co-passion, but involves identifying suffering as suffering, acknowledging its existence in another being and being a witness to it. By witnessing and validating, one makes the other's experience real. Next, I analyse three different war experiences related to compassion. First, a perspective on compassion which includes non-human embodiment; second, compassion through active engagement with emotions; third, compassion embodied in self-sacrifice. These experiences attest to the complexity of how compassion affects, and potentially hurts, bodies.

Dr. Baiev and the Cow Zoyka

Jane Goodall, the famous British anthropologist, ethnologist and primatologist who spent her career studying chimpanzees in Tanzania, says that if the emotions of pity and guilt are the reasons why we help someone, we are doing it for our own sake, to alleviate our own suffering. Goodall addresses empathy, which she experienced towards the chimpanzees she studied, and in fact, empathy enabled her to collect all that information about them. She also observed the social bonds between the chimpanzees and gathered evidence of love, altruism and empathy among

the animals (Goodall and Berman 2000).

Related to stilling and categorisation which I discussed in Chapter one, Goodall writes, “Once we have labelled the things around us we do not bother to look at them carefully. Words are part of our rational selves, and to abandon them for a while is to give freer rein to our intuitive selves” (Goodall and Berman 2000: 79). Goodall was in the forest, enchanted by the rich sounds of the environment, and by all that she perceived around her. She experienced awareness, cessation of the voice within, a return to something forgotten and wonderful. For Goodall, animals and nature have a subject body and for a moment she refuses to use language to capture it.

War touches non-humans too, and, according to enactivism, life is always minded or mindful, and mind always shares the organisational properties of life. This means that there is life-mind continuity in living beings. The richer the living form, the richer the life (Colombetti 2012). To bridge the gap between life forms with a highly developed mind and other life forms is also to bridge the gap between mind and body. Enactivism is a post-humanist mindset but also a non-fragmented view of the organism. Animals are present in war too, yet we do not hear so much about them. Penttinen (2013) has challenged the idea of animals as objects, instead of subjects, in war, and argues that non-humans also participate in making the world known. She also questions the notion of knowing associated only with a thinking mind. I became interested in non-human war experience, although from a human point of view, after reading Baiev’s encounter with the cow Zoyka (Baiev et al. 2003).

A woman came to Baiev’s hospital begging for help. It was Malika Umazhova, whom Baiev recognised as a woman who was known for organising protests and talking back to the Russians. Umazhova (they called her by the last name) said a member of her family had been wounded. Umazhova said: “She’s like a daughter to me,” but she was embarrassed to say the family member was a cow. Baiev insisted he had no time to operate on animals, he had so many patients already. Umazhova begged for help. Cows were important for a Chechen family, so he finally agreed to go to their house. Nearly all houses on the way were damaged or ruined.

Zoyka, the cow, lay on her side and Umazhova began stroking the cow’s head to comfort her. Baiev wanted to tie the animal’s legs for the operation, but Umazhova says it is not necessary because Zoyka understands everything, and then says to the cow, “You understand, Doctor is here to make you better.” Baiev anaesthetises the area of the wound and pulls a sharp piece of metal from the cow’s neck. He was amazed that the entire operation, one and a half hours, the cow remained calm. The woman had five children, and they would be able to get their milk. Baiev felt at peace for a moment.

