The Visuals of Violence

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether the visual framing of violence in Afghanistan and Iraq in contemporary Western news prompts Western newsreaders to view Arabs and Muslims as Others rather than equals. In order to do so, a background-focused historical and visual analysis involving Christian iconography and contemporary conflict news photography is undertaken. Art historical images are introduced to open the reader's mind to alternative readings of everyday news images. They also function as a way to emphasize the greater power structures in which Western visual conventions have been created in the past. An account of the current photojournalistic market reveals that the stylistic trends and subject matter of news photography seem to be conforming rather than changing, perpetuating the centrality of violence in Western visual convention.

The implication of violence-oriented news output is that the inability to see human vulnerability through the violence hinders our capacity to achieve mutual, non-violent understanding in a chaotic world. Images of current conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq are analyzed for possible differences in the representations of Western soldiers versus those of Arabs and Muslims. To investigate the possibility for achieving an East-West understanding of mutual vulnerability, images of injury, death, and grief of both parties are scrutinized for similarities and differences. The paper finds that discrepancies in the framing of Western soldiers and Middle Eastern actors deepens an "us"– them" divide, encouraging Western audiences to view Arabs and Muslims as belonging to a different social order as themselves. It is argued here that this phenomenon ultimately hinders diplomatic solutions from replacing Western-led war and violence in the Middle East.

1. INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2001 was undoubtedly a tragic day, as is any day in which innocent people die for the political motives of others. It nevertheless marked the opportunity for a fundamental change in world politics; an opportunity for the Western world to rethink its taken-for-granted global supremacy. Some scholars have argued that the realization of global vulnerability and interdependency presents a possibility for imagining the strengthening of a global political community. In this vein, risk could become the unifying theme for a new transnational cosmopolitan politics with an opportunity to end violence and war (Beck, 2006: 46-50; Butler, 2004: xii-xiii).

However, the violent declaration of "war on terror" was the chosen path. NATO evoked Article 5 of its treaty: an attack on one member within Europe or North America is thereby an attack on all; consequent measures, "including the use of armed force", would be taken "to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area" (NATO, 1949: Article 5). The 2001 invasion of Afghanistan has proved Western, not global, solidarity. While NATO as a whole did not ultimately support the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003 under the auspices of the same "war on terror," the American-British-led coalition continues to deploy troops in Iraq after what has proven to be a tumultuous and destructive war, the value of which is contested even within US government.

This paper, written and argued from a Western standpoint by a Western author, was prompted by an admittedly idealistic question: why is this kind of violence perpetuated, despite the diplomatic institutions we have in place? Violent retribution is not solely a government-led movement; Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2002) has documented the rise of hate crime against Arabs and Muslims within the US since 9/11. In addition, it has become clear that retribution has not quelled the violence; the 2004 Abu Ghraib prison scandal, in which photographs of tortured Iraqis and their US military tormentors were leaked to the American press, was a warning that what had started as self-defense against terrorism was turning into an equally brutal display of counter-terrorism.[1]

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[1] See Human Rights Watch's website on counterterrorism for an extensive debate on US/UK roles on fueling terrorism (http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=ct).

This scandal is in many ways a departing point for this paper. Reporting on American-led torture was not new; explicit and sexual images of such torture were. Or at least they were perceived to be. Scholars' reactions to the scandal actually argued it to be one of many Western examples of violence captured on camera for the viewing pleasure of those in relative safety. The popularity of the scandal within the news is one more indication – along with violent movies, videogames, and pornography – of how visualized violence lies at the heart of contemporary Western consumer society.[2] This leads us to ask, how far back does our infatuation with visualized violence go? How intrinsic and inevitable is it to our social system and the way in which we see the world? (Seaton, 2005; Spivey, 2001)

More specifically, how does the Western visual framing of violence against specific types of people present us with an essentially colonialist view of world order? Undoubtedly Abu Ghraib was an extreme case in which soldiers entertained themselves by circulating torture images amongst themselves, friends and family. Yet the consequent circulation of these images throughout Western news, along with the focus of war news photography on violence and destruction of Arab and Muslim bodies and territories, presents us with a similar, if more nuanced, moral quandary. Dead Western soldiers and victims of war are mentioned by name in obituaries and memorials; to show photographs of them has been deemed demoralizing in past wars and distasteful today (Sontag, 2003: 63). Arab and Muslim bodies, on the other hand, are anonymously paraded in media images almost daily (Butler, 2004: 149). How does this present Arabs and Muslims within Western society? How might this affect our capacity to view them as equals within a global political society?

These two concerns – the genealogy of violent Western imagery and the visual presentation of Arabs and Muslims within frameworks of destruction and violence – are central to this paper. Of course, time and word limits hinder an all-encompassing analysis of both Western visual history and images from all Middle Eastern conflict zones ignited after 9/11. This paper will narrow its focus by employing a critical visual analysis of a relatively small selection of Western art historical Christian images juxtaposed against news images of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001.[3] A theory-heavy historical analysis will further assist the attempt to pinpoint how news images propose Western audiences to think and react in distinct, pre-regimented ways. Of

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[2] See Dora Apel's comparison of Abu Ghraib with lynching photographs (2005) and Stephen Eisenman's art historical juxtapositions (2007). For immediate editorial reactions and comparisons, see Rich (2004), Santé (2004), and Sontag (2004).

[3] See Chapter 5, section 5.2, for more detailed rationale for the sampling selection.

course, as chapter 4 will elaborate, all viewers do not always interpret images in the same manner. This paper will nevertheless suggest that the repetition of Western visual conventions could have a narrowing effect on how broadly and differently we are prompted to interpret Arab and Muslim lives through Western news images.

The contribution of this research is invariably moral and ethical. It is a call for critical viewership; an attempt to sharpen our awareness that there might be other images, other ways of seeing. While this paper does contain systematic interpretations of images and their potential effects on audiences, it is not an attempt at ultimate truth. It is rather one evaluation of one aspect of our current global political landscape; an assessment of our current capacity for diplomacy over violence. This assessment is not final, but ongoing; audiences and their demands shift, as do alliances and allegiances between countries, cultures and regions. Further research is imperative.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE FORMATION OF STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY DATABASES

Images that appear in the Western news about the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq are rarely produced explicitly for the stories they appear in. While a minority of photojournalists work exclusively for specific newspapers, newspapers are unlikely to exclusively draw on their own photographers for every story. Rather, they buy photographs from the few news agencies specialized in photojournalism – most notably Agence France-Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters – and increasingly from large-scale stock photography agencies such as *Getty Images*, which includes many AFP images, and *Corbis*, which also includes images produced by Reuters and the photography agency ZUMA Press. It is important to note that this is recent; Corbis' and Getty Images' major image bank acquisitions took place after the advent of digital image storage technology in the late 90s. "There has been a shift," David Machin argues, "from emphasis on photography as witness to photography as symbolic system" (2004: 317). In his analysis of corporate media, Machin discusses Getty and Corbis images that emanate generic 'moods' categorized into keywords that can be searched on their websites and be easily applied to many different advertising and marketing purposes. His concern is that this one-sided use of photography could conceivably drown out the usage of all images corporate stock photography agencies do not deem marketable.

