Article

The politics and pedagogy of war remembrance

Nataliya Danilova [ID] and Emma Dolan
University of Aberdeen, UK

Abstract

Drawing on analysis of learning materials, interviews and ethnographic observations of Scottish education, we analyse how projects aimed at teaching children to remember wars instil war-normalising logics through (a) substitution of self-reflective study of conflict with skill-based knowledge; (b) gendered and racial stereotyping via emphasis on soldier-centric (Scottish/British) nationalisms, localisation and depoliticisation of remembrance; (c) affective *meaning-making* and embodied performance of 'Our War'. Utilising Ranciere-inspired critical pedagogy, we explore opportunities for critical engagement with the legacy of conflicts.

Keywords

Education, emotions, gender, militarisation, performance, remembrance, war

Introduction

In many countries, the introduction of children to the legacy of conflicts forms a corner-stone of identity and citizenship politics (e.g. Leonard, 2017). The main contribution of this paper lies in analysis of war remembrance education as a powerful yet often over-looked vehicle for engaging with conflicts and state-sanctioned violence. Drawing on analysis of learning materials, interviews and ethnographic observations,[1] we explore how projects aimed at teaching children to 'remember wars in a way they will never forget' (Poppy Scotland, 2018a) instil war-normalising logics through gendered, raced, affective and performative meaning-making practices. We associate the prominence of these practices with Britain's prolonged involvement in conflicts associated with the Global War on Terror (GWoT) from 2001 onwards; the large-scale marking of the World War I (WWI) Centenary, 2014–2018; and the specific configuration of military-support-ive (Scottish/British) nationalisms.

Corresponding author:
Nataliya Danilova, University of Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, Aberdeen AB24 3FX, UK.
Email: n.danilova@abdn.ac.uk

The main theoretical contribution of this paper is that an interdisciplinary approach, which draws from and expands upon ideas from Feminist International Relations (IR), Critical Military Studies (CMS) and Critical Studies in Education. Feminists explore militarisation as a process of 'social and cultural pervasiveness and preparedness for organised violence' which is enacted through the often-hidden *everyday* logics of war-normalisation (Dowler, 2012: 490–491). The prominence of these practices depends on specific geopolitical and domestic factors. Scholars have drawn attention to particular gendered, raced, embodied and affective responses to the GWoT across Western liberal democracies enacted through the interlinking logics of neoliberal governmentality (incorporating austerity and focus on effectiveness) and securitisation (Ahall, 2018; Basham, 2016a; Cree, 2019; Enloe, 2004; Gray, 2016; Hyde, 2016; Welland, 2016 and many others). In the late 2010s, the convergence of both logics has legitimised milita-rised interventions in schools as means to 'effectively' manage dwindling educational funds, respond to perceived threats resulting from the continuation of Western military involvement in the GWoT, anxieties over immigration and concerns about the fragility of national identity (Beier, 2011; Nguyen, 2017).

In Britain, an outcome of the prolonged engagement in the GWoT was the emergence of 'inter-weavings of schooling, gender, race, class, austerity, and an ontology of war' (Basham, 2016b: 261). This process resulted in a range of militarised interventions within schools, including an increasing number of recruitment visits targeting schools from socially deprived areas, schools in Scotland consistently receiving 10% more visits from military recruiters than the rest of the United Kingdom (Forces Watch, 2017; Rech, 2016; Scottish Government, 2018). Through these interventions, military values were transformed into 'moral and good for Britain's children', with the 'violent functions performed by the military' systematically obscured (Basham, 2016b: 261). From the 2010s, this nexus between neoliberal ideology and securitisation of education overlapped with a progressive 'marriage of education with remembrance' resulting from preparation for and large-scale marking of WWI Centenary, 2014–2018 (Pennell, 2016, 2018 see also Jeffery, 2015; Mycock, 2014). Research of history teaching and battlefield tours in England (Pennell, 2016, 2018) demonstrated that the convergence of education with remembrance generated reductive learning about WWI, with teachers utilising empathy with 'our' soldiers through stories about trench warfare, thereby systematically margin-alising 'a history of imperial exploitation and racial hierarchy' as part of WWI (Pennell, 2016: 46). Importantly, existing research overlooks Scotland due to its unique educa-tional system. This paper argues that analysis of the Scottish case highlights how the impacts of the GWoT and WWI Centenary overlap with military-supportive (British/ Scottish) nationalisms embedded within Scotland's Curriculum of Excellence (CfE) and war remembrance education.

