Shooting images: Photographs from the war in Iraq

...a review (of sorts)

Limited Language, Colin Davies & Monica Parrinder, 2003

Susan Sontag, like the Italian writer Umberto Eco, is among the few present day cultural critics whose influence resonates, in part through their novels, beyond the intellectual press and university libraries. In 1977 Sontag published On Photography, an extended essay looking at the role of photography in the West, which went on to become her most celebrated book. Its publication came at the close of the Vietnam war, which brought documentary photography, via the media, to the breakfast tables and television screens of America and Europe. The book's importance lay in the way it developed its readers' relationship with the photographic image by introducing an accessible language in which to discuss the increasing torrent of images around us. Sontag took discussion of photography out of the specialist realm into that of the everyday (1). Now, in Regarding the Pain of Others, the author returns to the nature of the photographic image in the West; to re-evaluate and reconsider some of her original findings in On Photography.

On Photography was published at a time when 'continental philosophy' was becoming a dominant force in many intellectual circles - particularly its emphasis on reading the image as 'sign'. Central to this thinking was the French cultural commentator Roland Barthes and his seminal Mythologies (2) - a collection of essays which had first appeared at monthly intervals in the French media in the late 1950s. Mythologies looks at the pop culture of advertisements and consumer goods in France to see how these create what Barthes termed 'myths' about certain products - the 'Frenchness' inherent in a Citroën car, for instance. Once these 'structures' (3) were exposed his analysis would allow us, the consumers, to read these images in the same way we would read a correctly punctuated sentence. The essays reflected his desire to mobilise a more democratic approach in the art of criticism and a deeper understanding of the infrastructure of his subject matter - popular culture - which, like Sontag, he felt should be available to all. On Photography was published soon after the English language edition of Mythologies came into circulation and, in it, Sontag introduces her readers to a way of reading these photographs in the aftermath of the long-drawn-out war in Vietnam.

In Regarding the Pain of Others the focus is more on how we experience these photographs - post Bosnia, Sarajavo and September 11th - in the much speedier digital age of 'shock and awe'. Both books look at the famous image from the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, of a Vietcong suspect and his executioner at the moment when the bullet has been fired and the prisoner is grimacing but has not yet fallen. On Photography, which came out when the image was still fresh in the memory, tried to predict how history would represent this image either as an 'icon' of suffering or as an image which fades in meaning/suffering as time passes. Regarding the Pain of Others re-evaluates this history.... 'As for the viewer, this viewer, even many years after the picture was taken… well, one can gaze at these faces for a

long time and not come to the end of the mystery, and the indecency, of such co-spectatorship' (4).

Sontag's re-evaluation of photography of war includes re-addressing two widespread ideas on the impact of photography - namely that the media direct our 'experience' of war and that we have become complacent, or numbed, by the sheer quantity of episodes and images of horror. 'Since I find these ideas formulated in my own essays on photography - the earliest of which was written thirty years ago - I feel an irresistible temptation to quarrel with them,' Sontag writes (5). More particularly, she quarrels with continental theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida who have, since Mythologies, moved away from any sense of a functional structured society and, therefore, any ability to 'read' its images in a coherent way(6). Their theory, which can be termed 'postmodern,' (7) has introduced a de-centred universe made up of multiple meanings and manipulations. The constant flow of images build up like the layers upon layers of billposters in every urban street until we experience visual culture as a collage of images pasted one on top of the other, so that we reach the point of opacity and reality recedes (8). It's here, somewhere in this fog, and the free-all of the image, that Sontag departs from what Donald Rumsfeld, the American secretary of defence, calls 'old Europe.' By this, he is means the countries which do not support America in its war against terror - particularly France. Politically, Sontag publicly questions the motives and sense of the US government's stance of distancing itself from/attacking 'old' Europe, yet culturally she seems increasingly in accord with it. This is a subtext to Regarding the Pain of Others - mainly seen through her attack on postmodern theory, which has its spiritual home in France. It was made more explicit in her address to the Frankfurt book fair in October 2003 as she accepted the Friedenspreis peace prize. For her, the departure from 'old Europe' is in response to her personal experience of war: in Sarajevo, at the close of the 20th century, where she experienced the realities of war first hand, and later, the trauma of the 9/11 disaster in New York - for both are drawn upon and liberally referenced in the book. Finally, her essay comes in to circulation in the midst of current media analysis of war in Iraq.