It is compassionate to go and save someone’s cow. Baiev had to consider the fact that the time given to the cow would be time away from human patients, but he saves the animal because it is important to the family. I believe that at least partly the reason why he includes this story in his book is that the operation is more significant than simply saving an animal for the sake of the family. Zoyka has a name and Baiev remembers it. He also remembers in detail what Zoyka looked like and what kind of decoration the cow had on her head. Baiev paid attention, took the time to observe, and acknowledged the cow as a subject. The relationship between Umazhova and her cow is intimate, and Baiev recognises the cow’s agency. Zoyka provides the milk, she participates in the everyday life of war, and she understands and is cared for. Her body is cared for as she cares for the family. Umazhova talks to Zoyka, and communicates with her through touch, thinking of the cow as her own daughter. The cow, cared for and talked to in this way, allows Baiev to tend to her wound. As Coole and Frost argue (2010: 20), political science cannot ignore bodies and their materiality, thus, “emphasis on corporeality further dislocates agency as the property of a discrete, self-knowing subject […].” The body is an open system in constant communication with its environment. The interaction between Baiev, Umazhova, her children watch- ing the operation under a tree, and the cow Zoyka is a gathering of lived lives in a space of war and peace. Zoyka is real and she embodies compassionate agency as she connects all these lives together. To know war, we need to know about animals too.

Baiev writes about cows at least twenty times in his book. Animals, the mountains, the natural habitat, the whispers of the dark woods are part of the material reality, but also spirituality, which runs through Baiev’s writing. It is the understanding of the natural world inherited from the elders. An understanding that the human world and the visible world are not all that is there. Nor is land an object to be only acted upon, moulded and controlled. Such spirituality

connects the human being to its environment in a profound way. As war destroys animals and plants, as it burns trees to their deaths and leaves behind abandoned dogs, it attempts to suffocate spirituality, the nurturing force of a happy life. Animals are victims of war too and they are important parts of peoples' lives. Regamey (2014) writes about material violence in the second Chechen war after reading testimonials from human rights reports where inhabitants of Argun said their cows and sheep were living targets for Russian soldiers who shot them for sport. Regamey (2014: 200) argues that attacks against valuables and objects are not only of great importance to civilians' war experiences but "central to the very rationale of violence." Thus, the killing of livestock and looting is not just a by-product of war but has its own rationale.

On the Side of the Wounded

Baiev's book is full of despair, and it describes in detail the horrors of war – literally through the flesh: the suffering of the body and the mind of Baiev himself and all his patients, and those who experienced and still experience war in Chechnya. Yet buried underneath the stories of suffering were stories of compassion and survival. Baiev was asked, for example, by the Russian military hospital to do reconstructive surgery, a proposition to which he agreed. At the hospital, he discussed the number of dead and wounded on both sides with a Russian General. He writes that it felt normal to talk to him, yet strange at the same time because they were supposed to be enemies. "We were both on the side of the wounded," he continues. They even made an agreement with the Russian military hospital to treat each other's wounded. In Baiev's experience, people understood that everyone was a victim of war, and some Chechen families even took war prisoners in as guests, showing hospitality.

Baiev saved and healed ordinary Chechens, Chechen fighters and Russian soldiers alike, and he suffered the consequences. He became the enemy of both Chechen fighters and Russian forces which led to his eventual escape to the United States. He himself was also saved several times. As if by miracle, someone always came and helped spare his life at the very last moment. One time he was stopped and taken into a house by three Russian contract soldiers at a checkpoint on his way to Grozny. Baiev knew that people did not often come out alive from such houses, and if they did, it would be to go to filtration camps to be tortured. The room he was taken to had bullet holes on the walls, blood stains and hair. The men wanted to cover Baiev's eyes and shoot him. But suddenly a Russian major came in shouting angrily. Baiev cried out that he was a doctor treating the wounded. The major said that his wife was a surgeon so out of respect for the profession, Baiev could go, but next time he would be executed. Baiev describes how he felt euphoric and immortal after he again escaped death. Overcoming his fear of death enabled him to continue working and risking his life when so many other doctors, understandably, left Chechnya.

When Baiev worked as one of only a few doctors during the second war in Chechnya, he examined a woman with a leg wound which went untreated because she and her husband could not leave their cellar for a month. Suddenly the woman said to Baiev: "I don't know where my daughter is." She said there were four or five drunk men. "They raped her in front of us," she continued. She talked unemotionally about the rape, as if it was someone else's daughter who was raped. The woman stayed in the hospital bed impassively for a month, and from time to time said, "General Shamanov told his men, do what you like."