Of course, in a sense, 'photographs that sell' have always been one aim of war news photography, if only to sustain photojournalists' livelihoods as they acted as witnesses for posterity, as some have put it (cf. Howe, 2002). While their sentiments might remain largely unchanged, the reality of today's market has decreased photojournalists' chances to work with reporters and editors in creating coherent and interrelated visual and written narratives of the violence they witness. Rather, photojournalists increasingly work on their ties with the databases through which editors search for images based on search categories that fit their pre-conceived stories. Corbis works mostly with freelance photography, thereby engaging in a selective process of which individual images will be most marketable. Getty is more interested in paying salaries, yet it retains all copyright and royalties, as do AFP, AP, and Reuters. While this might be preferable in terms of job security and payment of travel, equipment and protection, the consequence is that photographers can only pursue independent objectives if they reach a certain level of recognition that comes with excellent photographic style – largely determined by marketability. While many photojournalists lament the lack of independence that comes with working for large photo agencies, Corbis' and Getty's increasing control over

Western photography agencies give them little choice but to conform to a standard of photojournalism that sells.[4]

So what sells? Type *Iraq* in the editorial search field of www.gettyimages.com and you will be able to refine your search by specifying *Categories*, *People*, *Events*, *Location*, *Keywords* and *Style*. Interestingly, the top four *locations* in terms of the number of available images are *Iraq*, *Baghdad*, *USA*, and *Washington DC*. *Keywords* are compartmentalized into *Concepts* – the top four being *conflict*, *security*, *death* and *arrival* – and *Subjects*, highlighting *war*, *politics*, *army soldier* and *military*. *Afghanistan* yields similar cues – *USA*, *conflict*, *surveillance*, *politics*, *war*. These are very specific prompts that treat Afghanistan and Iraq as conceived within a Western – if not entirely American – framework and history centered around violence. They are literally *pictured* as 'Afghanistan and the USA,' 'Iraq and war,' 'Afghanistan and conflict,' 'Iraq and death', and so on.

As Machin argues in terms of corporate images, certain models, settings, and situations are highlighted by Getty Images for the global customers who access the site. This does not mean that there is no diversity – there are thousands of images to choose from within any given search category, and I can indeed extend my search to find images of Afghanistan or Iraq that have nothing to do with the US or violence. But it could mean that certain *kinds* of diversity, within broadly defined, yet weighty categories (i.e. *war* and *conflict*), are being pushed forward by these Western conglomerates with an eye for a largely Western market. The next section deals with the implications of viewing Afghanistan and Iraq with such an emphasis on a Western framework.

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[4] See Dorfman (2002) and Howe (2002) for reactions of photojournalists to the changing news photography market.

3. THEORETHICAL CHAPTER

THE WESTERN FRAMEWORK

Discourse and power

Michel Foucault might characterize the trend towards seeing Afghanistan and Iraq in terms of violence and the US as the beginnings of a "discursive formation" (1972: 37-38). Discourse – the convention of particular knowledge with which a certain subject, e.g. Iraq, is approached – structures how that subject is thought about in the world; or, more specifically, within the location in which it is discussed, e.g. the West. Here, "intertextuality" is key: texts and images are rarely 'read' outside of the context of other texts and images (Hall, 1997b: 232). So, as this paper will argue, it is the accumulation of specific types of images that generate broader meanings and perpetuate discourses.

Discourses can be seen as silently coercive; they encourage specific ways of seeing, thinking, and acting, without employing explicit propaganda or brute force. In Foucault's thinking, power, resistance, and discourse are everywhere and ever-changing, presenting room for new discourses and the overthrowing of oppressive ones (Foucault, 1977: 95). There are nevertheless certain discourses that are dominant, emanated from powerful institutions claiming their absolute truth. Again, the power of institutions is not necessarily forced, but often socially applied. Hannah Arendt for example argues that power fundamentally belongs to a group that might choose to give it to an individual or group of representatives (1970: 44).

Thus when an institution socially endowed with power claims its knowledge about a subject to be truth, we could be dealing with a dominant discourse that might hinder our capacity to see things differently, outside of the conventional framework within which it is presented to us. While skepticism of news media has gone up in recent years,[5] Western news conventions generally follow a guideline of bringing truth to its viewers through unbiased factual reporting. While often criticized for being imperfect, news media are arguably the most common, if not the only, source through which Western audiences inform themselves of geographically distant events. Western news images of Afghanistan and Iraq are powerful because they are the only

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[5] See Pew poll results on media credibility, available at http://people-press.org/ report/?pageid=838.

ones of their kind; and, as is suggested above, their scope seems to be becoming increasingly narrow.

Orientalism and the Other

Discussions on the power of Western news media to construct an image of Arabs and Muslims cannot exclude Edward Said's theories on orientalism (1978). Said claims that early studies of Arabs and Muslims undertaken by European colonialists have created a stark division between East and West that is perpetuated in today's subjugation of the East in Western media. The discourse constructing the Middle East during colonialism both "characterize[s] the Orient as alien and… incorporate[s] it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe" (1978: 72). Thus the image of the Middle East – "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'" (ibid.: 40) – constructed Arabs and Muslims as invariably "Other." The capital "O" marks the Lacanian distinction between others who are similar enough to identify with and Others who are not at all oneself and thus radically different and unknowable (Lacan, 1991). In the face of this Otherness, argues Said, Westerners were able to construct an image of themselves as radical opposites – "rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (ibid.).

Of course, recognizing difference is essential for the formation of our own identities (Hall, 1997b: 237); it is when difference is translated into "Otherness" that inequalities are created and interaction is inhibited (Pickering, 2001: 49). Otherness, argues Michael Pickering (2001), is a fundamentally discursive construct located in language and representation (ibid.: 72). This makes it continuously negotiable, yet also deeply entrenched. Once a discourse of 'us' and 'them' is constructed, it is difficult for 'us' to conceive of 'them' as anything but what 'we' have defined 'them' to be. The result is an unequal relationship in which the Other has no voice or image with which to define itself.

Orientalism and the Other lie at the heart of postcolonial studies on the Middle East. While it is generally agreed that the Middle East has been officially decolonized from European powers, theories on orientalism and the Other bring forward the lasting effects of colonization today. For the purposes of this paper, two considerations on orientalism and the Other should be taken into account. Firstly, there is a lack of images from Afghani and Iraqi photojournalists in the Western news on the Middle East. This might suggest that 'we' – the West – could be engaging

in a similar, though perhaps more nuanced, process of Othering as the early colonizers sending their accounts of the region to Europe.[6] Secondly, Western tolerance for blood, gore, and death in the news is affected by a double-standard in which non-Western bodies and blood are permissible, while images of Western bodies are not. This second point will be taken up in the analysis of images in Chapter 6 of this paper. The Western visual history of violence within which the Middle East is featured today is the topic of the next section.

THE FRAMEWORK OF VIOLENCE

Chapter 2 suggested that, in terms of the news imagery available in the much-used Western Getty Images database, Afghanistan and Iraq are generally conceived within a framework of conflict and violence. This means, of course, that the subject matter of the Western news on Afghanistan and Iraq is largely oriented along these same categories – the editor searches for images to fit her/his story, not the other way around. As Jean Seaton (2005) argues in her book on the augmentation of violent images in Western news, this can be viewed at least partially as a demand-issue. The parameters of the news are, or course, set by politics – the Afghan/Iraq conflicts have been going on for quite some time – but its style and display is undeniably influenced by audiences wanting specifically to see the violence of war and conflict. Seaton argues that the Western tolerance of violent news coverage has been steadily increasing, while at the same time Westerners' 'real' experience of violence has been on the decline. What is acceptable – especially in terms of graphic bloodshed and images of non-Western corpses – has not only been more lenient, but has been in higher demand.

While the trend may be rising, Western fascination with the display of violence is nevertheless historically based, as this section will suggest. "The news," Seaton argues, "has to create chronicles that dovetail unexpected historical realities with the stories that people understand…. [S]tories are shaped to create dramas with satisfyingly predictable resolutions, imposing reassuringly familiar patterns of violence, disaster and catastrophe in a way that actually masks

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[6] The scope of this paper will not allow for an adequate study of this trend. It should be noted that the Associated Press has been employing quite a few Iraqi photographers to report on Iraq. However, the US military has not reacted favorably to this initiative, repeatedly detaining photographers whose connections place them under suspicion of helping the terrorist groups. Prominent Iraqi AP photographer Bilal Hussein, who was part of the Pulitzer Prize winning AP team, was released in April 2008 after a two-year detainment by the US military. For more information on Hussein's experiences, see www.ap.org/bilalhussein/. CPJ's www.cpj.org contains more information on other journalists' detainments.

the reality" (2005: xxi). Violence is familiar. It makes sense in a way that visual coverage of, say, the many diplomatic negotiations undertaken in Iraq, does not. The discussion below illustrates how this might be attributed to the central role violence has played in the construction of Western collective visual memory.