Regarding the Pain of Others, then, is a reclaiming of a 'modern' view, a view developed by the traumas of the First and Second World Wars - a period that saw the development of documentary war photography into the 'language' we read today. This modern view of war and how it is represented is introduced in Sontag's opening chapter with a discussion of Virginia Woolf's essay Three Guineas. Woolf was a writer central to the mileu of the Bloomsbury group, artists, writers, intellectuals and poets who tried to make sense of the alienation of women and men in an increasingly conflictual society between the two world wars. In Three Guineas Woolf addresses both the representations of war and the inherent gendering of war in the media: 'Men make war. Men (most men) like war, since for men there is "some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting" that woman (most women) do not feel or enjoy' (9). It is this difference Sontag goes on to explore - in terms not of gender, but of the effect of power and its relationships in the formation of modernity. This opening chapter also reflects Sontag's effortless collaging of history with the contemporaneous allowing for an overall thesis rather than dogmatic timeline. Sontag uses the skills of the novelist to weave her argument without ever losing the rigour or the coherence of her intellectual argument.

The peculiarity of On Photography - a text on photography without photographic illustrations - is repeated in Regarding the Pain of Others. This works particularly well in that it frees the

book from displaying the pain that it seeks to analyse. Even when the monstrousness of war images makes for uncomfortable viewing for Sontag, she is convinced - and convincing - of her, and our, duty to look. With no images in the book, readers are compelled to action - to look for themselves at other war images, elsewhere - anew. The importance of this can't be over-estimated in a western media culture where not only have photographers such as Capa, Cartier-Bresson and McCullin created what might be called, in marketing terms, a 'brandscape' of war, but one which is increasingly supplied to us with the analysis pre-packaged. This is a culture where Barthes' method of reading images has, over half a century, become so common place that the ability to analyse imagery is second nature for many in contemporary western culture.

This phenomenon was striking in the recent Iraq coverage where the response to the images didn't follow their reproduction in the media but came ready-inscribed in the images themselves, for instance, the image of George W. Bush (distributed to newsrooms world-wide) in full combat gear jumping off his fighter jet, 'Commander in Chief' painted on the side. This was performed for the view(finde)er against the 'set design' of the the USS Abraham Lincoln; a building-sized banner behind Bush stating 'Mission Accomplished', which in effect supplied the image with its own commentary. The orchestration of the event was so obvious that reports of its PR manoeuvring accompanied the broadcast of the image.

Another piece of pre-packaged commentary, tellingly shot to commission for the British Guardian newspaper's G2 cover is a photograph of an Iraqi boy, Sufian. Sufian looks into the viewer's eyes, with the caption 'This is Sufian. He is 11. One evening, American soldiers hooded and handcuffed him, then took him to prison. For three weeks his parents had no idea where he was. Is this the way to police Iraq?' Breaking away from Sufian's stare, one notices that he is wearing an American Simpsons cartoon t-shirt, with Bart saying 'I didn't do it. Nobody saw me do it. You can't prove anything.' This photograph is an example of the complexity of the visual narrative coming from the current Iraq conflict - where most pain, violence or physical discomfort comes to us from the text rather than the image. The image is not simply reportage: firstly, it is tainted by the post-Vietnam 'knowingness' of any photograph in this age of irony, and secondly, while the pain remains latent it is the ideology of empire, of occupation, of media empires and their homogenising effect which is symbolised in the child's T-shirt that troubles the conscience. The picture demonstrates how the war for the Iraqi 'consumer' was already won, the western corporate occupation complete before the first smart bomb 'exposed' the first digital frame of its descent.

Our reading goes beyond Sontag's main arguments in Regarding the Pain of Others, because we are looking at how the packaging of both the photograph and the response become part of a culture of 'lifestyle' consumption. In this mediated relationship the photograph enters into a dialogue with the viewer which has little to do with the 'pain' of the child and everything to do with a shared language between photographer and viewer - in a sense, the child's image reads like a Kellogg's packet advertising its 'free gift'. The image is in no way orchestrated by the photographer, the photo agency Troika tells us, yet this photograph is still recognisable as a traditional representation of childhood in the war zone - one which creates empathy with the subject. But in the context of a British liberal broadsheet - whose journalists and editors are aware of the self-knowingness in their audience and supply copy and images already aligned to their tastes - the image of Sufian is given extra shelf-life with the 'bonus' of an ironic statement for its audience's appreciation. This cannot be viewed as 'voyeurism' in any

conventional sense of the word because the child's 'life' is not being observed. The 'I didn' t do it…' T-shirt remains tangential to the visual narrative. The anthropologist Anne Higonnet, in her book Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood, comments on the child in the history of the photograph: 'The knowing idea belongs to our particular historical moment. Photography's fidelity is to the values of that particular moment, not to some 'real' truth about children' (10).