To further explore the dynamics and implications of war-normalising practices embed-ded within Scotland's war remembrance education, we engage with Critical Studies on Education, and, specifically, Ranciere-inspired critical pedagogy literature (Biesta, 2008, 2011; Lambert, 2012; Means, 2011; Salfstrom, 2010; Simons and Masschelein, 2010). From Ranciere's (1991, 2015) perspective, power relationships that uphold consensus exemplify 'the police order' and constitute the absence of 'politics'. 'Politics' emerges only through the process of *dissensus*, disagreement and a challenge to the established

power relationships based on gender, race, and class-based inequalities. Expanding on this, contemporary critical pedagogy scholarship posits that education in Western democracies has compromised its own democratic principles through securitisation, neoliberalisation and the overall limitation of opportunities for challenging existing power relationships. Instead, the current educational environment favours 'communities of sameness' (Biesta, 2008) and upholds 'a tamed version of democracy' within schools (Simons and Masschelein, 2010: 588). As Salfstrom (2010) argues in relation to Sweden: 'by making *the political* [our emphasis] go away one also makes the other disappear as a legitimate adversary and therefore there is no political subject possible within schooling' (p. 611). This poststructuralist understanding within IR is echoed by Edkins (1999: 3) who sees 'the political' as 'the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics'. Drawing on these understandings of politics and the political, we analyse the potential for war remembrance education to establish/challenge power hierarchies based on gender and race/ethnicity-based differences and see these as essential opportunities for learning about state-sanctioned violence and conflict.

The paper begins by briefly outlining the trends within Scottish education, thereby highlighting the domestic educational context as it relates to war remembrance education. Specifically, we discuss the move towards experiential and skill-based learning as part of the marketization of education, securitisation dynamics, and the emerging interweaving of 'inward-looking' (Scottish) nationalism with (British) soldier-centred military culture. Second, we analyse Poppy Scotland materials as a resource produced by the key non-governmental provider of war remembrance educational services to Scottish schools. This section draws attention to the educational practices associated with red-poppy focused remembrance, commenting on limited opportunities to acknowledge the controversies of and/or study alternatives to red-poppy. We further demonstrate how Poppy Scotland materials substitute the study of conflict with 'inward-looking', local and military-sympathetic (Scottish/British) nationalisms, all of which are constituted by gender- and race/ethnicity-polarised visions of soldiering and conflict. Subsequently, we interrogate performative and embodied practices through analysis of a school-staged war drama, drawing attention to the substitution of the study of war with confidence-building, gender-polarisation and affective techniques of war-normalisation. Finally, we discuss how to revisit war remembrance education through opportunities for exercising Ranciere's vision of politics and disagreement within schools as well as learning from gender equality, diversity and peace education.

The setting for war remembrance education

The unique context of Scottish education was preceded by the devolution of powers from the United Kingdom to the Scottish Executive in 1999, and resulted in the introduction of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (e.g. Paterson, 2018). Although there is extensive scholarship discussing pros and cons of CfE (e.g. Biesta, 2011; Priestley and Biesta, 2013), we focus on outlining dynamics which set the framework for remembrance education within Scottish schools, including neoliberalisation, securitisation and nationalisation of education.

The novelty of CfE was to set up four capacity-building strategies aimed at educating 'successful leaners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors' (Education Scotland, 2019). In response to the neoliberalisation and marketisation of education, CfE emphasised educating 'effective' contributors through prioritising the importance of 'experiences and outcomes'. This recommendation identified experiential, active and skill-based learning as effective strategies to prepare Scottish pupils to succeed in the global economy. An important and often overlooked outcome of this reform was the recommendation from Scotland's educational authorities to expand opportunities for informal education and 'outdoor learning' through 'outsourcing' some curriculum activities to external organisations (Education Scotland, 2013). This represented a 'green light' for the expansion of collaborations between schools and Scottish heritage organisations, particularly in response to the WWI Centenary. Although there is a lack of studies assessing the impact of these projects, educational experts, echoing Pennell's (2016) findings, warn that learning about historical events through visiting heritage sites, museums and battlefields can excite students' imagination, but provide limited opportunities for 'rigorous and critical thinking about the past' (Smith, 2016; Smith, 2018b). Instead, these learning practices can successfully engender cultural and political myths and promulgate romanticised, sanitised and nationalistic 'experiences' of learning about soldiering and conflict.