Images of collective memory

In her book on Holocaust photography, Barbie Zelizer (1998) highlights the pervasiveness of collective memory in the viewing of atrocity photographs (1998: 1-15). Visual memories, she argues, indicate "a culture's socially, politically, and economically mandated and sanctioned modes of interpretation" (ibid.: 7-8). Visual memories might elucidate how that culture legitimates certain worldviews by its acceptance of certain images as necessary, informative or true; conversely, a culture's disregard for perceived unwanted, distasteful or untrue images might indicate how alternative worldviews are challenged. The steering of collective visual memory is thereby a fundamentally political process, potentially allowing engrained ideologies to remain in place well beyond their original purposes. In her analysis of suffering in the news, Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) places news images within Derrida's 'politics of memory,' following a peculiar news hierarchy determining what is worthy of repetition and what isn't (2006: 76).

So, while news producers may not receive direct orders to repeat more violent events, they do, and are even expected to. Where does this demand come from? This paper seeks to explore collective visual memory as it is subconsciously internalized within Western culture. We do not always recognize current photographs as echoing past images, and yet, as the analysis of images in Chapter 6 will demonstrate, the aestheticized style of violent images stemming from different centuries have much in common.

Violence as political spectacle – then

Art historian Stephen E. Eisenman's (2007) investigation of the Abu Ghraib images traces the aestheticization of suffering dating back to Pergamon, where truth and enlightenment were tested by means of pain and death. Eisenman portrays how this rendering of violence as both necessary and beautiful is echoed in the aestheticized suffering displayed on Hellenistic friezes (2007: 51-52). Eisenman and Zelizer both refer to images' subsequent use as mnemonic devices to store distinct motifs in the memory of ancient Rome (ibid.: 54; Zelizer, 1998: 5), thus encouraging individuals to act and think in accordance with a Roman way of life. This included

internalizing images of slavery and cultural conquest, as well as acknowledging the force necessary to maintain both for the good of the empire. In addition, the beauty and necessity of violence was further supported by the use of violence as evidence of political legitimacy. Seaton characterizes the Roman games, in which living human beings and animals were slaughtered before thousands of enthusiastic spectators, as such a political pastime. "The 'gift' of the games [given by rulers to the people] reciprocated the 'gift' of the people, which was not power but authority" (2005: 68), legitimized by the terrible public executions of slaves and Christians, who, after all, 'deserved' to die for the maintenance and glory of the empire.

When the Christian martyrs subverted the authority of death as punishment by welcoming death as their path to salvation, the political authority leading the games was forced to end (Seaton, 2005: 79). As the Roman Empire fell, Christianity spread throughout Europe, remaining the dominant Western religion today. While the church is no longer significant as a leading European political power, this paper contends that its influential grip over the formation of Western politics, ethics and collective visual memory cannot be understated. Christian art and iconography extended the political spectacle of an aesthetic death beyond publicly displayed emotions; it came to function as a way to guide or even regulate private devotion, constructing a public community by successfully modulating the private emotions of its devotees (ibid.: 85). Though not all epochs and forms of Christianity have used images of violence as their central mode of representation, the most popular symbol since the establishment of Christianity as a dominant religion generally involves a cross – the epitome of Christ's suffering. Nigel Spivey (2001) highlights two prominent ways in which Christianity's central figure is presented: the *Christus Patiens* – the 'Gothic Christ,' "a mangled, beaten and broken mess" (2001: 63) of a Christ figure popularized in the 14th century – and the 'Christ Triumphant,' a version of Christ "fully robed, patently alive, and ruling from the Cross" (ibid.: 48). The presentation of Christ in these two ways leaves the spectator with a choice: either suffer for Christ's suffering, or avenge his death (2001: 64) – self-flagellation or the Crusades.

Violence as political spectacle – now

Many Western citizens contest current Western involvement in the Middle East, especially in Iraq. Seaton argues that as their governments wage wars, Westerners' respect for democratic institutions is dwindling. This, she continues, enhances the political impact of the news; while its attempts to entertain audiences to improve its audience ratings might render some news sensationalist, exaggerated, or faulty, it nevertheless always addresses its consumers as

political participants (2005: 78-79). Western convention has it that news acts as watchdog; throughout Western history there are notable instances when government scandal and crime was uncovered by investigative journalism. Our perceived lack of democratic power in current Middle Eastern involvement might turn contemporary news into a political spectacle not unlike that of the Roman games.

It might however be more accurate to argue that the news images we see in the privacy of our own homes work much more like the Christian political use of imagery than the Roman games. We most often encounter news images alone or in small groups as we watch the news or read the paper at home. They address our private emotions and evoke private reactions, which we choose later to discuss publicly, or not. And, like in Christian iconography, many news images are centered on violence. Therefore, this paper will be using popular art historical Christian iconography to make its statement about the genealogy of violent images in Western collective memory.

Using Christian images to juxtapose images of Afghanistan and Iraq naturally brings up a further divisive 'us' vs. 'them' subject – religion. This is a conscious choice; while many Westerners who support the deployment of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq are not necessarily practicing Christians, Christianity's historical involvement in the region and its struggle with Islam may not be forgotten. A large portion of the analysis in Chapter 6 will play with this idea of viewing the conflicts within a Christian visual framework and narrative. The purpose of this is to open our minds to viewing contemporary images in a different, historical light, prompting us to ask ourselves how we are connected to our past and what implications this might have to how we see the world today.

STRUCTURE OF ADDRESS AND THE PERSONIFICATION OF UN-REPRESENTABLE NOTIONS

We have established that the news is a political arena in which the historically located spectacle of violence is perpetuated, engaging with the first questions of this paper's introductory chapter about the centrality of violence within Western visual history. The Introduction also asked how specific types of people represented within the framework of violence perpetuate a colonialist worldview. In Chapter 6, images of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq will be examined for the human voice of those represented. The aim here is to learn more about the agency the Middle

East has or does not have to construct its image in the West. How are Afghanistan and Iraq addressed, and how do they address us, in Western news representations?

Often we are addressed without seeking to be, against – or, as Judith Butler (2004: 130) argues, prior to the formation of – our will. There was no Western wish to be attacked in 2001; nor was there a consensus on an adequate response. Modes of address and moral authority have a peculiar relationship within Western consciousness, particularly in the context of war-as-self-defense, as the "war on terror" is construed. Butler evokes Levinas' notion that "Thou shalt not kill" is central to European[7] civilizational status, resulting not in a straightforward interdiction of murder but rather in a state of anxiety and ambivalence (ibid.: 135-6). Levinas notes our continuous fear of our own death alongside our simultaneous anxiety of prospectively having to kill others, e.g. in self-defense (Levinas, 1996: 164). In Levinas' view, peace despite the intrinsic European/Western drive for violence stems only from the knowledge that killing will, by historical experience, result in either our slaying by avengers or in our slaying *of* those avengers. For Levinas, only the face-to-face confrontation that can communicate mutual vulnerability will lead to peace.[8]

The usefulness of this Levinasian thinking in this discussion, and indeed in part of Butler's discussion, lies not in the revelation of the face and its discourse as experienced 'face-to-face' in 'real life', but rather the experience of the face through mediated representation, more specifically its capacity to humanize. When there is no geographical possibility for the 'face-to-face' that Levinas deems necessary to fully feel the demand of the other, we rely, for better or for worse, on representations. It is no secret that media do not always paint the whole picture. "[P]ersonification sometimes performs its own dehumanization", warns Butler; news imagery can cast the human face in a dehumanizing light (2004: 141). Thus the Western media representation of Osama bin Laden is 'terror'; of Saddam Hussein 'tyranny'; of Yasser Arafat, 'deception'. How, asks Butler, does this allow for a Western audience to view Arab men as human?

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[7] Following Butler, this paper takes Levinas' notion of Europe as one that has less to do with borders and more to do with a society with the kind of Christian-inspired legal system we see in "the West" today (Butler, 2004: 135-6).

[8] See Butler, 2004: 139.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In lieu of the abovementioned historical and theoretical discussion, this paper will seek to juxtapose current news images of violence in Afghanistan and Iraq against art historical Christian images in order to demonstrate evidence of an engrained Western collective visual memory in which violence is naturally situated within certain politico-religious contexts. The paper will further attempt to discern how the framing of Arabs and Muslims within these images encourages a reading that constructs them as fundamentally different, potentially hindering Western audiences from identifying with them as equals.

