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11 Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black-and-White Photograph

Ryan Jerving

I can't recall the first time that a student of mine turned in an essay that digitally had incorporated borrowed images directly within the text. I know I was duly impressed and I know I was interested first and foremost in finding out how the student did it and how I might do it, too. The images that in the early 1990s first began cropping up in student papers unexpectedly and furtively, fugitives from a signifying chain gang, spread like kudzu as the decade wore on, with all the biological assertiveness of a transplanted weed species. This was, to paraphrase W. J. T. Mitchell, a millennial phenomenon that had "legs" ("Surplus" 7). The potential rhetorical power of the digitally reproduced photograph—and it was and is still almost always a photograph: not a chart or a graph or a comic-strip panel or a work of original art—should be looked at as a concrete, perfectly mundane—and therefore perfectly instructive—manifestation of the "pictorial turn" that for Mitchell defines our current scene of cultural representation.[1]

To return to that scene now is to discover an instantiation of that classic crime story trifecta of motive, means, and opportunity. Motive was provided by those larger cultural and political "regimes of spectacle and surveillance" that Mitchell finds circumscribing our present-day intellectual life (*Picture Theory* 106), regimes lived at the subject level through what Susan Sontag once termed the "ethics of seeing," in which visual means come increasingly to supplement or to supplant textual or other means of expression and understanding (*On Photography* 3). The development and widespread campus dissemination of scanners, color printers, cross-integrated office software, and ever-more sophisticated browsing capabilities for an Internet increas-

ingly stuffed with JPEGs, TIFFs, and GIFs meant that by the mid-1990s students had the means to trawl an ocean of digital images and to drag and drop the day's catch into their writing with no appreciable degradation of source quality. To the extent that we writing teachers have become comfortable ourselves with addressing visual rhetoric in the classroom—still very much a work in progress, I'll be the first to admit—our assignments have come to represent a welcome, organic opportunity through which students can demonstrate their image-using savvy, especially as our demands have innovated beyond the one-damn-essay-after-another model and into drag-and-drop-friendly forms such as PowerPoint presentations, course websites or blogs, poster sessions, and student writing conferences.

And yet, from the evidence to be gathered at this scene of digital re-presentation, it's clear that we haven't always been struck by the smoothest of criminals. Indeed, although students clearly regard the visual as a valued accomplice, images as actually put to use receive what can be quite shoddy treatment, reduced often to the same level of inscrutability as the fourth-generation photocopies I once stapled to the back of my own undergraduate essays: coarsely pixillated, monochromatically rendered, scotch-taped miniatures with all the impact of an IMAX film viewed over your cell phone. Decorative rather than integrated elements, photographs are sometimes dumped, uncaptioned and uncredited, somewhere in the middle of the page or partially cut off across the bottom, sometimes sent as afterthought attachments, sometimes printed out with the Corbis (or other) watermark still stretching diagonally across the borrowed image like a chalk outline at a murder scene. All told, the grading room floor is littered with the lifeless frames of photographs coldly dispatched like the disposable rhetorical henchmen they all too often are: used, but not acknowledged; attached, but not analyzed; referenced, but not critiqued; noted, but not contextualized—in short, their significance assumed as a transparent gift to the text and not as something itself constructed, contestable, or worth arguing about. This reductive, iconic approach bespeaks an ultimately iconoclastic disregard for the actual concrete, material manifestation of the image as anything other than a placeholder at which to jerk one's thumb. See this? This IS a pipe. Next!

Of all the work that has crossed my desk exemplifying this disregard for the material image, one instance stands out in particular. For a digital slide show on the development of the U.S. Civil Rights Move-

ment, a group of students had pulled together many of the usual pictorial suspects. But within these dependably iconic images was embedded a more jarring one: Margaret Bourke-White's classic portrait of Mohandas Gandhi and his spinning wheel (charkha) taken in 1946 as part of a series on Indian leaders for Life (this is the Henry Luce magazine that debuted in 1936—with a Bourke-White photograph on the cover—and that, along with rival publication Look, was one of the first and foremost periodicals to exploit fully the aesthetic and commercial possibilities of feature photojournalism) (Bourke-White, "Gandhi").[2] If you're picturing Gandhi right now, and you're not seeing Ben Kingsley, then you've probably got this particular photograph in mind: Gandhi, unclothed from the waist up, seated cross-legged in the right upper-third of the image, looking down at his reading as though absorbed in his thoughts to the exclusion of even noticing the camera's presence (the photograph was taken on his weekly day of silence). The human figure is set against a woven rug and a silhouetted, flower-like spinning wheel that occupy the left and lower two-thirds of the frame, objects that metonymically place the anti-colonialist intellectual and activist within his politicized cultural context—the spinning wheel, which made possible and visible the boycott of imported British cloth, was, Bourke-White wrote, "the great symbol of India's fight for independence [. .] positive, productive, nonviolent, and [something that] gave to each spinner a sense of personal participation in the struggle" (Halfway, 38–39).

