

This is the accepted manuscript of the article, which has been published in *Peacebuilding*. 2019, 7(2), 146-159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1590081>

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**Funding details:** This research was made possible by the Academy of Finland grant number 297053.

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MUNDANE PEACE AND THE POLITICS OF VULNERABILITY: A NONSOLID  
FEMINIST RESEARCH AGENDA

ABSTRACT: This article draws on critical feminist theorising and post-colonial theories of the body, relatedness, vulnerability and the everyday to offer an alternative framing of peace and suggest a new research agenda. Although there are multiple ontologies in feminist peace theory, the concern for marginalisation and the understanding of the relational and vulnerable nature of human existence are the key contributions that enable a new take on mundane practices of peace. The article argues that traditional ways of thinking about peace ignore the notion that peace is best studied as an event that arises within mundane and corporeal encounters. Furthermore, the article provides a novel take on eventness that centers peace in the lives of ordinary people, and develops the concept of *choreography* as a means to grasp the richness and fluidity of the everyday techniques of interaction that are relevant for peace. In the proposed research agenda, peace is not a property or structure of a given society, but rather something that is expressed through acts and points of contact between variously

situated bodies – namely, in corporeal events where accountability, recognition and acknowledgement unavoidably emerge.

KEY WORDS: peace, mundane, gender, feminist theory, vulnerability

## **Introduction**

In this article, I draw on critical feminist theorising of the body, relatedness, vulnerability and the everyday to offer an alternative framing of peace and suggest a new research agenda. Furthermore, I provide a novel construct of eventness by which I center peace in the lives of ordinary people. I also introduce the concept of *choreography* to grasp the richness and fluidity of the everyday techniques of interaction that are relevant for peace. Ultimately, I propose a critical research agenda whose ambition is to *re-theorise peace by locating it within social and political contexts and examining the practices and eventness of mundane peace, thereby defying the dominant non-situated and abstract conceptions of peace*. This proposal is a critical response to the abstract and ontologically solid nature of peace approaches in general, as well as to the limited way in which critical peace approaches seek to theorise the local as an antidote to abstractions.

My aim is to demonstrate that the microsociology of corporeality, vulnerability and relatedness enables a renewed grasp of the study of peace. The research agenda I

suggest departs radically company from the mainstream – in which peace is conceptualised as abstract, solid or the ‘opposite of violence’ – by locating the substantial and situated nature of peace within social and political life. Ultimately, the agenda seeks to cultivate – in the spirit of non-representational theory, which goes beyond representation and focuses on embodied experience – an affinity for the analysis of ‘events, practices, assemblages, structures of feeling, and the backgrounds of everyday life against which relations unfold in their myriad potentials’.<sup>1</sup> To accomplish this, I introduce a phenomenological register that moves away from totalising perspectives towards microsociological approaches and an examination of the mundane practices where lived experience offers a rich fabric of corporeal presence, relationality and affect. I argue that the radical and transformative aspects of everyday life can be examined by exposing the extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary and therewith the transformative potential embedded in the everyday.

### **Studying peace as a mundane practice**

In philosophy, international relations, and peace and conflict studies, peace has seldom been theorised in ways that would contextualise it – which is to say, socially and politically situate it. Nor has peace been discussed without it becoming an auxiliary concept of war or conflict. Peace often seems to be an elusive concept, which is

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1. Philip Vannini, ‘Non-representational ethnography: new ways of animating lifeworlds’, *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 2 (2015): 317. See also Hanna Partis-Jennings in this issue.

deployed to ‘bludgeon humanity with its extraordinariness, forever out of reach, illusive by definition, a dream too flatteringly sweet to be substantial’, as described by Rose Mary Shinko,<sup>2</sup> or a concept so ontologically solid and attached to war that no debate beyond theorising violence is required, as Oliver Richmond<sup>3</sup> argues. It is this perceived extraordinariness and ontological solidness of peace, as well as its coupling with war and violence, that my article seeks to challenge. In my view, not even the Galtungian-inspired conceptualisations of positive and negative peace break fully with solidity and bring peace and its myriad forms back to the sphere of everyday life.<sup>4</sup> I seek to contest the views in which peace is removed from its corporeality, experienced qualities and everydayness – and therefore from its mundane visibility.

I establish the foundations of my argument not only on the phenomenological orientation (which is discussed further below), but also on feminist peace and conflict studies, which emphasise the relationality of human existence. To elaborate the importance of the body and its relationality for the study of peace, this article draws from those strains of feminist and post-colonial theorising<sup>5</sup> that are marked by a strong

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2. Rose Mary Shinko, ‘Agonistic Peace: A Postmodern Reading’, *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2008): 489.

3. Oliver Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5.

4. Johan Galtung, ‘Twenty-Five Years of Peace Research: Ten Challenges and Some Responses’, *Journal of Peace Research* 22, no. 2 (1985): 141-158.

