Culture, Theory and Critique

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rctc20

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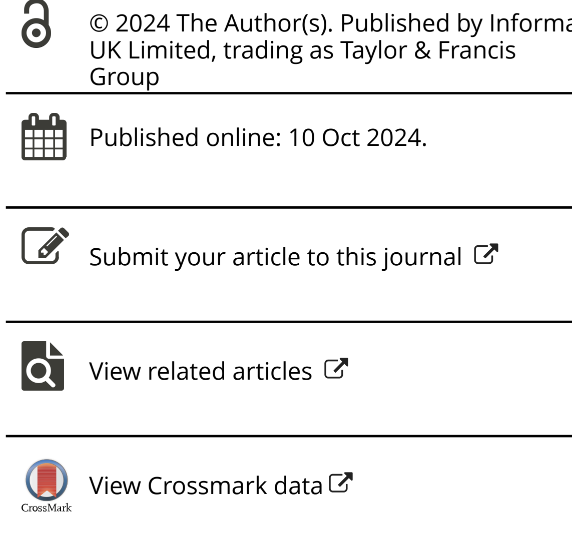
Alex Adams & Amy Gaeta

To cite this article: Alex Adams & Amy Gaeta (2023) Introduction: militarisation and pleasure, Culture, Theory and Critique, 64:1-2, 1-18, DOI: 10.1080/14735784.2024.2394417

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2024.2394417



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Published online: 10 Oct 2024.

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CULTURE, THEORY AND CRITIQUE
2023, VOL. 64, NOS. 1–2, 1–18
https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2024.2394417

INTRODUCTION

OPEN ACCESS

Introduction: militarisation and pleasure

Alex Adams[a] and Amy Gaeta[b]

[a]Independent Scholar, Jarrow, UK; [b]Centre for Drones and Culture, Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK

ABSTRACT
As power is everywhere, so is pleasure. Though we may be accustomed to understanding military violence and private pleasure as fundamentally separate, or at least as phenomena that seldom interact, this special issue contends that they are deeply interpenetrated in ways that reveal a great deal about contemporary culture, politics, and subjectivity. If one does think of pleasure and militarisation, perhaps the readiest to come to mind are the histories of depraved torture via sexual humiliation and the high rates of sexual abuse in the military, among other instances of the ways that explicit militarised violence is catalysed by pleasure. Rather than attend to pleasure as a weapon of war, however, for this special issue, we focus on the ways that militarisation is normalised, mobilised, felt, and imagined in the mundane sites in the civilian sphere. By collecting essays that explore the interaction of militarisation and pleasure in sites as diverse as cookbooks, video games, and anti-trans rhetoric, this special issue explores: What affective, consumptive, and sensorial regimes enable us to consider ourselves untouched by militarised infrastructures and state forces? How can we nonetheless sense our militarisation through sites of pleasure? How does militarisation function through our enjoyment?

KEYWORDS
Militarisation; pleasure; power; war; cultural studies

I

The commodities on sale in Guantánamo's gift shop offer the customer a ghoulish kitsch: sweatshirts, mugs, and lip balm bearing the brand of the most notorious twenty-first-century American torture camp (Hoogwaerts 2015). But it's not just the gift shop. The gift shop is part of a larger lifestyle complex run by the US Navy Exchange (Figure 1). The complex is characterised by a combination of contemporary marketing, bourgeois creature comforts, and colonial violence. Staff at the military base can enjoy a picturesque dog walking park, a golf course, a bowling centre, and some of the most stunning beaches in the hemisphere. As at many other military installations, they can eat their favourite fast foods from Subway, KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds. Guantánamo is, then, a model

CONTACT Amy Gaeta ag2403@cam.ac.uk

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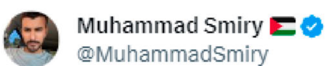
Figure 1. Aerial view of part of the U.S. military installation in Guantánamo Bay (Google Earth 2023).

example of settler colonial occupation as archetypal as the frontier town. It synthesises extraordinary physical violence against racialised people, the disregard of international law, and the occupation of another nation's sovereign territory with the ordinary, everyday pleasures of high-street consumerism, middle-class leisure, and culinary familiarity. Gift shops, cafes, and other tourist infrastructure at historic concentration camp sites may seem, to some visitors, uncanny or inappropriate; what does it mean for understandings of commemoration, collecting, and consumption that cute souvenirs are being sold at an *active* torture camp?