Much research on news imagery of conflict zones focuses on suffering and the in-/ability of news images to evoke compassion or pity in Western audiences that might mobilize them towards personal or political action (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006, Sontag, 2003). This paper seeks neither to examine pity nor action, but rather more nuanced feelings and viewpoints Western audiences might be inspired to hold in lieu of the types of images they are exposed to. Alienation in the form of Othering runs throughout the analysis, but should not be confused with inaction; the goal is not to determine how Western audiences *act*, but rather how images emanate qualities that promote a worldview of the Middle East as Other.

Consequently, the *research hypothesis* for this paper is that the visual framing of Afghanistan and Iraq in contemporary Western news fits into a Western visual memory that prompts Western audiences to view Arabs and Muslims as necessarily shrouded in violence in ways Westerners are not, encouraging a viewing of them as Others rather than equals.

The implications for such a viewing prompt moral and ethical questions of the West's political power and force in the world. If Westerners fail to recognize Arabs and Muslims as comparable equals – or, as Levinas has it, comparably vulnerable – a non-violent end to the policing of the Middle East by the US, UK, and NATO is far from sight.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the abovementioned research hypothesis, this paper will engage in two simultaneous analyses: a) an historical analysis in which contemporary images will be juxtaposed against art historical Christian iconography in order to demonstrate their integration into a violence-oriented Western visual memory; and b) a more in-depth critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Afghan/Iraq conflict images. As discourse can refer to many different types of texts (written, visual, symbolic, etc.), the visual nature of this study will be emphasized by specifying the analytical method as *critical visual analysis (CVA)*. Images will be examined in groups to denote their historicity and their relationship to past visual representations as well as to each other. Some images will then be examined in closer detail, involving more in-depth CVA. For this reason, the following discussion will focus on the nuances of CDA/CVA.

CRITICAL VISUAL ANALYSIS

Discourse and power revisited

CDA/CVA is concerned "with the way in which discourse [/imagery] builds social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge or belief and how these discourses [/images] maintain power through their ideological properties" (Brookes, 1995: 462). As we have seen in section 4.1.1, discourse and power are invariably linked; this section will elaborate on the implications of discourse and power in terms of visual texts.

As Gillian Rose (2007) highlights in her review of the role of the visual in Western culture, of more recent concern is that the connection between 'seeing' and 'knowing' is becoming increasingly blurred. While the photograph was the first invention that could create a 'true' reproduction of what was before the camera, there is no such thing as 'an innocent image'. Rose makes a useful distinction between *vision* and *visuality*: "Vision is what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing.... Visuality, on the other hand, refers to [the] way in which vision is constructed in various ways" – how what we see and how we see it is culturally constructed (2007: 2). Western war news photographs are interpretations of what photographers see in conflict zones; and, as is suggested here, their interpretations and subsequent visual framing of news events are in turn influenced by a long history of Western visual interpretations inevitably informed by the West's – and Christianity's – historically dominant status on the world stage.

It is this inability to discern truth that makes CVA a fitting research method for this paper. CDA/CVA do not aim to ascertain hidden meanings or absolute truths; rather, they attempt to find out how texts stimulate truth-*effects*; e.g. the claim to truth that meaning makes through Western journalism (cf. Chouliaraki, 2006: 83). The interest in CVA lies in discerning how images collectively emanate and perpetuate culturally constructed interpretations of the subject(s) depicted in them. The cumulative effect of images that propose similar interpretations might create what Foucault has termed "regimes of truth" – beliefs a society comes to value as true due to their socio-political and economic construction and perpetuation through institutions socially endowed with power, e.g. those involved in news production (cf. Foucault, 1980).

CVA is especially useful for its emphasis on power, which is multi-dimensional and thus central to this paper. There is the power Western media to disperse conceived truths within the West, but also the power of the West over the East, highlighted by the abovementioned theories of Orientalism, Christianity, and representation (sections 4.1.2, 4.2.3 and 4.3). As Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) notes in her research on suffering in television news, CDA "treats the... visual choices on the screen [or paper] as subtle indicators of the power of [news imagery] to mediate the world to the world... [and] to classify the world into categories of 'us' and 'the other'" (Chouliaraki, 2006: 84). Rose highlights Donna Haraway's argument that Western technologies have allowed for an unprecedented deregulation of vision for a minority of traditionally located superstructures – most notably those "tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy" (qtd. in Rose, 2007: 5). Versions of difference between East and West are thus reproduced within Western visual contexts that seem 'natural' owing to visuality's building conventional modes of viewing the world. Furthermore, with most international news being Western-based, Western conventions and truth effects are broadcast and printed in the East, thereby potentially mirrored in Eastern mindsets and thus even more difficult to debunk.

CVA, pros and cons

In lieu of the visual nature of this study as well as the emphasis on power outlined above, analytical approaches outside of historical analysis coupled with CDA/CVA have been rejected. Interviewing, surveying, audience studies and ethnographies of news producers/sites or viewers would perhaps lead to a clearer understanding of how people respond to images and what opinions they have of Arabs and Muslims. However, the time and length restrictions of this

paper would not allow for much breadth, resulting in few individualistic responses that could run the risk of bias. Furthermore, such methods leave little room for an in-depth study of the images themselves, which this paper theorizes to be central to the abovementioned power structures. Content analysis, which focuses exclusively on images, would be useful in establishing how often Western news bombards us with images of Afghan/Iraq violence versus non-violent imagery. It would however not tell us much about the nuanced ways in which the individuals depicted within the images are represented, or details on the images' backgrounds and presentations. Nor would it attempt to theorize how images prompt Western viewers to respond.

CVA, on the other hand, focuses on the image as well as those represented within the image. Meanwhile, CVA is also concerned with the origins of the image and the institutions surrounding it, especially in this paper. Rose distinguishes two forms of CDA/CVA: one focuses exclusively on the details of individual images itself, while the other – mostly used in this paper – is concerned with their production and use (2007: 172-177). This might include debates provoked by images either in the wider public – briefly discussed here in terms of Abu Ghraib – or at the site of their production and publishing, as is the case with the conflict news photography examined here. Looking at images in this way gives us insight into how the styles that are most prominent are chosen and perpetuated, and which power structures are responsible for them.

It is important to note here that CVA is a highly subjective form of analysis. The interpretation of an image is invariably informed by the viewer's background, location, and social situation (Rose, 2007: 10-11). Western viewers will never interpret the same images, which are in themselves interpretations of life, in exactly the same manner. As Stuart Hall argues, "the best way to 'settle'… contested readings is to… try to justify one's 'reading' in detail in relation to… what meanings they seem to you to be producing" (Hall, 1997a: 9). The author of this paper acknowledges that her subjective, personal analysis will inevitably influence this paper. It is nevertheless her hope that, through looking at a range of images, patterns might be detected that could hint which effects are emanated most strongly to a broader range of Western viewers. It is in this vein that she encourages further research on the topic that might indeed incorporate an audience analysis to test the findings of this paper.

SELECTION OF DATA

News images in relation to art history?

As previously mentioned, this paper will juxtapose news conflict images against art historical images. In his analyses of advertising imagery, Jonathan E. Schroeder (2004, 2006) is concerned with the construction of a genealogy of images; a contextualization and historicization of contemporary advertising images that link them to past cultural conventions and art history. This paper contends that much as Schroeder's advertising imagery works within the realm of aesthetics – the designers of campaigns are often both aesthetically-minded and informed by art historical trends (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004: 24) – conflict news photography springs from a vocation situated within art history. While some art historical images displayed here might seem unfamiliar to most Western viewers, their influence should not be discounted in the shaping of both Western news and the Western culture that consumes it. Behind each source of conflict photography lays an array of photographers whose portfolios often include what could be termed 'art photography'; they are likely to have an eye for artistic convention. Furthermore, as noted above, current market trends are making clear that their success increasingly relies on the following of a certain aesthetic formula within Western culture; one that, as this paper suggests, favors graphically violent images that play according to specific Western rules.

