

LIFE AFTER INJURY
WITNESSING INJURED UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS
COMING HOME

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ANALYSIS

Introduction

Emergence of stories about war veterans

War photography has been able to show the *human cost* of armed conflict since the American Civil War. By the beginning of the new millennium, visual coverage of war had become extremely sanitized and was “reduced to a video game” that shielded viewers from the dead and the wounded. Several studies (Aday, 2005; Roth et al., 2008; Ritchin, 2013) on American newspapers’ and broadcast stations’ coverage of the active phase of the war in Iraq arrived at a conclusion that visual imagery depicting *human cost* of war, especially among American soldiers, was extremely infrequent in print and broadcast respectively.

Roth et al. (2008) in their content analysis of two U.S. major newspapers admit, “Governmental regulation—taking the form of the “embed rules” for journalists with the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan—constitutes one primary *external* constraint on the ability of the press to fulfill its duty to the US public” (p. 269). According to the authors of the study, photographers’ inability to show dead and wounded U.S. soldiers to the public back home through pictures in traditional media leads to the phenomenon that Elaine Scarry calls “disappearance of the body”.

Aday (2005) blames reporters and, more importantly, editors back in the US for such imagery deprived of gruesome scenes. David Shields, an award-winning author, in his book entitled “War Is Beautiful”, collects images from *The New York Times* front page to make an argument that they “capture the irreducible glamour of war” but fail to show the “objective truth”.

Such sanitized imagery deprives the readers and viewers back home of an adequate realization of what war was actually is. Therefore, it is difficult for people back home to grasp what American soldiers go through. Chris Kyle, the famous sniper who served four tours in Iraq, wrote in his autobiographical novel “American Sniper” (2012) that “For some reason, a lot of people back home — not all people—didn’t accept that we were at war. They didn’t accept that war means death, violent death most times. A lot of people, not just politicians, wanted to impose ridiculous fantasies on us, hold us to some standard of behavior that no human being could maintain”.

Portrait photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, commenting on his portrait project on Iraq war veterans, emphasizes the importance of such stories in the time of censorship. “I think we need to see this. We don’t see the dead coming back in coffins. We’re sheltered from the injured. We just don’t see it. It’s all been brilliantly hidden from view” (Applebome, 2007).

In the complete absence of visual imagery depicting human casualties and heavy physical trauma among American soldiers in the war zones (with some rare exceptions), a trend emerged towards producing stories about heavily injured war veterans that had returned home. As Fred Ritchin discusses this matter in his “Bending the Frame” (2013), he notes, “Domestically there is more freedom for a photographer to circulate and,

presumably, a sense that their fellow citizens may better grasp certain of the war's legacies through their impact on U.S. soldiers and their families" (p. 67). Such stories, according to Chouliaraki (2013), "not only recast the battlefield as a space of individual trauma but also re-position photojournalism as itself an intimate practice of witnessing personal pain" (p. 329-330).

The first such photographic projects were published in 2004 as veterans were coming back to the United States. Since then single pictures and projects about injured war veterans have won a number of visual journalism awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for feature photography, World Press Photo, Missouri School of Journalism's Pictures of the Year International (POYi), National Press Photographers Association's Best of Photojournalism (NPPA's BOP) and many others.

The purpose of this study is *to analyze how heavily injured war veterans are visually framed in some of the award-winning photography projects*. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), characterization of a certain issue in a news report "can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (p. 11), and it is instrumental to know how heavily injured war veterans are perceived by US society.

The study looks at award-winning projects, as they had already gone through a professional review. Such projects stay in a collective memory longer than others, and they are easily accessible by emerging photojournalists or members of the public through websites of the professional photography contests. According to Greenwood and Smith (2007), award-winning images "persist in the minds of readers and shape their views of the world".

Literature Review

Framing

Framing as a concept was developed as early as 1974 by Canadian-born sociologist Erving Goffman. Since then there has been a lot of significant scholarly research on framing, including Entman (1993), who wrote that “To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). Building on the experiments of Kahneman and Tversky (1984), he added, “frames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described, which logically means that frames simultaneously direct attention away from other aspects” (p. 54).

Greenwood and Smith (2007) point out that “all news organizations frame as part of their work” (p. 84). Although this study looks at award-winning images of war veterans not necessarily produced by photographers affiliated with a news organization as staff members, I think the aforementioned notion can be applied to freelancers as well, as they presently are a big part of media content production.

Greenwood and Smith define framing as “cognitive devices media and audiences use to organize and make sense of issues and events” (p. 84).

Visual Framing

Despite a growing number of analyses on framing in journalistic texts and broadcast pieces, the research on framing social issues by news or documentary photographs, or *visual framing*, has been relatively scarce. According to Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011), one of the main reasons for that is the “confusion as to how visual

frames are supposed to be identified” (p. 51). The researchers emphasized that analyzing visual frames remains a challenge despite proven fact that “audiences may be more likely to accept the visual frame without question” (p. 50). Vicki Goldberg, photography critic for *The New York Times*, in her widely cited book *The Power of Photography* writes, “The fact that what is represented on paper undeniably existed, if only for a moment, is the ultimate source of the medium’s extraordinary powers of persuasion” (1991, p. 19).