II

On October 22nd, 2023 – almost two weeks after October 7th and thus nearly two weeks into Israel's latest bombardment of Palestine – Gaza-based Palestinian X (formerly Twitter) user Muhammad Smiry posted a picture of his breakfast (Figure 2) to his over eight hundred thousand followers (Smiry 2023). The responses to this breakfast under siege were, at first, innocent enough – people complimenting his savoury, robust breakfast of olives, pita bread, and more. Once the post went viral, however, it became the subject of a heated debate regarding which of us are allowed to enjoy the sensory pleasures of food during war. Many English-speaking respondents mocked Smiry, questioning the authenticity of the destruction of Palestine under the logic that pleasure, war, and occupation are incompatible. There is a set of dehumanising convictions undergirding this mockery, such as that, from the perspective of the white Western gaze on the Global South, war must be unremittingly bleak in order to be recognised as war, and that people affected by war must perform an explicitly abject victimhood in order to deserve compassion (Kozol 2014). If Smiry were able to enjoy so nourishing and delicious a breakfast, argued the trolls, then how could anyone claim that Gaza was, in fact, experiencing what many nations are calling a genocide at the hands of Israel?



My breakfast in Gaza. Alhamdulillah.

9:10 AM · Oct 22, 2023 · 2.3M Views

Figure 2. Screenshot of Muhammad Smiry's Palestinian breakfast tweet (Smiry 2023).

III

Every day, the British Museum welcomes tourists, school groups, scholars, and enthusiasts from across the world. The museum is rightly criticised for its historical origins in the violent expropriations of the British Empire and its continued collaboration with extractivist polluters such as British Petroleum; controversies regularly erupt over many of its exhibits, such as the Elgin Marbles and Benin Bronzes, which

Figure 3. Atrium of the British Museum (Barker 2018).

were violently looted and remain in London against the wishes of those with legitimate claims to ownership. The museum, however, is vigilant about its reputation, emphasising the free availability of its knowledge to the entire world and the philanthropic benevolence of its founders – such as seventeenth-century physician Hans Sloane, who built up the collection that forms the basis of today's enormous archive, the institutional website ambiguously informs us, 'with assistance from both English planters and enslaved West Africans' (British Museum n.d.). And yet, as Dan Hicks (2020) has shown, the pleasures of discovery and learning, of erudition and taste, cannot be separated from the sustained slaughter and naked theft with which the collections were assembled. What can we learn by the ways in which our enjoyment of visiting one of London's premier tourist attractions is disrupted by the acknowledgement that it is a trophy cabinet of empire's violence, undergirded by persistent colonial epistemologies? (Figure 3)

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As power is everywhere, so is pleasure. Though we may be accustomed to understanding military violence and private pleasure as fundamentally separate, or at least as phenomena that seldom interact, this special issue contends that they are in fact deeply interpenetrated in ways that reveal a great deal about contemporary culture, politics, and subjectivity. If one does think of pleasure and militarisation, perhaps readiest to come to mind are the histories of depraved torture via sexual humiliation and the normalisation of sexual abuse in the military, among other instances of the ways that explicit militarised violence is catalysed by pleasure. Rather than attend to pleasure as a weapon of war, however, for this special issue we focus on an under-examined site: the ways that militarisation is normalised, mobilised, felt, and imagined in mundane sites in the

civilian sphere. As such, when we refer to 'we' or 'us' in this Introduction, we are calling upon (privileged) civilians who believe themselves to be outside or otherwise exempt from militarisation because we may not directly participate in armed violence. By collecting essays that explore the interaction of militarisation and pleasure in sites as diverse as bunker tourism, cookbooks, video games, and anti-trans rhetoric, this special issue explores a set of thorny central questions: What affective, consumptive, and sensorial regimes enable us to consider ourselves untouched by militarised infrastructures and state forces? How can we nonetheless sense our militarisation through sites of pleasure? How does militarisation function through our enjoyment?

Re-evaluating militarisation

Conventional understandings of the term 'militarisation' relate it to a process through which the boundaries between civilian institutions and their military counterparts, usually fixed and clear, become increasingly porous. Marek Thee's classic definition of militarisation as 'an extension of military influence to civilian spheres, including economy and socio-political life' (1977, 296), suggests a process in which civilian life is negatively influenced or (more polemically, perhaps) polluted by military processes, technologies, or philosophies. Whilst this use of the term enables us to identify and critique significant and historically situated escalations in the use of force by the state, such use of the term leaves unexamined the deep and rich private life of militarisation. The understanding of militarisation that sees the military perniciously injecting ideology and weapons into an otherwise docile, vulnerable civilian world relies upon the idea that civilian and military institutions are discrete entities that, though able to influence one another for better or worse, remain philosophically, practically, and materially separate; civilian life is conceived of as an innocent sphere of peaceful sociality that is most often cleanly quarantined away from the violent principles and practices of military activity. A historically informed analysis of contemporary material conditions, however, must acknowledge the long mutual imbrication of civilian and military life, from the social conditioning and organisation of gender roles to the sustainability of the global market (Elveren 2022; Enloe 2004; Marshall 2023; Rech 2014; Woodward 2014). One might even say that the organisation of civilian life in major liberal democracies and settler states has only been made possible through militarised force and its values, especially in the ways that it aids in delineating 'rational civilised peoples' from 'unruly, violent populations'.

