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Teaching and Learning Reflexivity in the World Politics Classroom

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Complementing discussions of reflexivity as a research practice, this article turns its attention to the classroom. How does a pedagogy that invites students to practice reflexivity represent possibilities for thinking, writing, and imagining otherwise in scholarly engagements with world politics? In response to this question, I explore the dilemmas, challenges, and possibilities students encounter in practicing reflexivity. These include the challenge of meaningfully locating the self in relation to the workings of power, moving beyond a checkbox approach to vectors of identity, and learning to specifically analyze the manifestations of power in daily life. I argue that both the dilemmas and possibilities of practicing reflexivity are related to hierarchies of knowledge creation—and the opportunities to challenge those hierarchies—in the study of world politics. The aim is to illustrate how teachers and students of world politics alike can treat the invitation for reflexivity in the classroom as a potential site of experimentation and freedom that disrupts rigid frameworks of generating knowledge.

En complément de discussions sur la réflexivité comme pratique de recherche, cet article s'intéresse à la salle de classe. Une pédagogie qui invite les étudiants à pratiquer la réflexivité offre-t-elle des possibilités de penser, écrire et imaginer autrement dans des travaux académiques en politique mondiale ? Pour répondre à cette question, je m'intéresse aux dilemmes, défis et possibilités que les étudiants rencontrent dans la pratique de la réflexivité. Parmi ceux-ci figure le défi de situer de manière significative le moi par rapport aux rouages du pouvoir, de dépasser une approche de liste de cases à cocher pour adopter des vecteurs d'identité, et d'apprendre à analyser précisément les manifestations du pouvoir dans sa vie quotidienne. J'affirme que tant les dilemmes que les possibilités induits par la pratique de la réflexivité sont liés aux hiérarchies de production de connaissances, et des possibilités de contester ces hiérarchies, dans l'étude de la politique mondiale. L'objectif est d'illustrer comment les enseignants et les étudiants en politique mondiale peuvent traiter l'invitation à la réflexivité dans la salle de classe comme site potentiel d'expérimentation et de liberté qui remet en question les cadres rigides de production de connaissances.

Este artículo dirige su atención directamente a las aulas, complementando, de esta manera, las discusiones sobre la reflexividad como práctica de investigación. ¿Cómo es posible que una forma de pedagogía que invita a los estudiantes a practicar la reflexividad represente posibilidades para pensar, escribir e imaginar lo contrario en los compromisos académicos con la política mundial? Para poder responder a esta pregunta, estudiamos los dilemas, desafíos y posibilidades con los que se encuentran los estudiantes cuando practican la reflexividad. Estos incluyen: el desafío de ubicar significativamente el yo en relación con el funcionamiento del poder, el poder ir más allá de un enfoque consistente en aplicar una casilla de verificación a los vectores de identidad y el hecho de aprender a

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analizar de manera específica las manifestaciones del poder en la vida cotidiana. Argumentamos que, tanto los dilemas como las posibilidades de practicar la reflexividad, están relacionados con las jerarquías de creación de conocimiento (y con las oportunidades para desafiar esas jerarquías) en el estudio de la política mundial. El objetivo es ilustrar cómo los profesores y los estudiantes en el campo de la política mundial pueden tratar por igual la invitación a la reflexividad en el aula como si fuera un sitio potencial para la experimentación y la libertad, que perturba los marcos rígidos de generación de conocimiento.

When I teach feminist theories in world politics, a key question I ask my students to consider is "to whom do expectations attach?" In a given context, who is expected to be patient and pleasant, who is (not) readily imagined as authoritative or credible, and what might an intersectional gender analysis reveal about these expectations? These questions offer a fruitful starting point for this article: Who is expected to be reflexive, and in which sites do scholars readily locate the practice of reflexivity?

I understand reflexivity as an iterative invitation to consider how different subjects—researchers, students, teachers, and citizens—are enmeshed in power relations and to critically reflect on how those power relations in turn affect the knowledge these subjects create and access, as well as shape the processes and relationships by which knowledge comes into being (Krystalli forthcoming). Bringing together different ways of thinking about what reflexivity is and what it can do (Dauphinee 2010; Amoureux and Steele 2015, 7; Shepherd 2017), I treat *reflexivity as a practice* and am interested in its resonance in the world politics classroom. I make the case that, even outside the domain of research, reflexivity matters as a reading practice, a listening practice, a writing practice, and a practice of critically imagining and relating to the world and to the political.

In my own journey of becoming a scholar of world politics, I first became aware of reflexivity as a duty that pertained to research and, in particular, to qualitative fieldwork in settings of political violence.[1] Anxieties about reflexivity—what it meant, how to practice it, how to practice it *well*, and how to avoid the accusation that it is "mere navel gazing" (England 1994, 82)—recurred in my conversations with PhD students and early career scholars. This is not to suggest that scholars pursuing methods that were not readily legible as "fieldwork" were exempt from the duty of reflexivity or that they did not practice it; rather, in my imagination, reflexivity had a domain ("the field")[2] and an imagined subject ("the field researcher").

In this article, I aim to expand that imagination by redirecting my attention to a different site, the classroom, and different subjects of world politics, the students and teachers of these topics. I discuss my experience of teaching the practice of reflexivity in undergraduate classes on different aspects of world politics. How does a pedagogy that emphasizes reflexivity represent possibilities for thinking, writing, and imagining different sets of relations to each other, knowledge, and power in engagements with world politics? In response to this question, I explore the dilemmas, challenges, and forms of joy students encounter in learning to practice reflexivity. I argue that both the dilemmas and possibilities are related to hierarchies of knowledge creation—and the opportunities to challenge those hierarchies—within the study of world politics, as well as in the academy more broadly.

"Revealing pedagogies as a source of power," Claire Timperley and Kate Schick (2022, 113) argue, "encourages intentional pedagogical practices to critique,

[1] I am gratefully indebted to many thinkers and texts who were invaluable in this endeavor. These include Shepherd (2017), Fujii (2010), Sylvester (2013), and Aradau and Huysmans (2014), among others.