Sources of news images

The art historical images used here are chosen according to how well they mirror news images, demonstrating how contemporary images of violence, however shocking and seemingly unprecedented, do in fact parallel past artistic conventions. The news images themselves are chosen based their award-winning status. High-profile award-winning photographers are those who have done well in the current market, which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is arguably becoming an increasingly conformist field. This increases the likelihood that the images chosen here are recognizable to regular Western newsreaders, or at least correspond to other images in the news. The websites of four, high-profile Western-based awards are used as sources: Pulitzer, World Press Photo, Pictures of the Year International (POYi), and the National Press Photographers Association's Best of Photography (BOP) awards. Exceptions to this formula are two images of the Abu Ghraib scandal (Figs. 1 and 5) – which were not taken by photojournalists but nevertheless widely circulated throughout Western news – and four images

from the New York Times that are highlighted here for their controversial status in the news (Figs. 33-36). Photographs will date no farther back than the 9/11 attacks of 2001.[9]

One might argue that the award-winning status of the images denotes them as exceptional rather than everyday; they nevertheless set the standard upon which subsequent photographers base their style and/or subject matter. Furthermore, the judges of such awards consist of photo editors, established or veteran photojournalists, and press agency representatives[10] – in short, those who determine what we see on the news. This paper suggests that their votes not only reflect their personal tastes, but also establish lasting photojournalistic conventions. All the while, the art historical spin is meant to remind us that these conventions have roots situated in power structures far older and greater than these awards and judges.

Inevitable arbitrariness

Images of Afghanistan and Iraq have dominated most photojournalism since 2001. Late 2001 saw an unprecedented amount of award-winning images of Afghanistan. In 2004, the NPPA's global Best Of Photography awards gave the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places and the Honorable Mention prize for their Best Newspaper Photographer rubric to photojournalists working in Iraq. In 2006, series of photographs depicting the difficult return home for injured and dead US soldiers were prominent. By 2007, images of wounded Western soldiers dominated the awards, stirring controversy in the US Army as well as in news production teams. While these are specific categories, the images can vary greatly and it is ultimately an arbitrary choice of the author to pick those she feels are representative.

While there is some diversity, this paper contends that we are offered particular kinds of images that push certain impressions and reactions to the foreground, diminishing the various ways in which a subject as complicated as Western involvement in the Middle East can be viewed and/or dealt with. Of concern here are questions of humanization within the aestheticization of violence taking place on Afghan and Iraqi soil in the presence of Western soldiers. Who is depicted and in what position is carefully calculated and regulated, and, as this paper will demonstrate, strong reactions follow any deviation from that path.

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[9] NOTE: The images are available on these websites free to the public for personal contemplation; this paper may not be published before official copyright has been obtained.

5. ANALYSIS

The analysis here embarks on an ambitious quest to translate aesthetic categories into moral ones. Afghan/Iraq news images will be compared and contrasted to Christian Western art history, which makes claims about the symbolic significance of both types of images in Western collective memory and thus current events. News images will also be analyzed on their own for discrepancies in representations of Westerners and Arabs and Muslims that might Other the latter group, possibly estranging Western viewers. Again, it should be remembered that this analysis is not an ultimate reaction to visual texts as much as it is a claim to how the visual texts *propose* us to react to them. This, in turn, will shed light on whether the visual framing of Afghanistan and Iraq in contemporary Western news fits into a Western visual memory that prompts Western audiences to view Arabs and Muslims as necessarily shrouded in violence in ways Westerners are not, encouraging a viewing of them as Others rather than equal human beings. This involves questions of humanization:

> *Humanization is a process of identity construction that endows sufferers with the power to say or do something about their condition, even if this power is simply to evoke and receive the beneficiary action of others. The humane sufferer is the sufferer who acts.* (Chouliaraki, 2006: 88).

While Chouliaraki emphasizes pity and subsequent action on behalf of Western audiences, her analysis of images of suffering is largely applicable to images of violence. The deprivation of a sufferer's voice, the representation of subjects in large, non-descript groups, long-shots of the devastation of an unknown landscape – such visual effects, she argues, relegate sufferers to the realm of the Other, alienating them from the "existential order" of Western viewers (ibid.: 87-89).

As mentioned in the previous section, images will be examined in groups, not least because this is often how they appear in the mind; seeing one image can trigger the memory of another, even if we cannot quite recall in what context it was seen before. This is something we are interested in here in terms of collective visual memory. Groups 1-4 will be concerned with placing of images from Afghanistan and Iraq in a Christian framework of violence. Group 1 will demonstrate how we might view images of violence with the uncanny feeling we have seen it all before, referring especially to Christian influences in Western history and its involvement in

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[10] Full jury lists and jury professions are accessible at each award website. See *Appendix II: List of Images*.

the Middle East. Group 2 will demonstrate how the possibility for pity presented by Group 1 is obliterated by the overarching context of images of violence presented to the Western viewer. Groups 3 and 4 invite the reader to consider the implications of reading Iraq as part of an apocalyptic Christian narrative in which Western soldiers might be staged as saviors. Groups 5-7 will move away from art historical comparisons to focus on the differences of the representations of injured, dead, and grieving Westerners versus those of Arabs and Muslims. These groups focus on the stories behind some of the photographs; the contested nature of some versus the non-contested nature of others offers an important insight into our evaluation of 'us' versus 'them'. Differences are further examined in Group 8, an analysis of grief of both parties. Finally, Group 9 will conclude the paper by suggesting what the Western view of the natural landscape of the Middle East might look like.

THE CHRISTIAN VISUAL CONTEXT

Christ in our midst[11]

> *How did we become the Roman occupiers of the Middle East? How did we become the crucifiers of Christ? It will take contemplation of this image, and many other things besides, to figure all this out.* (W.J.T. Mitchell, 2004)

W.J.T. Mitchell (2004) refers here to Fig. 1, the image of a hooded human figure standing on a box, cloaked in a tunic-like gown, arms extended to either of his sides with cables attached to his hands. It is one of the most-frequently cited images to come out of the 2004 Abu Ghraib prison scandal, despite the absence of the taunting American soldiers that dominate most of the 270-plus images released to the public. Abu Ghraib prison had been converted from an Iraqi to an American prison for suspected terrorists after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. In April 2004, photographs depicting naked Iraqis being tortured and humiliated by US soldiers posing for the camera were leaked to the press, resulting in a media-frenzy of images and literary commentary. This image became "the icon of the abuse" (Boxer, 2004); a figure, Mitchell notes, reminiscent of the final stage of Christ's Passion, the crucifixion.

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[11] The author would like to note that this section is similar to prior analysis undertaken in her MC416 project (Candidate #60671, 2008), a visual analysis of the Abu Ghraib scandal. While the subject matter and analysis overlap *in this section only*, the overall objectives, analysis, and thus conclusions differ greatly between the papers. The aptness of the subject of the previous paper to this one's prompted the author to rephrase and re-direct some of her previous analysis, as was confirmed permissible by professors in the department.

Eisenman, interested in the attraction of this image for American cultural critics, references the Freudian notion of the "uncanny;" the discovery of something simultaneously familiar and disturbing (2007: 15-16). Freud argued that primal fears – thoughts repressed often for social reasons – can be triggered by seeing or experiencing them out of their initial contexts. Images of high shock-value, e.g. Fig. 1 and 5, are often those that are most recognizable; hence the reason for Fig. 1's 'popularity.' Religious or not, everyone recognizes Jesus.

Christ's inhuman suffering throughout the Passion guaranteed his redemption. This is perhaps a strong analogy to make in relation to the Middle East, but not one writer Lila Rajiva (2005) shies away from in her analysis of US government and military rhetoric in its Middle East deliberations, specifically in relation to Fig. 1:

> *When terrorism is seen as either religious extremism or violent heresy, the rooting out of that heresy may take such medieval forms as the scourging of the body in which the heretical spirit lodges. In this way, apocalyptic Christianity joins with the corporate state in the disciplining of flesh and the prisoner posed… like a hooded Christ recalls us uncannily to both the Inquisition of Catholic Spain and the witch-hunts of the Puritan forebears of America* (Rajiva, 2005: 173).