Although CfE was originally introduced as a distinctive educational framework, from the mid-2000s, the UK-wide securitising efforts found their way into Scottish educational institutions. These efforts can be traced to citizenship education and counter-terrorism prevention practices within schools. In response to the 7/7 London terror-attacks in 2005, the Westminster government intensified its efforts in introducing citizenship education through 'British values' as part of the English curriculum to foster community cohesion while elevating anxieties over terrorism, Britain's participation in the GWoT and broader concerns over immigration (Jerome and Clemitshaw, 2012; Mansfield, 2019). Although Scotland's CfE introduced citizenship as a 'capacity' spread out across several curriculum areas, CfE's goal of educating 'responsible citizens' resulted in schools being encouraged to utilise learning opportunities through connections with local communities and volunteering organisations as well as to teach about racial/ethnic difference through 'religious and moral education'. However, these efforts were compromised by 'prevent duty obligations' imposed on teachers as part of the UK-wide counter-terrorism strategy, particularly directed towards Muslim youth (i.e. *Prevent* programme). Studies in England show that the overlap between nationalising citizenship discourses and securitising efforts within educational settings foster stigmatisation and race/ethnic stereotyping (O'Donnell, 2016; Thomas, 2016).

Since inception, CfE has reflected ambivalent understandings of Scottish identity. The main point of controversy has been the balancing-efforts of the Scottish National Party (SNP)-led government between 'inward' and 'outward'-looking nationalisms (Arnott and Ozga, 2010, 2016; Mycock, 2012; Priestley and Biesta, 2013). Ahead of the 2014 Independence Referendum, the Scottish government attempted to resolve this conundrum by introducing Scottish Studies as a means of strengthening associations with Scotland as a unique political entity (e.g. Herald View, 2012). An outcome of this was the placement of WWI by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA,

2019) and Higher and Nationals syllabuses within Advanced Higher Scottish History rather than 'British' and 'World' history, now alongside such topics as 'Scotland and the Great War' and 'Scotland and Remembrance'. However, as Smith (2018a) comments: 'While no one would seek to diminish the impact of this conflict on Scotland, one cannot help but wonder whether a narrow national focus is the best way to teach about a war which saw naval engagements off the Chilean coast, Bengal lancers in Palestine and Japanese marines supressing a mutiny of Indian soldiers in Singapore' (p. 443). Hence, Scottish education has prioritised the 'inward-looking' nationalism by introducing local (Scottish) 'communities of sameness' as preferential educational norm (Biesta, 2008: 46–47).

   Paradoxically, SNP-government-led nationalising efforts did not challenge the ostensibly unproblematic co-existence of Scottish and British martial identities within education and broader politics (Danilova and Dolan, 2020; Ditchburn and Macdonald, 2014; McCrone, 2017). These efforts introduced Scottish identity as simultaneously one of difference to the British militarised state and one which praises Scottish contributions to Britain's wars. This problematic construct not only legitimises Britain's wars through re-affirmation of its military policy, it obscures the geopolitical and racial hierarchies which made Britain's wars possible. Our preliminary analysis of CfE, in particular the specifications for Social Studies ('People, Past Events and Societies/Conflicts'), History and Scottish Studies demonstrates the prominence of this (Scottish/British) military-centred nationalism expressed through the centrality of stories about sacrifices of predominantly (white) male (local) soldiers and warrior mythologies as learning tools (see, for example, Danilova and Purnell, 2019; McLennan, 2010). The following section explores how this context frames the discourses and practices of war remembrance education.

