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Sounds of War: 'Lonely Night'

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

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I try to remember how I came up with *Lonely Night*. I have no recollection, but I have a file named "One lonely night" dated 26 November 2014. In fact, I have a collection of songs almost all of which were written within the same period – winter of 2014. Not all of them have been arranged, and most probably never will be. "Life goes on even surrounded by death," Baiev (2003: 98) writes, telling of the celebration of the birth of his son Islam in the midst of shelling. I kept thinking of how difficult it must be to maintain or form a relationship in a (post-)war zone. How could Chechens fall in love, get married and start families? How could they deal with challenges in relationships, say for example, when someone begins to change because of the war? How could they survive the end of a relationship, or the loss of a loved one? If something seems absent and difficult to catch, or if it lies outside of the frame, this does not mean it is irrelevant. Absence is just the presence of unknowability. As long as there is longing there is love to be found. Love is a fascinating subject not only because it is not the obvious choice for a study on war, but also because it is so common and strange at the same time. Everyone is an expert on love; but for a researcher, love is a difficult concept to work with.

"Lonely Night"

How can you do anything good,
when you have to worry all the time

I want to marry, want to carry
won't you take this baggage for a while

Joking about, playing around
One more garbage and I'll die

I'm one step away from giving it up,
and then I'll die a lonely guy

It's gonna be lonely, lonely, lonely night
makin' you, makin' you makin' you mine
Lonely, lonely, lonely night

It's gonna be lonely, lonely, lonely night
takin' you, takin' you takin' your time
Lonely, lonely, lonely night

I'm not the same guy who you once knew
I've been to hell and never came back

All I can do is live in the past,
and it's not the life I want for you

It's gonna be lonely, lonely, lonely night
makin' you, makin' you makin' you mine
Lonely, lonely, lonely night

It's gonna be lonely, lonely, lonely night
takin' you, takin' you takin' your time
Lonely, lonely, lonely night

The Word Love

There are many kinds of love, and loving is a way of being and connecting in general, but here I discuss namely the idea of romantic love. My curiosity for love came, first, from the lack of love stories in the research material, and then from their sudden presence. I was lucky to encounter love stories from war time in Milana Terloeva's (2006) autobiography, because such stories are not easy to come across. In this chapter I discuss love through this one young woman's stories. I begin by introducing some perspectives on love from various sources. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest that love can be at the core of war experiences, and that love is a transformative power that leaves a person changed. If love is transformative, it can transform collectively, not only privately. Love, which is transformative collectively, can be a political force.

The conventions and norms related to romantic relationships, intimacy and sexuality are political, and lead to restrictions affecting women and sexual minorities in particular. The political is written on female bodies through shaming, persecution, arranged marriage, and honour killings in Chechnya. I envision a powerful politics of love because love taps so profoundly into our core selves, to the strongest of our emotions, and it manifests in so many ways, from parental affection to romantic surrender.

Helen Fisher (2008) says in her TED talk, *The Brain in Love*, that

Around the world, people love. They sing for love, they dance for love, they compose poems and stories about love. They tell myths and legends about love. They pine for love, they live for love, they kill for love, and they die for love. As Walt Whitman once said, 'O I would stake all for you.' Anthropologists have found evidence of romantic love in 170 societies. They've never found a society that did not have it.

According to Fisher, people in love show activation of the ancient parts, the reptilian core, of the brain, below cognitive thinking and below emotions. She calls romantic love an obsession and an addiction involving risk-taking, an obscured sense of reality and a craving for more. From the neural perspective, the same brain regions are activated in both romantic love and rejection, which is why rejection can be so devastating. Like all emotions, love is a lived experience. To know about love is to know how individuals experience love, the art of love beyond the neural correlates of love.

Love comes close to compassion. It is caring for the other, but the relationship is typically more intimate, more personal and more physical. In the Tom Stoppard's (1982) play *The Real Thing*, love is defined in carnal terms:

Carnal knowledge. It's what lovers trust each other with. Knowledge of each other, not of the flesh but through the flesh, knowledge of self, the real him, the real her, in extremis, the mask slipped from the face. Every other version of oneself is on offer to the public. We share our vivacity, grief, sulks, anger, joy… we hand it out to anybody who happens to be standing around, to friends and family with a momentary sense of indecency perhaps, to strangers without hesitation. Our lovers share us with the passing trade. But in pairs we insist that we give ourselves to each other. What selves? What's left? What else is there that hasn't been dealt out like a deck of cards? Carnal knowledge. Personal, final, uncompromised. Knowing, being known.

Here love is defined as knowing, or rather, knowing through the body. It is exclusive knowing of another person's body. Yet, I am not satisfied with the view of intimate sharing of carnal knowledge as all there is to love. Such a definition emphasises too much our naked selves or sexualised selves, at the expense of carnal knowledge through compassion, friendship and caring. I believe that love's essence is not in exclusivity. Romantic love is typically reserved for one person only, but it only means that there is a person to share more with than others. Even the naked self is shown to strangers in certain contexts. Lovers do not share everything. Secrets are kept to the self, or shared with some others.