Messaris and Abraham (2001), a milestone study in visual framing, focuses on three distinctive properties of visual images, “their analogical quality, their indexicality, and their lack of an explicit propositional syntax” (p. 215). Researchers emphasize that viewers make sense of certain images based on similarities or analogies they bring to mind. They write, “Analogical quality of images ... can make images appear more natural, more closely linked to reality than words are, it can also inveigle viewers into overlooking the fact that all images are human-made, artificial constructions” (p. 217).

As Messaris and Abraham discuss *indexicality* of images, they argue that because a photograph is an automatic product that bypasses human agency to a certain degree, “the connection between a photograph and reality has a certain authenticity that human-made pictures can never have” (p. 217). As a consequence, using photographs for framing “could diminish the likelihood that viewers would question what they see” (p. 217).

Comparing visual and verbal languages, researchers emphasize, “visual communication does not have an explicit set of syntactic conventions” (p. 219). Propositions in visual images are “more reliant on the viewer’s ability to make intuitive sense of implicit meanings on the basis of contextual or other cues” (p. 219). As a result, a set of claims presented by a photograph may be harder to recognize than the one found

in a verbal construct.

Geftter (2006) emphasizes, “It is one thing to read about the circumstances of our time; it's another to see them. Even if the subject is unfamiliar, the visual language is immediately recognizable” (p. 26). In subsequent passages he restates a popular notion, “A picture may not be worth a thousand words, but a picture and a good caption are worth a thousand and 10”.

Perlmutter (1998) in his book *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy* discusses the theory of visual determinism, an idea that photographs can shape public opinion. Beverly Denny, a Missouri School of Journalism alumni, in her master's project criticizes this notion for being overly simplistic and argues that images do not shape public opinion, “they interact with individuals' existing values and understandings of the world and influence judgment. Pictures stoke an emotional chord not necessarily strong enough to change our perspectives, but can definitely reinforce existing attitudes” (p. 47). For Khan (2010), another Missouri School of Journalism alumni, “visual framing starts with selection of news and follows steps such as which images to shoot, how to shoot, composition, what to emphasize on, which ones to select for printing and where to place them on the page and in which section” (p. 28).

Coleman (2010) makes a point that viewers' lack of awareness of the power of images “makes the framing of images even more important to understand” (p. 243). Crucially important, in her point of view, is that journalism graduates in the digital era are expected to not only write texts, but make still images and record video. “Choosing something based on journalistic values or because the image grabs attention, or even simply because the page needs a photo, can have consequences beyond what the

journalist envisioned” (p. 243).

Semiotics

A number of studies dealing with the analysis of visual imagery derive their methodology from semiotics, or *semiology*, postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916. As put by Barthes and cited in Berger (1981), “Semiology ... aims to take any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds ... which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification”. In fact, Roland Barthes was the one to adapt semiotics to analyzing photographs, and it is his studies that much of today’s research relies on.

One such study is van Leeuwen (2001), who sees “the layering of meaning” as the key idea of Barthian visual semiotics. *Denotation*, the first layer, should answer the questions ‘what, or who, is being depicted here?’. *Connotation*, the second layer, should answer “what ideas and values are expressed through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented?”.

Denotative signifiers, or ‘object signs’, as put by Barthes, are easy to spot, as “perceiving photographs is closely analogous to perceiving reality” (van Leeuwen, p. 94). Even a lack of knowledge about a specific object is not a problem. However, denotation is not entirely up to the beholder. Despite the fact that in some forms of modern art a multiplicity of readings is allowed or even encouraged, according to van Leeuwen (2001), “There are other contexts where the producers of the text have an interest in trying to get a particular message across to a particular audience, and in such cases there will be signs to point us towards the preferred level of generality” (p. 95).

People in visual images can either be represented as an individual or as a social type. It depends on if and how strongly visual stereotypes are present in a certain photograph. These stereotypes “may either be cultural attributes (objects, dress, hairstyle, etc.) or physiognomic attributes. The more these stereotypes overshadow a person’s individual features ... the more that person ... is represented as a type” (p. 95). Heavily injured war veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are presented in award-winning photo stories as individuals through “surrounding text”, but with strong conformity to ‘war veteran’ as a type. These photographs are rich with objects (disabled carriage, crutches). Moreover, physiognomic features (burnt skin, scars) unambiguously tell us who we are looking at. Van Leeuwen also notes, “Depicting people in groups rather than as individuals can have a similar effect”, meaning that if there are several people in the frame looking the same or performing the same action, they will be perceived as belonging to a certain type rather than several individuals.

Connotation is the “layer of the broader concepts, ideas and values which the represented people, places and things ‘stand for’, ‘are signs of’ (van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 96). It can be communicated either through cultural associations that we experience while looking at the images, or through certain ‘connotators’, or aspects of presentation, which may include, but are not limited to, photographic techniques. According to Coleman (2010), of the three basic camera angles, “eye level or straight on is considered neutral, shot from above is negative, and from below is positive. Camera distance includes close-up or the head and shoulders (positive), a long shot with the full figure (negative), and a medium shot from the waist up (neutral)” (p. 248). Such ‘connotators’ (framing, distance, lighting, focus etc.) were described by Barthes (1977), who called them ‘photogenia’.

Messaris and Abraham (2001) go even further emphasize that the simple and inevitable process of selection has far-reaching implications for the visual framing process. They write, “The practice in question is the simple act of selection – choosing one view instead of another when making the photograph, cropping or editing the resulting image one way instead of another, or simply just choosing to show viewers one image out of the many others that may have been produced at the same place and time.” (p. 218).