5. See, for example, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, ‘The Economy of Violence: Black Bodies and the Unspeakable Terror’, in *Gender and Catastrophe*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London and New

commitment to both corporeality and to the everyday. I argue that the mainstream theorising of peace, particularly as presented in the gatekeeper journals the *Journal of Peace Research* and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, has dismissed this tradition and hardly ever acknowledged feminist or post-colonial knowledge claims.<sup>6</sup> By

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York: Zed Books, 1997), 171-185; Urvashi Butalia, 'A Necessary Journey: A Story of Friendship and Reconciliation', *Alternatives* 27, no. 2 (2002): 147-164; Parin Dossa, 'The Body Remembers: A Migratory Tale of Social Suffering and Witnessing', *International Journal of Mental Health* 3, no. 3 (2003): 50-73; Kavita Daiya, "'Honourable Resolutions": Gendered Violence, Ethnicity, and the Nation', *Alternatives* 27, no. 2 (2002): 219-247; Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Ranjarit Guha, 'The Small Voices of History', in eds. Amin Shahid and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Subaltern Studies IX, Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-12; Hirofumi Hayashi, 'Disputes in Japan over the Japanese "Comfort Women" System and Its Perception in History', *The Annals of the Academy of the American Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 123-132; Jaspir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017); Nthabiseng Motsemme, 'The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silence at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Current Sociology* 52, no. 5 (2007): 909-932.

6. Matti Jutila, Samu Pehkonen and Tarja Väyrynen, 'Resuscitating a Discipline: An Agenda for Critical Peace Research', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2008): 623-40; Tiina Vaittinen, *The Global Biopolitical Economy of*

drawing from early feminist peace and conflict studies, post-colonial theory, feminist theorising on vulnerability and critical theorising on the everyday, the proposed agenda brings forth the sensuous, embodied, non-cognitive, pre-intentional and common-sensical nature of everyday life as well as the lived experience of conflict, violence, peace and peacebuilding. In sum, I will argue that peace is an event that comes into being through mundane and corporeal encounters.

The everyday life that I suggest be studied is the world of shared typifications and cultural material. It is also a world in which the subject has a living presence through and in her body. In the phenomenological tradition, Edmund Husserl considered the body the zero point of our orientation, the point around which our world is centred.<sup>7</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, emphasised that we gain access to the world through the body, and hence our experience of the everyday depends upon a ‘lived body’.<sup>8</sup> In this vein of thought, the symbolic order is constituted through the body, as the body’s being-in-the-world is at once mediated through both physical embodied presence and cultural meanings.<sup>9</sup> Both our living presence as sentient beings

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*Needs: Transnational Entanglements between Ageing Finland and the Global Nurses Reserve of the Philippines* (Tampere: Tampere Peace Research Institute, 2017).

7. Edmund Husserl, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 20.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 88–92.

9. For a summary see Nick Crossley, ‘Merleau-Ponty, the Elusive Body and Carnal Sociology’ *Body and Society* 1, no. 1(1995): 44–5.

and our apprehension of the symbolic actualises in our bodies – or rather, in our relational bodies, as the body is always already in relation to other bodies.

The study of the relational body and the mundane practices of peace require, in my view, research approaches and designs that appreciate the complexity of corporeal existence and encounters. In order to understand the workings of power, institutions and bodies, I use a methodology of *diffractive reading*, in which new insights are built by carefully reading for differences that matter, while recognising that at the core of the analysis is ethics.<sup>10</sup> Diffractive reading enables the reader to determine where problematic reductions and assimilations of difference have taken place. By using a diffractive reading strategy, the researcher can engage with different disciplinary practices and blur the boundaries between different disciplines and theories. In addition to its emphasis on difference, the diffractive method also implies a ‘curiosity’<sup>11</sup> on the part of the researcher: it requires *cura* – that is, care, concern and attention to detail. Curiosity calls for immersing oneself in a variety of research material, including

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10. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 93. Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 273.

11. Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist, Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004). For a similar point on curiosity and the usage of a variety of research material see Catherine Baker in this issue.



interviews, life stories, visual materials and faithful descriptive works. The curious interest in the details of how individuals and groups interact allows researchers, as Robert Latham writes, to examine ‘how institutions function and operate, . . . how belief and ethos bring the world to movement, and . . . how the materiality of the world is profoundly bound up with these affective elements’.<sup>12</sup>

Diffraction reading can also provoke new thoughts and theories and allow the researcher to examine how such thoughts and theories can be made or remade so that they matter more towards inclusion than towards exclusion and the creation or maintenance of boundaries. Since active engagement with the world has always been a part of the ethos of peace and conflict studies, diffractive reading is well suited to the field: seeing, thinking and researching diffractively implies a self-accountable, critical and responsible entanglement with the world.

To exemplify the study of mundane events of peace and to provide responsible entanglement with the world, I will present narratives that I have collected and examined in my earlier research. It is important to note that while I use narratives as empirical material when employing diffractive methodology, the narratives as such do not form the data of my study in that I would seek to produce knowledge claims on their truthfulness or accuracy. Rather, the narratives and the vignettes I have written about them are embodied data in the sense that they bear witness to the affective and corporeal elements of the cases and events examined.<sup>13</sup> The original empirical material

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12. Alan Latham, ‘Guest editorial’, *Environment and Planning* 35 (2003): 1904.

13. Cf. Valerie Walkerdine, ‘Communal beingness and affect: An exploration of

collected for the vignettes is audiovisual (e.g. documentaries, images) and textual (e.g. narratives in media, interviews) and was collected from a variety of sources.

