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TOWARDS AN ANALYTICS OF MEDIATION

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss a framework for the analysis of media discourse, the *Analytics of Mediation*, that takes into account the embeddedness of media texts both in technological artefacts and in social relationships and, hence, seeks to integrate the multi-modal with the critical analysis of Discourse. On the methodological level, the *Analytics of Mediation* applies a multi-modal Discourse Analysis onto media texts in order to study their visual and linguistic properties: camera/visual; graphic/pictorial or aural/linguistic. On the social theory level, the *Analytics of Mediation* addresses critical concerns on the ethical and political role of television and other media in our 'global village'. Can television foster a cosmopolitan consciousness or does its 'fake proximity' alienate the spectator from the rest of the world? Can we talk about the media as agents of global citizenship or do the media lead to compassion fatigue- a western denial of humanitarian problems? I illustrate such questions, by drawing on one concrete example of television news.

TOWARDS AN ANALYTICS OF MEDIATION

Distant suffering in the media

One of the most important questions in social and political theory today is the question of how the western world relates to distant suffering, to the powerless victims of famine, war or natural disaster. This is important because the capacity of the western world to relate to distant suffering with a sense of care and act on it with a sense of social responsibility lies at the heart of contemporary conceptions of global citizenship and the cosmopolitan public (Hannerz 1996; Boltanski 1999; Tomlinson 1999; Calhoun 2001; Barnett 2003)¹. Given that the western world comes to know about distant suffering primarily through the spectacles of television or the internet, the question of distant suffering is essentially a question about the ethical role of the media in public life today. Can the media cultivate a disposition of care for and engagement with the far away 'other'? Can television create a global public with a sense of social responsibility towards distant sufferers?

These issues have always been on the agenda of public debate and of the social sciences. Nevertheless, we know little about the role of the media in shaping an ethical sensibility that extends beyond our own neighbourhood (Silverstone 1999, 2004; Peters 1999, 2005). On the one hand, as television news constantly bombards us with humanitarian emergencies, arguments about the compassion fatigue of the public abound. On the other hand, the Asian tsunami emergency has reinvigorated a sense of optimism about the role of television in making people sensitive towards distant suffering and active vis a vis far away 'others'. Caught between the two positions, much theory on the media hovers unproductively between a positive view of the media as facilitating ethical action in public life today and a negative view of the media as undermining public action. This dilemmatic approach to the moral role of the media does not help us understand the question of ethics and public life in its full complexity. This is what I claim in the first section of the paper, 'Mediation and Public Ethics: Utopian and Dystopian Visions'.

In my view, the problem lies in the fact that questions about the relationship between media and public action are treated as 'grand' questions and are usually dealt with in 'grand' theory. They become the topic of philosophical argument on the

existence of universal moral standards or they are the stake of political debates about the rise or decline of communitarian and cosmopolitan values. The perspective I propose here is different. I develop a methodology for the study of these ‘grand’ questions not through theoretical argument but through the analysis of particular examples of television news on suffering.

Drawing on Aristotle’s advice that our enquiries into social life should be driven by the practical consideration of what ‘is good or bad for man’, I focus upon the ways in which particular news texts present the sufferer as a moral cause to the western spectatorⁱⁱ. This concrete engagement with values, what Aristotle call ‘phronesis’ (prudence), grasps the question of ethics from the pragmatic perspective of praxis (Flyvebjerg 2001:110-28; Ross 1923/1995: 31-49). This is the perspective that takes each particular case to be a unique enactment of ethical discourse that, even though it transcends the case, cannot exist outside the enactment of cases. In the phronetic spirit, then, the question of how the media shape the ethical dispositions of public life is recast in the form of a modest question: how does the news broadcast construe the misfortune of the distant sufferer? Is suffering presented as a case of action- whose action or to which effects? Or is suffering construed as of no concern to the spectator?