Four-level visual framing analysis

One of the most comprehensive visual framing analyses is the four-level visual framing analysis suggested by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). It is based on semiotics, discussed above, and derives a little bit from iconography, discussed by van Leeuwen (2001). According to their scholarly research, “Visuals, like text, can operate as framing devices insofar as they make use of various rhetorical tools—metaphors, depictions, symbols—that purport to capture the essence of an issue or event graphically” (p. 51). Visuals help the viewers to make sense of social issues by facilitating “the grounds upon which some interpretations can be favored and others impeded” (p. 51). Rodriguez and Dimitrova suggest analyzing images as denotative systems; stylistic-semiotic systems; connotative systems; ideological representations.

At the first level “frames are identified by enumerating the objects and discrete elements actually shown in the visual ... Visual frames at this level are basically described” (p. 53). This level reflects the aforementioned Barthes’ (1977) notion of denotative signifiers and relies on what Messaris and Abraham (2001) call *analogic* and indexical qualities of images. Frames can also be identified at this level by reading “titles,

captions, inscriptions, or other textual descriptions that accompany the visual” (p. 53).

At the second level one should analyze “how pictorial conventions and styles gain social meanings, such as when a close-up shot signifies intimacy, a medium shot signifies personal relationship, a full shot signifies social relationship and a long shot signifies context, scope and public distance” (p. 55). In her research on Associated Press photo service’s coverage of Afghan women’s life during the Taliban regime and after its fall Fahmy (2004) examined five stylistic variables, “visual subordination, point of view, social distance, imaginary contact, behavior and general contact” (p. 91). The behavior of the subject in the frame, specifically his or her actions or poses, are other signifiers. Barthes’ ‘photogenia’ list, outlined above, is applicable at this level.

At the third level visuals are analyzed as “symbols that are able to combine, compress and communicate social meaning”. Signs have to be analyzed for “more complex, often culture-bound interpretations” to dissect a meaning that is “highly personalized and distinct” (p. 56). On this stage a researcher has to be ready to notice and deconstruct abstract and figurative symbols having symbolic values, as well as visual metaphors.

At the fourth level researchers, according to Pieterse (1992), are looking for answers to such questions: “What interests are being served by these representations? Whose voices are being heard? What ideas dominate?” As put by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011), “this level tackles how news images are employed as instruments of power in the shaping of public consciousness and historical imagination” (p. 58).

Research Questions

To understand how the heavily injured Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are

visually framed in award-winning photo stories, this study aims to answer the following research questions. First, are they depicted as individuals or as generalized war veterans? To answer this question, the study will analyze if their individual features are visible, and if they appear isolated or in groups. Second, what type of shots and camera angles photographers used to frame injured veterans? Third, what are some of the recurrent patterns in these stories?

Method

This study relies on a visual analysis of denotative and connotative aspects of photographs. Using a four-level visual analysis suggested by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011), and informed by semiotics, photographs from award-winning photojournalism projects were examined to determine how heavily injured veterans are framed for the viewer.

This study looks at all the projects about heavily injured Iraq war veterans that won the World Press Photo contest until 2017. Since 2004, when heavily injured war veterans' coverage emerged, three photo stories have been awarded this prestigious prize. They are "Purple Hearts" by Nina Berman, "War is Personal" by Eugene Richards and "Healing Bobby" by Peter van Agtmael. Every image in these photo stories was analyzed for visual framing using four-level analysis to understand if authors wanted to communicate certain messages. World Press Photo was selected as the only contest to analyze based for the high quality of the work that is awarded and for its agenda-setting qualities. Below (2010) writes, "The World Press Photo Foundation is an agenda-setting entity whose annually prized World Press Photos influence the media coverage and the way in which the pictured events are covered further on. It also determines to what extent and with

what bias the recipients think about the incidents shown in the photographs and how they memorise them” (p. 41).

“Healing Bobby” by Peter van Agtmael, “Purple Hearts” by Nina Berman, “War is Personal” by Eugene Richards were analyzed for visual framing of the heavily injured war veterans level by level according to the four-level analysis, described above. At the *first* level I looked at an image to see what it denotes, in other words, what can be seen in the picture. Are there any “object signs”? How strongly cultural and physiognomic attributes are present? These are some of the questions I tried to answer at this level of visual analysis. At the *second* level I decoded camera distance (long shot, medium shot or a close up); camera angle (shot from below, above, or eye level); lighting situation etc. At the *third* level I looked deeper and tried to understand if there are metaphors in the frame by looking at signs with possible social meanings. At the *fourth* level I tried to understand what message a picture is trying to communicate, and what goal it is trying to achieve with it.

Every individual picture in a project was analyzed based on the first level, then based on the second level, etc. At each level, notes were taken that can be found in the Appendix D of this Master’s Project. Each photo story was analyzed completely before the study moved to the next one. Notes on every photograph of the three stories were then condensed into three tables (one for each photo story) that can be found in Appendix A of this study. Story summaries for each award-winning story can be found in Appendix B.

Results

RQ1. In “*Healing Bobby*”, in seven out of twelve images Bobby is the only person clearly seen in the frame. He is never in a small group of people, which would

communicate family's and friends' support (there would also exist a need to define everyone in the caption). He is either with one other person (5, 7, 11), who are not members of his family or friends, or in a big group or crowd (3, 9) where it is impossible to distinguish individuals clearly.

