

22, 23 & 24 June 2021 (Le Mans University)

**WAR MEMORIES (2020/21)
MEMOIRES DE GUERRE (2020/21)**

***Sharing War Memories – From the Military to the Civilian*
Partager les souvenirs de guerre – De la sphère militaire au monde civil**

International Conference initiated by Renée Dickason (Université Rennes 2), Stéphanie Bélanger (Collège militaire royal du Canada, Kingston, Ontario) and Delphine Letort (Le Mans Université)

Call for papers

War narratives are subject to emphases, orientations and points of view that give a particular flavour to wars fought by populations (anonymously, individually and/or hidden in an organisation, secret or not) and by the military (from high command to the 'unknown soldier'). Such accounts evolve with the benefit of hindsight, the writing of history textbooks and the constant (re)interpretations of archives (new or not) and the official version a country wishes to put forward according to its political agendas and visions of patriotism, citizenship and human rights, or its diplomatic or international policy objectives. The narratives of wars vary with the context and the need for men and women to express their inner feelings when faced with the torments and human atrocities of war; they also reflect the place of individuals within a group and the implications of group cohesion within the larger community.

Civilians' knowledge of the war effort and the involvement of the military is informed by two types of documents: primary sources (letters, emails, photographs, videos, testimonies, trench gazettes, blogs, etc.) provide direct information about the war experienced at an individual level, whereas secondary sources mediate these artefacts by incorporating them into another narrative.

The artefacts of war become the original materials which museums and memorials turn into places of memory, while feature films provide a less direct approach as they often (re)mediate the original accounts of first-hand witnesses through documentary, ethno-fiction, docudrama or more generally through fiction. These documents show a possible encounter between the military and civilian spheres, especially when the two are separated either in time or space.

Civilians learn about past and distant wars through the narratives built on them and through the images produced either by the military themselves, by news reporters embedded with them or following in their footsteps, or by historians. Journalistic records often frame the understanding of war by shining light on events hidden from the public gaze, by illuminating the conflicts or the complicity between civilian witnesses and members of the military. Whether intended to win the 'hearts and minds' of the indigenous populations or to denigrate the enemy by reductive stereotyping, military strategies condition how armed forces regard the 'Other'. Humanitarian groups approach war with a different goal in mind; their representations of war emphasize the dangers for civilian populations trapped by an ongoing conflict and reintroduce human concerns where war technology erases them. The case of civilian hostages is of particular relevance in this context.

This conference aims to explore zones of contact between the military and the civilian worlds – be they real or virtual. Zones of contact extend beyond the battlefields to civilian areas, where the enemy is sometimes conflated with undeclared combatants (especially in the age of terrorism). Soldiers may also find respite in the civilian life that wars disrupt but cannot completely annihilate. The contacts between the military and the civilians are often channeled by professional relationships. Doctors, nurses, drivers, journalists, artists... provide a link between two worlds that outsourcing has brought closer together in the contemporary era.

Both volunteers and conscripts undergo a change of status when they join the armed forces. The transition from the civilian to the military world may be a life-changing event, but it may also become

part and parcel of one's daily rhythm as war can increasingly be pursued without even leaving the home country (for example, with the development of drone technology). How do the military manage to attract civilians into donning the uniform? How do the veterans reintegrate into civilian life and overcome the trauma of waging war, especially when serious injury makes them unfit for further service.

The study of the relationships between the civilian and the military implies research into the artefacts of war, conveying the perception of combat by the military themselves or by the civilians observing them. This relationship is founded on a variety of objects aiming at boosting admiration for war heroes or condemnation of war criminals.

Reality turns into fiction as it becomes a political or romanticized narrative in film and on television, in

literature and in the arts – and this transformation illuminates the civilians' perception of war as well as soldiers' perception of themselves.

In 2021, to mark the tenth anniversary of the active and fruitful collaboration on the theme of war memories, our research groups – ACE (Rennes), 3L.AM (Le Mans) and the Royal Military College of Canada (Kingston, Ontario), assisted by an international scientific committee (Australia, Canada, France, India, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America...) – would like to offer researchers and members of civil society the opportunity to participate in workshop discussions on the subject of sexual violence and abuse perpetuated as a weapon of war, and on the fate of children in wartime, in addition to the themes in the non-exhaustive list given below.

Other possible workshops:

- Remembering, transmitting war (commemorations, textbooks (paper or e-learning), museums...) and narrating war (children's literature, graphic novels, essays, short stories, drama, poetry...)
- Drawing, photographing or filming war (documentaries, docu-fictions, ethno-fiction)
- Medialization of war (news bulletins, news reports, blogs, social media, websites...)
- War and the human dimension: testimonies of trauma and the management of emotions (from military to civilian points of view)
- Childhood in wartime: mobilization of children in armed conflicts; staging children characters in, fictional and non-fictional, war narratives; writing or representing war for a young public
- Women civilians and the military in war; women as war weapons and victims

Guest of Honour: Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Dr. Denis Mukwege

Round table with Colette Braeckman (Journalist, specializing in Central Africa and cowriter of the documentary *The Man Who Mends Women: The Wrath of Hippocrates*)

With keynote speeches by

Stéphanie Bélanger (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, Ontario): *Voice or Loyalty? Dealing with Memories in the Armed Forces*

Jonathan Bignell (Professor of Television and Film, Reading University, United Kingdom): *Television and Ephemerality: Remembering and Forgetting War*

Terence McSweeney (Senior Lecturer, Researcher LSE London, United Kingdom, co-director of *Blowback: The 9/11 Wars in Global Film* (2019), Best Documentary Short at the Respect Human Rights Film Festival in Belfast): *Film as Cultural Battleground: War, Conflict and Human Rights in Contemporary Global Cinema*

Daniel Palmieri (Historian, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland): *"Now, the World without me". Humanitarians and Sexual Violence in Time of War*

Organizing Committee Contacts:

Delphine Letort, Renée Dickason, Stéphanie Bélanger, Maud Michaud, Rebecca Dickason, Sylvie Servoise
To contact us, please use the @Contact section of the conference website.

Conference website: <https://warmem2020.sciencesconf.org/>

SUBMISSION DEADLINE : 30th JANUARY 2021

All submissions will be considered after the deadline of **30th January 2021**.

Please send your abstract (350 words) and biography (200 words) directly to the conference website. You will need to create an account in the “Submission” section before filling up the fields required and uploading your document (see information on the conference website).

We will not be able to give you any news concerning the acceptance of your work before 30th January 2021.