Brené Brown (2012) explains how researchers even in social work dismiss the study of love because they do not know how to talk about it and how to measure it, even though love is perhaps the most important human experience. None of us would want to live without loving and being loved. In order to start a conversation about love, she developed a definition from the research interview data she collected during her six years of study on vulnerability. Brown's (2010: 26) definition of love goes:

We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known and when we honour the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection.

From the carnal knowledge which sounds possessive and somewhat selfish we move to a definition which includes vulnerability and a spiritual connection. Brown's definition is also broad enough to include more than romantic love. Such love overcomes shame. It means you are not just looked at, but really seen. To put these two definitions together is rather effortless when framed through the bodymind, which is a fusion of emoting and feeling, bodily sensation and conscious thinking, and the carnal and the spiritual. To have a connection with someone means your neural networks are firing affection, and with a bodily experience soon comes a conscious feeling of the affective state. You know you love. Brown is correct in emphasising vulnerability, the willingness to be seen by others, as being able to love and accept being loved. Love is risky; yet so rewarding that it is impossible to imagine a life without it.

Author and activist bell hooks (2001: 6) offers a similar definition of love as "the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth." Hooks emphasises self-love, as does Brown. We need to love ourselves first. Alain de Botton (2016) in the novel *The Course of Love* identifies the central challenges underpinning the idea of romantic love: finding the right person, opening one's heart and being accepted. Furthermore, "Love means admiration for qualities in the lover that promise to correct our weaknesses and imbalances; love is a search for completion" (de Botton 2016: 17).

The most superficially irrational, immature, lamentable, but nonetheless common of all the presumptions of love is that the person to whom we have pledged ourselves is not just the center of our emotional existence but is also, as a result — and yet in a very strange, objectively insane and profoundly unjust way — responsible for everything that happens to us, for good or ill. Therein lies the peculiar and sick privilege of love (de Botton 2016: 90).

To refer to love as if it was a mental illness is somehow endemic to ideas of romantic love. Love is a dependency, a drug, a need. This is an attempt to include the pain of love and love's inevitable end in the definition of love – a destruction of expectations and dreams because there is so much dreaming involved in loving. Pinkola Estés (1992: 140) expresses the drama of love this way,

A part of every woman and every man resists knowing that in all love relationships Death must have her share. We

pretend we can love without our illusions about love dying, pretend we can go on without our superficial expectations dying, pretend we can progress and that our favorite flushes and rushes will never die. But in love, psychically, everything becomes picked apart, everything.

Love dies, passion dies, appetite dies. Yet the wonderful thing about relinquishing is the receiving of something new. A different loving.

Love is also healing. It is both death and life. It is the shattering of illusions and the construction of a new identity, shared to some extent. Love is also companionship and partnership, a gaze into the same direction rather than a stare at one another. Thus, cravings and insanity are part of love, but also a shared path – less exciting but love all the same. As an act of sharing (sharing a house, a bank account, a bed, a life, responsibilities), love is also political. Such forms of sharing belong to the realm of love and politics. What bell hooks (2001: 76) refers to as the "politicization of love," I call *the political potential of love*.

Love and Politics

Penttinen (2013) writes about the romantic relationships formed between Finnish women and German soldiers during the Second World War in Finland. She reasons that it is the intensity of war – the precariousness of life and proximity of death – which enabled love to be nurtured, against all odds.

She has discovered stories of an "unexpected sense of appreciation at finding love" in several memoirs (90). Love is a force to take seriously in war, not necessarily because it is visible on the streets, but perhaps exactly because it is often hidden and secret. Love can help an individual survive war, rebuild a life after war, or love can lead to violence – revenge, for example. In both cases, love has repercussions beyond the private.

Hardt and Negri write in *Multitude* (2004: 351) that,

People today seem unable to understand love as a political concept, but a concept of love is just what we need to grasp the constituent power of the multitude. The modern concept of love is almost exclusively limited to the bourgeois couple and the claustrophobic confines of the nuclear family. Love has become a strictly private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love.

Encounters and collaborations which bring us joy are love. The love Hardt and Negri refer to extends beyond the confines of the family and the intimate to political projects and the construction of a new society, a new humanity. "Without love, we are nothing" (Hardt and Negri 2004: 352). I believe that romantic love can teach such love, and be a precedent or an extension of loving in multitude.

Yet, love can be dangerous as a political motivator, and can lead to racism, exclusion, and violence. Thus, when Hardt and Negri (2004) idealise the politics of love, they do not mean love which excludes but which includes. The politics of love is indeed difficult terrain – at one end can be a satisfaction of the most beautiful kind, and at the other a cruelty of a crime of passion. Just like the politics of compassion, the political consequences of love can be of a violent and repressive kind, not exclusively healing and connecting. Yet, just like in the case of compassion, the emotion alone is not necessarily a cause of someone's actions. Other variables are at stake. Violence is not the result of love itself, just like violence is not the result of compassion itself. Acts are not reducible to a single emotion, just like the human being is not reducible to the suffering she has encountered.