[2] The quotes around "field" reflect both the scholarly debates and my own ambivalence around this term. For more on this point, see Bliesemann de Guevara and Bøås (2020) and Richmond et al. (2015).

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diversify, and re-story global politics." By taking undergraduate students and teachers seriously as subjects of world politics, who simultaneously experience world politics and influence this field of study, I enact commitments to approaching "international relations as if people mattered" (Koomen 2021). In this case, the subjects of IR are not only world leaders, peacekeepers, or conflict-affected individuals and communities, but also the students who are curious about these topics and who, along with their teachers, shape knowledge creation about them (Grenier 2016, 163). Similarly, the subjects who carry duties of reflexivity are not only researchers or people who professionally and readily claim the labels of "academic" or "scholar," but also the readers, writers, and thinkers who populate the undergraduate classroom.[3] I show how practicing reflexivity through reading, writing, and classroom discussions can help students and teachers alike see and critically make sense of power and its workings, inequities, and manifestations.

Scholars have persuasively made the case for why this intervention may be especially timely in the broader discipline of politics and international relations (Hamati-Ataya 2013; Caraccioli and Hozić 2015; Odysseos and Pal 2018; Schick and Timperley 2022). My analysis focuses on the generative possibilities of embracing reflexivity in the classroom, not on distilling its service to IR or creating a hierarchy of pedagogies and methods by claiming that reflexivity is "better than" Method X or Pedagogy Y. Instead, I am interested in demonstrating how the practice of reflexivity invites students and teachers alike to reimagine ways of relating to each other, to knowledge, to power, and to the political.

This article also contributes to discussions about *how* to practice reflexivity. "We need to be reflexive about the empirical and through the theoretical," Can Mutlu (2015, 937) argues, "and not only be reflexive in theory." Many conversations about reflexivity focus on underscoring its importance or lamenting the difficulties associated with it. Though essential, such conversations often leave students and readers convinced of the value of reflexivity, but still not entirely clear on how to negotiate its dilemmas in practice.[4] Amoureux and Steele echo the necessity of understanding "how reflexivity might be engaged beyond its passing mention (as if simply invoking the term 'reflexivity' is doing significant work)" (2015, 2). What might reflexivity look like beyond the buzzword (Tickner 2013; Bâ 2022)? I feel the urgency of the question "okay, but *how* do I do this?" Most keenly in the classroom, where students rightly expect instruction, as well as clarity about the criteria by which I assess their work.

The question of *how* to practice reflexivity is difficult to answer partly because of the conflicting imperatives of providing specificity while acknowledging variation across contexts. Mine is not a prescriptive or universal account. Pedagogy, like reflexivity, is lived in questions (Krystalli 2021a). A singular how-to guide to practicing reflexivity, whether in research or teaching, is at odds with the iterative reckoning with dilemmas that the practice of reflexivity invites (Thomson 2021; Jay 2023). However, the fact that a practice is context-dependent, or that singular prescriptions are ill-suited to navigating pedagogical and research dilemmas, does not mean that learning or teaching about a subject is impossible. Stemming from my own experiences as a feminist teacher and researcher, this article addresses the pedagogical dimensions of reflexivity in practice, particularly when teaching undergraduate students who, unlike PhD candidates, may not immediately conduct academic research. "My evidence—such as it is—is almost always intimate," Zadie Smith writes

[3] I rely on both the language of world politics and the language of IR here. I rely on the language of IR when referring to the school in which I teach, the way the students understand themselves in relation to the school, and when quoting others who use that language. I am less interested in IR as a strict, rigidly defined disciplinary (sub-)field and more interested in the questions of world politics that scholars and teachers ask within it.

[4] My thinking about "doing reflexivity" is inspired by bell hooks' thinking about "doing feminism." hooks has written that she prefers phrases like "I advocate feminism," rather than "I am a feminist", because the former "implies that a choice has been made, that commitment to feminism is an act of will" (hooks 2015 , 30).

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with reference to her starting points when narrating an experience. "I feel this — do you? I'm struck by this thought — are you?" (Smith 2018, xi) Smith's questions reflect my own starting points, as does her desire to engage the reader in an affective conversation about varied experiences.

The performance of reflexivity as a prescriptive blueprint or as a smug form of self-satisfaction on the part of the researcher/teacher/writer—what Mauro Caraccioli and Aida Hozić beautifully term "the perils of self-love" (2015, 146)—is antithetical to the ethic of (self-)questioning that reflexivity is meant to invite (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2022). Both reflexivity itself and the teaching of it are situated practices, meaning that structural dynamics affect who can embrace them and how. As I discuss in detail below, in the context of teaching reflexivity to undergraduate IR students in a UK institution, these structural conditions include the flexibility that instructors (may not) have to determine their own syllabi, the number of students in each class, the contract type and level of pay that different instructors receive for preparation, teaching, and marking assessments, as well as broader debates within academic departments and universities about what counts as (good) knowledge (Timperley and Schick 2022, 115–6). I hope to shed light on why some educators who are committed to reflexivity may struggle to fully bring it into the classroom and to think about what directing that reflexivity at the university itself as a particular site of power might reveal.

Context: Teaching Reflexivity to Undergraduate Students of World Politics

I have relied on reflexive pedagogies, and reflexive responses as a form of assessment, in two classes I have taught at the undergraduate level at the University of St Andrews School of International Relations[5]: Feminist Theories in Global Politics, which is primarily aimed at third-year undergraduate students, and The Politics of Nature and Place, primarily aimed at fourth-year undergraduate students. The size of these classes has varied between approximately twenty and thirty students each time I have taught them, which has been consistent with the other third- and fourth-year offerings in this school.[6] Students in these classes call different parts of the world home, and, for some, English is a second language.