A key point for Regarding the Pain of Others is to puncture some contemporary misconceptions borne out of this over-inflated 'knowingness' in contemporary culture. One of which is that (photography of) war was always an unselfconscious, 'honest', unstaged endeavour - which it suits both contemporary pro- and anti- war camps to believe. Sontag demonstrates how early written accounts of war were often fabricated and that this precedent informed war photojournalism from its beginnings, from the Crimean war right up until Vietnam 'Only starting with the Vietnam war is it virtually certain that none of the best known photographs were set-ups' (11). She is convinced that the staging of war dramas is now 'on its way to becoming a lost art' (12). In the wake of the recent Jessica Lynch affair, to say that 'war drama' is a dying art is hard to believe when the line between photojournalism and television reporting has become so blurred. Jessica Lynch, a US marine, was 'rescued' from Saddam Hospital in Nasiriyah, southern Iraq, by soldiers carrying guns and storming the hospital although witnesses say there were no signs of resistance or guns inside. The action played not to immediate circumstance but the roll of the film camera. This was after all, the first US prisoner of war to be rescued from the enemy camp since the Second World War, and their first woman soldier ever - moreover, it came at a time when President Bush' s ratings at home were flagging. It is, perhaps more literally, the 'artistry' of the faking that has been lost, in this case with America's crude desire to record the war and create the action movie in one fell swoop. More likely it is the impossibility, the loss, of pulling such fakery off undiscovered in an era when all images are questionable and everyone's a critic. It is this construction of war which echoes films like Wag the Dog and the 'simulacrum' discussed by European theorists which Sontag is so clearly against. (Nonetheless, at the time of writing this Jessica Lynch has announced a book deal worth one million dollars - the book is to be ghost-written of course!)

In an era when wars - in film and in reality - are now two-a-penny, another key point in Regarding the Pain of Others is to argue that people don't become anaesthetised by the quantity of violent images, but by passivity. To return again to the image of the execution of the Vietcong man, even after 30 years of repeated viewing, for Sontag the impact does not abate. Whereas for others (and it has to be said this is a postmodern reading) it is no longer an image of the degradation of man, pain, horror or even moral outrage. Now, when the image appears on our screens, newspapers, classrooms etcetera, it is as part of the discussion of the 'authentic' - and the postmodern destruction of 'truth' as nothing more than an arbitrary category. Here, the image is conflated, and ultimately erased of moral meaning, with issues of context and media representation. For Sontag, it seems, this postmodern denial of the notion of truth beyond a relative term in 'constructing' the world is a bogus position. For her, photographs do have meaning. 'To speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breathtaking provincialism. It universalises the viewing habits of a small educated population living in the rich part of the world, where news has been converted into entertainment' (13). This is to the detriment of the many for whom there is real pain.

Some time in the late 20th century, somewhere between the art exhibitions which endorsed the view of the war image as ‘ beautiful’, to be paraded, and owned, by the major galleries in Paris, London, New York etc., and the Hollywood war films which both embellished and Americanised this aesthetic (14) on its journey to the provinces the global brandscape of war has emerged. Yet from our position here in the provinces of war - and which western metropolis isn’t provincial to it? - the images that make up this ‘branded’ aesthetic of war make the concept of war/killing commonplace, but perhaps not the images of pain of which she particularly speaks. Sontag says, ‘If it bleeds, it leads’ (15). By this she means the sensation of dramatic war images are often used to increase the sales of newspapers, tabloids in particular. Today, in Britain, in a more engaged press, this doesn’t hold true. These newspapers are subject to various ‘restrictions’ on what and how death and pain can be shown - subject to suppression and editing by governments, the press’s own ‘codes’ of conduct and, albeit more malleable, the Geneva Convention. Increasingly, with the development of digital media the boundaries between East and West coverage become blurred. The Qatari television station Al Jazeera understands ‘pain’ to be legitimate viewing, for it does not seem to be affected by the same ‘sensibilities’ or censorship as those countries with a war to justify. Al Jazeera’s counterparts in these countries - certainly Britain and America - often reduce pain to an editorial rather than pictorial display. Early on in the coverage of the war in Iraq, American Time magazine (16), commentated on a ‘PG-rated’ war in terms of images - a movie metaphor which resonates with the Jessica Lynch affair. It made a call for more ‘real’ images of devastation and death to wake us up from the stupor that lead the West to war. A stasis, not induced by repeated exposure to pain and violence, but its aestheticisation, an induced moral anaemia for mainstream consumption of images and soundbites.