In the second section of the paper, ‘The analytics of mediation’, I present the theoretical premises of this methodology and propose an approach television texts on suffering as regimes of pity, that is as semantic fields where emotions and dispositions to action vis a vis the suffering ‘others’ are made possible for the spectatorⁱⁱⁱ. I then proceed to discuss the two key dimensions of the analytics of mediation: ‘multi-modality’, which refers to two main meaning-making technologies of television, voice recording and moving image (in the section ‘Difference within the semiotic’), and ‘multi-functionality’, which refers to the work of these meaning technologies to simultaneously represent suffering in various degrees of proximity to the spectator and to orient the spectator towards certain options for action on the suffering (in the section ‘Difference outside the semiotic’)^{iv}. Finally, in the section ‘The analytics of mediation: an example’, I provide a brief illustration of the analytics by referring to a specific example of mediation, the footage of the Iraq war.

The aim of this paper is to present the analytics of mediation as a methodology that enables us to ask questions about how the news text is put together in language and image and how this text construes the spacetimes and the forms of agency in

suffering within a series of hierarchical regimes of pity. Hierarchical as these regimes may be, they are, nevertheless, neither fixed nor immobile. They have their own discursive conditions of possibility that can be reflexively revised and changed. The contribution of the analytics of mediation in the debate on public ethics, therefore, is that it practically demonstrates the contingency of these regimes of pity, their human-made nature, and so it offers us the language to revise them; in Aristotle's words, to make them 'good for man'.

Mediation and Public Ethics: Utopian and Dystopian Visions

I take my point of departure in media and social theory, in order to discuss the two competing visions on the ethical role of television in social life that such theory presents us with, the dystopian or pessimistic and the utopian or optimistic one^v. Both visions emphasize the fact that television creates a new connectivity between the spectator and the distant 'other'. Both visions also stress the role of the medium in 'manipulating' the spectator's sense of proximity to and, hence, her ability to connect with the spectacle of suffering. But the two visions differ in the ways they understand the impact that television has upon the quality of connectivity between the spectator and the sufferer. As a consequence, the two visions reach different conclusions as to the possibility of television to engage the spectator with the sufferer's misfortune, leaving social theory undecided and inconclusive as to the ethical role of the media in public life.

1. a. The dystopian vision

Kevin Robins' eloquent paradox, *intimate detachment*, echoes the pessimism of Adorno (Robins 1994:461). The pessimistic vision maintains that television appears to create proximity but in fact fosters distance. This narrative is deeply suspicious of technology because it entertains the illusion that audiences participate in public life when they are simply, in Adorno's words, *regressing in listening* or watching (1938/1982:270). The reason is that the very technological form of the medium 'sanitizes' reality, that is to say it cuts real life off its raw sensations, depriving screen suffering of its compelling physicality and shifting the fact of suffering into pixel fiction.

We can identify two versions of dystopia. The first version maintains that

technology distorts the authenticity of the represented event and so we may call it the *intervention of technology* version of pessimism. Visual editing, soundtrack, repetition or fast tracking help the spectator create a sense of distance from the spectacle, whilst the zapping and switch off options strengthen the spectator's sense of control over what she watches (Tester 2001:1-9; Miller 1971:183; Peters 2001:713). As a consequence, suffering becomes a thing to watch just as any other and human pain turns into what Peters calls an exercise in Pavlovian pity, as we are freshly torn by the day's allotment of collapsing buildings, fires, floods, and terror (2005:11)

The second version of dystopia maintains that it is the conditions of the home, where the spectator watches television, that interrupt her connectivity with the distant sufferer and we may call it the *domesticity of reception* argument. The second remove from the scene of suffering, therefore, occurs because the image of suffering, already fictionalized, is further contained within the spectator's domestic environment, be this the living room, the office or the local pub. This does not only sever the reality of suffering from its own nexus of sensations, but it also re-inserts suffering in another nexus of sensations: the spectator's own immediate physical states and moods. Because this nexus of sensations and feelings has existential priority over on screen events, theorists claim, it is bound to always background the spectator's concern for the distant 'other' in favour of those who live 'at home' (Tomlinson 178-9).

The dystopian vision, in both its versions, clearly illustrates the paradox of technology. The capacity of technology to deliver immediacy is simultaneously the failure of technology to establish connectivity and this has dire consequences for contemporary ethical life, as the spectator lives in the illusion of a collective existence that is simply not there; she inhabits an inauthentic reality^{vi}.