In her analysis of Hannah Arendt's writings, Shin Chiba (1995) explains that Arendt considers love apolitical, even antipolitical, a force which should remain outside the realm of the public because it tends to exclude the outside world. Arendt (1958) writes in *The Human Condition* that love is extinguished the moment it is displayed in public and that love can only become false or perverted if it is used for political purposes. "Love by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others" (Arendt 1958: 242). But it seems for Arendt, for love to become political it needs to be expressed in public, exiting the private sphere. This is a very limited view of the relationship between emotions and politics. Until rather recently, emotions have been regarded as

personal and irrational, irrelevant to understanding political issues (Bleiker and Hutchison 2015). Bleiker and Hutchison (2015) write that emotions are seldom seen as positive political forces, even if political events are so often profoundly emotional. The question is not then whether love or compassion are or are not political forces, because both are as long as they are part of the human experience. Emotions will not leave the sphere of politics as long as human beings are in charge of it.

Shine Choi (2013) writes that in South Korean narratives on reconciliation and national reunification with North Korea, love is a prominent theme. She (2013: 120) writes that "they are public narratives of love insofar as these narratives envision intimacy, unity and togetherness as solving complex socio-economic and politico-cultural problems." Choi (2013: 120) continues, "Love, in different variations, is cited as a powerful driving force for propelling the search for solutions to the 'North Korean problem.'" But Choi's conclusion is that such narratives are destructive, making North Korea the other to be eradicated. Such love is oneness which kills the other. Yet, Choi offers an alternative view of a politics of love, through a reading of Hwang Sok-young's novel *Baridaegi*: love as an in-betweenness rather than redemptive love. Such love is "a way of staying open and attached to otherness through queering love" (Choi 2013: 128). This love does not seek a happy union or a lasting embrace, but is aware of love as "between an embrace and standing alone" (Choi 2013: 128).

Lauren Berlant (2011) notes that romantic love is unethical because it involves desire. But is any political concept fully inclusive, fully ethical? I do not think so. I believe the more interesting question than asking if a certain emotion can be the basis of political change, is to look at how it already is. This is essentially an acknowledgement that emotions make politics.

Stories, images and sounds of love, the touch and scent of love, and the many aesthetic displays of love, are moving. They nudge or push one to express, to sing, to dance, to withdraw, to crawl, to escape. The intimacy of love as a driving force cannot be only negative in terms of politics, because that would mean political agents did not love, or did not love when they acted. Love is there, just like any emotion, at the core of political issues. It is no coincidence then that love occupies so much space in the public, and why politics is ultimately passionate. Passionate because we care and are ready to fight for what we feel strongly about.

Violence, both physical and psychological, is present in Chechnya at several levels, not only through the legacy of war. The main element being the idealisation of tradition including the patriarchal structures of power and the acts of shaming. I propose that love could be an emotional basis for practices of political and social change anywhere, but especially in a profoundly patriarchal context. Thus, I envision love as a form of feminized resistance (Motta and Seppälä 2016), not only in war but against the valorisation of violence in a patriarchal order. There is no harmonious society without a harmonious family and community – this is why feminists pay attention to the private sphere, to the micropolitics of intimacy. What Terloeva's (2006) autobiography demonstrates are narratives in which the passionate and loving youth act with love as their concern, rather than idealised patriarchal traditions. Terloeva's writing contrasts Baiev's in this way as Baiev adheres to the patriarchal order. Terloeva does not specifically challenge patriarchal traditions, but she constructs an aesthetics built more on the emotion of love than on rules about how and who to love. When read in the context of the violent practices revolving around honour, Terloeva's stories constitute the aesthetics of a politics of love. Violent practices related to honour undermine spirituality. Thus, I begin by briefly discussing the violent side of Chechen vulnerability and then the politics of love in Terloeva's (2006)*Danser sur les Ruines*.

Women, Family and Tradition in Chechnya

Imagining the shapes and practices of love in Chechnya is quite difficult for an outsider. Such traditions as bride kidnapping and honour killing make it hard to envision what love looks like. "We never use the word love," Khassan Baiev (et al. 2003: 22) announces, "Though that doesn't mean we don't have those feelings. On the contrary, our families and friends are the most precious things in our lives." And he does use the word love on some occasions. Baiev describes that, like many Chechen fathers, his father never showed any affection or paid any compliments. He tells how he got whipped as a punishment for practising judo secretly. "We rarely express our feelings openly," he continues and suggests that it has to do with the strong admiration of resilience that comes from having a history of

being under attack. Cuddles would come from female members of the family, and only until about ten years of age.

We believe love is demonstrated through actions, not words. I've always understood love as loyalty and support of family, friends; love is education of children, love is helping the elderly. I always knew Dada loved me – even when he beat me – but the way he expressed it was by preparing us for the difficulties ahead. He did this by forcing us to work hard, endure frequent beatings and numerous lectures on how Chechens should conduct themselves (Baiev 2003: 22–23).