The main ballast of Sontag’s essay is historical and provides a rigorous position for her analysis. On the whole, she addresses a very specific notion or genre of photography - reportage/documentary. How then, for a book launched post-Iraq, does this fit with contemporary war aesthetics? One change since On Photography is how photography is now so firmly established as an ‘art form’ that the turnaround of disaster imagery into art display is almost instantaneous, whether it’s the 9/11 New York exhibition that Sontag looks at or a recent exhibition at Proud Central, London: Iraq – Uncensored. This ‘art-value’ firmly establishes war photography back in the realms of ‘use-value’, as a thoroughly commercial prospect. These ‘shifts’ and their fallout are not fully addressed in Sontag’s essay. Iraq – Uncensored offers the images for sale and a signature is optional on many - the pockmarked imagery of Iraq ready to hang on the cool emulsioned walls of apartments and institutions from New York to London. Suffice to say, neither of these outlets show many images of ‘extreme pain’. At the Proud galleries, any images that were sold - and they were few - were to ‘institutions’ including an army barracks and an army museum.

The images which do sell, newspapers and in art galleries, are the ones that Sontag might call ‘poster-ready’: heroic soldiers in the midst of battle or soldiers relaxing in the swimming pool of one of Saddam’ s palaces. Yet there is also another war aesthetic which is on view. Images of images as much of place as of people - a bullet-pockmarked mural where a photographer may have once shown a landscape strewn with corpses. ‘Poster-ready’ images of posters - Saddam’s image unscathed on the wall of an otherwise bomb-blasted government building. This isn’t a new aesthetic by any means; its roots are deep and widespread in the history of documentary photography. We see its antecedent in Tate Modern’s summer 2003 exhibition

Cruel and Tender, which showed 'realist' photographs of the 20th-century landscape, both urban and rural, inscribed with the scars of cultural and industrial change. The decline was manifest in the subject material; peeling logos, discarded packaging, austere signage, etc. It is a style compounded by the technique of photographing 'straight-on'. Paradoxically it also comes at the end of a long dominant visual aesthetic of 'overlaying' imagery inspired by the 'deconstructing' notion of postmodern theory (17) and, since the mid 1980s, made possible by the copying and layering technology of computers. They may be opposing techniques, yet both these 'art forms' have created images out of other images and seem to have come together with much pathos in many of the photographs portraying the Iraq conflict.

Perhaps this was inevitable though, for in the absence of the man himself, the landscape of Iraq was awash with symbols of Saddam's reign and to capture any of Saddam's icons on film, captured was a potent press image in itself. Some images were like versions of advertising's 'big idea', the visual equivalent of the verbal soundbite. Just one of many was the fall of Saddam Hussein International Airport and its subsequent change of name to Baghdad International; in this image two soldiers are directed, as is the viewer, by the signage above showing the way to 'arrivals'. Another image shows a cropped-in section of a mural of Saddam Hussein, in the streets of Baghdad, already corroded with age, and then photographed to show the pockmarks of the bullets - and by default the progression - of US marines in their final advance on the city. Yet there is more to this than image than its obvious authorial/moral intent - on the walls we see a reminder that this last incursion is only one in a long train of embattlements - hieroglyphics - layered on top of those already inscribed by the elements and Iraqis themselves.

This particular contemporary war aesthetic, which is reflected in the exhibition Iraq - Uncensored and else where in British newspapers, is made up with the shards of both the historical representations of past wars and the more recent developments in reportage and broader media representations. A move can be seen from direct representation or experience to the traces of the 'everyday' ...if war can ever be 'everyday'. It's an aesthetic which Sontag's book can't account for as it so often precludes pain. But even when it doesn't, it's something she doesn't (encourage us to) look for. For instance, if we look at her discussion of the conflict in Palestine, it is often depicted in rather black and white hues, lacking the depth, the saturation colour brings. An example of this is her description of the Israeli bombing of the Jenin refugee camp: 'Images of dead civilians and smashed houses may serve to quicken hatred of the foe…Incendiary as that footage was to many who watch Al Jazeera throughout the world, it did not tell them anything about the Israeli army they were not already primed to believe' (18). Sontag is right to highlight how this is used as propaganda by Al Jazeera and others but wrong in her description of the picture(s) and their 'primed' effect. The photographs are not simply 'propaganda' recording the number of bodies, injuries to adults or children real or imagined. The wretchedness of the images, the saturated pathos they contain is in seeing a crumbling, pitted landscape, being re-bombed, re-scarred - destruction on destruction. In film violence it is not the smashed face we turn away from but the boot, the fist, the club as it again pounds the already broken, bloodied, face. It is the futility of the action that makes us flinch… the abuse of an obvious position of power. But for Sontag it is a dominantly ideological position which creates the meaning and moral response to war photography.