### **Spatialising the ‘local’ and producing the distant ‘other’**

Although the scholars of the so-called local turn in peacebuilding are also critical of ontological solidness and the lack of context in theorising peace, their position on the everyday and the local is still too restricted for my agenda. In general, local turn scholarship engages with the peace implications of neo-liberal governance, which according to many scholars writing in this tradition, seeks to reproduce and impose Western models and to reconstruct Westphalian frameworks of state sovereignty. The liberal framework of individual rights, winner-takes-all elections and neoliberal free market economic programmes are seen to be at the core of such models.<sup>14</sup> With their critique of Westphalian frameworks, local turn scholars aim at dismantling the Western bias in both theorising and practicing peace. In order to elaborate the problems of liberal peace, Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond argue that peace is simply not as neo-liberal as neo-liberal institutions would like it to be. Rather, peace is always hybrid where the local meets the international, and furthermore, it is often contested, since the form of peace implemented through the practices of neo-liberal governance is moulded

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trauma in an ex-industrial community’, *Body & Society* 16 no. 1 (2010): 91–116.

14. David Chandler, ‘The uncritical critique of “liberal peace”’, *Review of International Studies* 36, no. S1 (2010): 137–55.

in local contexts in ways that challenge the neo-liberal aspirations outlined above. In short, according to Mac Ginty and Richmond, the imposition of the Western peacebuilding and peace model is doomed to fail in non-Western contexts.<sup>15</sup>

Subaltern views of peace are important for local turn scholarship since subaltern actors possess everyday agency in either promoting peace or resisting top-down neoliberal peacebuilding attempts. The everyday is fundamental for this branch of thinking, as the ‘pursuit of everyday tasks may allow individuals and communities in villages, valleys and city neighborhoods to develop common bonds with members of other ethnic or religious groups, to demystify “the other” and to reconstruct contextual legitimacy’.<sup>16</sup> Given the agency that the subaltern exercises, the local turn responds by focusing on everyday life and the forms of transversal solidarity and grassroots mobilisation that enable peacebuilding. In other words, the assumption is that a vibrant civil society and an everyday solidarity cutting across ethnic and religious affiliations is the guarantee of peace. The local turn argues that the promoters of liberal peace fail to recognise this type of agency and solidarity in their focus on elite-lead and top-down approaches to peacebuilding and thereby miss the opportunity for sustainable and local peace.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace’, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 764.

16. *Ibid.*, 769.

17. See e.g. Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Indigenous Peace-Making versus the Liberal Peace’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 2 (2008): 139–63; Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011); Mac Ginty and Richmond, ‘The Local Turn’; Oliver Richmond, ‘A post-liberal peace: Eirenism and

Although the local turn functions as an important critique of neoliberal governance and peace, for my research agenda, where the aim is to capture the corporeality and eventness of mundane peace, the discussion and understanding of the everyday offered by local turn scholarship is limited. The everyday implies for me more than the resilience and resistant potential of the ‘local’ and of ‘ordinary people’ in the face of

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everyday’, *Review of International Studies*, 35, no. 3 (2009): 557–80; Oliver Richmond, ‘The romanticisation of the local: welfare, culture and peacebuilding’, *International Spectator* 44, no. 1 (2009): 149–69; Oliver Richmond, ‘Beyond local: ownership and participation in the architecture of international peacebuilding’, *Ethnopolitics*, no. 4 (2012): 354–75. For works that summarise and/or criticise the local turn, see Séverine Autesserre, ‘Going Micro: Emerging and Future Peacekeeping Research’, *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 4 (2014): 492–500; Annica Björkdahl and Kristine Höglund, ‘Precarious peacebuilding: friction in global–local encounters’, *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 3 (2013): 289–99; Tanja Hohe, ‘Clash of Paradigms: International Administrative Local Political Legitimacy in East Timor’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24, no. 3 (2002), 569–89; Hanna Leonardsson, ‘The “local turn” in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding’, *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (2015): 825–39; Gearoid Millar, *An Ethnographic Approach to Peacebuilding: Understanding Local Experiences in Transitional States* (London: Routledge, 2014); Gearoid Millar, J. van der Lijn and W. Verkoren ‘Peacebuilding plans and local reconfigurations: Frictions between imported processes and indigenous practices’, *International Peacekeeping* 20 no. 2 (2013): 137–43.

neo-liberal peacebuilding, as it is largely understood within local turn scholarship. From my perspective, the local turn's interest in the everyday is too narrow, as it has not been translated into a sustained consideration of the productiveness of mundane practices.

Where I most radically depart company from local turn scholarship is in its tendency to define the everyday with reference to the subaltern's spatiality – namely, through the spatial location where the subaltern is assumed to reside and through the forms of everyday life that are thought to characterise her.<sup>18</sup> In the local turn, the subaltern and