The students' use of this image was jarring because they had (and without seeming to notice) elected to use, not Bourke-White's original photograph, but rather the image as lifted by computer manufacturer Apple for an ad campaign featuring Gandhi, Pablo Picasso, Martha Graham, and other twentieth-century artists and intellectuals all encouraging us to "Think Different" (Figure 1). The ad cropped Bourke-White's image to exclude most of the background and modified it so that the Apple logo and campaign slogan were pasted in the corner like a four-color wafer, in stark contrast to the studied asceticism of the original (Apple Computer, Inc. "Think Different"). I think I half-jokingly mumbled something at the time about the basic indignity of it all, the mahatma reduced to shilling for a corporation whose high-tech globalism couldn't exactly be characterized as "Gandhian" (Figure 2). And I kicked myself later for the teaching moment I'd missed. This re-imaged image represented a rare opportunity in its concrete
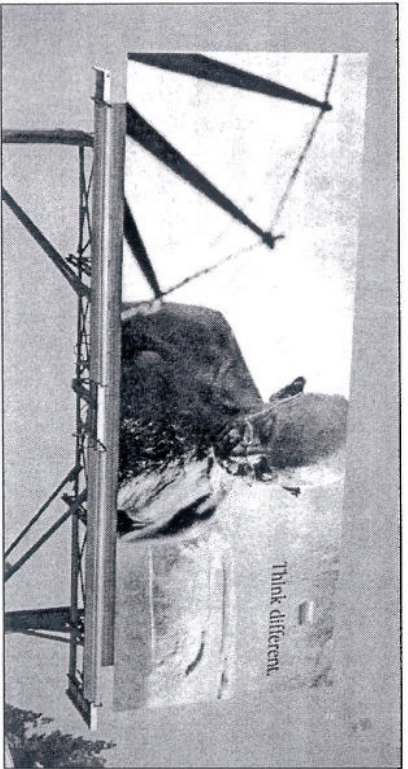
Figure 1. Margaret Bourke-White's portrait of Mohandas K. Gandhi, as put to use by Apple. The billboard image is organized horizontally while print ad versions of the same image are organized vertically; but both crop the original to center focus on Gandhi as an individual and not on his relation to his social context. (Used by permission of Apple Computer, Inc. "Think Different.")

crystallization of crucial theoretical questions of representation: of the commodification of dissent, of speech and subalterneity, of the technologization of the West and the traditions of the rest, of the othering of the other and the wording of the world. Apple's colonization of the image (and, indeed, Bourke-White's before them) could provide the raw material for a fascinating case study of the text/image question, the juncture at which, as Mitchell argues, "political, institutional, and social antagonisms play themselves out" and the join at which "history might slip through the cracks" (*Picture* 9; 104).[3] But to have brought my students to these kinds of questions would have meant overcoming a certain ingrained (willed) blindness to the material specificity of the image in practice as opposed simply to its iconic appearance as a name-checked reference. They'd have to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge of object and representation. They'd have to learn to see the apple.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT AN APPLE

The handout I've included as the appendix to this essay is meant as something like my act of contrition for such missed teaching opportunities. My thesis is that these "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black-
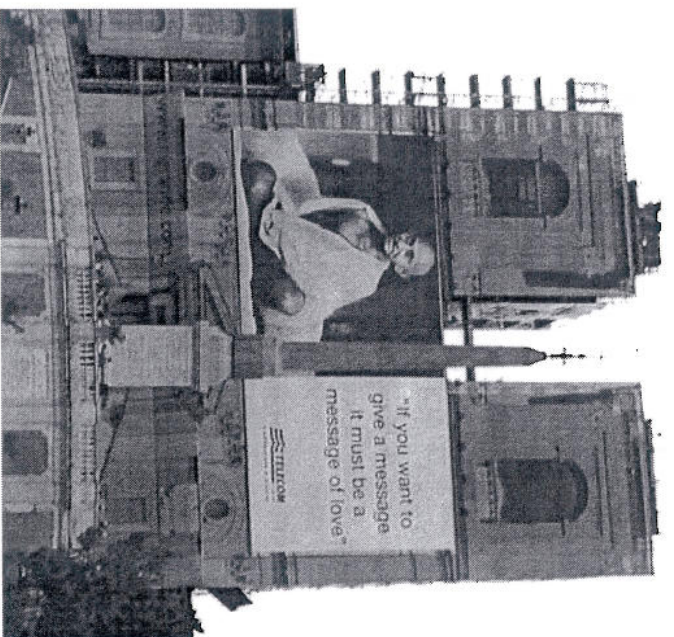
Figure 2. Apple is not alone in using the image of Gandhi—and again, notice, cropped to focus on the inspirational individual to the exclusion of any metonymic links to his political and social milieu—in efforts designed to humanize a multinational tech corporation. (Courtesy of Anne R. Richards.) See also Young and Rubican, Milan's truly astounding television ad for Telcom Italia, directed by Spike Lee, featuring the mahatma broadcasting his 1947 "One World" speech via webcam to a giant LED screen in Times Square, to cell phones in use near the Coliseum in Rome, and to a nodding crowd gathered in Red Square.