Here, we aim to disturb these misleadingly neat boundaries between 'civilian' and 'military' – the fiction of a clean scission between the peace and innocence of ordinary life and the extraordinary violence of war. Indeed, at a time when Palestinian civilians are being massacred in an agonisingly visible process of settler colonial extermination, and the maintenance of the distinction between combatant and civilian is perhaps more urgent than ever, the relationship of ordinary life to military violence demands to be critically examined. We contend, then, that militarisation is intimately connected to our personal pleasures: not only in the material circuits of infrastructural distribution that makes them available to us, but also in our private sensorial enjoyment of them. In this light, we of course follow the rich feminist tradition that contends that, as Linda Åhäll writes, 'militarisation as a security practice forms part of sensemaking in the

everyday' (2016, 155). Catherine Lutz, too, argues that 'the capillaries of militarisation have fed and molded social institutions seemingly little connected to battle' (2007, 321). As Kaplan, Kirk, and Lea write, attention to the ways in which militarism is found within our ordinary lives brings 'the grounded activities and materials of embodied lives into critical consideration' (2020) and enables us to recognise why and how militarisation becomes implicit in the 'normal' of everyday life. Indeed, if we take seriously the idea of what Derek Gregory (2011) refers to as the 'everywhere war', what Lutz (2019) calls 'the military normal', and what Lauren Berlant (2011) names 'crisis ordinary', then war – its logics, its technologies, its violence – is always already a part of ordinary life. Another facet of this 'everywhere war' is what upholds it, what cloaks it in ideas of 'normal' and maybe even 'the good life' (Berlant 2011). Following this critical lead, this issue seeks to call attention to the way that militarisation works across and *among* the civilian structures of 'ordinary' life through 'everyday modalities' with substantial effects on subjectivities, cultural products and processes, desires, and lifestyle choices (Basham 2022, 142). Thinking about how militarisation interpenetrates our private lives and cannot be conveniently quarantined into a discrete sphere of explicitly martial processes (arms manufacture, violence work, prisons) enables us to recognise that militarisation is built into many of the multiple, interlacing, and often contradictory flows of power through which civilian life comes into being.

'Militarisation' is, then, a more complex term and concept than it may appear. Some recent arguments have proposed that 'militarisation' cannot fully account for the scope of the role of 'martial politics' (Howell 2018, 117) and war and police power (Neocleous 2014). We are not proposing 'militarisation' as the ultimate term to describe these structures in any sense. We do, however, argue that the term can still do valuable work by shining light on the multidirectional flows of influence and shared construction between the military and its values and the domain fetishised as a distant sphere – 'civilian life'. Part of our effort to reframe militarisation is also to move it in the direction of ourselves – critics – and to ask how we are complicit in and subjected to the processes defined here. In short, this special issue was also conceived of as an experiment in method. As a primary feature of Enlightenment science, a backbone of the logics of empire and whiteness that remain so powerful today, the rational, objective scientist has long forced a distance between themselves and their object of study (Haraway 1988; Mirzoeff 2023; Said 1978). The objective observer – typically taking the literal or ideological form of a white able-bodied cishet European man – only looks figuratively downward at their object of study, never considering their own biases towards, or imbrication with, the object of study. Here, we attempt the dissolution of this dangerous binary opposite. It is not a mere looking backward at ourselves, but a deep looking inward, alongside, above, below, and in every other direction imaginable. Formulating our aims, we were keen to ask how our own seemingly banal and disparate pleasures, such as those derived from our meal choices and beloved television shows, may reinforce our own militarisation or, at the least, do nothing to stop it or sense it differently.

Just as with the totalising, integrated structures of colonisation and capitalism, there is no innocent 'outside' of militarisation; as Jordy Rosenberg writes in the afterword to *Transgender Marxism* (2021, 260), 'any fantasies cultural workers may have once had about that creative work as an unalienated rind circling the rotten core of capitalist

extraction are no longer possible'. To presume there is a neutral, uncompromised 'outside' in which our pleasures remain uncontaminated by the material conditions that bring them into being would be to risk losing oneself in a fantasy of purity and escape. This is not, however, a statement of defeat: rather, it is an acknowledgment that the challenge lies in finding ways to resist, mutate, and defy militarisation in all its forms while also existing within it. Doing this work necessitates critical self-reflection on our desires, values, and routines, as well as what systems we put our trust in to take care of ourselves and others. Confronting militarisation, for us, is the first step in the long process of becoming de-militarised subjects.

Re-examining pleasure

Like many other millennial and Gen Z people in the Global North, I – Amy, an editor of this special issue – love Squishmallows, the plushie, cute toys that come in a variety of sizes and designs. I have a frog Squishmallow named Darcy that I hug almost every time I lie down on my couch. When McDonalds announced a Squishmallow-themed happy meal in October 2023 – right as Palestinian solidarity campaigns asked allies to boycott the fast food giant for their support of the Israeli Defense Force – I sat in a space of affective difficulty. While it was an easy moral and political choice to partake in the boycott, I'd be lying if I didn't still want to partake in the joy of the cute little soft faces of mini Squishmallow happy meal toys.