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18. Although Roger Mac Ginty suggests that there is need to move away from the overtly territorial understanding of peace, he does not develop the idea further. He writes that 'if we understand the local as de-territorialised, networked and constituted by people and activity rather than place, then standard meanings of peace require reappraisal'. Roger Mac Ginty, 'Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 36 no. 5 (2015): 840–56. What is implied in the quote is that the local is synonymous with networked activity and transversal solidarity, rather than spatial location. As will be argued later in the article, this does not yet capture the everydayness and eventness of peace that are central to my feminist agenda. For feminist scholarship that explores transversal activism and/or practices of solidarity in contexts of conflict or peacebuilding, see Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 1998); Maja Korac, 'Women Organizing Against Ethnic Nationalism and War in the Post-Yugoslav States,' in *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across Warzones*, eds. Wenona Giles, Malathi de Alwis, Edith Klein and

her everyday life are projected to be somewhere ‘out there’: in a distant location of violent political conflict or far-away post-conflict zone. This is, in my view, a traditional Orientalist projection, in which the spatially projected ‘local’ world and its everyday are conceived of as radically different from our own.<sup>19</sup> In this projection, the local and the subaltern are constructed as distant ‘others’, whose emancipatory potential the Western and male local turn scholar is concerned with. This is a reminder of the colonial condition, in which white men seek to save ‘brown women from brown men’.<sup>20</sup> To avoid this, it is important to recognise that the everyday and the ordinary are constituted through enactments – that is, they are corporeal rather than spatial and not necessarily the ‘subaltern’ in the Orientalist sense, with its implication of non-Western populations. The focus on embodied enactments enables us to retain the local whilst distancing ourselves from the spatial hegemony of the distant ‘other’.

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Neluka Silva (Toronto: *Between the Lines*, 2003), 25–33; Maria O’Reilly, *Gendered Agency in War and Peace: Gender Justice and Women’s Activism in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

19. On ‘othering’, see also Thania Paffenholz, ‘International peacebuilding goes local: analysing Lederach’s conflict transformation theory and its ambivalent encounter with 20 years of practice’, *Peacebuilding* 2, no. 1 (2014): 11-27; Thania Paffenholz, ‘Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research’, *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (2015): 857-74; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory*, (London: SAGE, 2010).

20. Gayatri Spivak, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 93.

## **Feminist peace and conflict studies**

As noted earlier, feminist theorising has a strong commitment to corporeality and the everyday (in a non-territorial sense) and therefore functions as a starting point for my agenda. Furthermore, this corpus of thinking establishes a strong connection between corporeal ontology and peace epistemology. Radical feminist scholarship is instrumental, in my view, when investigating the body, the ordinary and the everyday.<sup>21</sup> There are multiple ontologies in feminist peace theory, but the concern for marginalization and the understanding of the corporeal and relational nature of human existence are the key contributions that enable a new take on the corporeality of peace.<sup>22</sup>

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21. For recent alternative research agendas see, for example, Catia Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance' *Peace & Change* 33, no. 3 (2006): 333–367; Catia Confortini and Abigail Ruane, 'Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* as weaving epistemology for *justpeace*', *Journal of International Political Theory* 10, no. 1 (2013): 70–93; Vaittinen, *Global Biopolitical*. See also Rachel Julian et al. in this issue.

22. See e.g. Elise Boulding, *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Elise Boulding, 'Peace behaviours in various societies', in *From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace* (Paris: Unesco, 1996), 31–53; Birgit Brock-Utne, *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989);

Particularly important for my proposed nonsolid feminist research agenda is the theorising of Elise Boulding and Sara Ruddick. Boulding's focus on peace as a daily process situates peace within the ordinary and its corporeal rhythms. Her work emphasises the personal and interpersonal promotion of peace, which for her involves shaping and reshaping understandings and behaviours to adapt to a constantly changing world and sustain well-being for all.<sup>23</sup> Boulding's theory is instructive for my agenda

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Cynthia Enloe, 'Margins, silences and bottom rungs: How to overcome the underestimation of power in the study of international relations', in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186–202; Tony Jenkins and Betty Reardon, 'Gender and Peace: Towards a Gender-inclusive and Holistic Perspective', in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (New York: Routledge, 2007), 209–31; Sara Ruddick, 'The rationality of care', in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, eds. JB Elshtain and S Tobias (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 1990), 229–54; Sara Ruddick, 'New feminist work on knowledge, reason and objectivity'. *Hypatia* 8, no. 4 (1993): 140–149; Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995); Sara Ruddick, 'Making connections between parenting and peace', *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 3, no. 2 (2001): 7–20.

23. Boulding, 'Peace behaviours', 31-53. On corporeal rhythms, see also Tarja Väyrynen and Eeva Puumala, 'Bodies of War, the Past Continuous, and (Ar)rhythmic Experiences', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 40, no. 3–4 (2015): 237–250.



as it emphasises the praxis of peace, in which the daily ‘doing’ of peace is fundamental. In addition, Boulding’s views concur with the critical and phenomenological thinking on the everyday, which argues that our existence in the world and our everyday life is embodied and relational – that is, human existence is based on our dependency on others and is hence always multiple. Her view resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s notions of intercorporeality and carnal intersubjectivity, which denote a primordial carnal bond between human beings.<sup>24</sup> According to this view, we are always open to each other, and always with others. In my view, Boulding’s theorising provides a new opening for a radical theory of peace that does not limit itself to civil society and its resistant and emancipatory potential. Rather, radical theory such as Boulding’s is ‘attuned to all facets of human existence: the poetic, irrational, corporeal, ethical and affective’.<sup>25</sup>

In the following vignette, I will demonstrate how the war reveals the relational nature of being in the world. My colleague Eeva Puumala had interviewed her grandmother about her life on the homefront during the Second World War. We wrote about the experience:

#### VIGNETTE 1

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24. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 19, 173; Crossley, ‘Merleau-Ponty, the Elusive Body’.

25. Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 19.

At many points, Nan's story takes up acts of solidarity. Although the actual battles took place far from her home, there were prison camps for Soviet prisoners of war also in the Western-most Finland. Nan tells: 'My elder sister Eeva was a maid in Köyliö in the Kepola mansion, which was located near a camp for Soviet prisoners of war. The prisoners were kept within barbed wire fences, and they hadn't much to eat. Eeva told that when she passed by the camp, the prisoners used to ask for bread, liepuska. A couple of times she took bread to them, but Eeva was always afraid of being caught. She stole the bread from the house where she worked'. After describing her sister's act, Nan exclaims 'But it is terrible for the prisoners also!' Then she elaborates: 'And they were innocent, just like the Finnish men who were merely told to go and fight. They had no choice, either one'.<sup>26</sup>

The vignette demonstrates the relational nature of being in the world and the radical potential that can emerge from it – namely, the daily practices of peace. The encounter between Nan's sister and the Soviet prisoner of war is ultimately an event of acknowledgement and recognition: she recognises him and feels accountable. An affect of 'response-ability'<sup>27</sup>, an instantaneous accountability, emerges. The vignette shows that peaceful relationality and response-ability can emerge in the midst of enmity, and as such supports Ruddick's observation that peace is a matter of creating relationships

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26. Väyrynen and Puumala, 'Bodies of War', 242.

27. Karen Barad, 'On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am.'. *Differences* 23, no. 3 (2012): 208.

in which people feel that they are respected. At the core of Ruddick's observation is her conception of motherly care as the opposite of the practices of violence and war. Care, according to Ruddick, is always a relation, and as such it is also a foundation for knowing the world: we come to know the world through corporeal, mundane and relational practices – by being an embodied part of the world. For Ruddick, the relational practices of mothering can generate advance peacemaking through the practices and knowledge.<sup>28</sup>

In connecting care and ways of knowing, Ruddick establishes a link between corporeal ontology and epistemology. Catia Confortini and Abigail Ruane expand upon Ruddick's thinking on practices of care and knowledge production by arguing that mothering and the knowledge generated through it engage us in the practices of de-centering ourselves. De-centering implies both locating oneself within a situation and, at the same time, stepping out of it. This double move allows us to hold someone else in personhood. Confortini and Ruane write that we need 'participatory epistemology, or an understanding of how actors develop knowledge through their practices of engagement with others'.<sup>29</sup> Knowing, in this view, is not a skill possessed by a detached, unembodied observer, but grows from interactions between multiple beings and bodies living and acting together in a world that is in a constant process of becoming.<sup>30</sup>

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28. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, 219.

29. Confortini and Ruane, 'Sara Ruddick's Maternal', 71.

30. *Ibid.*, 80–97.

In addition to care as a motherly practice, I also view care as an ‘intercarnal relation’, a practice of engagement with a corporeal other. I concur with Michael Gardiner who argues that care – like Nan’s sister surreptitiously giving bread to the Soviet prisoners of war – is ultimately an ordinary gesture of the everyday, an unspoken desire of the body and a ‘microscopic’ expression of solidarity ‘where the pre-emptive promise of the everyday continues to persist, in the interstices of more formal social relations and organizational structures’.<sup>31</sup> However, the everyday is not solely the realm of solidarity, but also involves the distribution of violence, torture and massacres, practices which haunt and shape the everyday and its relations.<sup>32</sup> By drawing from the feminist peace studies literature and by paying attention to the sensuous, embodied, non-cognitive, pre-intentional and common-sensical nature of everyday life and lived experience – which are also elaborated in post-colonial literature<sup>33</sup> – we can uncover the epistemological potential of thinking through the everyday.<sup>34</sup>

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31. Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, 17. See also Tiina Vaittinen’s concept ‘care as a corporeal relation’ in Tiina Vaittinen, ‘The power of the vulnerable body: A new political understanding of care’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17, no. 1 (2015): 100-118; Vaittinen, *The Global Biopolitical*. See also Tiina Vaittinen et al. in this issue.

32. Das, *Life and Words*.

33. See footnote 5.

34. Cf. J.D. Dewsbury, ‘Performative, Non-representational and Affect Based Research: Seven Injunctions’ in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, eds. Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang and Linda McDowell (London: SAGE, 2010): 31–54; Vannini, ‘Non-representational ethnography’, 319.

## Complementing the feminist agenda

As outlined above, early feminist peace and conflict researchers, such as Elise Boulding and Sara Ruddick, insisted on the importance of the relational body when studying peace. I also argued above that local turn scholarship is limited in its understanding of the everyday and mundane practices of peace. In my view, both the relational body and mundane practices require a more nuanced reading of power, governance and the vulnerabilities that practices of power produce, since the body is always both ‘active and acted upon’.<sup>35</sup> In short, practices of governance that are targeted at the body also produce the body.<sup>36</sup> Yet the fleshy living body also has

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35. Crossley. ‘Merleau-Ponty and the Elusive’, 51. For a similar argument see Nicolas Lemay-Hebert and Stefanie Kappler in this issue.