Poppy Scotland: 'Sowing the poppy seed'

In close partnership with the Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLS), Poppy Scotland (2018a) positions itself as the 'national guardian of remembrance'. Poppy Scotland's educational activities are supported by Scottish and British governments, with their free learning resource 'Sowing the Poppy Seed' (http://learning.poppyscotland.org.uk/) created in close cooperation with experts from Education Scotland and designed to 'shoehorn things into CfE' (Interview with Education expert, 21 January 2019). To comply with CfE, this resource provides materials for six levels of study, from pre-school (3–5 years old) to Advanced Senior Level (17–18 years old), and covers all eight curriculum areas, including Expressive Arts, Health and Well-Being, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Religious and Moral Education, Citizenship, Science, Social Studies and Technologies. Although we cannot assess the utilisation of this resource by teachers, with Poppy Scotland only indicating that it is 'really popular with schools' (Interview with Poppy Scotland, 27 November 2018), substantial government support for Poppy Scotland's activities results in every Scottish primary and secondary school receiving the materials for free. Moreover, as a result of the WWI Centenary, Poppy Scotland intends to expand its educational outreach, aiming to reach over 30,000 children by 2022.[2]

Making the red poppy

According to our interviews, 'the overall aim of the learning work with children . . . is literally, to coin a phrase, planting the seed' (Interview with Poppy Scotland, 27 November 2018). To 'plant the seed', Poppy Scotland organises learning around four 'big' questions: (a) Why do conflicts arise, how do they develop and how are they resolved? (b) What is the significance of the poppy? (c) How do conflicts affect communities? and (c) How can we support Poppy Scotland?. The materials for each level of schooling place different emphases on how these 'big' questions are answered, reflecting the intention of experts to enact socialisation learning, using Bloom's taxonomy of 'recognising, identifying, thinking and understanding' (Interview with Education expert, 21 January 2019). However, our analysis of learning materials suggests that the main technique of teaching children to 'recognise, identify, think and understand' war remembrance revolves around the (re)making of the red poppy. Responding to CfE's focus on 'experiences and outcomes', children are taught to grow the poppies as part of Science lessons (i.e. Poppy Scotland provides free poppy seed packets); colour sheets as part of Expressive Arts lessons adorned with contours of poppies, poppy-decorated memorial wreaths, remembrance crosses, Victoria Crosses (the highest military honour in Britain), and the 'poppy collage [design] challenge', using images of red poppies to reflect visits to local war memorials. This learning strategy of (re)producing the red poppy transforms it into Baudrillard's (1988) *simulacra*: 'When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning' (p. 171). The utilisation of the red poppy as a learning centre-point about remembrance and conflict allows avoiding the complex and contested nature of both phenomena while redirecting children's experiences and emotions towards the deceiving simplicity of the planted, grown, cooked, made and coloured symbol. This technique does not only lead to reductive conceptions of war remembrance, it obscures the often-complex circumstances which lead to conflicts (e.g. Pennell, 2016; Smith, 2018b). Most importantly, this red-poppy-making learning strategy enacts a *consensual* form of learning about Britain's wars, emptied of debate and controversy (Ranciere, 2015).

Poppy Scotland materials introduce the red poppy as a gender-delimitating symbol, cemented through the use of the male soldier as a 'default option' (Interview with Education expert, 21 January 2019). This gendered premise sustains the narrative in which male soldiers fall in battle, their destroyed bodies commemorated with the red poppy and women mourn, sell and wear the red poppy to prove their contribution to war efforts. This gender-polarised discourse encapsulates traditional–gendered– depictions of war through oppositions between sacred male warriors and women as mothers of the nation (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 1997). The gender-polarised vision of the red poppy normalises war-time sacrifice while obscuring the fact that 'soldiers do not of course "fall" in battle; they are maimed, and they maim . . .; they are killed and they kill' (Basham, 2016a: 884–85). Moreover, the widespread utilisation of images of smiling elderly (mostly white male) veterans who wear red poppies while assisting children in learning substitutes the living body of the modern soldier with a romanticised view of wars past.

Red poppy and learning about conflict

Replicating the setting of Scotland's CfE, Poppy Scotland materials utilise the construct of 'communities of sameness' in the study of conflict (e.g. Biesta, 2008). Teachers are encouraged to utilise localisation strategies to answer the question: 'how do conflicts affect communities?' The localisation strategy refocuses learning processes upon stories of 'local lads' perished, contributing to a wider trend of decontextualisation and depoliticisation of conflict (e.g. Ahall, 2018). This depoliticisation has taken the form of detachment of these 'local lads' from the political complexities of the time and the historical structure of the British Empire (e.g. Pennell, 2016: 16; Smith, 2018a, 2018b), as well as through misrepresentations of military service as voluntary (Sasson-Levy, 2008: 299), a point especially relevant to those who fought from British colonies or were conscripted. This strategy enables the normalisation of military sacrifice when it 'becomes a regrettable but necessary burden for the white, muscular, masculinist British state' (Basham, 2016a: 885).