and-White Photograph" can be used in the classroom to help unseat the iconic and to break apart that singleness of vision—our students' and our own—that encourages us to treat visual culture as a transparent or "merely decorative" window onto referentiality and not as something more interesting: acts of representation that are themselves potential objects of critique. The handout provides concrete tools and a shared vocabulary for doing so in the immediate context of news photography. But on a more fundamental level, it presents visual representation itself—the concrete means of production, appropriation, and abuse of images—as a problem.

This problem has been posed by a number of undergraduate writing texts that, in dealing with photography, photojournalism, and other forms of visual rhetoric, have begun to address the need to equip students in concrete ways for participating in our visual culture as critical consumers, producers, and writers. A literal supplement to *The Bedford Guide for College Writers*, Marcia F. Muth and Karla Saari Kitalong's *Getting the Picture: A Brief Guide to Understanding and Creating Visual Texts* (2004), is a thin but useful consideration of design as a factor in student writing, and it provides solid strategies (and a heaping helping of checklists) for identifying purpose and audience, analyzing visual characteristics (particularly narrative), and interpreting the significance of images. Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe's *Picturing Texts* builds on Faigley's own *Brief Penguin Handbook* (2003) to provide a vocabulary for analyzing visual texts; it structures the book around photographic analysis, with special stress on composition (element balance and patterning, with special stress on composition (element balance and patterning, interrelations of emphasis, unity, or contrast) and context (purpose, argument, institutions). Less adventurous than *Picturing Texts* in what it's willing to consider visual culture (restricting itself largely to the image), Donald and Christine McQuades' *Seeing and Writing* remains intriguing in the parallels it draws between verbal and visual rhetorical strategies. Their appendix devoted to "Reading Visual and Verbal Texts" (661–77) is a useful complement to the "Thirteen Ways" approach I present here.

This problematic of visual representation has a long and distinguished pedigree within photography's own history. Since its invention in 1839 (the technology was developed more or less simultaneously by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre in France and William Henry Fox Talbot in England), the photograph's uniquely indexical relation to the world has been a vexed question for both photographers and their critics. As photography historian Beaumont Newhall writes, "The camera records what is focused upon the ground glass. If we had been there, we would have seen it so. We could have touched the pebbles, noted the wrinkles, no more, no less. However, we have been shown again and again that this is pure illusion. Subjects can be misrepresented, distorted, faked," a fact that we occasionally "even delight in" (94). Indeed, Newhall's *History of Photography from 1839 to the Present* (first published for a Museum of Modern Art exhibit in 1937 and revised and enlarged several times between then and 1982) can be

read as a veritable catalogue of observations on this ebb and flow between the dream of "eliminating the hand of man in the reproduction of pictures of all kinds" (14) and the recognition and even embrace of photography's inevitable shaping of the object of its representation.

On the one hand, Talbot recounted having produced in 1835 "the first instance on record, of a house having painted its own portrait" (qtd. in Newhall 20); he also titled his 1844–1846 collection of calotype photographs *The Pencil of Nature*. In contrast, his contemporaries David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson made a virtue of the distinct reminders of human intervention expressed in the calotype process, noting in 1848 that with "[t]he rough surface, and unequal texture throughout of the paper [. . .] [t]hey look like the imperfect work of a man—and not the much diminished perfect work of God" (qtd. in Newhall 48). Talbot's faith in the photograph as an unaided "pencil of nature" has continued to resound since.[4] Meanwhile, a counterbalance has been struck throughout photography's history by a self-conscious sense of the constructedness of the photograph's reality and the continuing presence of the human hand in shaping its image.[5]