Each family has a different culture of affection and love. For Baiev, family means everything, and so does the idea of Chechen resilience, a survival as a people, which means both communal loyalty and shaming of weakness. Terloeva (2006) similarly expresses the need for Chechens to survive as a people, which has always demanded that Chechens exemplify certain qualities. Vulnerability, as a weakness *or* as the willingness to be seen by others, is not one of those qualities. Not explicitly at least. It is against this background that both Baiev's and Terloeva's openness about their vulnerability begins to signify a politics of love and compassion. In a culture of shaming, embracing vulnerability is a political act.

Marriage is not a personal matter in Chechnya. Marriage is not just two people but a network of relatives; thus, the family one marries into is important. Baiev talks about the kidnapping of his sister Razyat when she was 17. Bride stealing has been tolerated in Chechnya for hundreds of years. By kidnapping a woman, her purity and honour are put at risk. Her reputation is ruined, she might not find a man to marry in the future. The shame of inappropriate sexual behaviour like touching brings shame to the entire clan. After Razyat was kidnapped, elders came to negotiate a resolution and marriage contract. But Baiev's father did not approve of the marriage and sent him to bring her back. After they returned home, Baiev threatened to shoot anyone who tried to come and touch his sister. The kidnapper's brothers came to their door the next day and, even though he felt scared, Baiev greeted them pointing a gun. A neighbour deescalated the situation, and the men left after Baiev fired the gun in the air.

Baiev himself was involved in a bride stealing. It was a situation in which the woman wanted to marry his friend but because of her family's objection, the kidnapping was seen as a solution. It failed and the woman was brought back home and later married another man chosen by her family. It is interesting how bride kidnapping can be utilised by the two who want to marry. In such a case the young couple go against their families, who oppose the marriage, using the bride stealing tradition to their own advantage. They want to marry because of their mutual love. If the woman's honour is at risk, the family might agree to the marriage rather than demand her release. Of course, it is still the woman's honour at stake – her body, her imagined purity – never the man's.

The generation of women of the pre-war Chechnya learned to navigate between the Soviet order which legitimised woman's role in the public sphere, and the Chechen patriarchal order (Szczepanikova 2014). There are working women and educated women in Chechnya (see Laurén 2009), but Murphy (2010) writes that, even so, the highest goal for a Chechen woman is to be a good mother and wife. When the journalist Anna-Lena Laurén (2009) travelled in Chechnya she saw women who did not fit the model set out for them by the society. Social relations are never so simple that people do not escape the stills we try to fix them into. There are certain social hierarchies in place in Chechnya, old traditions and more recent religious influences, yet the lived experience is always unique – never fully controlled by outside forces and never fully independent. Tradition is always changing too.

According to NGO reports, since Ramzan Kadyrov became the president of Chechnya after his father's death, the situation for women has been deteriorating due to the so-called virtue campaign (European Asylum Support Office 2014). Without legal ruling, Kadyrov has been implementing a dress code, including head scarfs, for female students and women working in public institutions (European Asylum Support Office 2014). The president also supports polygamy. Raubisko (2009) argues that Islam is used for political purposes by the regime. Kadyrov's regime promotes the "right kind of Islam" (Sufism but with preference for certain religious practices and symbols) and believers are at risk of being suspected of being a Wahhabi (fundamentalist and potential terrorist) if they show signs of being too devoted (Raubisko 2009: 78). Raubisko suggests that neither Sufism nor Wahhabism is sufficient to explain religion in Chechnya which is entangled with the constantly transforming traditional, pre-Islamic rules and practices of the society. These 'Chechen laws,' or *adats*, emphasise patriarchal authority, kin ties and ideals of

dignity and justice. Moreover, two generations of Chechens were not raised with Islam under the Soviet Union, although religion was not totally absent and some Muslims retained certain practices.

Some Words on Honour

Chechen women are seen as the preservers of the family's honour (Murphy 2010). Female honour is intertwined with male honour, or to be more precise, when a woman dishonours herself, she dishonours the entire family – most importantly, its male members. Rape is stigmatised and rarely reported, divorce is rare and divorced women are stigmatised but also lose children to the husband or the husband's family. This is why Chechen women are advised to marry only Chechen men (unlike Chechen men who may marry Russian women) (see European Asylum Support Office 2014; Murphy 2010). And what is worse, women are killed because of honour. There is a haunting story about an honour killing in Åsne Seierstad's *The Angel the Grozny* (2008: 246–51). The story is about Abdul who shot his sister in the back in cold blood because he heard rumours about her. Men kill women because their reputation, or the family's reputation, is at stake. The killer can think he had no choice, it was *her* choice to live a dishonourable life.

Just like compassion could be explained in relation to neural activity (by no means exhaustively, or in isolation of social theory), so could violence and aggression. In fact, taking another person's perspective can also mean adopting violent behaviour through mirroring. Iacoboni (2013) suggests that mirror neurons could be involved also in the contagion of violent behaviour, and could therefore contribute to the mirroring of violent acts in the body. But a feminist reading shifts attention away from pathologising wartime violence. This means, rather than explaining wartime cruelty as a mental illness of the perpetrator, socio-political explanations are stressed. I believe this applies to honour killing as well to some extent.