As university and school policies and practices indicate, third- and fourth-year undergraduate students enroll in two classes each semester, and are expected to spend approximately 20 hours on each of them. The 20 hours include 2 hours of direct instruction for each class, usually in the form of a 1-hour lecture and a 1-hour discussion-based tutorial (or seminar), as well as 2 hours of the instructor's availability for office hours. The rest of students' time is dedicated to reading, working on the assessments, or engaging in optional activities (such as watching films, forming reading groups with other students, or attending field trips). Instructors typically teach both the lecture and all tutorial groups without support from a postgraduate teaching assistant, and are responsible for all marking and assessment.

At the third- and fourth-year undergraduate level at the school of IR, students are expected to write between 5,000 and 7,500 words a semester. Most instructors have some flexibility in determining how to distribute those. Some colleagues rely on a combination of essays and exams (e.g., a 5,000-word essay, two 2,500-word essays, an essay, and a final exam), while others experiment with different forms of assessments in addition to or instead of the above, such as blog posts, oral presentations, creative exhibits, student journals, and more (Jamalullail et al. 2022). When proposing a class to teach, instructors must clearly indicate the forms of assessment, the

[5]Though the school is framed around international relations and the majority of faculty do focus on some aspect of the study of politics and IR, its composition is also interdisciplinary, drawing together anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, who bring these fields into their teaching about world politics.

[6]In this context, school refers to the university department. The size of honors classes is regulated by the advising process at the University of St Andrews School of International Relations, through which the school attempts to balance student interest in different classes with relative parity of student numbers among members of the teaching staff.

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learning objectives, the themes of every week, and various other parameters, which the Director of Teaching and university-wide Curriculum Approvals Group review and approve. Instructors cannot unilaterally change their assessments or weekly topics without seeking further approval from this group.

None of my undergraduate teaching is, strictly speaking, "about" research methods or reflexivity. However, in all my teaching, regardless of subject matter, I strive to implement feminist pedagogies, which, in the context of my work, mean that I (i) encourage curiosity about power and its manifestations; (ii) aim to practice and inspire reflexivity in the creation of knowledge, both in terms of critically exploring who and what counts as sources and creators of knowledge, and in terms of reflecting on students' and teachers' own knowledge creation and disruption practices; (iii) endeavor to facilitate both critique *and* the re-imagination of worlds, acknowledging that critique is not just about fault-finding, but about envisioning and enacting more just ways of living; (iv) teach about violence, injustice, and loss with an eye toward practices of joy and care, not just an analysis of harms and destruction. As these parameters suggest, reflexivity is a key component of my pedagogical commitments and it manifests in choices I make about reading lists, assignments, discussion questions, facilitation style, marking rubrics, and more.

The most immediate way reflexivity enters my classroom is through the practice of reflexive responses. Reflexive responses are weekly 500-word pieces in which the students connect one concept or idea from that week's readings to one application in their own lives, such as to an issue in the media, in their broader university community, a childhood memory, or other relevant experiences. Reflexive responses are not reading summaries, expecting students to demonstrate that they have read everything I assigned for that week. Instead, the focus is on the application of one insight from the readings to students' lives, broadly conceived. Though this premise requires students to connect the class material to an aspect of their worlds, that connection need *not* be intimate or personal. Students commonly link an insight from one reading to another class at the university or to an issue in the news.

For example, in my Politics of Nature and Place class, students have applied the readings on the colonial history of botanic gardens to examining how the local botanic gardens label plants in their collections. Other students connected the readings on land and community to how they were (not) taught about the history of the Scottish Clearances and land disputes while studying in Scotland; yet others connected our discussions on the politics of naming nature to their childhood experiences of learning the names of plants and birds. Students are also allowed—and encouraged—to pursue more creative reflexive responses, such as writing poems, making TikTok videos, recording podcasts, or other forms of fulfilling the aims of the assignment. Illustratively, some students have written short fictional pieces engaging with a theme in the reading, as well as made collages or drawn watercolors, accompanied by a brief "artist's statement." These alternative media and forms of creation are particularly well suited to students who may find the task of writing every week challenging, or who may wish for variation in how they engage with the material.

Reflexive responses are weekly, meaning that students meet the institutional requirement of writing the required number of words over the course of the semester.[7] The weekly nature of the assignment also mirrors the iterative learning and practice of reflexivity, allowing students to experiment, try, struggle, learn, and try again. The first reflexive response of each semester is required but unmarked, allowing students to receive detailed feedback so that they can better tailor future responses to the aims of the assignment. This provision is particularly important,

[7]Though there is little institutional flexibility in allowing students to write more/less overall over the course of the semester, students in my classes have informally shared that the weekly nature of the assignment (and the fact that each week is weighted to only carry a small percentage of the final grade) allows them to practice and is a less stressful—if still intellectually demanding—way of engaging with the material.

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given that students' education until this point has not often relied on assignments of this type.

The reflexive response assignment is the most concrete manifestation of how students of world politics and I work to write and think reflexively, and it is for that reason that it forms the bedrock of this article. The practice of reflexivity in the classroom, however, transcends this assignment and spills over into all of the students' interactions with me and with each other. Reflexive writing requires reflexive inputs, so I have designed the reading lists with an eye toward giving students examples of how scholars have approached their own subject matter reflexively.[8] The facilitation questions for our tutorial discussions also invite reflexivity, and so does the students' final essay assignment.

Students experience this assignment, as well as their own learning, in diverse ways, which I cannot fully imagine or document here as their instructor. Indeed, while some aspects of this article may have looked quite similar if undergraduate students had written it, others would look rather different. Writing about teaching necessarily requires writing about interactions with students; writing about pedagogy, as Naeem Inayatullah has put it, is writing about encounter (2022, 2). This article is best placed to capture my experience as an instructor, informed by my encounters with students but not speaking for them, or assuming that students would speak in a singular voice. I have also taken care not to refer to any student in identifiable ways, relying instead on broader patterns I have observed over time and on examples that were so common that they pertain to no single student in particular.