Palestinian solidarity campaigns have long asked for allies to boycott certain goods in order to target the Israeli economy. These boycotts have grown in numbers and visibility since Israel began its bombing campaign against Palestine in October 2023. Boycotting involves a restraint of our personal pleasures in the name of political collective action. For those who still desire their daily Starbucks or McDonalds breakfast sandwich (or their cuddle with a Squishmallow) despite observing the boycott, therefore, our desire for these habitual bodily pleasures shores up the power that sensorial and consumer pleasures can have over us and our political commitments. This is not a 'poor me' story, and neither is it a call to centre the feelings of yet another non-Palestianian in response to the boycott. Rather, it is a story that seeks to start from the ethical discomfort raised by the way in which a cute commodity confronts us with our complicity in systems of power. While working on this special issue, I have returned to the scene of my silly desire for a silly little meaningless commodity and, rather than just 'feel bad', I have begun to ask how this position can be the scene of immanent critique.

Spectacle cinema is a hugely popular wellspring of aesthetic pleasure. I – Alex, the other editor – am a long-term Godzilla fan, and the contemporary Hollywood MonsterVerse movies are a source of ethical discomfort as well as a highlight of my moviegoing calendar. The films feature a wealth of tropes, characterisations, and other narrative elements that readily invite critique: the Hollow Earth setting central to MonsterVerse lore has a central role in Nazi occultism; ape kaiju Kong originated as a racist fantasy about the white horror of black masculinity; the franchise is based on the masculinist (even fascist) notion of an apex predator that ruthlessly enforces natural hierarchy through spectacular murder; its portrayals of Indigenous people draw very clearly on the trope of the 'noble savage'; and several of the movie scripts have been drastically edited in order to secure financial and production support from the U.S. Department

of Defense. And yet, I attended multiple screenings of the new blockbuster *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* (2024), particularly enjoying watching it in 3D 4DX, a rollercoaster-like screening technology developed in association with the British Royal Air Force.

The pleasures that I derive from MonsterVerse movies raise questions about the relation of my private enchantments to the broader historical and political processes that reproduce the militarised power to which we are all subject. The famous anti-nuclear and pacifist political commitments of the original *Godzilla* (1954), for instance, may seem to authorise progressive readings of the monster movie genre; the international commodification of the form, however, and its development into a pugilistic spectacle, arguably defuses any political critique it may advance and shows that these left-leaning conceptual commitments can be supplanted by an entirely new set of far less politically palatable concerns. Pleasure, that is, can authorise a rightward slide against which we should remain vigilant, and can be the conduit through which cultural productions noisily and influentially articulate militarised political visions.

What kind of scholars (indeed, what kind of people) would we be if we assumed some divide between what we enjoy in private and our epistemological positionings and outputs? We begin this section on pleasure with reflections on our private pleasures to emphasise that the objects of our pleasure have power over us that we may struggle to reconcile with our ethics and politics. We critics are in no way immune to the conundrums we seek to raise and tackle in our inquiry.

'Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another', writes Foucault, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Rather, he continues, 'they seek out, overlap and reinforce one another' (1991, 48). This mutually constitutive interpenetration of pleasure and power is especially pronounced, we contend, in the relation between our private sensory and affective pleasures and the militarised material conditions in which they circulate and from which they cannot be separated. Our critical gesture does not extend, however, only to *identifying* this link between militarisation and pleasure and proceeding to merely condemn it. Rather, we are interested in the work that these complicit pleasures do, both affectively and in terms of their broader political importance. What is it about our pleasures that captures us? How does our complicity feel? What, if anything, can our pleasures achieve politically? After all, if we treat pleasures rooted in militarisation as totalised by that origin, we risk foreclosing a multitude of possibilities and imaginaries. What could we accomplish if we were to attempt optimistic, generous, reparative readings of our pleasures, rather than to puritanically flagellate ourselves with paranoid, condemnatory readings of those things that we enjoy? By defamiliarising our pleasures, exploring the critical potentials of affective difficulty, and sitting with the intractable, irresistibly compromising seductions that our pleasures exercise over us, we may gain some insight into these questions.

This special issue is an attempt to undertake that critical work by examining our pleasures. By pleasures, we refer to a wide but not limitless category of sensory experiences: the intimate, private, and embodied experiences that can be induced by a broad array of stimulations, from the bodily pleasures of food, exercise, rest, and sexuality, through aesthetic experiences such as the consumption and production of music, cinema, visual art, and text, and on into the 'taboo' pleasures of intoxication, transgression, and violence. Pleasure is a fundamental need for human thriving as well as a political and psychological battleground where our deepest personal enjoyments

have relations of labyrinthian complexity with our desires, fears, and political beliefs. The meaning behind our pleasures sometimes stays hidden even to ourselves, inviting us to constitute them as somehow beyond interpretation. Distinct from more fleeting feelings like joy or happiness, pleasure cuts into us in ways that we often struggle to explain, or that we may feel require no explanation: it is the satisfaction of desires that are beyond rationality or reason. Pleasure occurs when we get what we want, even when we don't know why we want it or when we know that by all societal norms and moral standards, we should not want it. Pleasure itself is a site – ephemeral, temporary, and tantalising – where politics can happen.