As Poppy Scotland materials encourage children to remember and grieve for the local (white) sacrificial soldier-dead, members of non-white, non-local and non-British communities, and their participation in war are systematically marginalised through invisibility and silence. This demonstrates that 'communities of sameness', which are constructed through ties to particular localities, are reproduced in racialised terms (Ranciere, 2015: 115; see also Biesta, 2008; Salfstrom, 2010). This racialisation of difference is implicit despite the fact that a key premise of 'planting the seed of remembrance' assumes that children and at least three generations of their ancestors served and sacrificed their lives in Britain's wars. Although this local premise resonates with Scottish governmental efforts to nationalise CfE, it also reveals the drawbacks of this 'inward-looking' and locally based identity politics. The focus on local communities normalise support and compassion for all 'those who can be loved and grieved whilst denying others the same privilege' (Ahmed, 2004: 63; Ahall and Gregory, 2017; Welland, 2016). In other words, it makes the local a consensual norm which, in turn, makes it difficult to recognise difference, be it alternative readings of military service, conflict or remembrance.

Alongside Othering through invisibilisation, Poppy Scotland materials encourage children to colour sheets with images of Crescent and Star of David decorated with red poppies. Importantly, the materials do not contain any stories reflective of war experiences of Muslim, Jewish or any other communities. Ware (2012) describes this presentation of alternative cultures through symbolic co-optation as British 'militarised multiculture'. This militarised multiculture transforms the members of non-white (particularly Muslim) communities into potential 'dangerous' Others whose allegiances to the British state have to be proven through wearing the red poppy (Basham, 2016a: 888; Cohen, 2018: 68). Therefore, the militarised multiculture of Poppy Scotland-led remembrance engenders implicit racial and ethnic stereotyping, and further enhances the problematic securitization efforts in schools alongside the GWoT. Furthermore, Poppy Scotland materials contain minimal references to the British Empire and through this obfuscation achieve the erasure of both racial hierarchies within the British Army at the time of WWI and geopolitical hierarchies associated with the GWoT. This framework precludes recognition of civilian casualties of wars, and, indeed, the Poppy Scotland

materials have minimal references to the losses of opposing populations, cementing the reproduction of war-normalising logics alongside racial, ethnic and geopolitical divides which made Britain's wars possible.

Sadness, tears and hope

Poppy Scotland identifies 'emotions and emotional intelligence' as necessary outcomes of the process of learning about remembrance (Interview with Poppy Scotland, 27 November 2018) and it also emphases that 'at the heart of every poppy is a person's unique emotions, opinions and stories' (Poppy Scotland, 2019). These discourses do not clarify the nature of the affective engagements expected from children. Although this lack of explanation suggests that any emotional experiences are welcome as part of children's participation in remembrance, our analysis suggests that the materials sanction only *particular* affective performances and disregard the fact that making children *feel* something can be pedagogically problematic:

> . . . Battlefields trips which is about taking young people around lots and lots of graveyards and making them feel very sad . . . ultimately have young people weep by gravesides or weep on the bus when they bring the candle out on the bus and do a small ceremony. We do need to be careful that we are presenting a broad range of experiences for young people including their emotional experience.'. (Interview with Education expert, 21 January 2019)

Based on our analysis of Poppy Scotland materials and ethnographic observations of remembrance ceremonies across Scotland (2017–2019), we identify sanctioned affective engagements, including the expression of sadness, tears and hope. The most common practices of engendering sadness include writing and reading war poetry, performing war dramas and visiting war memorials and battlefields. The expression of sadness and, on emotionally intensive occasions (battlefield tours and remembrance ceremonies), crying, is seen as evidence of children being 'really moved' and have 'truly understood' the importance of remembrance (Interview with Poppy Scotland, 27 November 2018; Interview with Scotland's WW100 panel, 2 August 2017). To perform sadness, children are encouraged to keep silence through transforming 'one's body into a temporary memorial', a practice which has been a traditional part of British remembrance since 1919 (Brown, 2012; see also Gregory, 1994). In Scotland and across the United Kingdom, children are introduced to this by their parents and/or through the ceremonial Two-Minute Silence held on Armistice Day, 11 November in schools. Due to a lack of empirical studies, it is unclear what children *feel* during the Two-Minute Silence (Imber and Fraser, 2011); however, keeping silence while looking sad is a passive form of learning about war when asking 'whys' about conflict are often seen as disruptive and disrespectful.