Witnessing stories such as this, Baiev became angry at the Russian mercenaries (Kontraktniki), especially the so called Shamanov division. According to Baiev, half of General Shamanov's troops were convicts released from prison to fight in Chechnya. For weeks Baiev could not get the family's experiences out of his mind, and he felt rage when a Russian Kontraktniki was brought to his hospital. He had terrorised people and extracted bribes at a checkpoint. The mercenary had been attacked by Chechen fighters and was hit under his armpit. The man screamed that he did not want to be treated by a bandit. Baiev was tempted to let the man die, thinking, "The world would be a better place without this monster. He would not rape any more women or children." But then he remembered the Hippocratic oath he had taken. "If I started deciding who would live and who would die, where would it end?"

The oath became manifest when Baiev chose to treat all patients, and he did it, in the order of urgency. Baiev's choice to treat all patients regardless of his (conscious) feelings towards them resonates with the compassion of the *Bodhisattva Never Disparaging*, and it represents a political virtue. It is not selective compassion, or compassion which could turn into revenge. It is not discursive compassion: Baiev does not elevate himself as an exceptionally

capable and compassionate person. He contemplates right and wrong, resonating with Nussbaum's (2003) vision of educated compassion. In fact, his body does the compassionate work. His conscious emotions are at times explicitly uncompassionate, yet he adheres to and embodies a theistic (Allah) and nontheistic gratitude (his oath). Even when angry and resentful, he treats the mercenaries. Compassion is manifest in his approach to life in general. Returning to the definition of compassion by Brown (2012), rather than a skill set, Baiev's compassion is a spiritual belief about how to live life. It is so profound that he can overcome momentary feelings of anxiety, tiredness, sadness, anger and fear.

Baiev's experiences relate to an ethics of care; an ethics, which as Slote (2007) argues, empathy is essential for. Yet, Baiev's compassion is manifest in his acts, rather than his conscious feelings of empathy, or compassion. He did not feel good about treating the mercenaries, yet he treated them, and not as a rational choice (he risked his life) but because it was the way he wanted to live. Maurice Hamington (2004) argues that embodiment must be recognized as a central factor in moral consideration. For him, "our bodies are built for care;" this is how essential care is in human existence (Hamington 2004: 2). Knowledge on care entails that which the body knows.

I would suggest that Baiev's care is *compassion as a corporeal-political relationship*. Baiev's politics of compassion refuses to take sides when caring for those in need; it is resistance against the dehumanising practices of war. His compassion as an embodied way of life enables him to suppress his feelings of anger and resentment against perpetrators, and to try to save their lives.

Baiev makes a choice – a choice that will manifest throughout the wars. Courage is an interface of compassion in action. To treat looters, torturers and rapists must have been incredibly hard for Baiev. First, he witnessed the parents' pain because of the rape and disappearance of their daughter, and then he needs to treat one of those who took part in the brutal violence against civilians. It is not only that Baiev has taken an oath to treat all patients without discrimination, but he manifests the courage to act accordingly. Even if a moral choice to treat everyone in the order of urgency, perhaps Baiev was also emoting compassion in his body without becoming aware of the feeling itself. The Bodhisattva compassion is, in the end, a body courageously bowing to others, rather than a mind thinking compassionately. Perhaps, then, it was not only Baiev's sense of justice, but his carnal knowledge of the pain of the mercenaries he so despised, which made him the war doctor he was.