Often, in queer, trans, crip, and Black feminist thought, proudly and boldly prioritising one's pleasure can serve a means to refuse the ideologies and regimes that contend that some people's pleasure is a sign of their depravity or that some people do not deserve to feel good (Dale 2021; Lavery 2023; Lorde 2016; Piepzna-Samarasinha 2020; Rosenberg 2022; Stewart 2021). In the wake of rising fascism, the policing of pleasure is of utmost importance to contest. The banning of drag shows in Tennessee and Florida, for one, has shown that conservatives, the premier mouthpieces for nationalistic and militarised ideals, are actively committed to restricting pleasure in the name of 'safety' and 'protection'. Further crackdowns on LGBTQ+ rights in Poland, Uganda, Russia, and elsewhere show how rigorously the pleasures of love and attraction are policed. In light of such pleasure policing and its long ongoing history, we can productively wonder: what do fascist regimes not police when it comes to pleasure? What pleasures go unnoticed or even supported by the state? What are we 'allowed' to enjoy and who is 'we'?

Pleasure certainly has radical, even liberatory potential, as evidenced by recent calls from adrienne maree brown's (2019) Black feminist praxis of 'pleasure activism', which takes inspiration from Audre Lorde's (1988) assertion that self-care, which includes pleasure, can be a socially and politically transgressive act (consider the transgressive significance of Smiry eating and *enjoying* a satisfying breakfast under material conditions of lethal bombardment; certainly, those objecting to his post recognise the defiance inherent in his pleasure). Yet, this same scholarship ascertains that pleasure is not automatically or inherently 'empowering', especially not when it remains an individual experience without any material basis in challenging hegemony. In fact, pleasures can also become part of our subjugation or the ways in which we unknowingly subjugate others, as it serves as a biopolitical and necropolitical vehicle or device for world-making and world-destroying processes and imaginaries (Berlant 2011). Pleasure gains special power by embedding itself as part of daily life and culture. This not only makes it a prime vehicle for political propaganda, but also a means through which it can influence an enormous variety of our everyday lifestyle choices (food, sex, clothing, entertainment). There is a great deal of scholarship that attends to sites of pleasure and the entertainment industry, such as the body of work on gaming and militarism or the ways many major action and adventure films double as military and nationalistic propaganda (Bourke 2014; Cohler 2017; Coyne and Hall 2021; Der Derian 2009; Huntemann and Payne 2009; Payne 2016; Salter 2014). Militarised pleasures, however, are not always so explicit: many are routine and mundane (snacking, TV watching, shopping) and so too are their close relation to military practices. Major high street brands work hand-in-glove with the militaries that colonise and pollute the planet: consider the 'chic'

Lockheed Martin streetwear collaboration. If, as we argued above, militarism and militarisation have played a role in constituting the routine activities, lifestyle choices, behaviours, and dispositions of civilians in implicit and explicit ways, usually at the detriment of already geographically, economically, and racially marginalised people (Enloe 2000; Enloe 2010; McSorley 2018), then it is important for us to attend specifically to the role of pleasure in this process.

A great deal of scholarship has attended to the ways in which militarism and pleasure collide, reinforce, or even contradict one another. Of particular importance is the widespread understanding that many daily pleasures that those of us living in liberal democracies and settler societies take for granted – fast fashion, chocolate and coffee, smartphone components – are impossible without the extractive subjugation of distant or not-so-distant 'others'. Such bodies of work include the scholarship and activism focused on the exploitative sexual economy around military bases and war (Baudrillard 2006; Lee 2010; Nagel and Feitz 2016), the fetishisation of military culture and aesthetics (Crane-Seeber 2018), the many ways that militarism informs the formation of sexualities and ideas of romance (Amar 2013; Digby 2014; Nagel 2019; Puar 2008), and the commodification of battle locations through museumisation and political memorialisation (Weaver 2011). This work often asks probing and vital questions about the implications of 'war economies', and examines how the imbrication of civilian and military lives affects the locals living on or near militarised lands, military bases, and former warzones (Gonzalez 2013; Lisle 2016; Skwiot 2011).

Elsewhere, hegemonic popular culture is a frequent object of critique for the ways in which it circulates the dominant ideologies of contemporary imperial capitalism, embedding it into our familiar circuits of meaning through the pleasures of recreation and entertainment (Bourke 2014; Enloe 2016; Stahl 2010). Pleasure is often built upon an economy of dispossession and exploitation, and may often be complicit with the entrenchment and intensification of reactionary and damaging politics, practices, and violence.