Beyond the specific institutional context, broader structural dimensions also inform how and what we teach. In many UK universities, a workload model tracks faculty members' investment of time and effort. While workload models vary within and across departments (as does the calculation of how staff ought to balance teaching, research, and service commitments), few such models account for how time-consuming different kinds of pedagogies and assignments are. More broadly, and as higher education strikes in the United Kingdom and beyond draw attention to, overextended workload expectations have led to both unpaid labor and staff burnout. For staff who do not have permanent employment contracts, those challenges are magnified by precarity and worries about the future (Ivancheva et al. 2019). Early career scholars, scholars on fixed-term contracts, and minoritized scholars often feel most keenly the pressures to pedagogically "innovate" or invest even more time and effort in student-facing work, while also juggling the fact that this is not always the work that is institutionally rewarded in the form of compensation, job security, or promotion (Timperley and Schick 2022, 116).

Teaching with and about reflexivity demands significant investment of time, effort, and care on the part of the instructor throughout the semester.[9] These demands may make reflexive responses difficult to practice in large classes, and/or for instructors on fixed-term or contingent contracts, many of whom get paid by the hour, with a set amount of time allotted to marking student work (regardless of how much time this marking actually takes). Further barriers to embracing reflexive responses as a form of teaching and assessment may include sometimes limited flexibility some instructors in the UK system have in changing or determining the assignments in their classrooms, and the varied support different university

[8]Illustrative examples include engaging with Shahram Khosravi's auto-ethnography of borders (2007), Carol Cohn's feminist observations of defense intellectuals (1987), and Azra Hromadžić's account of rivers, joy, care, and grief (2022). What these texts have in common is that they are not "about" reflexivity or directly about methods or pedagogy, but they *model* ways of doing reflexivity that are generative for classroom discussion and for students' own experimentation.

[9]Unlike exams or essays with which the students are more familiar, reflexive responses require teachers to provide more instruction to students on how to approach the assignment. Having an unmarked reflexive response on which students receive feedback presents further (often uncounted) demands on instructors' time, care, and effort. Supporting students through office hours, offering the kinds of detailed feedback on student work that can further reflexivity, and helping colleagues understand the assignment for the purposes of "second marking" or moderation present further time burdens.

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administrators offer to practices that deviate from standard norms of teaching and assessment. These norms are often themselves contradictory: On the one hand, many universities declare that they expect and encourage innovation in teaching and pedagogy, while, on the other hand, not adequately supporting such innovation in the form of appropriately rewarding and compensating instructors for their time and effort.

These barriers to embracing reflexivity in pedagogy do not mean we, instructors, need to throw our hands in the air. They do, however, inspire three sets of questions and duties. First, there are many situations in which "just" doing the job, with as much consciousness and care as one can muster, is sufficient and appropriate, as opposed to constantly calling on educators to "do more," to "innovate," or to "do differently," particularly when many of those educators face precarity, burnout, inequalities in the sector, and other barriers to thriving.[10] Second and relatedly, rather than assuming that certain pedagogical practices are always desirable and prescribing them to others, we ought to ask what structural conditions of working within universities may hinder the adoption of such practices, even among those who are otherwise receptive to them. And third, we need to continue critically examining how the hierarchies that inflect knowledge creation and exchange, both in terms of the subject matter and in terms of the working conditions within universities, affect how and what we teach and learn.

The implication is that a meaningful practice of reflexivity within the university requires students, teachers, and administrators alike to treat the university as a site of power and world politics (Odysseos and Pal 2018). Put another way, teaching and learning about reflexivity within universities requires turning the curiosity this practice inspires toward the university itself. In practice, such an acknowledgment would investigate how structures of precarious employment, and overwork, as well as racialized, gendered, and classed inequalities, affect the experience of teaching and learning.[11]

Locating the Self in the Work

If reflexivity is, in part, an invitation to "locate the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter" (Harding 1989, 8), the act of placing the student/writer in the work, and in that same critical plane as the subject matter, has proved consistently difficult for students. This challenge has manifested in a range of ways, both in reflexive responses themselves and in students' narratives about them: Many students have struggled with first-person writing, hesitating to claim the narrative "I." Yet others feel comfortable writing "I think" or "I believe," but give little information about that "I" that thinks, feels, believes, claims, and argues. For many of these students, even if an "I" in writing is within reach, there is little explicit connection between the texts and experiences they are analyzing or critiquing and the self-developing that response.

These struggles relate to more systemic issues that affect higher education in the context in which I teach. When I have asked students why the "I" feels out of reach and why locating oneself within the work is difficult to imagine, they tell me that much of their prior education, from high school exams to their first years in university, underscored that there is no place for the (visible) self in Serious Academic Writing. Instructors and texts do not only teach students about the subject matter; they also model acceptable ways to perform authority. In many educational institutions, narrative authority requires distance, which comes into being through the erasure of the self within the work and words. "Throughout most of the twentieth century," the anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996, 12–3) has written, "in scholarly

[10] Thanks to Reviewer 2 for helping me draw out this point.

[11] As Reviewer 3 helpfully noted, this is an important area for additional research, which I hope continues to grow across disciplines, and which is not fully exhausted within the scope of this article.

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fields ranging from literary criticism to anthropology to law, the reigning paradigms have traditionally called for distance, objectivity, and abstraction. The worst sin was to be 'too personal'." Speaking directly about a particular kind of international relations scholarship, Roxanne Doty observes that "the identity of the writing subject as scholar becomes a faceless, formless authority positioned at a remove distance from the human element at stake in what is being written about" (2004, 389).