1.b. The utopian vision

In the utopian vision, the immediacy of television's images and stories brings the world closer together. Part of the broad communitarian tradition of Durkheim and Merton, this narrative rests on the anthropological premise that the media work as symbols that generate authentic sociability. How so? In two respects.

In the *celebration of communitarianism* version of utopia, television introduces the spectator into a broad community of fellow-spectators simply by engaging her in the act of simultaneous viewing. This is a vision on the mass media as early as Mc Luhan's idea of the 'global village' (1964), but the argument is also

present in current accounts of mediation, which claim that television establishes a spectatorial ‘feeling in common’ through the co-ordination of viewing action rather than through the message of communication itself (eg Mafessoli 1996). Unlike the pessimistic thesis, where television erodes our sense of the real, here the dissemination of images has the positive effect of bringing spectators together, in new forms of sociality and emotional connectivity. What this view of mediation misses out, however, is an orientation towards the distant ‘other’, since the images that bring the sufferer close to our home does not act as testimony of the sufferer’s pain but as a guarantee of the co-presence of spectators.

In the *democratization of responsibility* version of utopia, television’s flow of messages from around the world increases the spectator’s awareness of the existence of ‘others’ and, thereby, it also increases her concern for the misfortune of the distant sufferer. This kind of optimism takes its point of departure in the reflexive organisation of the self in late modernity and begs the question of how the mediated experience of the spectator can translate into public-political consciousness (Giddens 1990, 1991; Thompson 1990, 1995) The constant flow of images and information on screen, the argument has it, inevitably opens up the local world of the spectator to the sight of the ‘other’ and, broadly, to non-local experiences, and enables the reflexive process by which the spectator comes to recognise non-local realities as a potential domain of her own effective action^{vii}. Despite its forceful rhetoric, however, this utopian version proposes no specific perspectives as to how such a new public life may be realized; the dream of moral reflexivity is asserted but the question of how we get there is essentially ignored (Chouliaraki 2000:293-314)^{viii}.

The paradox of technology, in summary, haunts the utopian vision of mediation just as much as it haunts the dystopian one. Technology connects; but how and who connects with who remain unaccounted for. Instead of closely studying the specific possibilities and limitations of technology to connect, media and social theory engages in an abstract, argumentative mode of theorizing that treats the role of technology in our culture in a dilemmatic, ‘either-or’ way and cannot adequately address the issue of how mediation can cultivate a cosmopolitan ethics. Yet, if there is a lesson to be learned from the pessimistic account is not so much that technology is to blame for failing to connect, but that technological contact with the imagery of the ‘other’ does not necessarily link to ethical responsibility; nor does the act of

simultaneous witnessing by definition cultivate democratic ‘publics’ (Derrida 1999; Silverstone 2003; Barnett 2003).

In order to understand how cosmopolitanism is shaped as a mutual feeling of togetherness with fellow-spectators or as responsibility to the distant ‘other’, we need to keep separate the conceptual space between watching and acting. This is the space of mediation as a public-political space and it is to a discussion of the study of this space that I now turn.

The analytics of mediation

The key question is how we can study mediation as a process that sets up norms of public conduct and shapes the spectator as a citizen of the world. My own argument is that the potential of mediation to cultivate a cosmopolitan sensibility is neither de facto possible, as in the utopian vision, nor a priori impossible, as in the dystopian vision on mediation. The potential of mediation to shape a cosmopolitan sensibility has its own historical and social conditions of possibility. What we need to do in order to investigate these conditions of possibility, I propose, is to investigate empirically how television narrates instances of human suffering through specific regimes of meaning, which construe the spectator in particular relationships of proximity and agency vis a vis the sufferer- what we may also call ‘regimes of pity’ (Chouliaraki 2006: 70-1) .

The term ‘analytics’, which Foucault borrows from Aristotle to distinguish his approach from a ‘grand’ theory of power, aims at describing how discourse manages to articulate ‘universal’ values of human conduct at any historical moment and how, in so doing, it places human beings into certain relationships of power to one another (Foucault 1991; Flyvbjerg 2001:131-138). Media discourse on distant suffering, for instance, operates as a strategy of power in so far as it selectively offers the option of emotional and practical engagement with certain sufferers and leaves others outside the scope of such engagement, thereby reproducing hierarchies of place and human life. The object of study of the analytics of mediation, therefore, is the various genres across media (print, electronic and new) as a regime of meanings.