Why think militarisation and pleasure together?

What can scholarly critique and analysis do in the face of the fact that for some, particularly in racialised geographies, militarisation is a deadly, dehumanising infrastructure whereas for some, mainly those in more so-called democratic and 'safe' geographies, militarisation is experienced as a mundane, pleasurable part of everyday life? For this issue, it was clear to us that the point of critique is *not:* to engage in judgemental sneering about specific individual habits of consumption or pleasure; to locate responsibility for structural harms in individual practices of reception or interpretation; to claim that critical reading is in itself a form of resistance to power; to prescribe a specific manner of consumption that exonerates us from the systematic harms that pervade society and of which cultural and critical production are never innocent. To seek ideological purity as a starting point for action forecloses forms of situated and strategic knowledge that can animate an imperfect resistance. Here, our authors avoid the trap of seeking politically pure pleasures or simply condemning all and every pleasure affiliated with militarisation. Rather, our authors dissect various sites of pleasure and build a foundation that enables us to ask how these sites of pleasure can exceed their original intended use and be repurposed, remixed, and reappropriated in a wide variety of ways.

The scholarly impulses that have animated this issue have sought to identify the ways in which pleasure and militarisation are co-constituting in order to acknowledge our complex, messy, always already implicated positionality and to use this acknowledgment as a way of opening horizons for resistance, living otherwise, and becoming other. We aim to dissect militarisation in its multiple mundane forms and to examine ourselves in the process, especially pressing down on the seductiveness of epistemological and methodological practices that would somehow place academics outside of the field of our critique.

Our goals for this special issue can be summarised by three questions that motivated our work and ultimately shaped the organisation of the papers. We ask: Why and how do militarised subjects enjoy what we enjoy? What does everyday militarisation feel and look like? How do we examine ourselves as militarised subjects? More broadly, assembling these papers has brought to us a sense of surprise in relation to the multitudinous complexity of pleasure. That is to say, pleasure is more than simply something that masks or medicates our exposure to the harsh realities of a militarised society, and it can often speak with multiple voices. What these authors show is that if we are willing to put ourselves within the scene of critique, then reflection upon our pleasures can enable us to disrupt the ideological and material hold that militarisation has on us. The papers further show the merits of using pleasure as an archive through which to critique militarisation. These forms of pleasure are irreducibly multiple and resistant to categorisation; nonetheless, they are often sensorial or affective – linked to global economies of consumption and memorialisation – displaced proxy experiences – such as video games and films – and ritualistic – including forms of nationalistic rhetorics and cooking instructions. These heterogeneous scenes of pleasure give us an expansive, holistic, and disturbing picture of what militarisation is and how we experience it through everyday forms of enjoyment.

Our first four papers speak with particular clarity to the question of how and why we militarised subjects take pleasure from the artifacts that we enjoy. In 'The Cinematic Universe of Copaganda: World-building and the Enchantments of Policing', Derek S Denman draws on a range of seemingly unrelated film texts in order to argue provocatively that most police texts take place in the same shared universe – a shared universe in which the police are a force for good in the world that is capable of solving crimes and protecting the innocent. Denman's focus on what he refers to as the 'enchantments of copaganda' and their relation to contemporary political discourse around policing provides original and compelling insights into the ways that cultural production and the pleasures it gives us are put to work in the service of militarised state violence. Likewise, Nausikaa El-Mecky's 'Aesthetic (Dis)Pleasure in a War Zone: The Complexities of US-Military Patronage of an "Enemy" Iraqi Artist' examines artistic production in the context of militarised violence, exploring how these pleasures intersect with military conquest. Examining the case study of Iraqi sculptor Khalid Alussy, who made statues for the US military using bronze reclaimed from toppled statues of Saddam Hussein, El-Mecky describes how Alussy's sculpture brought multiple strains of enjoyment to multiple audiences, including the online civilian audiences who received it via the circulation of what El-Mecky calls a 'heartwarming myth'. Importantly, she dissects how the sculpture contains 'myriad layers of conquest and subjugation' due to the intractable political complexities of its wartime creation. Pavel Vasilyev's rich historical analysis of the emergence of

military 'miracle' drugs in the Soviet Union shifts the focus away from American state violence to on the Soviet Cold War context. His essay 'Military Miracle Drugs and the Pharmaceuticalisation of Everyday Life from Below in the Cold War USSR' not only traces the central role that military research and development has played in pharmaceutical advancement, but also considers how citizen scientists and the wider Soviet public perceived these drugs. Vasilyev shows how the public engaged with such miracle drugs – drugs believed to be able to treat or cure a number of ailments – as pleasurable off-label objects, and considers how the Soviet Union sought to stop this trend of everyday pharmaceuticalisation. Finally for this section, Ada Hubrig's essay 'Policing Trans Existence Through Peda-Parrhesia: Deploying the Rhetorical Child', examines the fine detail of one particularly interesting rhetorical technique employed by transphobic actors – peda-parrhesia, or the act of appearing to speak bravely against powerful forces which threaten children and their innocence. As well as critiquing the bogus connections that transphobic politicians, entertainers, and journalists draw between trans liberation and the endangerment of children, Hubrig's essay reveals that what Sartre (1944, 21) called 'the joy of hating' remains very much with us.