36. Michel Foucault’s early work shows how the body and its operations have been broken down by the many historical regimes that produced disciplinary inscriptions upon the body. Complex and historical social practices, i.e. technologies of power, have been at work on the human body, moulding and forcing the body in ways that make it subject to disciplinary forms of conduct. In his later work, Foucault complements his view of the ‘body infused with power’ with a consideration of power in terms of populations, namely, in terms of biopower. Biopower is ultimately utilized ostensibly in the protection of life. He writes that biopower is ‘an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations’. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, (New York:

agency, which makes it an ‘engaged body-subject’.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the body is never a passive target of practices of governance: it also has a capacity to escape these practices.<sup>38</sup>

Eighty-year-old Kaisu told her story in a Finnish documentary film in 2010.<sup>39</sup> She was among the Finnish women accused of having fraternised with German soldiers during the Second World War. She moved to Germany with the withdrawing German troops and was repatriated to Finland after the war. The following is my description of Kaisu’s narrative:

## VIGNETTE 2

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Vintage Books, 1990), 140; Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64.

37. Crossley. ‘Merleau-Ponty and the Elusive’, 101.

38. Eeva Puumala, Tarja Väyrynen, Anitta Kynsilehto and Samu Pehkonen, ‘Events of the Body Politic: A Nancian Reading of Asylum Seekers’ Bodily Choreographies and Resistance’, *Body & Society* 17, no. 4 (2011): 83–104; Tarja Väyrynen, Eeva Puumala, Samu Pehkonen, Anitta Kynsilehto and Tiina Vaittinen, *Choreographies of Resistance: Mobile Bodies and Relational Politics* (London, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).

39. Virpi Suutari, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, CD, (Helsinki: For Real Productions, 2010).

Kaisu was among the women whose bodies were securitised and transferred to the camp immediately on their arrival on the Finnish soil. She calls it the ‘quarantine camp’ as if there had been something contagious in her body that needed purification. Hence medicalisation also takes hold of her body even in her most intimate memories. Her young body had been securitised and medicalised as it was seen to constitute the contagious risk of knowing too much. In the documentary, her body is stiff, but strong when she sits on the porch of the barracks, in which she thinks she was incarcerated sixty years ago. She is smoking a cigarette with a firm hand. Her body and her solemn voice convey her strength. Kaisu recalls how the Security Police had suspected her of being a German mole. She is very proud of the fact that she did not cry during the interrogations: ‘In front of Hautojärvi [the interrogation officer] I did not cry’. In the narrative, her resistance is not just geared towards the interrogation officer, but also towards the Finnish state, whose security apparatus suspected and humiliated her. In her upright body, she resists the forces that sought to silence her.<sup>40</sup>

When considering mundane peace, Judith Butler’s observation that one way of managing populations is to distribute vulnerability among people unequally is

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40. Tarja Väyrynen, ‘Muted National Memory: When the “Hitler’s Brides” Speak the Truth’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 16, no. 2 (2014): 227.

crucial.<sup>41</sup> Biopower – power that is about managing the births, deaths, reproduction and illnesses of a population and which is ultimately utilised by the state ostensibly in the protection of life – establishes a norm that allows for measurement, evaluation and hierarchical ranking. As such, it constitutes a mechanism of control and distributes vulnerability and invulnerability among the population.<sup>42</sup> In Kaisu’s case, her body was rendered vulnerable – shaped as that of an outcast – through the mechanisms of governance in the post-war Finnish national order. The vignette demonstrates that power is multiple and relational, as it establishes socio-historical relationships that render some bodies more vulnerable than others. Biopower increases efficiency and capacity at the level of individual bodies and whole populations, yet it also distributes vulnerability and invulnerability. This is particularly acute during times of economic, social and political transformation, such as peacebuilding and reconstruction, when social relations must be re-imagined and re-structured.

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41. Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London, New York: Verso, 2009). Feminist security studies have also recognized vulnerability as characterising human existence and rendering it insecure on many occasions. See e.g. Annick Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2011).

42. In addition to the governance-induced vulnerability that emerges from being embedded in specific structures of power, there is also another type of vulnerability: the vulnerability that is a basic condition of life. Judith Butler, *Precarious life: The power of mourning and violence* (London, New York: Verso, 2004); Butler, *Frames of War*, 30.



Butler theorises peace and argues that peace is a way of indicating one's dependency on others and being acknowledged. She not only theorises peace as individual vulnerability but says that it needs to be institutionalised:

I think that peace is the active and difficult resistance to the temptation of war; it is the prerogative and the obligation of the injured. Peace is something that has to be vigilantly maintained; it is a vigilance, and it involves temptation, and it does not mean we as human beings are not aggressive. It does not mean that we do not have murderous impulses. This is a mistaken way of understanding non-violence. ... Peace is a certain resistance to the terrible satisfactions of war. It's a commitment to living with a certain kind of vulnerability to others and susceptibility to being wounded that actually gives our individual lives meaning. .... I think it needs to be institutionalised. It needs to be part of a community ethos. I think in fact it needs to be part of an entire foreign policy.<sup>43</sup>

For Butler, therefore, the recognition of vulnerability can lead to more adequate, peaceful responses to different forms of violence and can counter the tendency to react to violence with more violence.<sup>44</sup> Alyson Cole has noted that Butler's view on

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43. Judith Butler, 'Interview with Jill Stauffer', *Believer*, May 2003, [http://www.believmag.com/issues/200305/?read=interview\\_butler](http://www.believmag.com/issues/200305/?read=interview_butler)

44. Butler, *Precarious life*, 28–9.

vulnerability paves the way to ‘nonviolent interaffectivity’.<sup>45</sup> Vulnerability does not, in this view, imply weakness or inferiority; rather, it is a human condition, ‘a basic kind of openness to being affected and affecting in both positive and negative ways, which can take diverse forms in different social situations (for example, bodily, psychological, economic, emotional, and legal vulnerabilities)’, as Erin Gilson summarises Butler’s views.<sup>46</sup> Understanding oneself as vulnerable involves an understanding of the self as shaped by its relationships to others, the world, power and its environs. This has, in my view, implications for the everyday, as our embodiment and vulnerability are embedded in the everyday – in its historicity, forms of power, materiality and concreteness.