In March 1996, Baiev met the Russian doctor Sasha while operating on Salman Raduyev, one of the leading rebel commanders, in a rebel hideout. Sasha was captain in the Russian medical corps. He had been captured by the Chechen rebels for use as a bargaining chip. At the time, Baiev was working in Urus-Martan where civilian casualties were increasing. Baiev needed an extra pair of hands so he asked to place the Russian doctor to work in his hospital. Sasha arrived and started working in the hospital, and Baiev joked that he was their prisoner in the Caucasus, referring to a Pushkin short story. Sasha spent a month there and learned that a Chechen prisoner at a Russian filtration camp for whom he was supposed to be exchanged had been murdered and he would be executed as revenge. Sasha begged Baiev for help, but Baiev did not want to help him, because he would risk his own life. However, Baiev could not get Sasha and the injustice out of his mind. He tried appealing to the field commander, but it was in vain. Eventually, Baiev arranged for Sasha's escape because he could not live with Sasha's death on his conscience. He drove Sasha to a Russian headquarters and before they departed, he asked Sasha to never tell anyone how he escaped. Sasha promised not to, and soon Baiev would pay a heavy price.

Chechen rebels suspected Baiev was involved in Sasha's escape and came to get him at his home three days later. Baiev kept insisting he did not help Sasha but they did not believe him. They took him to the mountains in a Jeep. The men led him to a large opening in the ground and ordered him down to contemplate a confession. Dampness penetrated his bones and darkness surrounded him but he knew he would be shot if he confessed. He felt shame and anger – it was his own people holding him in the pit. Baiev remembers how he had once felt a similar darkness when he was a child returning home from the mountains when it got too dark and he could not find his way. It was pitch dark and he heard a voice calling him. He remembered that the elders had warned not to follow voices into the forest – they were evil spirits luring men to their deaths. He dropped down on his knees to pray and the voice disappeared. He was cold and kept crouched the entire night listening to the sounds of the forest. When the sun rose, Baiev could see he was close to an enormous drop.

Based on how his beard had grown, Baiev suspected he had been in the pit for a week. A guard came to get him up and Baiev felt great pain in his eyes when he saw the light. He knew they would execute him. But first he was ordered back into the pit for his last prayers, and then taken up again. This is when Baiev made his last request for his body to be returned for burial. The rebels started reciting prayers, preparing him for death. But suddenly a car arrived with horn beeping. A man came out from the military vehicle and shouted "Don't kill him! He's not the one!" They drove him back to his village, Alkhan Kala. Without knowing why, he was saved.

Baiev writes that imagining war is impossible if you have never experienced it. But not trying to imagine war means that there is no connection between the one who experienced war and the one who did not. I listened to the story carefully, going to the dark places of my own memories. From this place – him in the pit, me shaken by his story – I was touched by war. The lyrics and melody for the song *Pit* were there. For Baiev, it was, without exception, Allah's wish to save him. In my view, it was the kindness of strangers that saved him. This kindness runs throughout the book and it is, I believe, the essence of compassion. Often there was no explanation for Baiev's rescue. Perhaps his acts of kindness came back to him inexplicably.

Baiev writes,

Chechens believe that to survive not only as an individual but as a people, one must overcome fear. For this reason, I find it hard to write about the war and to admit that after being confined in that dark pit, I couldn't sleep without a nightlight – just like a child. In the dark, I relived the earth closing in on me and my feelings of helplessness. Whenever I heard a noise at night, my heart raced. I broke out into a sweat and had difficulty breathing. I couldn't stay in bed. I'd fling back the covers and go to the kitchen to escape the voices…the voices of my captors.

Baiev is telling this story in the book for the first time, he did not even tell his family before. Sharing the shame and the child-like fear of the dark with the public is a political act. The private experience of fear is the last thing Baiev is *supposed to* admit to, but just as he believes all are victims of war, and all are human, so is he. Baiev exposes his vulnerability, allowing the reader to see him. At the same time, Baiev writes about Chechens as private people who hide their emotions, particularly men, who do not talk about their families. Baiev embraces vulnerability when he decides to publish a book which reveals his personal and family life, his emotions and suffering. He even writes about his depression. The reason for such openness is that he wants to show Chechens as human beings. Moreover, he states that, "The threat of annihilation and use of warfare have conditioned us to hide our emotions lest they weaken us in the eyes of our enemies." What he wants is Chechens to be known, to be heard. War forces people to ignore tradition. In Baiev's case, it means a discovery of an altered masculinity which embraces vulnerability by speaking openly. Were he to be loyal to the tradition which silences, we might not know about the cow Zoyka, his agony over treating Russian mercenaries, his betrayal which saved Sasha's life, or his suffering in the pit and after.