The next four papers share a preoccupation with what everyday militarisation feels and looks like. These essays reflect the tentacular distribution of militarisation throughout our lives, locating militarisation in spaces where we might not, perhaps, expect to find it. The first of two essays on food in this issue, for instance, Nieves Pascual Soler's 'COVID-19 Cookbooks: War and Pleasure in US Kitchens' examines the use of military-themed vocabulary and imagery in three community cookbooks published during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining the now-familiar metaphor in which state responses to COVID-19 were positioned as 'wars against coronavirus' through an unusual – and often funny – set of textual resources, this essay provides a vivid account of the granular penetration of military vocabulary and thought into food culture in the US. In 'Soft Food as Violence Cover-up: Militarised Foods as Foods of the Everyday', our second essay on food, Kayci Merritte zooms in to examine how militarisation permeates lifestyles even at the level of food texture and sensory pleasure. Merritte argues that the soft texture of foods that transverse civilian and military realms – ready to eat meals, instant coffee, or chocolate bars, for instance – can operate as a site to examine how militarisation reveals itself through sensorial surprise. It is no great insight to observe that twentieth-century militarisation has had colossal ecological and infrastructural effects. Many of these effects, however, remain clandestine. Zeroing in on one of the military technologies that dug into the physical landscape during the Cold War, Greg Elmer and Steve Neville examine the multiple histories – and the contemporary afterlives – of the military bunker. Today, many bunkers have been repurposed into tourist attractions, and not merely as educational objects but zones of entertainment and play, featuring the likes of zombie roleplaying and escape rooms. Elmer and Neville show how the bunker – a media object positioned in certain socio-political military histories – can live multiple afterlives. Finally here, in 'Autonomous Weapons of Pleasure: Media Archaeology of Automated Killing in Military and Gaming Technologies', Michael Dawid Żmuda examines the role of AI in the video game *Alien: Isolation* (2014) to identify how it immerses players into the pleasures of being being 'preyed upon' and experiencing 'military entrapment'. Rather, that is, than critiquing the game's military logic at the level of the gameplay text, Żmuda examines

the ways in which military logics and tactics underpin the programming of the game's antagonist (a malevolent alien powered by an AI bot). Ultimately, the author shows how the AI system manipulates the player into 'military entrapment' and masks this fact with the pleasures of feeling in control.

The final four papers in this issue are all, to some degree, engaged with the question of self-reflexivity. Ben Scholl and Milena Droumeva examine the connection between video games, sensory experience, and the softening of militarisation in their paper 'From the ready room to the battle bus: exploring militarisation through gamespace soundwalks in *Fortnite*'. The authors develop the innovative method of gamespace soundwalking, which enables them to reflect on their gaming experience in novel ways. They engage this method to show how *Fornite*'s affective dimensions condition players into the ideal neoliberal sonic environment, an environment where the noise and chaos of conflict are masked by standardisation. This issue's third paper on video gaming, Olga Usachova's 'Play for Ukraine: Wargaming as a Resistance Pleasure', moves beyond the interpretation of in-game content and examines the connection of a specific video game to its real-world military context. The game, *Play for Ukraine*, when played, assaulted Russian web servers with DDoS requests. Usachova argues this is a form of 'gamified resistance' that could be conducted in the anonymity of a web browser and the relative safety of one's own home. Usachova unpacks how the enjoyment of a simple video game formed part of a complex web of collaborative social practices at the nexus of militarised violence and civilian pleasure. Effective self-reflexivity requires us to shift the grounds on which we see, to rethink what modes of perception we inhabit, and to think through what types of technologies and structures enable and support them. Peter J Woods's paper 'The Abject Pleasures of Militarised Noise' explores the tension between militarism and pleasure within contemporary noise music, contending that the politics of noise music trade in the dual nature of abjection. This produces an intense critique of militarism while simultaneously rearticulating some of its most problematic aspects. Woods's critique of the competing sensory, affective, and political registers of militarised sound emphasises the multiple contradictory entanglements that produce this specific nexus of militarised pleasure. The final article in this issue, Zoe Eddy's '(Role)Playing Soldier: LARP, Simulated Combat, and Gender at War', is a compelling, partially autoethnographic analysis of Live Action Roleplaying (LARP) communities. Fascinatingly, Eddy resists the temptation to attribute moral purity to the sources of one's own pleasure and instead examines how LARP may indeed normalise violence under the guise of fun. Simultaneously, however, she acknowledges how LARP, though problematic in some respects, can also offer a uniquely inventive place for women and gender minorities to build community and resist sexist gender norms.