Enloe (2004), who studied the case of Borislav Herak, who was accused of raping and killing Bosnian Muslim women, argues that systematic wartime rape is fuelled by men's relations to each other. Rather than a mental illness, wartime rape is better explained through masculinity which relies on a soldier/ warrior identity and social bonding among peers. Amanda Marcotte (2016) uses the concept of toxic masculinity to explain gun violence in the United States. She defines it as a specific model of manhood, geared towards dominance and control. It valorises violence as the way to prove one's self to the world and it is associated with a fear of seeming soft or weak. This toxic masculinity coupled with positive reaffirmation from the group affects the brain/body capacity to emote compassion. Thus, militarised and masculinised social cohesion affects soldiering in a way that inhibits compassion, resulting in rape and the mass killing of civilians. Militarised toxic masculinity helps us understand Abdul's readiness and capacity to kill his sister. He is geared towards a belief system in which his own masculinity depends on the honour of his sister, but it does not mean he does not care. Seierstad (2008) pays attention to Abdul's body, describing his fists, his sobbing, his posture, when he talks about the events leading up to his sister's killing (details which I do not wish to repeat here). Maybe this is a sign of Abdul emoting, even if he says he has no regrets. Or maybe it is Seierstad wanting to see signs of emotion, so that the young man would not seem so heartless.

Valentina Rousseva (2004) writes how sexual crimes during the Chechen wars affect women's positions so that instead of compassion they face rejection inside the community in which female virginity and chastity, and male honour, are emphasised. Shame and dishonour take precedence over compassion towards the raped woman. Again, where is the compassion? Where is love? As Brown (2012) says, shame resilience is all about empathy. Empathy makes a hostile environment for shame. Shaming women who are suspected of having been alone with a strange man in the same space is a violent valorisation of toxic masculinity. This is difficult to reconcile with *Adamallah*, the Chechen understanding of humanity I mentioned in Chapter four. Shame is a powerful tool in war. How can Chechens, men and women alike, ever walk through shame in a culture that puts so much emphasis on honour? Baiev's book offers some examples of how patriarchal boundaries are broken down and reaffirmed during war time.

Tradition is a lived experience with many conflicting sides to it too. There is nothing given about tradition. Kvedaravicius (2012: 181) writes,

But how is one to specify the peculiarities of 'tradition,' 'honour,' 'respect,' 'morality,' 'blood-feud' and '*teip*,' when they turn up unannounced in macabre actualities; in forms, images, actions or riddles. In bits of 'Chechen tradition'

voiced loudly by officials each day, in President Kadyrov's orders to women and girls to wear headscarves, while his enforcement agents drive the streets with paintball guns shooting at those without them. Kindergarten age girls go to sleep wearing scarves for the fear of disappointing or upsetting the President, whilst teenagers burn holes in their scarves swearing not to wear them unless their heads are burnt as well.

There are no statistics available on honour killings because the practise remains a taboo, and killers are often not prosecuted (European Asylum Support Office 2014). Murphy (2010) reports several cases of honour killings. The European Asylum Support Office report from 2014 presents several cases of recent honour killings from information gathered from different sources. The same applies to intimate partner violence: cases are rarely reported and prosecuted, and if they are the men are rarely convicted or are punished mildly. Furthermore, there are no shelters for victims of violence (European Asylum Support Office 2014). Another taboo involves sexual minorities, as LGBT rights are practically non-existent in the society. In March 2017, the Russian journal Novaya Gazeta released news about an anti-gay campaign in Chechnya stating that over 100 men have been detained and accused of homosexuality and three have been killed. The response from the Chechen authorities was to claim that there was no such campaign because there are no gay people in Chechnya, and if there were, their families would implement the punishment, not law enforcement (Walker 2017).

Against this background – the burden on the female body – Milana Terloeva writes about love. In these narratives, love is central in the war experience; moreover, several of these stories unstill the lovers from patriarchal structures and honour codes and bring them closer to spiritual and vulnerable loving.

Her Friends in Love

I had not planned to write about love in war, I was supposed to stick strictly with compassion. The beauty of looking open-mindedly at your empirical material is that you can become surprised by what you find. It was this question that began to haunt me: How could people love and be loved in war? What I needed was to come across Milana Terloeva's (2006) autobiography *Danser sur les Ruines: Une Jeunesse Tchétchène* to begin exploring these questions. I focus less here on the embodiment of emotions than in other chapters, and more on the storytelling through which a politics of love is emerging.

In no other material did romantic love come forward so prominently. Love is at the heart of the matter – any matter – including war, exactly because it is invisible until we become curious about it and acknowledge its importance. Love is so easy to ignore. It is often thought of as feminine, and even silly. But investigating love in politics and war offers new perspectives on resistance, healing, and human needs and actions. But studying love in politics requires overcoming our fixation on rationalist modes and models. Again, I must return to the arguments I presented earlier in the book about the disembodied mind: emotion and cognition are not separate. Feeling and knowing are one and the same. There is not a rational self separated from the body and its emotions.