Encouraging students to locate themselves in their work, then, requires some degree of *un*learning. The process of unlearning pertains to me as well, not just to the students. Much of my own formal education did *not* center the practices of reflexivity that are now a key component of my teaching. To teach the students, I have had to learn and unlearn—through reading, through conversations with colleagues, and through attempting to write in ways that resonate with me, even if those ways are not always welcome in a particular discipline. The moments of learning and unlearning what kind of thinking and writing are welcome are teachable moments. In my debriefs with students, both as a class-wide group and in individual meetings, as well as in my written feedback, I ask them to consider where their notions of academic authority came from. What are our respective memories of being told how (not) to write about world politics? What was the first time someone told us what counts as (good) academic writing? Who sees the first person singular or plural as a threat to those notions of authority, and how does reinserting the "I" or "we" back into academic writing potentially broaden our view of who counts as a creator of knowledge about world politics? Importantly, who disrupts, challenges, and broadens these impressions of what an authorial voice about world politics can sound like? Many of these prompts invite the students (and me) to tell stories, in the way that narrating memories is necessarily a relational, storytelling act. Engaging with storytelling voices, with all the possibilities for narrating emotion and undermining narrative distance that these voices carry with them, is in further service of practicing reflexivity.

Reflexive outputs require reflexive inputs. To further address students' difficulty with locating themselves in their work, I turn to the assigned texts on the reading list. The students and I read closely and consider: How does bell hooks locate herself in her work? What do we learn about bell hooks as a person in the world—as a daughter, an activist, a theorist, a Black woman, a person in pain, a human living in Appalachia, and a loving human, among other vectors of selfhood—through her writing?[12] And, crucially, how does hooks connect her own narration of the self to her writing about theory, feminism, class, place, and other subjects? The goal of this exercise in reflexive reading is to treat the texts as windows into different practices of writing the self into stories that are not primarily *about* the self and to notice the work that self-narration does within the broader act of theorization and storytelling.

Many of the challenges of writing the self into the work are challenges of trusting storytelling as a process through which knowledge comes into being within the academy. Writing about the field of IR, Laura Shepherd has observed that "ours is conventionally a discipline of abstraction, hypothesis testing, and quantification of the social world, in the name of 'rigour' and 'objectivity'." She concludes that "science is not seen as the same order of thing as storytelling" and "an individual's stories may count as knowledge, but only once they have been apprehended by Science, rendered objective and docile […]" (2021,12).[13]

In light of these observations, perhaps the most helpful prompt I have encountered in encouraging reflexive writing in my students is to ask them to tell me more: Why did this idea, text, or concept resonate with you? What did it remind you of? The students almost always begin answering these questions by telling me that "when I was a child", or "in my other class last semester, this thing happened,"

[12]To answer these questions, we read closely hooks (1994, 2009, 2015) .

[13]There are, of course, hopeful exceptions, as Shepherd herself acknowledges elsewhere in her book.

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or "I was looking through TikTok the other night, and…" Story happens in the "when," the "and," in the "thing that happened," which leaves humans bursting to tell. The conjunctions, the temporal locations, and the items that some IR scholarship and pedagogy treat as irrelevant personal "asides," rather than as the raw materials of knowledge creation, are the fruitful starting points of reflexivity about politics.

Meaningful Locations: Beyond "As A White Woman…"

Once we arrive at a point, usually a third of the way into the semester, where we can make peace with—and actively welcome—the self as relevant to the page and stories as relevant to knowledge creation about world politics, students and I experience a sense of relief and delight. It is exhilarating to read their stories of self and theory and to see those strands intertwining. I draw hope from how the students reimagine IR writing and add to the chorus of voices that resist the norms of performing a distant, omniscient objectivity (Doty 2004; Edkins 2013; Bâ 2022). Yet, not all locations of the self within the work are necessarily *meaningful* locations.

The self-on-the-page is not an end in itself. "Vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes," Behar writes with regard to what she calls the vulnerable observer in anthropology and beyond (1996, 14). "The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake." Behar's insight is that it is not enough to say "I," if the reader knows nothing about you in relation to the world, to the subject matter, or to the question you are asking and answering through your writing. The swiftest way many writers (undergraduate students and otherwise) seek to address this hurdle is through a checkboxing exercise. Particularly when I teach about social justice, many reflexive responses feature some version of the writer naming vectors of their identity. "As a Greek woman,... " my own version of this would go. Or "as an immigrant woman," "a woman raised in a working-class family," "a chronically ill woman," "a White woman," and so on. These self-disclosures may be true, but "they prevent reflexivity from becoming anything more than a rubric" (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2022, 38).

To begin with, there is no singular understanding of what Greekness, womanhood, illness, or migrant identity mean to people who lay claim to these identifications, so the identifications cannot be presumed to carry universal, unambiguous meeting. Furthermore—and this is the crucial bit that I emphasize to students—reflexivity is an invitation to consider the writer as socially situated within relations of power (Krystalli 2022): *How* does ethnicity, illness, Whiteness, or gender shape the given experience I am narrating? It is the writer's job to connect the dots for the reader by explicitly linking the vectors of self to which I lay claim to my understanding of the world. What does being "a Greek woman" enable me to see about the phenomena of world politics I am writing about, and what does it potentially foreclose? How does being ill shape how I relate to, for example, the politics of nature and place? Again, I turn to Behar (1996, 13):

> To assert that one is a "white middle-class woman" or a "black gay man" or a "working class Latina" within one's study of Shakespeare or Santería is only interesting if one is able to draw deeper connections between one's personal experience and the subject under study. That doesn't require a full-length autobiography, but it does require a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied.

Tackling all the above questions in sufficient depth in the 500 words of a reflexive response is an impossible task. The constraints of word count, however, are a gift, in that they require writers and thinkers to sharpen our attention. In developing their reflexive responses, students need to decide on which *one* insight resonated with

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them from the texts they read that week, and apply it to *one* dimension of their lives, telling *one* story vividly about the process. As they locate themselves in that story, they need to make further decisions about which aspects of their identity, experience, and situatedness within power relations in the world are most relevant to that story. Rather than taking a "kitchen sink" approach to naming every vector of identity, aspect of positionality, or form of oppression, reflexive responses invite students to reflect on the resonance between *particular aspects* of experience, identity, power, and the insights they distilled from the relevant texts.