Vulnerability is not just a way of referring to the capacity to be wounded, however. It is also a ‘way of indicating one’s dependency on another, a set of institutions, or a circumambient world to be well, to be safe, to be acknowledged’, argues Butler, in the spirit of early feminist peace and conflict researchers’ work.<sup>47</sup> While the vulnerable body is often thought to be private and non-political, when in contact with other bodies, *the politics of vulnerability* comes to the fore – firstly, in the form of the unequal

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45. Alyson Cole, ‘All of Us Are Vulnerable, But Some Are More Vulnerable than Others: The Political Ambiguity of Vulnerability Studies, an Ambivalent Critique’, *Critical Horizons* 17, no. 2 (2016): 262.

46. Erin Gilson, ‘Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression’, *Hypatia* 26, no. 2 (2011), 310.

47. Judith Butler, ‘Confessing a passionate state – Judith Butler im Interview’, *Feministische Studien* 2 (2011): 200.

distribution of vulnerabilities, and secondly, in the form of accountability, recognition and acknowledgement. In other words, the way in which vulnerability is recognised, accounted for, acknowledged and responded to is at the core of the political. ‘The political’ is hence an existential relation that we all live out, on a daily basis, in ways that create, re-produce, transcend and challenge differences, hierarchies, discriminations and vulnerabilities between subjectivities and political positions. Furthermore, vulnerable bodies are agentic, as receptivity, accountability and vulnerability are actually the presuppositions of agency, not its opposites.<sup>48</sup> In short, vulnerability is enabling for our being in the world; that is, vulnerability is a ‘condition of potential that makes possible other conditions’,<sup>49</sup> including peace. It can be argued that Kaisu’s bold appearance in the documentary film was a political event of claiming back her silenced body and evoking recognition of the existence of the bodies of her kind. Her vulnerable body thereby carried an agentic capacity capable of challenging the existing hierarchies, discriminations and differences.

Although vulnerability can be seen as a shared human condition, it is lived and experienced in different ways, as well as distributed unequally, as argued above. The ways in which we live and are affected can be understood only in light of the particularity of embodied, social and mundane experiences. It is in this way that feminist and critical theorising of the body, the everyday and vulnerability open up new pathways to re-theorise peace. Peace is something that becomes expressed and takes place through acts and points of everyday contact between variously situated and

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48. Cf. Cole, ‘All of Us Are Vulnerable’, 268–71.

49. Gilson, ‘Vulnerability, Ignorance’, 310.

variously vulnerable bodies – namely, in corporeal events where accountability, response-ability, recognition and acknowledgement emerge. The pluralistic and critical approaches indicated in my agenda are more sensitive to the changing patterns and dynamics of peace than many abstract, ontologically solid or violence-dependent approaches.

### **The eventness of peace**

The research agenda developed in this article calls for the analysis of events in which recognition and acknowledgement have an emergent potential. As Latham says, social scientists are ‘recognising the need to acknowledge the event-ness of world, along with the profound importance of affect in the unfolding of this event-ness’.<sup>50</sup> In thinking about peace, paying attention to the eventness of the world is useful because it suggests that research should focus on the rhythms and textures of everyday life. In short, everyday life comes into being through events and engages the human being in practical doing.<sup>51</sup> As the self and the other co-mingle in the event of being, the eventness of the world is relational; the self and other remain, however, distinctly ‘incarnated’.<sup>52</sup>

I find it revealing how Kaisu recalls the suffering of the Jewish population she saw

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50. Latham, ‘Guest editorial’, 1902.

51. Cf. Boulding, ‘Peace behaviours’.

52. Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, 47.

when she was in Germany and how the event of co-being emerged. She describes in detail how the Jews were contained in small underground bunkers, and how their bodies were malformed as a result. I interpret Kaisu's experience in the following manner:

### VIGNETTE 3

'I and some other Finnish girls encountered a Jewish woman who wore a yellow patch with the Jewish star. Her eyes were full of anguish and they were begging us to notice that she was indeed wearing the patch'. She wonders what kind of suffering has caused such timidity in a fellow human being. Her voice becomes low and husky when she reminisces the suffering of the others. Her own hardship in war-torn and ravaged Germany seems to have only minor importance compared to the suffering of the Jewish population. When Kaisu mourns the suffering of the others, a splitting of the subject as well as temporality takes place. She is not Kaisu located here and now, but young Kaisu who glimpsed into the void of human existence. She loses her notion of herself as an autonomous subject and in control.<sup>53</sup>

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53. Tarja Väyrynen, 'Re-thinking national temporal orders: the subaltern presence and enactment of the political', *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016): 607–608.