The term regime of meanings refers to the bounded field of possible

meaning relations that obey a certain regularity in the ways in which they combine and circulate and, as a consequence, in the forms of knowledge and identity they constitute in the medium where they appear. In the study of suffering, we speak of regimes of pity to refer to this array of semiotic practices that construe suffering as a meaningful spectacle with its own proposals of relating to the spectator.

We can perhaps better grasp the idea of a regime of pity through the example of the live footage of a major disaster. Visualizing the event through a street camera places the event in the temporality of emergency, of frantic and contingent activity, and endows it with the aesthetic quality of testimony, the first-hand knowledge of the eye-witness. This regime of pity offers a sense of close proximity to the scene of suffering and organizes the spectacle of suffering around action that may alleviate the sufferer's misfortune. This is different from the long shot of a city skyline. Here pity takes the form of aesthetic contemplation vis a vis the sublimity of the catastrophe and invites reflection over the event's causes and consequences. The long shot, as opposed to the 'involved' camera at street level, potentially entails an interest in historicity and analysis rather than actuality and activity. It is evident that the camera with its different techniques of filming is a key technology in shaping the regimes of pity on television.

Central, therefore, to the analytics of mediation is that distinction which refers to the role of technology in creating meaning about suffering- the distinction between hypermediacy and immediacy, in Bolter and Grusin's terminology (2000). The analytics of mediation takes both hypermediacy and immediacy to be semiotic categories, that is to say categories that produce meaning in television by marking some form of difference.

On the one hand, there is the difference inherent in the medium of meaning-making, in the technologies of verbal and visual recording that turn the screen into a material reality of images and narratives. This is hypermediacy. On the other hand, there is difference that lies outside the medium of meaning making and which is shown and enacted on screen in the asymmetrical relationship between, for example, the victims of earthquake in Islamabad and the UN forces that provide them with emergency aid. This is immediacy. In this sense, the analytics of mediation integrates the critical interest in the production of meaning on television, in 'difference within the semiotic', with the ethical function of television to shape specific dispositions of viewing and acting, in 'difference outside the semiotic'. The production of suffering

as a television spectacle arises out of the interplay between these two dimensions of meaning making: the technologies of meaning production and the social relationships of viewing- or difference within the semiotic and difference outside the semiotic.

Difference within the semiotic: the multi-modality of mediation

Difference within the semiotic points to difference that lies inside the semiotic systems themselves. This point is well developed by Derrida. For Derrida, who pushed structuralist linguistics to its limit, the idea of difference is not a social category (difference among people) but it is a systemic category (difference within a sign system) that resides in the very organisation of language^{ix}. Derrida's claim is that the sign, rather than being split in internal form (medium) and external content (representation), is seen as a *mark* that consists of both materialities:

The possibility of repeating, and therefore of identifying, marks is implied in every code, making of it a communicable, transmittable, decipherable grid that is iterable for a third party, and thus for any user in general (Derrida 1982:315).

By emphasizing that meaning operates as a 'mark in every code', Derrida tells us two things. First, following Saussure, the founder of structuralism, he tells us that not only language but also image is internally differentiated into form and content; that the image is itself a semiotic code. The implication of this claim is that the image becomes now an object of semiotic study in its own right. It is not a simulacrum or a signal, as theorists like Baudrillard or Castells might wish it, but it has the potential to produce content and it has a grammar for the realization of meaning (van Leeuwen 2004:17). This means that even when the content of television appears minimal, for example in 'raw' footage or 'pastiche' images, the screen still confronts the spectator with a meaningful message that is possible to systematize and to analyze.