In my experience, reflexive responses are a hopeful exercise. I draw hope from how quickly students build the skills I have described in this section and from how many of them respond to feedback about meaningful reflexivity when they receive it. Some of that hope stems from the fact that practicing reflexive writing fuels reflexive reading. When we read scholars' statements of positionality that follow the refrain I critiqued above ("as a White woman…"), students raise their hands to point out the limits of reflexivity-as-caveat-or-disclosure. They demand more from texts, from scholars, and from writers who are interested in power. In so doing, they broaden horizons of possibility in the world politics classroom.

Analyzing Power

Reflexivity may invite critical engagement with the self (and the relationship between oneself, power, and knowledge), but it goes beyond the self. The practice of reflexivity is relational. Grounded in indigenous conceptions and practices of relationality as a practice, Lauren Tynan (2021, 600) argues that "relationality is how the world is known and how we [...] know ourselves and our responsibilities to one another." Understanding a meaningful practice of reflexivity as linked to relationality, then, requires zooming out beyond the self to trace the relations of care, carelessness, violence, and regeneration that shape particular subjects, places, and communities. Such a practice, in turn, requires specificity in characterizing the workings and manifestations of power.

My undergraduate students have sometimes struggled to analyze power in ways that go beyond adjectives. To illustrate, in my Feminist Theories in Global Politics class, students' reflexive responses frequently characterize behaviors as "patriarchal." This is neither surprising nor inappropriate, given that analyzing patriarchy—understood as the "structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity" (Enloe 2004, 4)—is a key learning objective of this class. However, a feminist analysis that is reflexively attuned to power requires students and teachers alike to go beyond the naming and labeling of patriarchy. As Enloe (2004, 18) has written, "seeing patriarchy, even misogyny, is not enough. In each instance, we need to know exactly how it works and whether, even if continuing, it has been contested." A common question I find myself scribbling in the margins of students' reflexive responses is "where is patriarchy observable? In what kind of behaviours do these power inequalities manifest?"

How students answer these questions depends on where they have chosen to direct their reflexive curiosity. For example, if students are conducting a gender analysis of an elected leader's tweets or of images in a newspaper, I ask them to point to the work language and visuality do. *What*, in particular, is patriarchal here? How and where does patriarchy reveal and hide itself? These questions invite students to ground and locate patriarchy in observation, to narrate it through its manifestations and effects, not just by relying on the label. Such a narration requires showing the reader how patriarchy works, how it materializes (or hides in plain sight) in a given setting, who enacts it or reinforces it, who subverts it, and with what effect. The values of a reflexive practice are most discernible when such a practice illuminates the workings of power, an exercise that, in turn, becomes most vivid when it is grounded in specificity.

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Though the illustration above focuses on patriarchal power and gendered violence, similar prompts apply to characterizing relations of care: What is potentially caring, how does care manifest, who practices it, and to what effect? At its best, a pedagogical practice of reflexivity invites students to be attuned to how power manifests and shapes worlds. This is a potentially significant intervention because, rather than asserting "power" or "the political," students and teachers alike learn to practice curiosity about *how* power becomes observable, what the political looks like, and to whom or why those questions might matter. By directing reflexive curiosity not only at the self, but at broader sets of relations, the students can also learn to go beyond critique (and beyond adjectives that label power) toward appreciating how power shapes worlds and imagining different possibilities, relations, and ways of being in the world.

Specificity is also helpful for analyzing ideas about what is mainstream and what critique entails. It can become deceptively easy to imagine a "mainstream" of a discipline that we, students and teachers and thinkers and writers, wish to push against without practicing meaningful curiosity about its characteristics. To encourage such curiosity, there is another set of questions I scribble in the margins of students' work: Where do you see the mainstream at work? How did the mainstream come to be accepted as such by the actors who are of interest to this analysis? What are the benefits of certain approaches to knowledge being accepted as mainstream? What are the challenges and opportunities that emerge in the margins of the mainstream? Conversely, what are some of the ways in which critical scholarship is also full of tensions, contradictions, and moments of reifying that which it seeks to critique (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2022)?

These questions aim to encourage specificity about imagined centers, peripheries, and hierarchies of knowledge creation (Tickner 2013). For example, "mainstream IR" is observable in the reading lists of introductory modules at the School of IR where students are enrolled. What do students learn about the mainstream if they pay close attention to which reading is required and which is recommended, and to the sequencing of the 10 weeks of their class on fundamentals of IR theory? "Mainstream IR" is also observable in the silences, erasures, and absences (Parpart and Parashar 2019). In my Politics of Nature and Place class, I ask students to consider whether and how plants emerged in their IR education to date, and what those potential absences suggest about the sites and subjects to which scholars direct the gaze of world politics.

Taken together, these prompts invite students to consider the orientations of their reflexive curiosity and to build skills for specifically and meaningfully analyzing the workings, inequalities, and effects of power. Rather than treating power as abstract, "out there," defying observation, students turn their curiosity toward its manifestations in their own education, from reading lists and past essay prompts to the advice they have gotten about what academic writing about world politics ought to sound like.

Fears and Worries

In tracing students' feelings about this assignment and form of learning about world politics, I also trace the evolution of their fears and hopes. As other scholars have found when teaching reflexivity (Grenier 2016, 169), some students, particularly those who had performed well in standard essays or exams in their other classes, initially approach the reflexive response assignment with trepidation. Perhaps this is the fear of encountering novelty, of having to learn a new skill—and how to be good at this skill—in an environment that is often riddled with anxieties about excellence and performance.

Yet others worry that, even if they know what they want to write about and how they want to apply the insights of the readings to their life, application will somehow

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not be "IR." I sit with this worry and ask them where their ideas about what is and is not IR, what counts or does not count as world politics, come from. I invite them to turn that worry into fodder for seeing and meaningfully critiquing what counts as knowledge, and encourage them to treat their reflexive practice as a way of broadening how scholars, thinkers, writers, students, and teachers think of the political, its raw materials, and its manifestations.