The story of the red poppy emerges as the key tool of governing children's emotions. 'The Inquisitive Mind of a Child' Poetry Challenge (children 5–7 years old; Poppy Scotland, 2018b) exemplifies hidden affective logics of this process. This poem begins with 'mummy selling poppies in town', and a child asking about the poppy's meaning. Mummy answers: 'Because my child, men fought and died in the fields where the

poppies grow'. The child notices that 'mummy is crying' and asks 'why?', and mummy responds: 'my tears are my fears for you my child. For the world is forgetting again'. This poem deploys two interlinking affective meaning-making practices. First, it utilises the red poppy as an emotional gender-delimitating symbol used to produce sadness by linking it to the dead body of a sacrificial soldier. Second, the poem feminises emotions through crying. The 'mummy' appears as an embodiment of 'good wives and angelic daughters' whose sadness and tears communicate care, love and support for the British military (Basham, 2016a: 889; Cree, 2019).

Finally, the Poppy Scotland materials introduce hope and enjoyment as part of war remembrance education. These emotions are communicated through images of smiling children making poppies, creating poppy-inspired art, and cooking poppy biscuits. Emphasis on positive emotions reveals Poppy Scotland's aspiration for public support and *consensus* over how war remembrance is practised and taught in schools. Simultaneously, this aspiration for hopeful optimism and 'the kind of satisfying sense that enables enduring' (Berlant, 2011: 225) masks anxieties and insecurities of Poppy Scotland in introducing red-poppy-focused remembrance as the only legitimate practice within Scottish schools.

Performing WWI: 'Theatre of remembrance'

In line with the culture of commemoration in the United Kingdom, which sees young people as those 'who have to bear the responsibility of carrying memory forward' (Pennell, 2018: 84), this section explores an event entitled 'Theatre of Remembrance' performed at one of the secondary schools in Aberdeenshire. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Trust as part of the WWI Centenary 2014–2018, and run in partnership with local authorities and the Scottish Council on Archives, this project engaged a group of secondary school students to produce a play based upon archival materials.

Developing confidence through performing war

Interestingly, the aims of the 'Theatre of Remembrance' project were articulated in our interview with the organisers not through the language of remembrance or learning about war, but through the promotion of active and skill-focused learning. While 'experiences and outcomes' are presented within Scotland's CfE as means of encouraging critical understanding, our analysis highlights alongside critical pedagogical literature that active learning set within the context of red poppy-focused remembrance limits rather than broadens opportunities for critical understanding (Lambert, 2012; Simons and Masschelein, 2010).

Two techniques enacted logics of teaching marketable skills while marginalising the language and reality of war. First, the focus on confidence-building operated through the targeting of students who were considered to be in an 'invisible middle': not the pupils who are failing, but not those who achieved high grades; rather, 'the ones whose names teachers often do not remember' (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019), and in this way there was a clear attempt to choose students for the project who would find the development of marketable skills beneficial to their future as 'effective contributors', in

line with the CfE (Arnott and Ozga, 2010, 2016). Second, although the project aimed to give children a 'voice' in line with democratic ideals of education through the structuring of the performance on extracts of their choice and by allowing them to make decisions around the staging, this agency was restricted by an affective framework of poppy-focused remembrance which allowed only particular emotional and embodied experiences of war to be performed. As the following sections will demonstrate, the play focused on the experience of local, white men and women and the children engaged in subdued and respectful affective displays while tending to remove more complex emotions such as anger, trauma and loss.

Embodying, gendering and localising war

The performance presented a somewhat unique opportunity to destabilise the traditional gender-polarised narrative due to the fact that the cast was made up entirely of female students, a dynamic not present within performances at two other schools involved in the project (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019). Despite this opportunity for destabilisation, ultimately the performative roles undertaken by the pupils reinforced traditional war-related gender binaries in several ways. First, the gendered make-up of the cast was identified by the organisers as potentially disruptive to the 'respectful' performing of the 'soldiers' memory'. One method of dealing with this gendered reversal was the choice of archival materials which were designed to tell the story of the war specifically through women's records (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019). However, the choices of female experiences represented in the play were conventional in their performance of militarised patriotic womanhood through allying women's roles with mourning and caring for soldiers (Danilova and Dolan, 2020). In addition, the costumes utilised for the play represented the male experience as default through the dressing of female pupils entirely in black trousers and shirt with the optional *addition* of long skirts or nurse aprons in order to embody female roles, a performative choice which reframed the girls as male in line with the default war experience.