Bobby has extremely strong individual features, in other words, he can hardly be attributed to a type (a generalized "war veteran"). He never appears in a military uniform or among other war veterans. Notably, he never appears at home with his family.

In "*Purple Hearts*", in nine of the ten images a war veteran is the only person we see in the frame. In most cases the photographer deprives subjects of social or family context (except for two pictures). In two photographs the subjects can be easily attributed to a "type" through their military uniform (1, 3). Two subjects have burnt faces (1, 2), three are seen with prosthetics (5, 8, 9), two have visible scars (4, 10) and one appears on a wheelchair (7).

In "*War is Personal*", In four of the images there is one visible subject (1, 2, 6, 7), in five other images there are two subjects (4, 8, 10, 11, 12), and in three there are more than two subjects (3, 5, 9). Notably, in the last three images there are no more than two adults, the rest of the subjects that help make a bigger number are kids. Most subjects appear in the third image, two adults and two kids.

War veterans, alone or accompanied by family members, appear in ten of the twelve images (2-11). A physical trauma is visible in seven images (2-7; 10), and a mental trauma is visible in one image that shows a disturbed war veteran looking into a window (11). The other two photographs depict veterans' family moments where no trauma is visible.

RQ2. In *“Healing Bobby”*, there are seven long shots and four full shots in this story. There is one shot that could be called a close up, but there are no extreme close-ups. Nine of the twelve images are shot on eye-level, and three are shot from above. The photographer remains a rather neutral observer of the unfolding events.

In *“Purple Hearts”*, there are six medium shots, three full shots and one close up in this story. Five images are shot on eye-level, four from below and one from above. The photographer seems to be making this decision based on what objects she wants to be seen in the background.

In *“War is Personal”*, there are seven medium shots, two full shots, two close-ups and one long shot in the story. In most cases the photographer is very close to his subjects, and in such conditions the medium shot is the best solution. A close up (1, 6) is used to depict the face in detail (so the viewers could feel close to it), and full shots are used when there is a need to show the whole room where subjects are (3, 9). The long shot is the last picture from the Arlington cemetery.

Four images are shot from below, four from eye-level, and four from above. The angle seems to be chosen based on the amount of context the photographer wants in the pictures. Subjects look away in all of the shots.

RQ3. *“Healing Bobby”* deals with a lot of important topics concerning heavily injured soldiers coming back home from Iraq and Afghanistan. One of them is the acceptance and appreciation of war veterans in American society. Four photographs deal with this topic. While three of them (3, 5, 9) clearly show the appreciation through dedicated events, the fourth (10) juxtaposes Bobby to the random crowd on the street.

Six images place Bobby in quite mundane situations as if to show that his life now is not that different from the lives of other people, and war veterans can enjoy life just as they did before the injury. Therefore, one can talk about a certain *therapeutic* goal of this project.

“*Purple Hearts*” shows a certain number of individuals having the same story or problem. One of the things it connotes is that there is a much bigger number of people struggling with the same issue. So one of the things that this story succeeds to show is the *human cost of war*.

Every photograph depicts a heavily injured war veteran. There are, for one exception, no relationship images in this story, and no pictures of the “bigger world” these people live in. We are looking at images of individuals and the small worlds each of them lives in.

Many photographs in this story tend to be made having an idea of contrasting elements in the frame.

Fifth and eighth images are this emblematic portrayal of war at home. Home has a very strong visual presence (through a garden and a bedroom respectively), and it is disturbed by war. Veterans return home, but now they are different, they have physical wounds and painful memories. Contrasting elements here are *home* and *prosthetic arms and legs*.

The first and third images feel like they have an anti-war idea. It is communicated through the juxtaposition of the contrasting elements, a dress military uniform and a burnt face in the first images, and a soldier in the contemporary uniform and cowboys in the reflection in the third image.

“War is Personal” discusses such important topics as parents’ feelings and support (1, 3, 8, 10, 11), family relationship (5, 8, 9, 11), veterans’ anxiety (2, 11), acceptance of them by their families with the physical limitations they have (5).

This story is a classic Eugene Richards’s piece. Except for a couple of images (9, 12), there is a sense of hopelessness that these photographs communicate. War’s consequences are severe (2-5, 10) and often lethal (1, 6, 7). Trauma is a burden forever to be carried by veterans and their families.

Discussion

Despite the fact that Peter van Agtmael, Nina Berman and Eugene Richards are dealing with very similar subject matter, the heavily injured Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans in their stories are visually framed in very different ways. Peter van Agtmael’s “Healing Bobby” tells a story of overcoming physical and mental trauma through social activity; Nina Berman’s “Purple Hearts” emphasize the burden of physical and mental trauma on individuals; Eugene Richards’s “War is Personal” shows the effect death and trauma have on Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans and their families.

What we see is different on a *denotative* level. Van Agtmael’s Bobby is depicted as almost a public figure, and only one of the twelve photographs shows him at home (notably, without his family). His comedy is a tool in overcoming the battle trauma. The US society and the “bigger world” are clearly present in this story, they help the main subject deal with his physical and mental trauma. Berman’s war veterans are mostly alone in their indoor or outdoor “small worlds”, sometimes real, and sometimes imaginary. They face their trauma on their own. Richards’s war veterans are family members that

love and are being loved. Most of the photographs take place indoors, in people's apartments or houses, with only the last picture taking place at the cemetery.