As images of traces, something happens in these photographs that can not be understood in a simple moral framework. Especially when they are commissioned pieces of work for later re-sale (19). This capturing of traces allows for a war at one more remove. It doesn't present us with a simulacra of the war at all - like a movie might do. Even more removed from the pain and horror of war, they actually present us with a more complex series of images which need time to penetrate the depth of their meaning. Paradoxically because of the lack of thorough - or sometimes any - contextual information any one interested is forced to scan the image in depth for themselves. Consider for a minute an image from when the war was already ' declared' over; Iraqi men eating at the table of an outside café in Baghdad, in the background patrolling American soldiers are seen passing and on the café-table stand a collection of fizzy drink cans. Look a little longer and one drink can, which at first glance looks like it bears the Seven Up logo, on really close inspection reads Cheer Up.

An image like this can't be 'consumed' at speed; and it may not, either, be able to dissolve from memory at speed. Whereas the conflation of 40 years of war imagery through film and television reduces everything to the 'spectacle' or iconic images (many of the examples used by Sontag fall into this latter category), here we have the opposite of the the pre-packaged, epic represenation of the abhorrent - a desire to peel back the layers of meaning, restore the uncertainties that make readers self-conscious about their response. So many of these images we have talked about are still 'PG-rated', in filmic terms, yet they are the reverse of the flattening/homogenising/big idea of branding. It's like taking time to read the ingredients on the side of a packet and not just be seduced by the logo alone. Certainly in the image above, there is no central message. Sontag suggests that photographs become engraved on our memory for instant recall - yet there is nothing in this image which is instantly memorable.

The layering of images, and of narratives, the fragmentation, and the 'forgettableness' of which we speak is not to reinforce the postmodern, 'European' position - for we are in agreement with Sontag that postmodernism and its dislocation of truth and the value of experience has taken away from our engagement with the image. Yet, much of the thinking, termed 'postmodern', is still very useful in any understanding of the photographic image. The bullet-ridden Saddam mural already, iconicly, rises again on the cover of the worldwide bestseller The Baghdad Blogger(20). This time, the bullet marks spray across the page, yet the traces of layers of embattlements from elements and Iraqis is already lost - physically and metaphorically - to the crude reproduction. For us the trace is now the same as the modernist idea of 'experience': images not only have 'meaning' but, in an over-saturated visual world, it is sometimes the traces which give meaning. Images cannot compete with the SFX of movies, but traces are real and not simulations.

August 2003

footnotes

1 There were, of course, others too: in his preface to Philip Griffiths' Vietnam Inc. (2001), Noam Chomsky writes that this is the book that politicised him against the war. It is a collection of photos by one photographer.

2 Roland Barthes, Mythologies (1957 tr.1970)

3 This work was in the broader tradition of Structuralism, in the main written by French academics which, in its simplest form, looked for rules or ‘ structures’ in culture which could be identified and observed - from culture to culture.

4 Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (2003), p53-4

5 Regarding the Pain of Others, p93

6 This shift in thinking included Roland Barthes in his Camera Lucida: reflections on photography (1982). In this text he suggested that the relative innocence which prompted his earlier structuralist essays had passed.

7 This work is more particularly part of post-structuralist thinking. While following on from structuralism, it becomes more complicated (Sontag and others would argue it was -and still is an exercise in obfuscation), more ideologically active and influenced by psychoanalytic theory. Two of its main protagonists were Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida; the former deconstructed reality, the latter literature, and both of whom are in the cross-hairs of Sontag’ s Regarding the Pain of Others.