As we have noted earlier in the paper, war remembrance in general and remembrance education specifically has tended to personalise and therefore depoliticise war (Pennell, 2018); despite this, the 'Theatre of Remembrance' project was articulated as a learning opportunity to introduce pupils to 'the lived experience of the war' through both access to local archive records and embodied affective experiences of soldiers (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019). However, both techniques, personalisation and embodiment, enabled 'an ambivalent and non-political interpretation of military actions' and 'disguised the coercive nature of military service' as disproportionately affecting working class men and those from British colonial territories (Sasson-Levy, 2008: 299). This was achieved through a depiction of war which sanitised and romanticised the reality of the military as one of inflicting violence on others through a detachment of the personal narratives told in the play from the structure of the British Empire and through an emphasis 'similarities' and 'sameness' (Biesta, 2008) in terms of age and background between the students and soldiers/nurses who ostensibly volunteered to serve their country.

Finally, while death was performed through the action of covering over a body with a blanket and injury/disability was acted through one of the girls limping, there were few

allusions to the reality of war as one of violence and killing. Not only did these performative choices result in an extension of invisibility of wounded and disabled veterans during and after WWI throughout the Centenary (Danilova and Dolan, 2020), but the sanitised performance of conflict operated as a means of both preserving conceptions of virtuous war and discouraging complex interpretations of British conflicts. This performative choice of local war-story devoid of depictions of violence and trauma was congruent with broader trends of British remembrance, which 'invite communities of feeling to forget the violence and bloodiness of actual warfare and the victims it creates' as a means of sustaining support for contemporary wars (Basham, 2016a: 892).

Warrior-centric (Scottish/British) nationalisms were reinforced through the localisation of war experiences on display. Experiences from the local community were therefore used as 'hooks' to engage the young people in a history with which they may feel they have no connection (Pennell, 2018: 90). In addition, while the play made mention of white, Canadian Commonwealth soldiers, there was a clear othering of non-white soldiers who served for Britain which operated through invisibilisation. In the context of the performance, the invisibility of the Other was substituted with a narrative of the local (Scottish) community making sacrifices for Britain's wars, past and present.

The gendered and racial hierarchies identified above were further engendered through encouragement of young people and the audience to feel sadness and empathy for someone who 'lived in the streets around their homes' (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2018). In this way, feelings of compassion on the part of the children and the audience were reserved only for the experiences of those who represent their local 'community of sameness' (Biesta, 2008: 47) and Scottish communities were therefore reproduced in line with inward-looking nationalisms discussed earlier. This premise of compassion with 'someone like us' is typical for war remembrance discourse in Britain, and it does not only make it difficult to question the violence done by soldiers (Basham, 2016a: 892), but it leads to depoliticisation and uncritical understandings of war (McCartney, 2014: 306; Pennell, 2018). In this regard, the 'Theatre of Remembrance' project problematised the difficulty of introducing critical self-reflective learning about wars and capturing different experiences and opinions through the performance of the lived (local) experience.

Feeling war

Emotion was placed at the very centre of the 'Theatre of Remembrance', and the personal narratives included in the performance were chosen ostensibly by the young people because they were stories which 'moved them' (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019). However, our observation of one of the plays indicated that particular forms of emotion were more evident in the performance than others. The most emotionally heightened scene involved a conscientious objector pleading his case to local authorities; indeed, scenes involving the conscientious objector marked a change in tone as compared with the rest of the play, including scenes dealing with loss as a result of war. This heightened emotionality demonstrated the readiness of the young performers to connect to a sense of injustice which they may certainly have experienced in their own lives as teenagers (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019), with the value of peace and

non-violence obscured. By contrast, in those scenes involving loss, injury and trauma, which might be considered key affective means of accessing the implications of war, the performance was subdued. This demonstrates how difficult it is in an educational setting to perform complex war-defining emotions.