The photographs differ a lot on the *stylistic-semiotic* level as well. The documentary photographers analyzed here use "photogenia" (visual means such as framing, distance, lighting, focus etc.) to convey the exact meanings they want. Peter van Agtmael remains a neutral observer and mostly does long and full shots to provide context. He uses lines created by the environment and natural light to emphasize his main subject. Nina Berman uses a square format that is well fit for portraiture. Most of the pictures are medium shots, but in four cases she makes a step back to show more surrounding. Sometimes she goes for the natural light, but mostly uses one or a couple of strobes to highlight her subjects. Eugene Richards predictably uses a lot of wide-angle and bends the horizon, and remains extremely close, with seven out of twelve images being medium shots. He often uses open aperture to emphasize an element.

In terms of *connotative* systems, both van Agtmael's and Berman's photographs can be divided into certain groups inside one story. In "Healing Bobby", images either communicate loneliness, or society's appreciation. In "Purple Hearts", images either juxtapose contrasting elements or show war veterans lost in between succeeding their rehab and succumbing to depression. Richards's photographs communicate pure human feelings like love, worry about the loved ones and pain of loss.

In terms of *ideological representations*, some of the recurrent topics in the stories are the burden of physical and mental trauma; war veterans' families' love and support; war at home; society's acceptance and appreciation; disturbed ordinariness; veterans' involvement in helping each other and other veterans' families.

Although what makes these stories very different is not their immediate content or form, but the *context* the subjects are placed in, the *roles* subjects appear in, and the *relationships* subjects have with their surrounding or each other in the photographs.

- Bobby Henline is put into social context, his main role is the one of a comedian, and the relationship that is described in this story is the veteran-society relationship;
- Nina Berman deprives her subjects of context, they are war veterans with no other additional roles, and there are no relationships shown;
- Eugene Richards shows his subjects in a family context, war veterans are family members, and the relationships shown are different family relationships affected by war.

Limitations and suggestions for future study

The photographs analyzed in this study can't serve as a complete representation of the visual coverage of the issue. This study is limited in its analysis of the three projects about heavily injured war veterans that won the World Press Photo contest. This photography competition, despite its prestige as a journalistic award, is just one of the many contests awarding documentary photography projects. Stories and essays about heavily injured war veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan had also won such contests as Pictures of the Year International (POYi), National Press Photographers Association's (NPPA's) BOP and PDN Photo Annual, just to name a few. To get a full picture, projects about heavily injured war veterans that had won these contests have to be included in the analysis.

Future research could possibly compare how injured war veterans are visually framed in photography projects published by local and national newspapers, and analyze their portrayal in media over a certain period of time. This analysis doesn't necessarily have to be visual. Analyses of texts that are published in American media outlets are also crucial for understanding how war veterans are framed and afterwards perceived by the society.

Table 1: Peter van Agtmael, “Healing Bobby”

		Stylistic-semiotic systems						
	Denotative systems	Camera distance	Camera angle	Subjects looks	Depth of field	Other	Connotative systems	Ideological representation
1	Bobby in a motel room; close up of burnt face; plaided shirt; tattoo	Close-up	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Lines; Layering; Clean Shot	Relaxation; Loneliness	Ordinary
2	Bobby in his garden with dogs; well-maintained property	Long shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Lines; Layering; Clean Shot	Relaxation; Loneliness; Social standing and order	Ordinary; War veterans are not homeless
3	Bobby performing comedy in a bar, raises his stump	Long shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Emphasis with light; Layering	Strong character; turning trauma into a joke	Acceptance and appreciation of war vets in US society
4	Bobby in a motel room; lying across bed; casual wear	Full shot	Above	Away	Shallow	Lines; Color	Relaxation; Loneliness	Ordinary
5	Bobby on ice rink during Military Appreciaton Night	Full shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Emphasis with light	Appreciation	Acceptance and appreciation of war vets in US society
6	Bobby in a motel room; bare-chested	Full shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Emphasis with light	Relaxation; Loneliness	Ordinary
7	Bobby supporting deceased soldier’s sister	Full shot	Above	Away	Deep	Emphasis with light	Linking the distant war	War at home; Veterans’

							and the peaceful life back home	involvement in helping relatives
8	Bobby walking out of the restaurant; parking lot	Long Shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Emphasis with light	Loneliness	Ordinary
9	Bobby on an ice hockey match; applauds veteran; full stadium	Long shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Camera angle	Camraderie between the soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan	Acceptance and appreciation of war vets in US society
10	Bobby walking along beachfront in the evening wearing a "Got Burns?" T-shirt	Long shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Subject placement in the frame	Linking the distant war and the peaceful life back home	Acceptance and appreciation of war vets in US society
11	Bobby standing on the grave of his fellow soldier	Long shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Clean shot	Linking the distant war and the peaceful life back home	War at home; Veterans' involvement in helping relatives
12	Bobby swimming in a pool	Long shot	Above	Away	Shallow	Clean shot	Relaxation	Ordinary

Table 2. Nina Berman, "Purple Hearts"