Within this dynamic, photojournalism has largely stuck to the "pencil of nature" story, rather than the "human hand" admission, in articulating its material engagement with what Roland Barthes called "the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real" (4). News photography has from its beginnings lived at the busy intersection of multiple authorial, editorial, textual, and visual decisions, struggles, agreements, and antagonisms. Though scattered earlier examples of the genre might be pointed out, news photography depended for its effective genesis and subsequent development on the convergence of a number of technological and institutional happenings: the development of a halftone printing process that made it possible to produce, mechanically, facsimile reproductions of photographs alongside text; the economy of scale and mass dissemination made possible by the penny press and a rail (and later road) network increasingly national in scope and depth; and the development and later proliferation of portable hand cameras and celluloid roll film (see Newhall 130–33; 217–33; 248–67). Current photojournalism continues to respond to the economic and institutional forces of today's news market, in particular to competition with televisual media, the demands and possibilities of digital formats and distribution, and the concentration of increasingly for-hire, non-royalty work in news photo agencies such as Magnum and Sygma or

wire services such as Reuters and the Associated Press (Roskis 43–45). Such forces have a significant visible effect on the shape that news photographs take (see, for example, John Taylor's cogent reading of war and disaster photography in *Body Horror*). Yet news photography most often represents itself as utterly transparent: simply delivering up the day's happenings, too quickly produced and put to work to warrant or to reward sustained analysis.

"Thirteen Ways" sands against this grain, asking students to read news photography for effects of selection and emphasis that arise through cropping, blocking, and aestheticization; for characteristic tropes of setting, costume, and objects in the mise-en-scène; for the formal/ideological conjunctions of camera distance, angle, and lighting; for issues of representation raised by the photographer/photographed relation, genre and tradition, and the re-presentation within the frame of others' acts of visual-textual representation; and for the shaping effect of the institutions of dissemination and reading through which news photographs are mediated. To begin with news photography out of all possible genres—as I do in my first-year writing course designed around the theme of visual culture and the usable past—is to ask students to look at something very familiar and re-imagine it as something quite strange. Working through the constructedness of this quotidian, casual form, we learn—at least this is the idea—to see and speak the visual rhetoric of other dialogic cultural forms as well.

This baker's dozen of approaches is meant to signify not as holy writ but rather as a set of tools for prying open further discussion, a list of heuristically useful but ultimately insufficient points of reference for other kinds of visual culture. Indeed, thirteen is my magic number precisely due to the aura of arbitrariness that (I hope) attaches to it. The joke of my handout's title plays on this contingency, lifted as it is somewhat unceremoniously from Wallace Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (a classic case study in the modernist practice of making representation and perception themselves the object of perception and representation). The handout's introduction explicitly invites students (and instructors) to remake these approaches in and for their own images and other visual genres. Indeed, the handout as presented here has been adapted, with the input of many students, from its initial appearance in a social texts course in which it served to introduce 1930s American documentary photography. Further revision of it might, in this light, drop #12, "Representing Representa-

tion"—a holdover concept crucial to the characteristic irony of the 1930s (see James Guimond's "The Signs of Hard Times"), but not one that many students have taken to in the context of twenty-first-century news photography. Other possible, but untested, ways of looking could include the potential for knowing, ironic digital manipulation (a la *The Onion* or *The Daily Show*), the representation of cultural otherness (see Faigley, et al. 228–48), page design and layout, or the supporting, resisting, or complicating relations that a photograph can bear to the story (or stories) it accompanies.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A CLASSROOM

As a matter of classroom practice, I begin by bringing in a single, especially rich photograph with which to spend a couple of days—say, August Sander's snapshot of three young German farmers on their way to a dance on the eve of World War I, Gordon Parks's confrontational 1942 portrait of federal government charwoman Ella Watson (paid for by the federal government), or Ken Lambert's double-edged rendering of a George W. Bush presidential photo-op at Mount Rushmore in 2002. As a class, students offer their initial reactions concerning the composition, meaning, or cultural/historical impact of such a photograph. Then, again as a class, we dive into a point-by-point interrogation of the photograph in each of the handout's thirteen ways. That this initial step usually takes two full class periods sends a strong (and delightfully excruciating) signal about the level of surgical depth at which the analytical dissection of visual texts might operate.