Most importantly, alongside Poppy Scotland materials, the project utilised the red poppy as a key affective, performative and framing device. Not only were red poppies present in the lobby, where they were available for families of young performers and other audience members to purchase, but the walls of the school had been adorned with large poppies alongside silhouettes of soldiers going to war. The poppy was also used by the performers as a prop within the play to represent 'wild flowers' which were handed to the audience members in an act of shared intergenerational consensus. Therefore, the use of the red poppy linked remembrance of WWI to contemporary–and a projection towards future – conflicts through the notion of continuous war-time sacrifice and also through the repetitive emphasis on the necessity of remembering and performing war. In contrast, the absence of the white (peace) poppy was linked by organisers to disruption and emotions of anger through the notion that its use would make 'a deliberate political statement', inappropriate either for this project nor for school-based performances (Interview with organiser, 16 January 2019). This characterisation of the white poppy as a disruptive symbol reinstated the red poppy as the only appropriate and 'apolitical' emblem of remembrance. Through this displacement of the white poppy, the value of peace as well as any questioning of red poppy-focused remembrance was also deemed inappropriate, reinstating the value of support for the sacrificial figure of the white British soldier who had fought, and still fights in Britain's wars.

Conclusion

The uniqueness of war remembrance in Britain lies in its peculiar appearance of dissociation from politics through focus on the lives and deaths of British soldiers as 'local lads', individuals and family members. We, however, agree with those who see remembrance as a political process that 'is about the politics involved when there is little space to resist these manoeuvres, because it just does not make any sense to do so' (Ahall, 2018: 13).

In our study, we have observed how war-normalising practices are perceived as unproblematic through the focus on 'experiences and outcomes' associated with the constantly reproduced red poppy; localisation aimed at remembering the sacrificial (local/white) soldier-dead; and the systematic reproduction of gender, race/ethnicity-based stereotypes through invisibilisation, omissions and silences that make Britain's wars possible. Moreover, our analysis of a school play highlighted the difficulty of destabilising conventional gender-polarisation, which underpins the war-normalisation process. Affective meaning-making practices further consolidate gender and racial hierarchies first through feelings of sadness and compassion for 'our' communities' losses, and, second, through instilling hope as a means of reinstating the illusion of intergenerational consensus while deeming anger and disagreement as disruptive to learning remembrance. Observing these trends within Scottish education leads us to two questions: why does the systematic reproduction of gender and racial hierarchies in war remembrance education remain unproblematised? and how can these practices be productively revisited?

Drawing on scholarship in critical education and Ranciere's understanding of politics, we argue that it is important to recognise that war remembrance constitutes a *political* educational practice, and as such it should be seen through the lens of how it could challenge the existing power hierarchies and create spaces for discussion and recognition of difference. In this regard, we see it beneficial to adopt Salfstrom's (2010) concept of 'pedagogy of dissensus [which] works by undoing the supposed naturalness of any social order and strives to create the conditions for the equality of relationships between everyone by asking the question – what do you think differently?' (p. 615). This argument resonates with Biesta's contention that democratic education should facilitate recognition that '*political* communities' are not communities of sameness, but rather 'communities of those who have nothing in common' (Biesta, 2008: 47; emphasis in original). In other words, Scottish education can more productively achieve the Scottish government's stated progressive goals by creating spaces and opportunities for challenging the *naturalness* and consensual nature of red-poppy focused remembrance and introducing children to a range of remembrance symbols and practices, including the white (peace) poppy. This also means going beyond the mere (re)making of the red poppy as a learning tool and incorporating critical thinking/discussion as essential to learning about conflict. Finally, to move beyond the local and 'inward-looking' nationalism, teaching and learning about war remembrance can benefit from the curriculum areas of gender equality, human rights and peace education. Only through these practices it is possible to resist the danger of transforming teaching war 'into remembrance without any invitation to pupils to think critically about their past, codetermine their heritage or to consider the political agendas at stake' (Pennell, 2016: 55) and to move towards compassion for the war experiences of someone who is 'not like us', furthering critical analysis of Britain's wars and Scotland's role therein.

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The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Nataliya Danilova iD https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2576-726X

Notes

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2. Using the Heritage Lottery funds, Poppy Scotland produced 'A Poppy Story', a book sent to each school primary school and local library in Scotland. In April of 2019, Poppy Scotland put on the road a Poppy truck, known as 'Bud' which provide educational services to Scottish children (https://poppybud.org.uk/).

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