The images in Group 1 can invite various responses, not least pity; the images of the torment of Christ (Figs. 2 and 6) as well as Goya's rendering of the Inquisition (Fig. 3) were created with the intention of communicating to their viewers the suffering of subjects at the hand of our inaction. And yet this suffering has also invariably ennobled them; they are better for it, and we are implicitly lesser than them. All the while, we are dealing with prisoners – could they have deserved it?

As Stuart Hall (1997) has noted, the meanings of images "float" – they cannot be fixed. Group 1 might evoke feelings of pity, envy, or justice, all at the same time. Yet, he argues, "representational practice" attempts to "fix" meaning, privileging one over the many other possible interpretations (1997b: 228). How we read these images depends on context, e.g. the many other images of the Middle East we see in the news.

The pervasiveness of violence

So what are the other images in the news? In order to examine images from the same time frame as Abu Ghraib, we need to look at award-winning images of 2005, as award ceremonies are held early in the year for images taken the previous year. The four images from Group 2

were all taken in 2004, visible in the news at the same time that the Abu Ghraib scandal was unfolding.

Emphasis on violence is dominant. Fig. 7 won 3rd place in the 2005 POYi Spot News award rubric, featuring Iraqi Shiites fighting US forces in Baghdad. Figs. 8-10 were taken by various Associated Press photographers; the AP's Iraq photojournalist team won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography "for its stunning series of photographs of bloody yearlong combat inside Iraqi cities" (The Pulitzer Prizes, n.d.). Fig. 8 features Iraqi insurgents fighting US troops in Fallujah. Fig. 9 presents the celebration of the insurgents' success – the bodies of four US contractors hang from a bridge over the Euphrates, charred beyond recognition. Fig. 10 similarly displays an Iraqi man celebrating an explosion that set fire to four US Humvees – one of which he is standing on – as well as destroyed a building and killed one US soldier.[12]

As Western viewers, how does this group of images make us feel? Frightened, perhaps, or shocked at the violence Iraqis engage in. For some it might justify why our soldiers should be there – a civil war that is doing more harm than good. Another feeling that might be provoked is rage. In the case of the highly circulated Fig. 9, many asked why Iraqis were killing Americans who selflessly went to war to help them. While the issue is infinitely more complex, it must be understood that on the level of the average American soldier, this was the sentiment. Given this context of "representational practice," the most likely reading of Group 1 is "justice." There are many people in Iraq and Afghanistan who deserve to be imprisoned; someone must step up to the task.

Judgment Day

The Apocalypse of St. Paul describes Paul's tour of Hell after having been shown Paradise. He cries at the shock and horror of it all, yet his angel-guide asks him why – the archangel Michael weighs each dead person's good against their bad, according to the choices God had given them to choose good and evil on earth. After Michael's judgment, there is nothing to lament; the bad has passed and the good still reigns (Spivey, 2001: 67).

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[12] Information on individual photographs is taken from their accompanying captions unless otherwise stated. Captions can be found on the images' corresponding websites; see *Appendix II: List of Images*.

And yet, there are last-minute amendments to the final damnation of the Last Judgment. "Christ was a teacher who had time for whores and thieves" (ibid.: 70). Apocryphal writings describe one of Christ's Passion stages as the 'Harrowing of Hell,' in which Christ descends into Hell to save those that do not really belong there. Dante even created purgatory, an in-between stage of Heaven and Hell (ibid.: 67-72). This is an idea we can recognize within our prison system today: even the bad can be saved before really going to Hell – they just need someone to discipline them.

Group 3 emphasizes the control Western soldiers can exert over the chaos of Group 2. Yet it also demonstrates the ambivalence of the need and want for their presence, as do the images in Group 2. Figs. 11 and 14 are quite clear; the insurgents have been captured and will be dealt with. In Fig. 12, we witness a more ambiguous situation; the potential prisoner is still being judged. His facial expression and demeanor reads as though he fears the 'judge' – presumably the soldier standing immediately front-left of the camera. Yet he also takes shelter behind another soldier, not unlike a small child would behind its parent when confronted with a stranger.

This simultaneous positive and negative Western presence in the Middle East, the fear of and shelter taken behind Western soldiers, can also be seen in the context of Fig. 15. It is a photograph taken in 2002 of German peacekeepers at the "Game of Unity," a friendly soccer match between Kabul United and the British ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) team. The match was made possible by the defeat of the Taliban from Kabul by the ISAF; yet the crowds pushing into the sold-out game resulted in more rioting and deaths.

A heavily armed peacekeeping force meant for the Afghan's own protection reads, "they cannot manage peace on their own." US troops patrolling Iraq's streets and arresting potential insurgents – note, plain-clothes Arabs who cannot be immediately deemed 'innocent' or 'guilty' at face-value – indicates the US stepping up where Iraqi's themselves cannot. The soldier in Fig. 11 has a steadfast look on his face – we will win this fight. The soldier in Fig. 14 looks undeniably pleased with himself. How does this group of images portray Arabs and Muslims on equal grounds as Western spectators? They are submissive or forcibly in submission; they are fighting despite their newly-won freedom. Here, Western soldiers become both the archangel Michael and figures of 'Hell harrowing.'

The fires of Hell

Fig. 16 is a depiction of the right panel of Hans Memling's *The Last Judgment*, completed in 1471. It is the realm of the Damned as they fall deeper and deeper into Hell. Fire is an ever-present attribute of depictions of Hell, as of war. Archives of award-winning news conflict images are littered with burning buildings, bodies, and vehicles.

Who burns is a contentious issue. The conflagrations that follow the many wartime explosions are non-discriminatory; the representations thereof are not. Fig. 17 explicitly shows the horrific burning of Iraqi civilians after an explosion in Baghdad. Fig. 18 is less accidental, and, in this case, more metaphorical – it shows US soldiers burning Taliban fighters who had attacked their convoy. The soldiers in the background are largely unconcerned with their doing; two talk amongst themselves, while others rest, waiting for the bodies to finish burning, perhaps in order to move on with their original mission.

Fig. 19 is an oddity. It depicts a burning British soldier jumping out of his burning tank after a shooting in Basra in 2005. Captions do not mention whether or not he survived, but it does so happen that the fighting was caused by two British soldiers who were ultimately arrested for having killed an Iraqi policeman without precedent and responding to subsequent rioting by opening fire on crowds of civilians.[13] This implies that the burning man was actually at fault – Western or not. This is the exception. The closest Western soldiers usually get to fire is either starting it (Fig. 18) or saving civilians from it (Fig. 20). This leads us to ask, how different are the representations of injury, death and destruction of Westerners and Arabs or Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq?

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[13] "British soldiers arrested over alleged killing," guardian.co.uk, Monday September 19 2005.

'US' VERSUS 'THEM'

Injury and death

In Group 5, Figs. 21-23 deal with representations of injured Iraqis, and Figs. 24-26 with those of injured US soldiers. Immediately, we can see the primary difference between the two sets of images: injured Iraqis are alone, while injured US soldiers are always, always attended to. Similarly, in Group 6, there are great differences between the portrayal of dead and dying US soldiers (Figs. 27-28) and dead Arabs and Muslims (Figs. 29-32). American dead are handled with care, and completely indistinguishable. In Fig. 29, a man, face stricken with urgency and fear, holds a dead boy as one would a rag, seemingly afraid to dirty himself with his blood. In Fig. 30, thick red blood nearly crowds out the image of its source, the head of a dead Iraqi thief. In Fig. 31 bodies of Islamic extremists are pulled off a truck like potato sacks after a successful US-led air and ground strike. Fig. 32, titled "Deserted," shows the unthinkable – the dead, forgotten and left behind to rot on an empty street.

It's not that injured and dead Western soldiers do not exist, nor do they exist only in aesthetically pleasing scenarios. New York Times photojournalist and writer Michael Kamber teamed up with journalist Tim Arango in July to publish an article titled, "4,000 U.S. Deaths, and a Handful of Images," (*New York Times*, 26 July 2008). The article was provoked by the barring of freelance photojournalist Zoriah Miller from working in Iraq after having published photographs of a dead US soldier on his website. Journalists working in Iraq and Afghanistan must be embedded with troops in order to ensure their safety, and must therefore abide by "embed rules." These include obtaining consent from injured soldiers before publishing images of their injuries, as well as making sure families of dead soldiers are notified before publishing their photographs. Images of identifiable dead soldiers are rarely published in any case, and even the publishing of images of non-identifiable dead soldiers has been met with retribution by the military.