As the vignette of Kaisu retelling her experience in war-torn Germany attests, the event of co-being can have relatively vague temporal and spatial boundaries as they can cross temporal and spatial boundaries.

My notion of ‘event’ in this article bears similarities with Alain Badiou’s: for him, events are gateways to future possibilities and reconfigurings and enable novel modes of being-in-the-world.<sup>54</sup> But while Badiou limits events to rare revolutionary and spectacular moments in history, for me, events are everyday occurrences that open up novel ways of being-in-the-world, just as Kaisu’s encounter with the suffering and vulnerability of the other did for her. More generally, thinking through eventness can, in my view, point peace and conflict studies towards the fleshy and carnal existence from which mundane practices of peace can potentially emerge. By attending to the specifics of particular events and paying attention to detail, the researcher can come to appreciate when and why such mundane activities and encounters matter for peacebuilding, reconciliation and peace.

If the starting point for research is the assumption that peace emerges from *everyday contacts between variously situated and variously vulnerable bodies*, it is necessary to further conceptualise these contacts. My colleagues and I have introduced the notion of choreography to capture the corporeal eventness of everyday contacts. Through the notion of choreography we have sought to capture the affective potential of everyday encounters as they articulate a body’s capacity to communicate and integrate with other bodies. In this sense, bodies coming together form everyday choreographies that are

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54. Alan Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2005).

always social and connecting. Because of its common association with dance, choreography is often understood primarily to signify composing and arranging movement in advance. However, there is another etymology for *choreo*: ‘being in, passing, entering into or holding space’. In our use, choreography indicates practices of being corporeally in space and inhabiting space.<sup>55</sup>

Elsewhere, we have summarised the idea of choreography as follows:

Through choreographies, we examine the oscillation of bodies as lived, experienced, and material configurations, which are simultaneously extremely personal, shared, and relational. The body is always partially marked and already-made-visible, yet simultaneously always in the process of becoming, with other bodies in particular, historically contingent choreographies.<sup>56</sup>

Choreographies do not happen in a vacuum: they are enacted in the corporeal practices people deploy in the everyday to form and maintain movement within practices of power. For the actors, then, choreographies are always partially pre-given, already

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55. Samu Pehkonen, ‘Choreographing the Performance-Audience Interaction’, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 46, no. 6 (2016): 699–722; Eeva Puumala and Samu Pehkonen, ‘Corporeal choreographies between politics and the political: Failed asylum-seekers moving from body politics to bodyspaces’, *International Political Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2010): 50–65; Väyrynen et al., *Choreographies*.

56. Väyrynen et al., *Choreographies*, 11.

planned and presented as fixed lines to be followed – yet the interactional resources of bodies can be used to remould the situation, as my vignettes demonstrate. Looking closer at these everyday techniques of interaction reveals that choreographies are in fact open to surprises and even disturbances, and tend to produce extraordinary acts out of the ordinary.<sup>57</sup>

Because the everyday is made and remade through the changing positions and relations of bodies, choreographies are always situationally enacted in events. As such, choreography allows, in my view, the study of embodied micro-practices of peace. In short, the immediacy of the everyday and its encounters, as well as their relevance for peace, calls for the analysis of events and their corporeal choreographies where acknowledgement and recognition emerge. This ‘corporeal turn’ in peace thinking points research towards events and processes that are marked by their mundaneness and ordinariness – their everydayness – as well as towards embodied data collected from multiple sources.

## **Conclusions**

In this article, I have advocated for the value of bringing the body, everydayness and ordinary people to the study of peace. The research agenda I have suggested offers a heightened sensitivity to the fleshy realities of the human body. Taking the body

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57. Cf. E. Laurier, ‘Youtube: fragments of a video-tropic atlas’, *Area*, 23 Jan 2015.



seriously introduces phenomenological registers that prioritise the relational and vulnerable elements of human existence and thereby prioritise mundane practices, including mundane practices of peace. My research agenda and its ontological commitment to corporeality and vulnerability do not precede or escape politics, but rather have a politics of their own: a politics of the reality that takes shape when bodies are rendered vulnerable or invulnerable.

The ontology of being vulnerable and connected guides the suggested research agenda towards new ways of thinking about community and practices of peace. Encountering vulnerability creates moments of accountability, recognition and acknowledgement in which the peace ethos of the community is created. Being wounded and being susceptible to vulnerability constitute a rupture in the smooth ordering of political space and hence is of vital importance for the peace ethos. The commitment to living with a certain kind of vulnerability to others and a susceptibility to being wounded is in this research agenda the litmus test of peace.

In short, I have sought to demonstrate that feminist and post-colonial theorising on the body offers a new bodily ontology that bears relevance for peace. This is an ontology and politics that is attuned to the nonviolent realisation of mutual dependence and exposure, as it is from those instances that mundane practices of peace emerge.<sup>58</sup> My understanding of peace hence bears some resemblance to the theorising of the local

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58. Cf. Ann Murphy, *Violence and the Philosophical Imaginary* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).

turn. Yet it differs greatly in the sense that this alternative agenda is based on embodied data, diffractive methodology and a corporeal analysis that brings together affect, emotions and the somatic and provides an understanding of the body as both the subject and object of discourses, materialities and practices and policies of peace.