By the end of the semester, the vast majority of my students have not only gotten the hang of how to develop a reflexive response, but have also begun to enjoy the process. What started out as worry about whether and how those students could embrace reflexivity evolved into worries about the future of thinking reflexively: "Can we write reflexively in our final essay too, even though it's not a reflexive response assignment?" I often smile and ask students what they think, and they smile back and nod yes, acknowledging that reflexivity is not a bounded practice, limited to assignments that are "about" it, but an iterative one that thinkers and writers can bring to any domain of their life. As the conversations grow, the questions become more future-oriented. Several students have expressed worry that, though they have enjoyed reflexive writing in my classes, they will not be able to practice it in other classes. When it comes to writing their final year dissertation (a 12,000-word "capstone" project that students research and write on their own initiative, under the supervision of a faculty member), or their essays in other classes, students worry they will have to default to the omniscient, distant, not-always-reflexive voice that parts of the academy often expect of them.

This fear is not unfounded. As Ruth Behar (1996, 12) writes, "there are risks in exposing oneself in an academy that continues to feel ambivalent about observers who forsake the mantle of omniscience." Barthwal-Datta also emphasizes that there are gendered and racialized risks for teachers and students alike who choose to be vulnerable in how they inhabit not only their writing, but also their broader presence and relation to the university (2023, 5). There have been teachers in the past who have taught these students that there is no place for the "I," the personal, the emotional, and the bodily (Olarte-Sierra 2023), and there likely will be such teachers in the future, too. I worry about the people who may tell these students that there is no place for how they think, feel, and write about world politics, that reflexivity is not a rigorous or appropriate practice, and that Dr Krystalli should have taught them better than that.

However, alongside these worries, I reassure my students that there are also teachers who welcome reflexivity, even if they have not always felt they can practice it themselves. University instructors are also caught in the hierarchical expectations of what good knowledge looks and sounds like, and subverting those expectations—or allowing students to challenge them—can be a daunting task. And, despite the fears associated with these challenges, many instructors are committed to reimagining academic writing, relationality, and the study of world politics through creative assignments and pedagogical practices. Rather than assuming resistance or hostility to reflexivity on the part of others, I encourage students to use the skills they developed to make a case for the value of reflexivity. If, I say to them, we are each to treat students as subjects and actors of world politics, then we must recognize that students have certain kinds of power—power to shape their own education, power to influence their teachers' thinking, and power to direct their words, curiosity, and learning as they wish. We practice reflexivity in communities of thinking, writing, and (re)imagining world politics, and those communities are especially vital in helping us envision the viability of our practices in moments of marginality or institutional/disciplinary loneliness.

I still worry. I worry about the limits of students' power to influence their own education, I worry about the persistence of rigid ideas about what counts as good knowledge, and I worry about the crushing effect that being told reflexivity is not rigorous or appropriate can have on students' imaginations and attunement to power.

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As the next section illuminates, these worries are situated within a broader context of ironies and dissonances that inflect reflexive pedagogies and pedagogies about reflexivity.

Dissonances, Contradictions, and Possibilities

In the spring of 2022, I was recording lectures for The Politics of Nature and Place on Panopto, the software the university has relied on for online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For me, as for many others around the world, albeit in different ways and to different extents, it was a season punctuated by encounters with mortality, inflected through both grief and illness (Krystalli 2021b).

In the summer of 2021, I became ill, faced with a life-threatening condition, the effects of which remain life-shaping and life-altering. Treatment for this condition requires that I take medication that suppresses my immune system. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, I became more porous to the world. I have experienced this permeability not only as an increased physical vulnerability to infection, but also as an emotional condition, as a feeling that the boundaries between me and the world are thinner than they used to be.

One of the medications that suppresses my immune system is a corticosteroid. Bodies respond differently to this medication, and I spent some of the winter of 2021 lurking in an online support group for people with my condition, reading the accounts of fellow patients. Many posts are about a common side effect of corticosteroids, dubbed as "moon face." The corticosteroid alters the distribution of fat on the sides of the face, prompting people who post on the forum to complain that they look like chipmunks. It is the alteration that is most jarring: Faced with an array of losses, from grieving my mother's recent death to contemplating my own mortality, becoming unrecognizable to myself felt like an indignity. "Oh honey, you are *alive* though," my favorite phlebotomist would exclaim at my hospital appointments when I dared to admit I was feeling self-conscious about how the medication had made me a stranger to myself.

During that period, I avoided mirrors, selfies, and anything that reflected my own image back to myself. I steered clear of any encounter that demanded self-scrutiny. And yet, week in and week out, I showed up on Panopto, welcoming the students to another lecture about land, sea, and the politics of naming, living, and dying in relation to the world, and inviting them to practice reflexivity. To comply with accessibility requirements, the university requires faculty members to insert captions to these recorded lectures. The automated caption software cannot quite make out my accent or the plants and birds that populate my lectures, so each week, I squinted beneath the video of my moon face to make the words legible, even as I willed for the image of myself to disappear. "The act of disappearing," Mutlu (2015, 942) argues, "which has become the norm in the name of professional(ised) publications, robs the field of the productive pedagogical potential."

Reflexive writing and learning on the part of students require reflexive teaching. I interpret reflexive teaching to mean "turning the binary of expert knower/receptive learner on its head, nurturing instead collaborative environments marked by exchange and humility" (Timperley and Schick 2022, 120). Yet, there are several reasons why many of us have been afraid to model to the students the kind of reflexivity we expect from them. These reasons go beyond the hesitation to confront the self in times of illness to encompass structural ideas of credibility and authority in the classroom, which often rely on the same assumptions of distance on which some notions of narrative authority are built (Doty 2004; Dauphinee 2010). As other scholars have compellingly written (Gelber et al. 2022), there is a gendered and racialized price instructors pay for being warm and personable. Even when students appreciate those traits, there are fears that in the hierarchy of credibility and authority that inflects university life, "brilliant instructor"

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trumps "kind" or "warm." Of course, feminists and other scholars have questioned the binary imagination of brilliance and warmth, and have underscored that many can inhabit the intersection. The point, however, still remains: It is difficult to demand that students locate themselves within the work when I, at times, also wish to eclipse myself from it.