Conclusion

Let us return to our opening examples. The presence of a gift shop and other leisure facilities at a place like Guantánamo tells us a great deal about the relationship between capitalism and empire-building, as it is an evocative example of the embeddedness of consumer comfort in our daily exercise of military atrocities. And yet, it is not our intent to say that military personnel should not eat at branded restaurants or that the environment should be more austere. This would be a way of moralising about pleasure,

a gesture that we are keen to critique in itself. The greater question posed by the Guantánamo Bay gift shop, rather, is how to make sense of it without recourse to a sentimentalised and critically unproductive outrage; what does the idea of selecting, paying for, taking home, and displaying a kitsch souvenir of an active torture camp tell us about, for instance, cultural capital, tourism, memorialisation, and the commodity itself?

Muhammad Smiry's breakfast tweet and its ensuing controversy, too, are examples of the elaborate complex of moral judgments that are attached to pleasure, and the knots that these judgments can tie into our understanding. The economies of deserving in play here – the idea, that is, that there is something inappropriate about eating a delicious breakfast in wartime – rely on a mean-spirited, puritanical respectability politics informed by the idea that material suffering and sensorial pleasures cannot coexist. Given that they plainly can and do co-exist, how do we examine these relationships and affective experiences in ways that do not rely on normative judgments about the appropriateness of any given form of enjoyment?

Finally, the British Museum presents a fascinating case study of the mutual imbrication of sustained military-colonial exploitation with refined epistemological, rhetorical, and aesthetic pleasures. How can we look differently at objects taken by force without subjecting the objects to be overdetermined by their colonial framings? How, too, can we negotiate our engagement with these objects and confront the pleasure of knowing and mastery, not to mention the gaining of cultural capital, that is so baked into the colonial mindset of an ideal museum-going experience?

We don't seek to answer these many rhetorical questions here, but rather to frame what we consider to be our critical task. Our core commitments arose from our shared scholarly interests in drone systems, military culture in civilian spaces, and the pleasurable attachments that we unknowingly form with military-born technologies, processes, aesthetics, and values. Central to our commitments were our agreements around the purpose of critique; in particular, inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1997) concept of 'paranoid reading', we aimed to avoid the political dead-end of treating the purpose of critique as merely revealing the problems in the world as they are reflected in cultural objects, as though our job as critics were simply to provide straightforward diagnoses rather than to problematise and complicate our objects of inquiry. In turn, to close this issue, we want to meditate briefly on the task that motivates us as we move forward as political subjects and academics. The task being: to imagine a materially grounded ethics of pleasures under contemporary militarisation.

Looking forward, we are faced with the challenge of how to mobilise the insights offered by this special issue in order to reorient and reevaluate our material, emotional, and ideological investments without either self-exoneration or the policing of our pleasures. After all, individualising guilt or propriety provides no insight into the basis or effects of pleasure, and pleasure itself still exists even if not acted upon. We hope the contributions to this special issue will encourage readers to think about the ways that economies of deserving structure affective impulses, imaginaries, and thoughts about who is or is not able to enjoy things. Further, to put ideas into action, we aspire for readers to feel hopeful, and ask how they can disrupt such economies of deserving and militarised regimes that attempt to dictate what we enjoy and how. Lastly, when writing this issue we were deeply inspired by the growing number of boycott movements in the Global North. As such, we

encourage readers to also think beyond the militarisation of personal pleasures and ask how we can use the personal as a means to form and reach the collective.

Notes on contributors

Alex Adams is an independent scholar and musician based in the UK. They have published three monographs on the representation of political violence in popular culture, and a fourth, *Kill Box: Military Drone Systems and Cultural Production*, is forthcoming from Rowman and Littlefield. They are also writing *Godzilla: A Critical Demonology*, which will be the definitive scholarly study of Godzilla. Learn more at www.atadamswriting.com

Amy Gaeta is a scholar, poet, and disability justice advocate. They are a Research Associate at the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence at the University of Cambridge, where they use feminist disability studies to analyse the emotional, aesthetic, and political dimensions of human-tech relations. They have published two chapbooks of poetry, and are working on their first monograph, *Drone Life: Cripping Twenty-first Century Human-Tech Relations*.

Acknowledgments

The guest editors would like to thank the following people for their support, insights, and enthusiasm throughout the making of this this special issue. We extend our support to *Culture, Theory, and Critique*'s Editor-in-Chief Greg Hainge for giving us the space and intellectual freedom to compile this issue. Further, the editorial and production team at this journal was essential to producing this body of work. The peer reviewers for this issue demonstrated supreme care and expertise in their feedback, for which we express our gratitude. Finally, thank you to Beryl Pong, Logan Smilges, and Jamie Johnson for their feedback on the introduction.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by UK Research and Innovation [grant number MR/W010429/1].

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