The images in Group 7 are examples of images that have led to the expulsion of journalists from their designated embed posts. Fig. 33 is the reason for Miller's recent barring; Fig. 34 that of European Pressphoto Agency's Stefan Zaklin in 2004. Fig. 35 was taken by Robert Nickelsberg of Getty Images for the New York Times; Nickelsberg and writer Damien Cave were barred after the Times published a story featuring the image because the heavily injured soldier had died without them having been able to obtain the written form of consent to use the

image. After Michael Kamber's publishing of his contested series of photos surrounding Fig. 36, new regulations introduced the barring of all photographs featuring soldier patches that might identify the platoon and thus the injured soldier.[14]

The lengths the military go through to ban journalists is, as Kamber & Arango report, an attest to the difficulty of reconciling the embed rules conceived far away in Washington with the soldiers who must accommodate journalists. However, if we look at the images of injured and dead Arabs and Muslims in Groups 4, 5 and 6, there might be more at stake. Western soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq have a right to determine what the world is allowed to see of them and what it isn't. Arabs and Muslims are naked to the world; the death and destruction of their people and their countries is paraded in Western news daily. They have no right to contest it or explain what is depicted in the images on their own terms, the way that Westerners do. In short, they have no voice – indeed, placing 'them' in a fundamentally different "existential order" than 'us.'

Grief

> "If we are interested in arresting cycles of violence to produce less violent outcomes, it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, may be made of grief besides a cry for war" (Butler, 2004: xii).

Grief is central to war and conflict. As we have all experienced loss, Butler claims, "[l]oss has made a tenuous 'we' of us all" (ibid.: 20). The social vulnerability of our bodies at least partially constitutes us as political, equal beings; recognizing this can lead us closer to the Levinasian face-to-face recognition of others. How do we grieve? How do they grieve? Might we find common ground here?

Group 8 suggests that, at least visually, the grieving over Western soldiers fallen in the Middle East is very different from that over Arabs and Muslims perishing in the same conflict. Figs. 37, 39, 42 and 44 all portray Iraqi mourners grieving over a family member. Figs. 37 and 42 attest to the common practice in Western news to multiply Iraqi deaths. Not that this is untrue – there are proportionately more Iraqi deaths than deaths of Western soldiers – but the depiction of these deaths as multiple rather than individual obliterates human connection. As is noted in the

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[14] Kamber's descriptions of the difficulties of taking, editing, and publishing wartime photographs can be found at www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0707/a-walk-in-the-sun.html.

introduction of this chapter, the representation of subjects in large, non-descript groups is apt to relegate such subjects to an unidentifiable realm of the Other (cf. Chouliaraki, 2006: 87-89). This kind of distant mass-death overwhelms the Western viewer; there are just too many to mourn for. Images as those seen in figs. 37 and 42 do not give us opportunity to either connect with the mourner – their faces are turned away from us – or to the victims – made faceless by the sheer volume death.

Figs. 42 and 44, on the other hand, seem at first to be extremely personalized – we see the faces of both the victims and the mourners, and they are depicted alone. However, the image of bloody dead boys with mothers wailing over them is a much-repeated staple of Western news conflict – a look at Fig. 41 might indicate why. A pietà is immediately recognizable, yet untouchable – the Virgin Mary is alone in her grief, and we may but humbly attempt to copy it. We will never achieve the holy state she is in; better to leave her alone.

One might argue Fig. 43 to be a pietà of sorts – the mother of a US soldier killed in Iraq weeps over her coffin. However, the photograph of her daughter as a soldier in the top left-hand corner of the image along with the US flag draped over her coffin suggest a greater collectivity. The dead soldier is ennobled by having served her duty. In conjunction with the flag, the reminder of army duty tells us of the selflessness of the soldier's death, inviting fellow-Americans and citizens of allied countries to join her mother in her grief.

Fig. 38 further emphasizes collective grief. Of course, when we see a body of a dead soldier, it is invariably covered by other soldiers due to the implicit embed rules that prohibit explicit shots of dead soldiers. The effect becomes one of group solidarity. We identify with a group mourning over a lost comrade because that is most likely how we ourselves have mourned in the past. There is indeed always the silent moment that we can see in images 40-44, yet Western custom has it that families and friends come together in mutual support at funerals. The soldier in Fig. 40, taking a moment by the boots, rifle and helmet of a fallen comrade, is not actually alone – behind him we see a line of other comrade ready to embrace his grief.

This section shows that the connection with grief over conflict in the Middle East is fundamentally located in a Western context, with little or extraordinary invitations of Westerners to partake in Arab and Muslim grief. This section must conclude that the "tenuous 'we'" Butler would like us to detect in grief is not encouraged by visual representations of loss in this case.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to examine whether the visual framing of violence in Afghanistan and Iraq in contemporary Western news prompts Western newsreaders to view Arabs and Muslims as Others rather than equals. The paper suggested a greater, violence-oriented historical visual framework guiding and perpetuating Western visual convention. The analysis found that many of the "spot news" or "breaking news" photographs celebrated by photojournalism awards could easily be read alongside medieval apocalyptic Christian imagery. The author has acknowledged her inevitable partiality in choosing the images, and must admit here that certain images that "fit" better than others were chosen for this purpose. While some might scrutinize it for bias, the art historical comparison nevertheless fulfils the objective of painting an alternative picture in which to view everyday conflict news photography. Uncanny parallels between old and new portrayals of violence confirm the claim in this paper's hypothesis that current images fit into a Western visual framework of violence.

The contrasting of representations of Western soldiers and Afghanis and Iraqis fell short of equal representation of Americans and Europeans as well as Iraqis and Afghanis. This was due mostly to the fact that coverage of the Iraq war has been greater than that of Afghanistan, as has the global outcry against the war, particularly in the West. Furthermore, while the four awards scrutinized are all international, most contestants appear to be American or working for American-based companies and newspapers. The comparison nevertheless confirmed the hypothesis that Westerners are portrayed differently than Arabs and Muslims in crucial scenarios in which vulnerability could most aptly be communicated: injury, death, and grief.

Future research might attempt to patch the holes in the image-selection of this paper. A content analysis of a limited amount of newspapers over a limited amount of time would be more indicative of what kinds of images of Iraq and Afghanistan we are exposed to in the West. Within such a content analysis, a similar critical visual analysis could take place focusing more on individual images, on par with the analysis done for Group 8.

While its scope was perhaps too broad, this paper did provide a framework for thinking of the implications of a lasting East-West divide. Though not necessarily generative of feelings of aversion or hate towards Arabs and Muslims, the visual distinction of "us" and "them" nevertheless obstructs peaceful solutions to current global strife. Following Levinas through Butler, this paper set out to demonstrate that the discrepancies of the visual framing of violence

involving Westerners versus that involving Arabs and Muslims deepen the difficulties of comprehending mutual vulnerability. This paper laments that the direction of the current photojournalism market outlined in Chapter 3 does not indicate a deviation away from a long-standing Western visual convention focusing on violence and producing difference.

Group 9 concludes this paper with how a natural Middle Eastern landscape might appear to Western viewers if the violent and destructive visual framing proceeds apace. While undeniably dramatic, we must acknowledge that despite much evidence to the contrary, "seeing" is still "believing" for many of us. Closer scrutiny of our media images not only an interesting, but a highly necessary subject of study.