When I returned to work after a period of hospitalization, I received guidance from occupational health and university administrators that I ought to inform my students that their lectures would be online for a period of time "due to unforeseen circumstances." I knew that this would come as a disappointment to students, given that, in that phase of the pandemic, the university had promised them they would still get some face-to-face teaching. I also knew that, when it came to returning to face-to-face interactions, students would be more likely to look after my health if they knew a little more about what was going on. "Unforeseen circumstances" are the language of liability. In the past year, I have learned that liability is not what protects us from harm; care does.

Face glowing with jaundice, cannula bruise still visible on my hand, I called an online meeting with my class. I told the students a bit about the illness with which I had been diagnosed and about the plan for treatment. Tellingly, it was easier to do this in more detail and specificity in the (online) company of my students than I mustered in the paragraphs above. For me, trust is easier to practice when interlocutors are visible in front of me and embedded in regular encounters and relations (Olarte-Sierra 2023), rather than being invisible readers who cannot engage in a synchronous exchange with the writer. I encouraged the students to ask questions and to share their feelings, frustration, and disappointments. I positioned myself in relation to the work—in this case, the ill, recovering, afraid self (Manion 2021), existing alongside the self who wished to teach, who wished to exist in the world a few days a week in frames that transcend illness.

The care I experienced in that semester of illness and recovery has taught me that reflexive, caring pedagogies do not flow only from the teacher to the students. At their best, they allow for the possibility of mutuality and reciprocity, even while other kinds of hierarchy persist in the classroom. Care, like patriarchy, is easier to grasp when the writer is specific. Students cared for me by asking how I was, by wearing masks even when not required to do so, by keeping their distance and testing regularly, and by not attending class in person when they were ill. They also cared for each other by sharing notes through a collective system, by reading drafts of each other's work, by offering encouragement and pep talks, and by taking walks to notice the plants and birds that populated my lectures. It is my quiet hope that reflexivity and care can reinforce one another, that by locating ourselves as teachers, students, subjects, and actors of world politics within our work, we also can remind ourselves that we live in relation, and can tend to those relations more intentionally.

Dissonances remain when practicing and encouraging reflexivity within universities. In assessing student work that semester (and every semester), I receive anonymous submissions, each student knowable to me only through an eight-digit number at the top of their work. The purpose of the anonymous assignments and marking is, as far as I understand, to ensure fairness. I notice the ironies between expecting students to specifically and meaningfully locate themselves within their work, to tell me stories about who they are in relation to world politics and power, and then assuming that removing the students' names adequately obscures the self for the purposes of assessment and marking. In the UK university system, the ironies are further observable in the process of "second marking" or moderation, whereby another faculty member reviews the marks the instructor has assigned to make sure they are fair and appropriate.

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Assessing reflexivity is a practice full of contradictions.[14] I make it clear to students that I am evaluating and marking their practice of reflexivity, *not* their life experience. Practically, I rely on a marking rubric that clearly lays out the criteria of assessment, which include (i) demonstration of understanding of the key points of the reading with which the students are reflexively engaging; (ii) critical response to the concepts of the selected reading; (iii) reflexive discussion of how the reading ties to broader themes in world politics, and/or how it informs the student's studies, actions, and practices; (iv) intersectional analysis and critique of the key concepts discussed; (v) quality of writing; (vi) appropriate citation of any sources, wherein "appropriate" refers both to an accurate system of citation and to attention to citational politics in terms of which voices and perspectives the students have represented in their work; (vii) creativity and originality in the student's insights and/or in the format in which they are presented. I both welcome the clarity of expectations that the marking rubric enables, and am concerned about the ways that rubrics potentially "obscure student creativity" (McKittrick 2021) by enforcing expectations of uniformity. "Acknowledging pedagogies as embodied and relational does not come without risk," Timperley and Schick(2022, 114) claim, "as we both make ourselves more vulnerable and ask our students to share more of themselves with us and with each other." It feels dissonant to meet that vulnerability with a marking rubric of allotted points. I pair the rubric with detailed written feedback, in the hope that my words can accompany the students' words, in the hope that these words can tell a fuller story than the rubric does. Ultimately, however, on this front, my duties as a teacher who has to evaluate entangle me in what Jenny Edkins calls "knots I cannot escape" (2013, 282).[15]

It is difficult to be fully reflexive as a teacher and student in university environments that do not always reward, and sometimes actively discourage, humans who wish to exist as fuller selves within and in relation to their work (Barthwal-Datta 2023). "How can we speak of *positionality* without investigating the place where scholarship is produced?" (Caraccioli and Hozić 2015, 144). In considering the dissonances that emerge in response to that question, I do not long for "a space of purity, a space outside corruption and contamination, a space emptied of the power that can ground both tolerance and action" (Ticktin 2017, 578). Rather, both the practice of politics and pedagogies about politics are compromised exercises. Ravecca and Dauphinee encourage scholars to release what they call the "attachment to innocence" (2022, 46), and, instead, make peace with the indeterminacy of encounters, with the self as unfixed with the contradictions, tensions, and dissonances that emerge when scholars seek to narrate our own practice. Alongside the contradictions and tensions, beside the dissonances, lies a sense of possibility: that it is possible to imagine different ways of relating in, to, and through the world politics classroom, that "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (hooks 1994 , 13).

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[14] My thanks to Kanisha Bond for helping me draw out this point.

[15] Though the institutional environment makes practices like "ungrading" challenging to implement, I am currently investigating their potential for addressing these dilemmas. It is also essential to consider how university educators in the United Kingdom (and likely beyond, though I speak from the context in which I work) are expected to tend to students' mental health in ways that are not commensurate with our training or compensation. Making the case for the benefits of pedagogies that emphasize reflexivity is not a call for the teacher to become a therapist or counselor, and additional research is needed to understand how these growing expectations have formed and what they mean for teachers, students, and other actors in the ecosystem of universities.

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