		Stylistic-semiotic systems						
	Denotative systems	Camera distance	Camera angle	Subjects looks	Depth of field	Other	Connotative systems	Ideological representation
1	Man with heavily burnt face; dress military uniform; dusk	Medium shot	Below	Away	Shallow	Strobe	Contrast between awards and burnt face	Anti-war
2	Man with heavily burnt face; teary eye; cap; shadows	Close-up	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Dark shadows	Contrast between ordinary outfit and burnt face	Disturbed ordinariness
3	Man in military uniform and beret; reflection of cowboys and Indians; no visible injuries	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Reflection (looks like multiple exposure)	Connection between current wars and preceding armed conflicts	Anti-war
4	Man lying on bed bare-chested; scars on belly; shadows	Medium shot	Above	Away	Shallow	Dark shadows	Physical effect of war on a young body	Young masculinity disturbed; Diversity
5	Man near his house; prosthetic hand; garden looks like Heaven; American flags on the tree	Full shot	Below	Away	Deep	Strobe	Contrast between American dream and a prosthetic arm	Disturbed ordinariness; Emblematic <i>human cost of war</i> (outside)
6	Man through a window covered	Medium	Eye-	Away	Shallow	Strobe,	Poetic image;	Estrangement;

	with rain drops	shot	level			shot through glass	rain lines symbolize tears; lack of mobility	Balance between the Darkness and the Light
7	Man in a wheelchair; his relative's hand on his head; sweatshirt is saying "Navy"	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Strobe	Love, care and support of the family for the injured war veteran	Family support; Absurdity of war (from caption)
8	Man sitting on a bed in his bedroom; prosthetic leg	Full shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Strobe	Contrast between a typical American bedroom and prosthetic leg	Disturbed ordinariness; Emblematic <i>human cost of war</i> (inside)
9	Man standing on a gravel road lighted by car lights; prosthetic leg	Full shot	Below	In the camera	Shallow	Car lights	Poetic image; absence of global vision of the future	Estrangement; Balance between the Darkness and the Light
10	Man hugged by a woman outside; neighborhood; palm tree in the back	Medium shot	Below	Away	Deep	Strobe	Love, care and support of the family for the injured war veteran	Family support

Table 3. Eugene Richards, "War is Personal"

		Stylistic-semiotic systems						
	Denotative systems	Camera distance	Camera angle	Subjects looks	Depth of field	Other	Connotative systems	Ideological representation
1	Man crying; close-up	Close-up	Below	Away	Shallow	-	Pain; Loss	Parents' Feelings
2	Young man in a wheelchair leaning on a table; bare-chested; a cigarette in hand	Medium shot	Below	Away	Shallow	Wide angle; Horizon bent	Intimacy; Pain; Hopelessness	Physical trauma; Young life disturbed; Anxiety
3	Man lying on a bed; his mother and two girls sleeping on a chair bed	Full shot	Above	Away	Deep	Shot from high point; wide angle	Struggle of families; Lov),	Physical trauma; Family Support; Parents' Feelings
4	An injured war veteran holding his daughter; mechanical hand; close-up	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Extremely open aperture	Love; Disturbed mundane situation	Injured veteran as a father
5	An injured war veteran bending towards his daughter (not visible); little girl crying while being held on mother's knees	Medium shot	Below	Away	Shallow	Horizon bent	Horror because of how the man looks like	Veterans not easily being accepted the way they are now
6	Deceased young woman in a coffin; very humane; close-up	Close-up	Above	Away	Shallow	Extremely open aperture	Beauty; Loss	Death of a Human Being; Cycle of life disrupted
7	Deceased young woman in a	Medium	Above	Away	Shallow	Wide	Beauty; Loss	Death of an

	coffin; more official; medium shot with a US flag	shot				angle; Horizon bent		Officer
8	Woman in her fifties; her son passing by	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Extremely open aperture Horizon bent	Worry	Parents' Feelings; Anticipation
9	Man in military uniform bending to kiss his kids; set in bedroom	Full shot	Above	Away	Deep	Wide angle; Horizon bent	Love; Hope	Injured veteran as a father
10	Woman hugging her injured son; a part of his head is gone; hospital	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Shallow	Wide angle; Horizon bent	Love	Physical Trauma; Family Support; Parents' Feelings
11	Young man sitting on a couch in the foreground looking in the window; an elderly woman sitting behind him	Medium shot	Eye-level	Away	Deep	Wide angle;	Lack of understanding; Lost; Worry	Family Relationship; Parents' Feelings; Anxiety
12	Two boys playing on a big tree in the Arlington Cemetery	Long shot	Below	Away	Deep	-	Poetic image; Metaphor	Future; Question

Appendix B. Story summaries

Peter van Agtmael, “Healing Bobby”

Denotative systems. This photo story is about an individual. He is present in every single one of the twelve images. Whatever messages the author is trying to get across, he has to communicate them through Bobby Henline, his subject. The story consists of three types of images: Bobby’s social life (3, 5, 9), Bobby visiting Rodney McCandless’s family and grave (7, 11) and quiet moments alone (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12) in between.

The photographer omits oversaturating his story with too many elements. In seven out of twelve images Bobby is the only person clearly seen in the frame. He is never in a small group of people, which would communicate family’s and friends’ support (there would also exist a need to define everyone in the caption). He is either with one other person (5, 7, 11), who are not members of his family or friends, or in a big group or crowd (3, 9) where it is impossible to distinguish individuals clearly.