Love also persists in those places where humanity has failed. Love can be found in the hardest of conditions, the driest of land, and the most destroyed environments. Love is central to the emotional landscape amidst war: broken relationships, relationships that will never be, and the loss of loved ones. Love in the world of Milana Terloeva is equal, gentle, and passionate. For her, loneliness, or solitude, is the most horrible thing about war. Such loneliness means feeling alone even when surrounded by other people.

Milana Terloeva (also known as Milana Bakhaeva) is a journalist born in 1979 in Orekhovo, Chechnya. During the first war she hid with her family in a cellar, and took refuge in destroyed Grozny. At the beginning of the second war, she and her family escaped to Ingushetia. After the war, she risked her life studying French at the University of Grozny (now Chechen State University) while anti-terrorist purges were taking place. She was able to study in France thanks to the non-profit organisation Études Sans Frontières, and she graduated with a master's degree in journalism from the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris in 2006.

In Terlova's autobiography about her life and the lives of her friends, love is constantly present. It is love for life, love for education, love for family, and so often, romantic love and emotional intimacy with a partner. The young women's

war experiences stand out in their youthful spirit and in the importance love plays in daily life among the ruins.

War affects the young through their experiences of love. Young women lose their loved ones when they become combatants or manufactured terrorists, or victims of indiscriminate bombings or senseless killings. So often, love relates to loss. Terloeva writes about Kazbek, a university student who was killed in 2001 by Russian soldiers who set the car he and his friends were driving on fire. Kazbek had planned to propose to Madina, a girl who he had picked flowers for and invited for coffee that same day. Their love was cut short by war.

It is not only death which causes loss, but the possibilities for loving are lost too. In *Barzakh*, the disappearance of a loved one causes a painful absence – not knowing what happened (see Chapter four). War results also in the loss of the relationship that once was, or could have been, for the young who are waiting to experience love and family life. The capacity to love can be harmed and destroyed. The person changes, and is unable to love or live 'honourably' any longer. The possibility is lost before love gets a proper chance.

In Grozny, in 1995, Terloeva's friend Ceda is upset and locked in her room because of a letter she received from Ali. Ali was her loved one since childhood. Terloeva writes that they were a perfect couple. But in the beginning of the war Ali's brother was killed and, due to the loss, his father died soon after. This made Ali suffer greatly, and it changed him. The man Ceda fell in love with had turned into someone filled with hatred. Ceda did not recognise Ali anymore, he was so obsessed with revenge. The last time they met Ali no longer had even hate in his eyes, only emptiness.

Ali had written a letter to Ceda. In the letter he thanks Ceda for every moment together, for every look, for every dream. But Ali does not want to share his life with Ceda, because he has turned so resentful.

Above all, I would like to thank you for every minute spent in your company, for every look, every wish and every dream. We will never get married. You deserve more happiness than that. I will not convict you to live with me, with the person that I have become, empty, full of hatreds and resentments. I love you too much for that…(Terloeva 2006).

Ali believes Ceda deserves something better for her life than being with a man whose only wish is to kill. Ali writes in the letter how his hate controls him. Ali believes he lacks compassion and honour, which resulted in him killing an unarmed Russian prisoner. He shot him when he cried for mercy. "Our treatment of war prisoners with dignity is what you admired Ceda," he writes. Ali explains in the letter to Ceda that he could not live with his deed, and had to go live in the mountains, to go to war. But his reasons were not noble like the others', he writes. He only wanted to kill or to be killed. Ali's letter ends with the words, "My life will be short, but because of you I can say I have lived." Ceda dies in 1996, but Terloeva does not want to write about her death.

Ali and Ceda could not find each other anymore, after war had taken so much. There is a spiritual loss, loss of connection, and a destructive affective environment, a breeding ground for hate, resentment and anger. Yet Ali's letter is a love letter. It is a letter of love as sacrifice. Ali feels he has become a dishonourable man too angry to live any other life than war. But he expresses vividly his emotions for Ceda. Again, there is an openness about emotions present in the aesthetics of the letter. Terloeva does not write about this as an atypical anomaly, nor does she portray an image of young Chechen men as incapable of expressing their feelings. On the contrary: love is talked about not only among women, but among men too. Moreover, love is not a footnote in war; it is a central theme. Love hurts and love heals. Unfortunately, neither Ali nor Ceda find a happy ending to their love story.