Collective, gendered practices enable and disable social relations and their manifestations. Like Swati Parashar (2011) writes, excessive feeling is often seen as feminine or weak. Writing about war experiences in the first place can mean reliving trauma. For Baiev, writing about his feelings and personal struggles is a step even further. The gendered expectation, as Baiev explains, is for men to not talk about the private and intimate, but to perform their masculine duties without complaint. It is improper for a man to talk about his wife and family, and Baiev apologises for his openness.

War entails militarisation and the favouring of violent solutions (see more in Chapter five). Baiev's compassion is intertwined with militarisation. He accepts blood feud, for example, as the normal practice and means of seeking justice within society. In the war context, though, he does not become militarised. He is not recruited to join Chechen fighters and is able to keep out of the conflict as a result of his profession. What the war seems to do to Baiev, instead of bringing out a militarised masculinity which would seek revenge and take up arms, is to expose his compassion and to feminise him to the extent that he reveals his psychological trauma and its physical symptoms. It is as if the masculine and feminine pressures in him combined to enable both his own agency as a humanistic war doctor as well as his courage to share his story with all its nuances against gendered expectations of patriarchal structures. It is curious that even though war can bring out the worst toxic masculinity, it can also make way for grass-roots resistance to the forces which drive violence. Baiev's stories portray human complexity and political agency

which cannot be stilled in stable categorisations.

The way Baiev embodies compassion is through his operating hands and care. When Baiev escaped to the United States after his life in Chechnya had become too risky in 2000, his hands were swollen and blistered from the continuous operations in the warzone, and he wonders if he will ever operate again. In the framework of enactivism there is a living body and lived experience. Baiev writes frequently about the details of his operations but also about his own bodily sensations. He would train physically to keep his mind working. He also did physical exercises in the pit to pass the time. Baiev could not sleep and was exhausted as he had to manage with a couple of hours of sleep, if lucky. He writes, "I worried about my waning ability to feel my patients' suffering, that compassion had been replaced by irritation." When Baiev was staying in Moscow studying skin grafting techniques for a few months in 1998, he began experiencing the symptoms of posttraumatic stress, and he developed a fear of being alone. He did not want to return to Chechnya in such a depressed state as this would upset his family. He describes the psychological and physical symptoms: sadness, heart racing, plunging into darkness, feeling of an electric shock, and sweating. For a moment he wanted to kill himself and even thought about jumping from a window. The next morning he asked to be hospitalised and was admitted for 45 days.

It was not when he received counselling and medication, but when he started exercising again, that he began to feel better. Exercise was the only thing that really helped him during the war, he states. Baiev competed in judo and sambo, which explains his passion for exercise. After suffering from serious posttraumatic stress, Baiev would still experience another war and keep caring with his hands. The body's knowledge of care, the embodiment of care and self-care, is visible in Baiev's war experience, and it attests to the importance of the body for compassion.

Interestingly, Baiev describes how women play an important part in keeping the peace in Chechen society. For example, men must stop fighting if a woman takes off her scarf and throws it between the antagonists. Baiev's autobiography is not only about himself; he writes about many courageous individuals who showed mercy and compassion during the war. Many of those were women, including female nurses who remained in Chechnya to work together with Baiev.

Women in War

Courageous women. Nurses, risking their lives to save others. They have stayed with him while others have left. And who could blame those who escaped the burning hell of Chechnya.

But the women who stayed to work with Doctor Baiev, the former plastic surgeon
– now "war zone do it all with no medical supplies doctor,"

these women, when the bomb hits nearby and the walls crumble, they throw themselves against his body…to keep him alive.

Oh they are brave and selfless.