Students next work in smaller groups to produce informal presentations that run one way of looking through each of the photographs they have scavenged from that week's newspapers. This initial group work sets the students up for the first half of the individual writing project by 1) enabling them as peers to distinguish iconic but uninteresting images—photographs selected due primarily to an interest in the subject matter—from images rich enough to stand up to extended analysis; and 2) providing a forum in which to test their sense of how material choices in the photograph might be linked to interpretive effects. (This stage also offers an opportunity to explore paragraph construction and relations of warrants, claims, and evidence.)

From each student, I ask for an individual written analysis of a single photograph in the form of thirteen independent paragraphs, each to be crafted as a small jewel of 100-150 words. I do so because of the

inevitable redundancy this approach generates across their document as a whole. This redundancy can then be exploited in a next, synthetic stage in which the student pulls together these scattered observations into a complex discussion of overall effects—whether writing about a candidate on the campaign trail, NASA scientists in a nondescript room celebrating the Mars Rover landing, the Superbowl halftime show, a California anti-avocado theft sign, a lone U.S. soldier on a deserted street, a child soldier carrying an assault rifle, or a Daoist fortune-teller plying his trade on the streets of Beijing (all actual student essay topics from a recent semester).

To take a more extended example, we might consider one of the defining images of its decade—a hooded, caped Iraqi prisoner on a small box, dummy wires attached to his fingers and genitals (see Hersh 42).[6] As students have suggested, insightfully, absent the explicit violence or sexualized humiliation of many of the other images of torture from Abu Ghraib, the dehumanization effected in this particular photograph is perhaps best realized when looked at through the prism of genre ("Ways" #11). Whatever other visual traditions the image calls up—Christian iconography of supplication, JPEG S/M, the vast twentieth-century photographic record of lynching, genocide, and torture—it is especially remarkable for adopting and confounding the conventions of the posed portrait. Like the portrait, it depicts a single figure, directly addressing the camera, aware of its presence. Yet it stands on its head the complicity and self-possession that a posed portrait is supposed to enact: the subject's agency is not only denied here, that denial is itself the subject of the image. As a class discussing this image, we were able to suggest that a student writing about this photograph could follow up on this particular moment of generic analysis through a move toward synthesizing evidence from other ways of looking to make his or her claim to genre as a key to the photograph's power. To begin, the student might point to the contribution that *blocking* (#6) and *cropping* (#1) make to this effect of the subverted portrait: the figure might have been centered as the primary focus of our interest, but here is framed and positioned to include the whole body rather than just the face or bust, thus visually surrounding the figure within the prison-wall background and calling attention to the humiliating detail of the small box. (Indeed, the image as it most often appears bolsters this effect through cropping out much of the contextualizing empty space and a partially visible American with a

camera [see Sontag "Regarding" 27]). In making this back-and-forth movement, the student can experience analysis and synthesis as modes of thought and writing that are complementary (one can help generate the other) if not entirely coherent (there's bound to be leftover, unassimilable parts).

The handout closes with "The Photograph's Setting." This category of analysis is given its privileged spot (and its own subsection) in order to emphasize it as a springboard to further thinking about context: that is, how images reflect, affect, and reconnect with the world of viewers and institutions from which they emerge. It is worth emphasizing here that contexts of production and dissemination are multiple and multipliable. With respect to the Abu Ghraib images, for example, Susan Sontag has argued (in "Regarding the Torture of Others") that the photographs' digital provenance is a key to their meaning, one reflecting a basic "shift in the use made of pictures" (27). These were not simply soldiers' souvenirs, a recognizable if disturbing version of the thumbs-up tourist photography described in Sontag's earlier *On Photography* as "indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun was had" (9).[7] These were, instead, "less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated, circulated" ("Regarding" 27)—a difference of potential access that, "unstoppable" ("Regarding" 42), would play a key role in their eventual public discovery. And the photographs took on very different meanings when they began appearing in newspaper stories exposing the abuses at Abu Ghraib or before the Congressional committee investigating them, than when they had functioned as email attachments or screen savers shared among coalition personnel. As the scene of representation and the camera's presence (#10) became the object of interest—the backstory of power relations between photographer and photographed, and within the chain of military, intelligence, and privately subcontracted command linking those on this side of the lens—the photographs could be read as much for evidence of the dehumanizing effect of the situation on American captors as on their Iraqi prisoners. There is no necessary outside to the photographic text looked at in this way, and students can be encouraged to consider how these photographs might also mean differently when viewed late at night on the dorm room PC, over a public terminal in the campus computer lab, or as part of a writing course focused on visual culture.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AHEAD