Bobby has extremely strong individual features, in other words, he can hardly be attributed to a type (a generalized “war veteran”). He never appears in a military uniform or among other war veterans. Notably, he never appears at home with his family. I will discuss possible reasons for this below.

Stylistic-semiotic systems. There are seven long shots and four full shots in this story. There is one shot that could be called a close up, but there are no extreme close-ups. Nine of the twelve images are shot on eye-level, and three are shot from above. The photographer remains a rather neutral observer of the unfolding events.

Bobby looks away from the camera in all of the shots. Depth of field is shallow in five images, and deep in seven images. The photographer mostly uses shallow depth of

field when depicting Bobby alone in a motel room or in other places, and deep when Bobby is in the big group or crowd of people.

Peter van Agtmael uses various visual means of emphasizing his primary subject. He uses lines created by the environment and light to place the accent on Bobby to make sure that the viewer looks at him first, and comes back to him again after looking at the picture overall. Many pictures in this story are also extremely clean, almost deprived of extra detail.

Connotative systems. Six images in this story communicate relaxation and loneliness through showing Bobby alone. There is nobody with him in a motel room, near his house and in the swimming pool. This story emphasizes how he overcomes the physical and mental trauma with the help of comedy. He is obviously a war veteran, but if we think about the role he appears in in the story, it is probably the role of a comedian. The US society that is appreciative of war veterans is an extremely important element here, as it helps the veteran in his rehabilitation. In this story Bobby Henline totally exists in a *social context*, meaning that his only role is being a part of American society. He doesn't appear in a role of a son, or husband, or father. Bobby's own family is left aside. On one hand, it makes the story more focused, on the other hand, a big part of his life is not even mentioned in these twelve images, and one can argue that it is not an objective representation of him.

A number of images unequivocally show the acceptance and support of the general public towards the injured Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans (3, 5, 9). Three images connote link the distant war and the peaceful life back home through Bobby (7, 10, 11).

Ideological representation. This story deals with a lot of important topics concerning heavily injured soldiers coming back home from Iraq and Afghanistan. One of them is the acceptance and appreciation of war veterans in American society. Four photographs deal with this topic. While three of them (3, 5, 9) clearly show the appreciation through dedicated events, the fourth (10) juxtaposes Bobby to the random crowd on the street.

Six images place Bobby in quite mundane situations as if to show that his life now is not that different from the lives of other people, and war veterans can enjoy life just as they did before the injury. Therefore, one can talk about a certain *therapeutic* goal of this project.

Two of the images (7, 11) touch on the actual war (and how it affects home). They link the distant battlefields of Iraq and quiet American streets. Rodney McCandless, Bobby's comrade, died in Iraq in same the explosion Bobby himself was injured, but the tragedy is here, at home. Bobby visits his friend's sister and goes to see Rodney's grave. He acts as a kind of link connecting the two very distant worlds. Pictures communicate that the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan wars are supportive of each other back home, they are also very involved in supporting the relatives of the deceased soldiers.

This story is not so much about the human cost of war, but rather about fighting physical and mental trauma. In this particular case, through comedy.

Nina Berman, "Purple Hearts"

Denotative systems. In Nina Berman's series, every photograph is a portrait of a new subject, and there is no link between the images, unlike in the other two stories. It is the only story out of the three consisting of 10 rather than 12 images.

All the images in this story can be divided into two groups. Those where veterans are put in some kind of context (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10) and those where they are deprived of context (2, 4, 6, 9). In the first group, they are either put on a kind of typical American background (3, 5, 8) or pictured together with a family member (7, 10). In one photograph a dress military uniform adds a certain context. Concerning the second group, here veterans exist in a kind of imaginary world that lacks context.

In nine of the ten images a war veteran is the only person we see in the frame. In most cases the photographer ***deprives subjects of social or family context*** (except for two pictures). In two photographs the subjects can be easily attributed to a "type" through their military uniform (1, 3). Two subjects have burnt faces (1, 2), three are seen with prosthetics (5, 8, 9), two have visible scars (4, 10) and one appears on a wheelchair (7).

Stylistic-semiotic systems. There are 6 medium shots, 3 full shots and one close up in this story. Five images are shot on eye-level, four from below and one from above. The photographer seems to be making this decision based on what objects she wants to be seen in the background.

Subjects look away in nine of the ten photographs. Seven photographs are shot with shallow depth of field, as Berman tries to put on emphasis on her subjects rather than their surrounding. The photographer often uses strobe light (1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10). In two of the photographs she prefers harsh natural light (2, 4), and even uses car lights in one of the images (9). One of the photos appear to be shot using some kind of reflection.

Connotative systems. Some of these images emphasize the physical trauma (1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9), some of them emphasize the mental trauma (3, 6, 10), but it can be said that all of them in one way or another communicate both.

A recurrent topic in this photo story is the *ordinariness disturbed by war*. Subjects are superimposed to typical American surroundings to show how war looks like back home (2, 5, 8). These are the fifth image, that places a young man inside a heavenly looking garden near his house, and the eighth, where a soldier appears with a prosthetic leg in a typical bedroom. The second image can also be included in this group, even though there is less context in it, compared to the other two. A typical American plaided shirt and a cap that the veteran is wearing and a garage door that he is standing next to make this image a part of this group.