The women use their bodies as a shield. Baiev feels ashamed at the face of such female strength.

It makes him feel small, even though he is as big as the humanity.

All this, all this sacrifice is because for them the world is so much bigger than their own lives.
So, they don't have to choose to stay.
The choice is already embodied in them from some moment in the past when they decided, they will never give up.

(*The Bright place,* Susanna Hast)

In the winter of 2015, I was asked by a colleague, youth researcher Sofia Laine, to perform at a peace event in Helsinki. For the event, I created a two-part piece called *The Dark place/ Bright place*. I will discuss the experience

of the performance itself in the concluding chapter, but here I want to discuss the story. It is not simply that I wrote the piece using Baiev's story of nurses shielding him. I spoke the words repeatedly, searched for the rhythm, and did it with passion.

As I kept doing this – working on the text with my body – I began to understand how Baiev's compassion was not an emotion he possessed as his property, but one which emerged in-between bodies; emotions binding bodies together, emotions transmitted and circulating. It was Baiev writing, his experience, but as I thought about the nurses one day after the other, I began taking women in war seriously (Enloe 2004).

Women have been important in the Chechen wars in many ways. Many of the human rights activists and reporters working in Chechnya were women. Natalia Estemirova investigated human rights abuses in Chechnya until she was abducted and killed on July 15, 2009. She worked with Anna Politkovskaya. Eric Bergraut's 2005 film*Coca: the Dove from Chechnya* tells the story of Zainap Gashaeva, who was documenting human rights violations in Chechnya using a video camera. The director explains:

I have not made a film about high-level politics. Coca was conceived from the start to be about women who struggle against the destruction of bodies and souls; women who condemn violations of human rights and who hope for justice. They don't do this out of naiveté, for which Chechnya would be the place least apt, but because they can and want to do nothing else, because they are courageous, and because they do not deny themselves and their ideals, even if to do so would be easier for them and their families, and would increase their life expectancies (Tribeca Film Festival 2005).

Women also acted as soldiers or took part in terrorist acts, such as the female snipers often referred to as 'White Stockings' (Murphy 2010). Female Chechen suicide bombers, instead, have been called 'Black Widows.' On October 23, 2002, the Dubrovka theatre was attacked by some 40 armed Chechens, 19 of which were female bombers wearing black mourning clothes and explosives on their bodies (Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006a). The macabre images of dead female bombers on the theatre chairs were circu- lated by the media. Speckhard and Akhmedova (2006a) conclude that the women involved in the terrorist activities did not suffer from personality disorder but from traumatisation, symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and dissociative phenomena. They had witnessed violence them- selves and lost family members in cleansings and bombings. Many turned to Wahhabism (which was imported into Chechnya around the first war) after their traumatisation, extending traditional Chechen blood revenge to include jihadism.

Speckhard and Akhmedova (2006a: 68) write:

Trauma victims are often dissociative in response to their experiences, displaying amnesia, emotional numbing, and a sense of social alienation. A huge part of the healing process in response to psychological trauma is to reconstruct both a personal narrative and a worldview that incorporates the traumatic event.

Jihadist ideology filled the vacuum and gave women purpose after traumatisation and loss of family members. Speckhard and Akhmedova (2006a) found that the women self-recruited and were willing to join the movement instead of being forced into it. Women are capable of violence, and Speckhard and Akhmedova identify traumatisation, together with religious extremism, as the root causes. Baiev suffered from posttraumatic stress, and most likely the nurses working with him experienced trauma as well. Yet, instead of becoming militarised and radicalised, they cared for the injured.

According to Baiev, on the eve of the first war, throughout Chechnya women of all ages marched through the streets, protesting against the advancement of Russian tanks. He writes that women have always joined the battle, and have even taken up arms when Chechnya has been under attack. In December of 1994, there was a column of women as long as 40 miles on Moscow-Baku highway. Baiev saw older women make a circle to dance, "their feet picking up the hypnotic beat of zikr," an ancient Sufi ritual praising Allah. *Zikr* is danced everywhere – during weddings and funerals, before the act of blood revenge and when going to war, but its purpose is always to lift the soul to a higher plane. Baiev writes, "During zikr I have heard old men with rusty voices sing like opera singers, and the voices of old

women soar with the angels."