8 For Jean Baudrillard this is the simulacrum.

9 Regarding the Pain of Others, p3

10 Anne Higonnet, Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood (1998)

11 Regarding the Pain of Others, p51

12 Regarding the Pain of Others, p52

13 Regarding the Pain of Others, p98

14 See Philip Griffiths, Vietnam Inc. (2001)

15 Regarding the Pain of Others, p16

16 Joe Klein, Time magazine, 7 April 2003

17 The writings of Jaques Derrida, including Of Grammatology (1967), in particular.

18 Regarding the Pain of Others, p9

19 The British newspaper The Guardian offered Iraq photos for sale on its website even as they still appeared in the guise of reportage in the physical paper. One could ‘ click and own’ the photographs. www.guardian.co.uk/iraq

20 Salam Pax, The Baghdad Blogger (Guardian Books, 2003)

1. A photograph of a mural of Saddam Hussein from Iraq, used to ‘advertise’ the article ‘Defying Saddam: how I became the Baghdad Blogger’ by Salam Pax. From the cover of *The Guardian* G2, 9 September 2003

2 Pre-packaged analysis: President Bush declares victory in Iraq in a photo-shoot for the world’s press on 2 May 2003, against the set design of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln and a banner stating ‘Mission Accomplished’. Robert Byrd, Democratic senator for West Virginia called it ‘an advertising backdrop’. The event took place in the Pacific, just off San Diego, and the event was delayed as the carrier ship had to turn round so that the shoreline would not show up in film footage. Having flown in on a navy Viking Jet warplane in full combat gear, Bush spent six hours on board the ship and, here, is photographed in a suit - it is, it seems, business as usual. *Time* magazine, 26 May 2003

3. A ‘knowing’ twist to a traditional photographic representation of childhood in war: Sufian Abd al-Ghani. *The Guardian* G2 cover, 15 August 2003

4. It only leads if it doesn’t bleed: this photograph of a banner from a demonstration in Tehran records anti-American sentiment in Iran. Through the juxtaposition of the relative sizes of the small child compared to the big bomb,it also reflects the British liberal press’s own anti-war stance -with the child’s back to the camera, the photograph certainly prioritises this over any reportage of the child’s experience. In both cases, the photograph allows the newspaper to address the issue without the need to show bloody and upsetting evidence of any children killed. From ‘Feeding the Arab furies’ in *The Sunday Times*, 30 March 2003

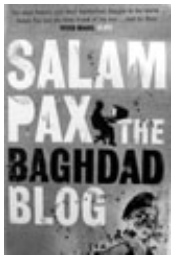
5. Images of images: a framed portrait of Saddam Hussein - against the odds still on the wall, clean and pristine - amid the otherwise smoke-stained remnants of the gutted Ministry of Defence in Baghdad. From ‘Afterburn’, *The Guardian* Weekend, 24 May 2003

6. The visual equivalent of the soundbite: the photograph titled ‘New Arrivals’ (above) records the US Army’s 3rd Infantry Division looking for resistance from Iraqi fighters as they make their way into the main terminal of Saddam International Airport. Later the airport was renamed Baghdad International. From ‘Destination: Baghdad’, *Time* magazine, 14 April 2003

7. Layers of iconography: this cropped-in section of a mural of Saddam Hussein (right), already corroded with age, from the streets of Baghdad was then photographed to show the pockmarks of the bullets - and by default the military progression - of US marines finally advancing on the city. A much needed piece of ‘proof’ for a Western readership who had expected Baghdad to have been taken -and so the war to have been over- much more quickly. From ‘The deadly choice facing Baghdad’, *The Observer*, 6 April 2003

8. A move from direct representation to the traces of the everyday: a scene of impromptu market stalls which have sprung up amongst cars and burning rubbish - rubbish which blows from the open sewers, between the stalls and cars. At the edge of the photo there is a defaced road sign indicating ‘cross here’. This is a sign which no longer has any meaning in the ruined city , but it serves to remind us of the routinely enforced actions and boundaries - both real and ideological - of the everyday life which is yet another casualty of the war. From ‘Baghdad: the true picture’, *The Independent*, 28 May 2003.

9. Uncertain narratives: at first this photograph appears to tell a typical tale of everyday life under US occupation - for the Iraqi men eating at the table of an outside café in Baghdad are surrounded on the street by American soldiers and on the table by cans of fizzy drink. One of these cans, at first glance looks like Seven Up. Looking closer it, in fact, reads Cheer Up. From ‘A latté – and a rifle to go’, *The Observer* Review, 8 June 2003



10. A logo for our time? The section of the Saddam Mural, used in *The Observer*, 6 April 2003, is re-used as the cover of *The Baghdad Blogger* by Salam Pax (Guardian Books, 2003). This time, any traces of the wall have been removed with digital retouching technology to create an image with one succinct message – and a few extra bullet holes have been added