Finally, in addition to all the "Thirteen Ways" handout does in terms of introducing grammars of analysis, rhetorics of synthesis, or symbolics of context, it is most crucially intended as a generative model for approaching other types of visual culture, from the interior design of justice at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague to the ritual of destiny made manifest at a halftime show in Urbana, Illinois. In preparation for a project on the ways the visual self-presentation of urban spaces both reveals and conceals those spaces' history and the tensions currently underwriting them, for example, I've found it useful to have students as a class build their own "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a City Block" handout—which came to include things like aesthetic or functional coherence; the level and kind of activity and motion; function in relation to neighboring blocks or the rest of the city; the difference in function or appearance produced by time of day, week, or year; sanitation; the prominence and impact of text; and the assumption of relative anonymity/familiarity of those on the block. And, to close in the spirit with which I began, students could be challenged to turn this vision-splitting approach back on the work they themselves are producing: on their own work's choice of fonts and typefaces; punctuation and paragraph/sentence lengths; margins, indentations, headings, and bulleted lists; white space; incorporated graphics; and documentation understood not only as a guide to access or the production of intellectual credit, but as a visual act of interpellation designed to make a certain kind of disciplinary reader feel at home. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Your Own Writing," anyone?

APPENDIX: THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

Like other cultural artifacts, news photographs can be read for the choices made in taking, developing, and publishing them. Many of the concepts discussed below could be applied to art, film, candid, portrait, or commercial photography as well. But I focus here on news photography: a style that generally claims to record events exactly as they really happened. If nothing else, this handout is meant to suggest the degree to which news photography's "reality" is a carefully-con-

structed effect: an illusion of factuality shaped by narrative devices, rhetorical figures, and institutional expectations.

These ways of looking are not equally important to all photographs, and there are other possible perspectives I've left untouched that might be especially important to particular photos—for example, color, depth-of-focus, or digital manipulation.

Subject Matter

1. Cropping—how the photograph's reality is framed

   Photographers create exclusionary borders in deciding where to point their cameras. But the photograph can also be physically cropped later to edit out unwanted material. As with the other concepts on this handout, the single most important question you might ask of a particular photograph is how things might be different. How would it change the photograph to include what is excluded (imagine, for example, the same shot shifted five feet higher, or 90 degrees to the right), and what is gained by its exclusion?

2. Visual cues—how the photograph directs the eye within the frame

   Photographs direct the eye through a number of well-tested techniques. These include blocking (see below), depth-of-focus, color contrast, the rule of thirds (which assumes four privileged points at the intersecting lines of an imaginary tic-tac-toe board laid across the photo), and the tendency to read in a "Z" pattern: horizontally from top left to top right, diagonally from top right to bottom left, and horizontally again from bottom left to bottom right. Some photographs will make use of virtual arrows or frames within the photograph created by doorways, guns, gazes, the horizon, etc.

3. Aestheticization—the effect of art as opposed to the effect of fact

   I've suggested that news photography presents itself as a transparent window onto reality, simply recording and passing on the day's happenings to us. But, on occasion, news pho-

tographers aim for more artistic, aesthetic effects: blocking, cropping, or posing their subjects to create patterns, repetitions, frames, dramatic visual imbalances, color harmonies, etc. This aestheticization can exist in tension with the illusion of reality. Simply to freeze a moment—as all photographs do—is to aestheticize it, taking its subject out of its social and historical context. (Theorist Walter Benjamin once criticized photography's inability to say anything other than "What a beautiful world!" ["Author" 262.])

4. Characterization—the photographed subject's surrounding environment

Surroundings imply the social world of the photograph, suggesting a relation between the figures and their neighborhood, workplace, leisure activities, natural environment, etc. That relation might be friendly, conflict-ridden, indifferent—moods that can be emphasized through such things as blocking, relative size and distance, and color (warm, bright, filthy, high contrast, infinite shades of grey, etc.).

5. Costume

Even more directly, subjects are characterized by their neat suits, glamorous gowns, ragged overalls, ironically worn hats, etc. Costume (and its absence) provides a wealth of information about occupation, class, age, regional origins, religion, and political attitudes. Consider also how figures are characterized and typed by the objects (props) that surround them: work tools, furniture, food, animals, wallpaper, protest signs, etc.

6. Framing—how the photograph's subjects are positioned within the frame and in relation to one another

Each given figure or object in the shot might be centered (or not), solidly in the foreground, out of focus in the background, partly obscured, isolated or interacting with other figures, visually balanced against other elements of the photograph. As in theater, staging often works as a kind of metaphor: the figure at center stage (frame) is presumed to be central to the action and its cultural significance. This likewise can work for

photographically/culturally marginal, isolated, or obscured figures.