At the same time, Derrida's understanding of meaning as consisting of both form and content -as a mark- pushes the point on visibility beyond the legacy of Saussure. Challenging the traditional superiority of language over the visual, Derrida insists that orality and visibility are two distinct but equally complex semiotic codes and that the relationship between them is fundamental in describing the process of

meaning-making (Howarth 2002: 36-42)^x. Meaning-making combines marks that are both oral and visual- as the medium of television clearly shows. Meaning, then, comes about as a result not of a positivity, a fixed presence that these marks carry around, but as a result of the difference between the media of such marks, pictorial or spoken, and the content potential of these media- what they 'show' or 'say'. Meaning is an unfinished business because these marks constantly alter their relationship to other marks as they travel from context to context (Howarth 2002:41). It is this capacity of the mark both to repeat itself, that is to change context, and to be identified, that is to be recognized as the same, the 'iterability' of the mark in Derrida's words, that lies at the heart of difference within the semiotic.

Let us take the example of a piece of news reporting on a boat accident in a remote province of India. How could this piece of news be represented on television? Depending on the journalistic resources available, this piece could be represented in at least two different ways. It could be represented through telephone link in the studio or through on-location footage of the rescue operation of the boat passengers. These are two possible inscriptions of the 'boat accident', a single content, on different media: on voice technology (telephone link) or on camera (moving image). It is obvious that the semiotic code upon which each medium inscribes the content of the event considerably alters the meaning of suffering in it. Listening to a brief verbal report is different from witnessing the scene of the rescuing of passengers. This difference bears, in turn, a tremendous effect upon the regime of pity that construes this instance of suffering. The brief verbal report renders the boat accident an instance of suffering without pity that makes no demand for response upon the spectator. On the contrary, the intense visualization of rescue action renders the boat accident an instance of suffering with pity that incorporates the demand for action in the news story itself.

Iterability, in this context, helps us understand the hypermediated dimension of mediation. It shows that the use of different media transforms the meanings of suffering, in ways that make it difficult to separate how these meanings both remain the same and become different. Wouldn't we react to the India news in its two diverse presentations by saying 'it's the same and yet it's not'?

Multi-modal analysis

Multi-modality is the study of the semiotic processes by which the hypermediated environment of television manages to create a coherent regime for the representation of suffering, a regime of pity, that construes the event of suffering as the spectator's immediate reality. The methodological principle of multi-modal analysis is that regimes of pity do not coincide with the specific image or language we watch on screen.

The image and language of suffering, rather, follow a systematic pattern of co-appearance and combination, which organises the potential for the representation of suffering under the generic conventions of the news broadcast. Because regimes of pity are patterns of co-appearance and combination rather than single pictures or sentences, they are best understood as analytical constructs that help us describe the semiotic choices by which the spectacle of suffering becomes meaningful to the spectator in the genre of the news. I take three aspects of the genre of the news to be relevant in the construal of regimes of pity: the 'mode of presentation' of the news text; the 'correspondence between verbal narrative and image' in the news text and the 'aesthetic quality' of the news text.

Mode of news presentation: The mode of presentation of the news refers to the locations from which the news story is told and to the media that tell the story. Modes of presentation may include studio anchor, which secures the flow and continuity of the broadcast, usually accompanied by footage, archive or live. Whereas studio presentation may include the commentary of invited experts, footage may include oral testimony of witnesses from the scene of action. Choices over the mode of news presentation have an impact upon the ways through which the spectator comes to evaluate the news on suffering. Depending, for example, on how the visual presentation relates to anchor speech or to voiceover, each mode of news presentation offers the spectator a distinct approach to the reality of the event, a distinct form of narrative 'realism' (Grodal 2002:67-91; Ellis 2000: 193-200).

Narrative realism may evoke the tangible reality of facts based on the truth of what we see, on the power of visual perception. This is what we call 'perceptual' realism. Narrative realism may also bring about the reality of the heart, a reality evoked through strong feelings rather than facts, giving rise to a form of realism that we call 'categorical' realism. Finally, narrative realism can make use of the reality of

doxa, a reality appealing to our deep-rooted certainties about what the world is or should be like. This is what we call ‘ideological’ realism. The realities both of the heart and of doxa are versions of ‘psychological’ realism, a way of knowing about reality that appeals to our emotional and moral sensibilities rather than to our quest for facts.