The importance of love becomes evident through the recurrent stories of relationships. These relationships, formed and broken, are an important part of young women's and men's war experiences. Ali's letter offers a glimpse into the feelings of a suffering young man, a voice rarely heard because it is considered feminine. A life of honour, trauma, escape, murder and revenge; then, the most tender affection, gratitude, admiration and consideration for a woman. Ali's experience is a mixture of being aware of how the experiences of violence have eaten away hopes of normalcy – a complete lack of hope indeed – and the wish to protect this young woman, a very vibrant form of love. What we do not find out is how Ali emotes corporeally. He has gained the capacity and willingness to kill, but other than that there is no knowledge of his embodied emotions. But it seems Ali is very much aware of his emotions; he can

describe them and he explains his choices through them. Emotions are indeed constitutive of war and politics, as Åhäll and Gregory (2015) write. The loss of his brother and father caused Ali to not only abandon love, but to become a combatant. Ali cannot be stilled to either militarised masculinity or vulnerability. In the face of love, he expresses both. Milana Terloeva takes part in the politics of love by transmitting the story and the affects embedded in it to the reader. Loving is knowing.

Networks of compassion and extended families literally save Chechen refugees who rely on the kindness of their relatives or compassionate strangers. Terloeva, her mother and her brother were hosted by a Chechen family in Ingushetia after they left Chechnya in 1999. There were already plenty of refugees in the house, but after their arrival, yet another family arrived looking for shelter. The owner of the house refused them because the house was too full already. The owner's daughter begged her mother to take them in, throwing herself at her mother's feet, offering her own place in the house for the family on the street. Her mother finally gave in and Bella, the girl, runs after the family to invite them in (Terloeva 2006: chapter 17).

Bella has her own love story and Terloeva (2006: chapter 18) shares it with the reader. Bella fell in love with her brother's friend Ramzan, whom she knew had known since childhood; but, according to tradition, such love was forbidden. It could have caused Bella's bother to feel anger towards his friend, so it was wrong. Ramzan leaves for a year. When he returns, he does not treat Bella with the kindness she expects. Yet, Bella interprets Ramzan's behaviour as his internal battle between tradition and his feelings. The politics of love is manifest here in how Bella reflects on tradition which sets honour before love. She accepts that their love is forbidden. But their feelings contradict the customs,and she believes that there is a way to work this out. Bella never gets Ramzan – the war comes between them psychologically, and then physically. Ramzan could only talk about war the night he returned. When he leaves again to return to the battlefield, it is for the last time.

In Terloeva's autobiography, compassion and love intertwine. Of all the things she could have written about war, she writes entire chapters on the exper- iences of love and compassion. Milana Terloeva does not share any stories of her own romantic love life – perhaps there was nothing to share at the time – though she nonetheless concentrates on the compassion, passion and love of others. Perhaps love is her way of meeting the world, seeing the world and overcoming grief. This would be the politics of love, the generous conception of love, Hardt and Negri (2004) refer to.

Terloeva was in Moscow in 2000 and was taken to a militia station when she refused to offer bribes to an officer. While interrogating Terloeva, one militia officer, being left alone with her, suddenly starts talking about fighting in the first Chechen war. He addresses Terloeva as someone who, unlike the others, knows war. The officer explains how he went to Grozny with his cousin not knowing where they were being sent to. His cousin died there. While Terloeva remains silent, the man keeps talking about his cousin who was 20 years old, and whose only passion was football. This is a former soldier, the enemy, sharing his war experience with a Chechen woman, the victim, who is being interrogated because she refused to pay the officers.

The police officer is trying to form a connection between them by explaining that they were regular young men, not monsters. With details of his cousin's life, the officer makes known the tragic and irreplaceable loss of life. He is saying: We are human too. We suffer because of this war too. Terloeva is not willing to engage in a dialogue with the Russian officer but she writes that she feels pity for his loneliness, and utters, "I am sorry about your cousin." She is listening, carefully. When allowed to leave, Terloeva still asks, "What is your name?" "Micha," the officer answers. "And your cousin?" "Vitya." Later in the book, Terloeva tells a story about soldiers doing a cleansing operation at her university in the spring of 2001. She calls them lost soldiers who did not know what they were doing, and who were not prepared for the cruelties the Russian army practices. They were victims too.

In 2002, Terloeva started collecting testimonials from civilians with a French journalist in Grozny. One day a young man in his twenties wearing a militia uniform came in. Terloeva was surprised but then she looked at him. She writes that she had never seen such pain in a man's eyes. His entire face expressed distress. The man tells his story. He works with the Russians, but only in order to help Chechens. Because he tried to help save Chechen combatants, the Russians were headed to his home to arrest him. The man managed to escape and went to find help while his family was in the house. When he returned with ten men, his father and brother were already dead. What is so painful to the

man is that he believes his father died thinking that he had abandoned them and left them to die at the hands of the Russians. He was left to take care of his brother's four children and his only wish was to get his revenge. He could not marry because his brother's children would see him love his own children more than them. He has come to tell this story because he has no one else to talk to. What he wants to say, is that not all Chechens are resistance fighters or victims. The Chechen militia can be as cruel as the Russian mercenaries. War changes people.

There are many important insights in this story. First, the pain in the eyes of the man in the militia uniform and the man's need to share his story is yet another example of a Chechen man sharing publicly his intimate feelings. Second, this story reveals the complexity of enmities: how someone will assist the enemy in order to save his own kind. Third, this story reveals much about love and loss. Terloeva says that in that 25-year-old man's body she saw the soul of a 100-year-old man. Terloeva validates the man's experiences like she validates the Russian officer's experiences. The people in Terloeva's stories escape stilling – they are not simply victims or perpetrators.