Camera Work

7. Camera Distance—where the camera is located on a horizontal axis in relation to the subject

Importance is often implied by the percentage of the total frame taken up by a given figure or object. A human figure is a small part of an extreme long shot, a full body fits in a long shot, knees-up in a medium long shot, waist-up in a medium shot, chest-up in a medium close-up, face-up in a close-up, a single feature in extreme close-up. Closer shots emphasize individuals; longer shots emphasize surroundings.

8. Camera angle—where the camera is located on a vertical axis in relation to the subject

A shot taken from the same height as the subject is a straight-on shot; a shot from below, a low-angle shot; a shot from above, a high-angle shot; a shot from straight above, a bird's-eye view. High-angle shots can suggest the subject's vulnerability; low-angle shots can suggest power (this is, of course, not always the case).

9. Lighting

Whether natural (sun) or artificial (flash), the lighting in news photography generally aims at realism, as though simply presenting the subject as we ourselves might find it. But lighting—particularly shadows—can aim also at expressionist or presentational effects, suggesting the subject's or scene's psychological state or social condition.

The Scene of Representation

10. The camera's presence—the camera as narrator

News photography generally takes a third-person stance: an outsider's eye viewing the scene objectively, unnoticed by the

subjects (who look at each other or somewhere off-camera). Occasionally, the camera might take a first-person stance: a character in the scene acknowledged by the subjects, whose attitude toward the camera—friendly, hostile, humorous, indifferent—then becomes an important part of what's represented.

11. Genre—the type of image, as recognized by the viewer

News photography will sometimes use traditional images or types of scenes, sometimes from the news photography tradition (e.g., mass demonstration, head-shot with microphone and podium, political handshake, dead child with a grieving parent, etc.) and sometimes from another visual arts tradition (e.g., painting, film). Genres include landscapes, still lifes, family portraits, madonna and child images, stereotypes, and others.

12. Representing representation

News photographs will sometimes turn the camera on other acts of representation: billboard advertisements, painted signs, other photographs, a subject's performance, etc. Often the point is ironic, a montage (juxtaposition) of two visions of the world: the one the photographer sees versus the world depicted in this "found art."

Photographs in Their Institutional Place

13. The photograph's setting—where and how the photograph is viewed

A photograph derives much of its meaning from its physical context. It may or may not appear with a caption, a byline credit, a headline, its own or other news stories (and other photographs), advertising, etc.—all contexts which can reinforce, qualify, or even contradict the meaning of the photograph alone. Consider the photograph's size and placement (what page or section, above or below the fold, etc.). And consider the effect of a viewer's interaction with the photo: over

breakfast, online at work, behind the vending machine glass, in a respected weekly newsmagazine, in a less-respected daily tabloid, within a "best of" archive of news photos, in a museum, in a textbook, etc.

NOTES

1. For undergraduate-appropriate overviews of this pictorial turn and of the visual event as our cultural dominant, see the introductions to Nicholas Mirzoeff's *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (1999), Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright's *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (2001), Donald McQuade and Cristine McQuade's *Seeing and Writing 2* (2003), and Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe's *Picturing Texts* (2004). For a recent overview of the field at large, see Cara A. Finnegan's "Visual Studies and Visual Rhetoric."

2. For Bourke-White's account of taking this picture, see her 1949 study of post-Partition India, *Halfway to Freedom* (81–90). For the image as it appears in various print ads from the Apple "Think Different" campaign, see Apple Computer, Inc., "'Think Different' Ad Campaign Photography." For the "false note" struck by Apple's use of the Bourke-White image, see Michael Richards's 1997 brief for the *History News Service* ("Thinking Differently" par. 1).

3. Such questions might even have included a self-reflexive look at those historical forces and social antagonisms that had brought these students and this image together within this uncritical pastiche in the first place: a look, for example, at the structuring tension between the global, instantaneous access to such images that is promised by networked technologies (I was teaching at the time at a university in Ankara, Turkey, but the students' images came almost entirely from U.S.-based websites) and the restrictive counterclaims staked by proprietary interests gobbling up ever more of the intellectual landscape. By this, I mean, most simply, that copyright and marketing pressures make it easier to find and use the ad than the original. For example, if you attempt to download the Bourke-White photograph as it appears on, say, *Gallery M* (an art market site, and the first site that comes up on a Google search of <Bourke-White AND Gandhi>), right-clicking on the image in Internet Explorer generates a pop-up error box and the message "All Rights Reserved"—to which you can only reply "OK." Meanwhile, Apple, who has a stake in seeing its image disseminated as widely as possible, makes the images from its "Think Different" campaign broadly available, on its website granting "full permission to reproduce or otherwise utilize entire photographs or part" for noncommercial purposes (though, not surprisingly, the publishable-quality uncompressed version of the image is made available

only in the proprietary Apple PICT format) (Apple Computer, Inc. "Think Different' Ad Campaign Photography").