Two of the images connote love, care and support of the family for the injured war veteran (7, 10). Two of the images (6, 9) are deprived of context but show subjects balancing between overcoming and succumbing to the trauma. One image strongly emphasizes the physical trauma through an African American male soldier, and one seems to be making a parallel between the current American soldiers and cowboys.

Finally, the first image is the photograph that best depicts the idea (question) of Berman's series. It is the juxtaposition of the physical and mental trauma and the awards for military service. In the image we see a young man with a heavily burnt face with multiple scars. He wears a dress military uniform with numerous awards and decorations on both sides. "Was this achievement worth it?" is something that the photographer and some of her subjects (in their book interviews) are asking.

Ideological representation. One-subject stories tend to be either universal (they tend to show the problem through an individual) or unique. A portrait story, and it is applicable in this case as well, shows a certain number of individuals having the same story or problem. Therefore, one of the things that any picture story connotes is that there is a much bigger number of people struggling with the same issue. So one of the things that this story succeeds to show is the *human cost of war*.

Every photograph depicts a heavily injured war veteran. There are, for one exception, no relationship images in this story, and no pictures of the “bigger world” these people live in. We are looking at images are of individuals and the small worlds each of them lives in.

Many photographs in this story tend to be made having an idea of contrasting elements in the frame.

Fifth and eighth images are this emblematic portrayal of war at home. Home has a very strong visual presence (through a garden and a bedroom respectively), and it is disturbed by war. Veterans return home, but now they are different, they have physical wounds and painful memories. Contrasting elements here are *home* and *prosthetic arms and legs*.

The first and third images feel like they have an anti-war idea. It is communicated through the juxtaposition of the contrasting elements, a dress military uniform and a burnt face in the first images, and a soldier in the contemporary uniform and cowboys in the reflection in the third image.

Such important topic as family support of the injured war veterans is also briefly touched upon (7, 10), as well as a feeling of being lost and not having a life plan anymore (6, 9).

Eugene Richards, “War is Personal”

Denotative systems. This project is neither a story about one person, nor a portrait story. The most accurate description would be that it is a twelve-picture edit of Eugene Richards’s book of the same name. There are twelve photographs, and eleven of them depict heavily injured war veterans or members of their families (or both). There are two cases when consecutive photographs are about the same subject matter. So one can say that nine stories are presented in this picture collection.

There are no detail shots in this story. Eleven of the twelve photographs are set indoors, either at subjects’ houses (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) or in hospitals (3, 10). Two photographs depict a deceased female soldier in a coffin (6, 7).

In four of the images there is one visible subject (1, 2, 6, 7), in five other images there are two subjects (4, 8, 10, 11, 12), and in three there are more than two subjects (3, 5, 9). Notably, in the last three images there are no more than two adults, the rest of the subjects that help make a bigger number are kids. Most subjects appear in the third image, two adults and two kids.

War veterans, alone or accompanied by family members, appear in ten of the twelve images (2-11). A physical trauma is visible in seven images (2-7; 10), and a mental trauma is visible in one image that shows a disturbed war veteran looking into a

window (11). The other two photographs depict veterans' family moments where no trauma is visible.

Stylistic-semiotic systems. There are 7 medium shots, two full shots, two close-ups and one long shot in the story. In most cases the photographer is very close to his subjects, and in such conditions the medium shot is the best solution. A close up (1, 6) is used to depict the face in detail (so the viewers could feel close to it), and full shots are used when there is a need to show the whole room where subjects are (3, 9). The long shot is the last picture from the Arlington cemetery.

Four images are shot from below, four from eye-level, and four from above. The angle seems to be chosen based on the amount of context the photographer wants in the pictures. Subjects look away in all of the shots.

Depth of field is shallow in eight of the images, and deep in the remaining four. Two of the latter are the images shot from above where the photographer wanted the whole room to be visible, one is a picture with two people sitting on the same couch on a distance, and the image from the cemetery. In the rest of the images the focus is where the viewer's attention has to be.

The horizon is bent in six of the images (2, 5, 7-10) to make the action in the shot more dynamic. A wide-angle lens (to the extent that the distortion can be seen) is used in six of the images (2, 3, 7, 9-11). Extremely open aperture is used in three images to emphasize the most important element (4, 6, 8).

Connotative systems. Eugene Richards frames the issue of the war veterans returning home through a *family context*. A lot of the images connote pure human

feelings and emotions, such as pain (1, 2), loss (1, 6, 7), worry (8, 11), love and support (3, 4, 9, 10) and many others.

War veterans in this story are sons, husbands and fathers who are taking care and are taken care of (3, 4, 9, 10). This story touches upon individual physical (2, 4, 10) and mental trauma (8, 11), but mainly it shows the burden of war on American families (1, 3-10). Every story is different, and in every case there is a different kind of pain, but in the end *war is personal* anyways.

Ideological representation. The story discusses such important topics as parents' feelings and support (1, 3, 8, 10, 11), family relationship (5, 8, 9, 11), veterans' anxiety (2, 11), acceptance of them by their families with the physical limitations they have (5).

This story is a classic Eugene Richards's piece. Except for a couple of images (9, 12), there is a sense of hopelessness that these photographs communicate. War's consequences are severe (2-5, 10) and often lethal (1, 6, 7). Trauma is a burden forever to be carried by veterans and their families.

The story ends with a very poetic and metaphoric image of the kids standing on a tree looking at the Arlington cemetery. They can choose the future, and no one knows what it's going to be.

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