Women occupied the streets, protesting during the war and searching for their loved ones after. The journalist Anna-Lena Laurén (2009) writes that only women have the courage to protest on the streets of Grozny. Travelling in Chechnya, Laurén (2009) saw mothers on the streets with photos of their sons who had disappeared, trying to find out what happened to them, to find them.

A woman called Rumani was working with Baiev as a nurse. She transported critically wounded patients through Russian fire. Even if her husband wanted her to join him and their children in Ingushetia, she refused to leave the war zone. Baiev writes (2003: xviii),

Her courage made me ashamed. She was a woman, and I should have been protecting her instead of asking her to dodge Russian snipers. Several times during bombing attack, she and another nurse pushed me to the floor or up against the wall, shielding me with their bodies. 'What are you doing' I had asked, embarrassed, the first time it happened. 'We've got to protect you!' Rumani said. 'There are several of us, but you are our only doctor.'

In Baiev's view, he was supposed to be the protector, but instead the two female nurses used their bodies to protect his. This story of the nurses protecting Baiev is only a few lines long, unnoticeable in the grand scheme of war. I became convinced that the role of women was very literally embodied in the way that they kept Baiev unharmed. The women's agency here is not about mothering, escaping, or mourning – their vulnerability has another aspect. They take part in the politics of touch. By touching this way, shielding Baiev, the women challenge gendered roles of the body: the male protector and the female protected. The women risk their lives by staying in Chechnya and utilising their bodily capacities to keep the only doctor they have out of harm's way. They have agency typically associated with masculinity: physical strength and taking control of a situation fearlessly. This could also be seen as a demand for the women to self-sacrifice, but Baiev does not resort to imagery of womanhood or motherhood which would support such an interpretation. Moreover, because women are so easily shamed through patriarchal honour codes, it is important to pay attention to how Baiev attaches shame to himself, not the women. He is ashamed that the nurses have to resort to self-sacrifice for his sake. Again, Baiev's politics of emotions tells a story of embodied compassion and express his own feeling openly, vulnerably. Baiev thinks that war forces people to abandon tradition, especially in relations between men and women, and that it is tradition which holds Chechens together. Yet in the case of his nurses' actions, it is the abandoning of tradition that holds them together, saving lives.

One material need directly related to survival and health in wartime is healthcare. Baiev specialised in dentistry and was a facial surgeon, but had to learn to become a war surgeon who could amputate and operate in the hardest of conditions. He operated even in his dark basement, with little equipment and had a hard time maintaining proper hygiene. The nurses were working under great stress and constant threat. To target hospitals in war, as was done in Chechnya, is a war crime, a punishment against the most vulnerable. So when the nurses protected Baiev, they were manifesting compassion in a very corporeal, even self-sacrificing way. They would rather die than let him die. They were not doing it for Baiev, but for everyone trapped on the battlefield. In fact, Baiev and the nurses were already ready to sacrifice themselves by being in the war zone, facing danger every day. To stay and to care for everyone, without choosing who is worthy of their touch, was their politics of compassion. The nurses were not the only women who stayed to care for the injured. For example, the sisters, Roza and Zarema Asayeva, were voluntary cooks at a hospital in Alkhan Khala, Baiev's home town to which he returned after the Ninth City Hospital was ordered to be closed in 1999 when Grozny was being intensively bombed. Baiev describes how the women took a great risk travelling several miles to work, often through gunfire.

From the emotions, feelings and acts of care by the war doctor, I want to turn the gaze next to a less evident expression of embodied compassion: dance. I return to the role of women in war in Chapter six.

About the author:

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