4. For instance, in 1860s critic Alphonse de Lamartine's characterization of photography as a "plagiarism of nature" (qtd. in Newhall 69), in the New York *World*'s trumpeting of Matthew Brady's Civil War photographs (some, it turns out, staged) as "truthful as the records of heaven" (qtd. in Newhall 89), in Eadweard Muybridge's stop-motion studies of human and animal locomotion in the 1870s and 1880s, in manufacturer George Eastman's description of the amateur-ready Kodak camera of the 1890s as "a photographic notebook" (qtd. in Newhall 129), in the *British Journal of Photography*'s 1889 vision of a vast photographic archive of reality that would provide "a record as complete as it can be made [. . .] of the present state of the world" (qtd. in Newhall 235, ellipsis in source), in August Sander's similarly imagined project (begun in 1910, never completed) to exhaustively catalogue German types in a study to be called "Man in the 20th Century," in the Straight Photography movement of the first decades of the 20th Century, in Roy Stryker's hope that his photography unit with the New Deal's Farm Security Administration would provide a comprehensive document of American life for the 1930s present and the future, in Jean-Luc Godard's epigrammatic statement that "Photography is truth. And cinema is truth 24 times a second."

5. For instance, in the ready acceptance even by the 1850s of retouching portrait negatives, in the admission by the same Lamartine quoted above that photography represented a site "where the artist collaborates with the sun" (qtd. in Newhall 69), in the painterly Art-photography movement of the 1850s, in the impressionist Pictorial movement of the 1900s, in the cut-and-paste photo collages of Alexander Rodchenko, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and others in the 1910s and 1920s, in the almost cubist aestheticism of Edward Weston or Margaret Bourke-White in the 1920s and 1930s, in Walter Benjamin's argument from "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) that photography had abandoned the wholeness of reality in favor of a surgical carving up of "multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law" (234), in Pierre Bourdieu's 1960s account of the structural and systematic middle-browness asserted by (especially amateur) photography, and in the work of a whole host of twentieth-century photographers with aesthetic or political agendas as disparate as those of Alfred Stieglitz, Man Ray, Walker Evans, Ansel Adams, Cindy Sherman, or William Wegman, but all working to highlight the constructedness of their images.

6. Or see just about any news source published in or around May 2004. To get a sense of this photograph's iconicity, see Francoise Mouly's image for the cover of the 18 October 2004 "Politics" issue of the *New Yorker*, in which the hooded prisoner, recognizable even in silhouette, haunts the red-

and-white striped background against which it is figured ("A Shadow Over the Election").

7. I could probably better serve Sontag's argument in *On Photography* by citing her account, entirely apropos events at Abu Ghraib, of photography's role in sustaining regimes of power through performing "essentially an act of non-intervention" (11), voyeuristically "at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening. [. . .] to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing—including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune" (12).

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12 Collapsing Floors and Disappearing Walls: Teaching Visual and Cultural Intertexts in Electronic Games

Mark Mullen

DREADFUL WONDER

In December 2000, multimedia publisher Electronic Arts released *American McGee's Alice*, a dark and disturbing game for the PC conceived as a third installment in the adventures of Charles Dodgson's classic heroine. In the cinematic sequence that opens the game, the player learns that Alice's family dies in a fire shortly after the conclusion of her trip to Looking Glass Land; Alice survives but remains in a coma and eventually is hospitalized in the Rutledge Asylum. When the player meets Alice, she has begun to emerge from the coma; she is now, however, in her late teens/early twenties, a traumatized child trapped in a battered adult's body. Retreating from the world of the institution, Alice returns to Wonderland only to find it horribly disfigured. As is clear from Will Brooker's extensive catalog of adaptations of Lewis Carroll's work in *Alice's Adventures*, McGee's vision of a corrupted Wonderland may be extreme (arguably matched only by Jan Svankmajer's 1987 film version), but its representation of Carroll's work as incorporating dark thematic elements is nothing new. And for all its evident delight in destroying every dear childhood memory one may have of Wonderland, the game also faithfully represents the core dilemma in Carroll's original tales: is Wonderland a place of escape for Alice from the bizarre and alien logic of the adult world? Or is it

Writing the Visual

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Edited by
Carol David and Anne R. Richards

Contents