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APPENDIX I: Figures

Fig. 1

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Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 6

Group 2

Fig. 7

Fig. 9

Fig. 8

Fig. 10

Fig. 12

Fig. 11

Fig. 13

Fig. 15

Fig. 14

Group 3

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Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Fig. 19
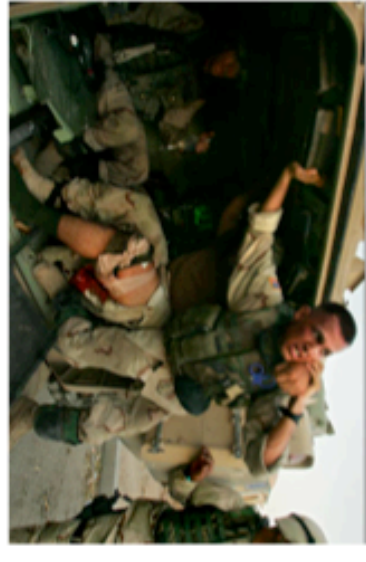

Fig. 20

Group 4

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Group 9

Appendix II: List of Images

List of Awards Websites:

National Press Photographers' Association (NPPA): The Best of Photojournalism (BOP)
http://bop.nppa.org

Pictures of the Year International (POYi)
http://www.poyi.org

The Pulitzer Prizes – Photography
http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Photography

World Press Photo
http://www.worldpressphoto.org

List of Images:

Group 1

Fig. 1 Untitled. November 1-4, 2003. From "Chapter 4: Electrical Wires," *The Abu Ghraib Files*, available online from http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/ 2006/03/14/chapter_4/index.html (accessed April 28, 2008).

Fig. 2 Velázquez, Diego. ca. 1632. *Christ on the Cross*. In Museo del Prado, Madrid. Available online from http://www.artchive.com/artchive/V/velazquez/velazquez_ christ.jpg.htm (accessed August 13, 2008).

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Fig. 4 Bouju, Jean-Marc (The Associated Press, France). March 31, 2003. World Press Photo of the Year, 2003. Available online from http://www.worldpressphoto.org /index.php?option=com_photogallery&task=view&id=202&Itemid=115&bandwidth=high (accessed August 18, 2008).

Fig. 5 Untitled. November 7-9, 2003. From "Chapter 6: Dog Pile," *The Abu Ghraib Files.* Available online from http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/ chapter_6/index.html (accessed April 28, 2008).

Fig. 6 Caravaggio. c. 1607. *Flagellation*. In Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. Available online from http://www.wga.hu/index1.html (accessed August 16, 2008).

Group 2

Fig. 7 Cho, Sungsu (Polaris / TIME Magazine). 2004. *Iraqi Shiites*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, Spot News, Third Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/22/03.php (accessed August 14, 2008).

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Fig. 9 Mohammed, Khalid (The Associated Press). May 31, 2004. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2005, First Place awarded to the Associated Press, Iraq team. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5484 (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 10 Muheisen, Muhammad. April 26, 2004. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2005, First Place awarded to the Associated Press, Iraq team. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5502 (accessed August 14, 2008).

Group 3

Fig. 11 Niedringhaus, Anja. November 12, 2004. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2005, First Place awarded to the Associated Press, Iraq team. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5499 (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 12 Raedle, Joe (Getty Images). 2005. The Best of Photojournalism (BOP) Still Photography 2006 Award for International News Picture Story, Honorable Mention. Available online from http://bop.nppa.org/2006/still_photography/ winners/INS/50799/96748.html (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 13 van Eyck, Jan. 1420-1425. *The Last Judgment*, central panel. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Available online from http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/m/michelan/3sistina/lastjudg/index.html (accessed April 22, 2008).

Fig. 14 Nachtwey, James (VII / TIME Magazine). 2003. *US led War on Iraq*. 61st Pictures of the Year International, Magazine Photographer of the Year, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/61/mpoy/nachtweytwo09.php (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 15 Reeder, Mona (The Dallas Morning News). 2002. *Riot in Kabul*. 60th Pictures of the Year International, News Picture Story, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/60/12/120502.php (accessed August 14, 2008).

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Fig. 16 Memling, Hans. 1467-71. *Last Judgment Triptych*, right panel. In Muzeum Narodowe, Gdansk. Available online from http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/m/michelan/3sistina/lastjudg/index.html (accessed August 16, 2008).

Fig. 17 Aziz, Ceerwan (Reuters). June 14, 2006. *Iraq*. 64th Pictures of the Year International, Human Conflict, Third Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/64/08/03.php (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 18 Dupont, Stephen (Contact Press Images). October 1st 2005. *War On The Mind*. 63rd Pictures of the Year International, Magazine Spot News, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/63/21/01.php (accessed August 17, 2008).

Fig. 19 Hassan, Atef (Reuters). September 19, 2005. 63rd Pictures of the Year International, Newspaper Spot News, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/63/14/ae03.php (accessed August 17, 2008).

Fig. 20 Diaz Meyer, Cheryl (Dallas Morning News). 2003. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2004, First Place. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5425 (accessed August 12, 2008).

Group 5

Fig. 21 Cole, Carolyn (The Los Angeles Times). 2003. *Pools of Blood*. 61st Pictures of the Year International, News Picture Story, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/61/14/cole04.php (accessed August 12, 2008).

Fig. 22 Linsley, Brennan (AP). March 2, 2004. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2005, First Place awarded to the Associated Press, Iraq team. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5501 5498 (accessed August 14, 2008).

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Fig. 24 Cole, Carolyn (The Los Angeles Times). 2004. *Battleground*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, Issue Reporting Story, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/17/cole_07.php (accessed August 19, 2008).

Fig. 25 Kozyrev, Yuri (Time Magazine). 2007. *Iraq War*. 65th Pictures of the Year International, Spot News, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/65/18/ae02.php (accessed August 19, 2008).

Fig 26 Silva, Joao (Freelance). 2006. 64th Pictures of the Year International, Spot News, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/64/14/ae04.php (accessed August 19, 2008).

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Fig. 27 Gardi, Balazs (VII Network/Alexia Foundation, Hungary). World Press Photo, General News, First Prize Stories, 2008. Available from http://www.worldpressphoto.org/index.php?option=com_photogallery&task=view&id=1098&Ite mid=187&type=&selectedIndex=8&bandwidth=high (accessed August 20, 2008).

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Fig. 29 Barria, Carlos (Reuters). 2007. 65th Pictures of the Year International, Spot News, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/65/18/01.php

Fig. 30 Leeson, David (Dallas Morning News). Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2004, First Place. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5442 (accessed August 12, 2008).

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Group 7

All images in Group 7 are from the NYT Slideshow, "Picturing Casualties," July 26, 2008. Available online from http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/07/25/world/ middleeast/20080726_CENSOR2_2.html (accessed July 26, 2008).

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Fig. 36 Kamber, Michael (New York Times). 2007. Available online from http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/07/25/world/middleeast/20080726_CENSOR2_6.html

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Fig. 37 Nachtwey, James (VII / TIME Magazine). 2003. 61st Pictures of the Year International, Magazine Photographer of the Year, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/61/mpoy/nachtweytwo05.php (accessed August 14, 2008).

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Fig. 40 Cutraro, Andrew (The St. Louis Post-Dispatch). 2004. *Fallen Comrades*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, Spot News, Award of Excellence. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/15/ae03.php (accessed July 16, 2008).

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Fig. 42 Mizban, Samir (AP). June 13, 2004. Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography 2005, First Place awarded to the Associated Press, Iraq team. Available online from http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5488 (accessed August 14, 2008).

Fig. 43 Patrick, Bryan (Sacramento Bee). January 22, 2004. *Missing Soldiers*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, News Picture Story, Third Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/16/patrick01.php (accessed July 26, 2008).

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Group 9

Fig. 45 Murphy, Seamus (AWP / Newsweek / The New York Times Magazine). November 2001. *Morning of the Fall of Kabul*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, World Understanding Award, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/wua/murphy_10.php (accessed August 17, 2008).

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Fig. 47 Hicks, Tyler (The New York Times). 2005. *Afghanistan*. 64th Pictures of the Year International, Newspaper Photographer of the Year, First Place. http://www.poyi.org/64/NPOY/npoystories02_12.php (accessed August 17, 2008).

Fig. 48 Murphy, Seamus (AWP / Newsweek / The New York Times Magazine). November 2001. *Dead Talib Fighters on Old Road*. 62nd Pictures of the Year International, World Understanding Award, First Place. Available online from http://www.poyi.org/62/wua/murphy_05.php (accessed August 17, 2008).