Zina and Deni Will Have Each Other

While Terloeva was studying in Paris, she met other Chechens who often talked about the war. In the autumn of 2004, she talked with a young man called Soulemaine, who proposed that, for once, they would talk about something happy. "The world can smile at us too! Even in war time!" (Terloeva 2006). Soulemaine shares a story about a divinely beautiful woman, the "heroine of the story." This story touched me so deeply it inspired several performances. Despite all the loss, love can find its way through war.

Oh, Zina, she is beautiful. It is a day of celebration and her face is one big smile and the spring wind touches her dress. It looks like a typical wedding except …

Zina is not leaving her parent's house, but the prison gates of Rostov.

But do not feel blue. For this is a story about love inside the prison walls.
Can you imagine!

While in prison the lovers don't meet, but their words meet. They fall in love by writing each other letters. Secretly, discretely.

When Zina walks out, Deni has already been released. Waiting for her.

What a happy story! It's the beginning of the second Chechen war but Zina and Deni will have each other.

In autumn 1999, an anti-terrorist operation was implemented resulting in the erroneous imprisonment of ordinary Chechens. Zina was the only Chechen woman taken to Rostov prison where Soulemaine was incarcerated. Along with two other men, Deni and Yusup, Soulemaine quickly heard the news about Zina. The men decided to contact her to protect her so that she would not feel lonely. The prisoners passed secret messages through small holes. This is how they were able to establish and keep contact with Zina without ever meeting her in person. But for Deni, Zina became someone more important, and soon all the prison knew about their romance. Deni's brother outside the prison provided him with pens and paper, and money to bribe the messengers. Deni did not reveal to his brother that he was in love, because he was already being teased by others who said, "Maybe she is ugly." But Deni would reply, "She is not ugly, and even if she was, I will still marry her."

Deni kept writing but his brother finally managed to pay for his release. He asked to be left there for another month because Zina had another 30 days left of her sentence. Deni could not go against his brother who insisted he leave the prison right away. But he wanted to stay. Returning from the visiting room, Deni finally saw Zina being escorted by the guards. She was beautiful, like Deni knew she would be. He sent her his last letter, a marriage proposal for the day she would be released from prison and Zina answered "yes." They married, and had children.

Here is a politics of love in the war context, in which love is found in an unusual place. Love gives hope, and Zina's

and Deni's story is what the young need to hear when they live with the scars of war. Here is a politics of love in which gendered expectations make way for the feeling of emotions. The men in Terloeva's stories talk about heartache, and the women are not women to whom marriage happens. Even Bella's story portrays how tradition is negotiated when she reflects on how she and Ramzan should behave but how their feelings could still result in a happy end.

War transforms a person, and this transformation is fundamental in building and dismantling structures of war and peace. *Love transforms a person*, and this transformation is relevant collectively. The ways relationships are structured in societies are deeply political, and often violent. Yet it is love that is broad and open-minded about others that is transformative. It is love in multitude (Hardt and Negri 2004) and love as in-betweenness (Choi 2013). The story of Ali and Ceda does not have a happy ending, but the letter Ali writes expresses the spirituality of love. Love in his letter is not a drug, or a dependency, but a connection between individuals. Ali reveals his innermost self and expresses his debt of gratitude to Ceda, even if he is unable to change.

The aesthetics of Terloeva's narrative is what Choi (2013: 130) describes as "aesthetics that disrupts the easy alignment of bodies, objects, dreams and promises." Terloeva's book situates love in the centre of experience, even in war time. Love is not a marginal narrative. Through the complexity of love in war time, Terloeva demonstrates a queering love, to which Choi points, between embrace and standing alone. Embrace is but a fleeting moment, and by attending to the fluctuation between embrace and loneliness, Terloeva makes love central to understanding lived experiences in war. In Terloeva's stories, the loss and vulnerability of love is a constant.

Thinking of love in its multitude, there seems to be an entire national narrative of Chechen-ness built upon the loss of love, and the rebuilding of love. There is never that perfect union of the imagined community, yet love gives the necessary hope in the darkest of times. Love is always accompanied by the closeness of loss – death having her share. In her openness to otherness, Terloeva is at the intersection between love and compassion. When she is mindful of the Russian officer, listening to his stories, she needs to negotiate with her love for her people and the loss she has witnessed.

When Milana Terloeva returns to Chechnya from her studies in France, she sees fear and silence. The local militia is terrorising the population and unlike during the bombings, when the good and the bad were on different sides, the (post-)war is maybe even worse than the war. It is the *Chechenisation* of the conflict. Clean-ups continue, and it feels like the rule of Stalin to her. Corr- uption and the criminality of President Kadyrov are not spoken of. One wrong gesture or word, and the person disappears. Terloeva worries how the children in Chechnya will grow up, when war is all they have seen. For them, war is the normal. Will they know peace and freedom?

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