News realism, it follows, is not about presenting the spectator with the single reality of suffering but it is about presenting her with different realities about suffering- different meanings through which suffering can be represented. When we analyse a piece of news, questions concerning the mode of presentation include:

- Is the news introduced in the studio? Is it supported by visual material? is it reported on location?
- Which sense of news realism is being evoked in the news?
 - If the suffering is shown at all, is it shown in a manner that seeks to evoke a ‘this-is-how-it-is’ type of reality? Or does the emphasis fall more on a ‘this-is-how-we-feel-about-it’ or ‘this-is-how-sad-horrific-wrong’ the suffering is? Does the emphasis of the narrative make an appeal to the spectator’s sense for compassion, sense of righteousness or justice? Alternatively, does it refrain from engaging the spectator in a sustained emotional relationship with the piece of news?

Verbal-visual correspondence: The sense of reality that each news text attempts to evoke for the spectator cannot simply be identified through the mode of presentation. In order to be able to describe precisely how types of realism emerge through the multi-modal combinations of the news text, we need to talk more specifically about the work that language and the image perform in the news text. The verbal entails three modes of narrating the suffering, what I term below ‘descriptions’, ‘narrations proper’ and ‘expositions’^{xi}, whereas the image entails three modes of portraying suffering, the ‘index’, the ‘icon’ and the ‘symbol’^{xii}. Let me focus, in turn, on each one of the two semiotic modes.

The visual: The impact of any news text is almost always a function of its visual referent^{xiii}. It is the ‘seeing it happen’ that makes the strongest claim to the

authenticity of suffering in television and ‘burdens’ the spectator with the moral role of the witness.

In this sense, the shift from no visual towards an increasingly intensive visualization of suffering is a shift towards an increasingly intensive involvement with the sufferer and thus an invitation for the spectator to remember and to repeat the sufferer’s misfortune. For example, video images of human figures with their backs to the camera place us in the scene of suffering but they do not engage us with the sufferer. In contrast, a quick sequence of suffering children’s close ups gazing at the camera takes the form of a visual bombardment and invites us to urgently respond to their tragedy. The distinction between the former and the latter type of visualization is a distinction between news without pity that we hardly register as such and news with pity that make upon us a demand to speak up or do something about the misfortune (Chouliaraki 2006: 70-76).

Because I discuss the visual-verbal correspondence of news texts below, the analytical questions about the visual that I am posing, at this point, do not address visual meaning in the news text as a whole but are only about the image layout on screen. Such questions include:

- Which kind of visual representation does the suffering take in the news report? Is it graphic (map, diagram), photographic, archive film or live transmission?
- If graphic, is the representation static and minimal or dynamic and multiple (computerized, as for example, in Iraq war maps)?
- If there is written text, how does it interact with the image? Does the text add to the image (explicate, illustrate) or is it decorative, running simply in parallel to it?
- If video,
 - which point of view (above and afar or involved);
 - which angle (direct/gaze level or oblique/profile or back filming);
 - which framing (actors’ position; distance from camera; relationship to the overall visual composition)
 - which vectors of movement (between actors; towards the spectator; outside camera frame).

The verbal: If visualization tells us something about the degree of authenticity of a piece of news, it is the verbal mode that establishes the distinct sense of reality that

the story evokes for the spectator. This is because words regulate the flow of edited images and create a meaningful story out of a usually unrelated flow of places and people. In ordering and organizing the spaces and temporalities of events, the verbal narrative of the news performs fundamental classificatory activities: it includes and excludes, foregrounds and backgrounds, justifies and legitimizes. It separates ‘us’ from ‘them’.

Three narrative functions of the news are responsible for this classificatory work: descriptions, narrations or story telling proper, and expositions. The hard facts of suffering are mainly evoked through descriptive narratives that tell us what we see and so they make the strongest claim to objectivity. For example, in the Indian boat accident news, a descriptive report sounds like this: *Forty four people drowned in river Baytarani*. In narration, the factual report of events is replaced by elements of fictional story-telling, such as a chronological plot (with moments of deliberate tension or suspense) as well as generic conventions of opening and/or closure: *It was the end of an ordinary school day, when the boat transporting the children in river Baytarani capsized; forty four people drowned*. The term exposition refers to the verbal narrative that incorporates a point of view within the news and, in so doing, it explicitly articulates ethical judgement vis a vis the reported suffering: *Forty four people feared drowned in river Baytarani*. Evaluation is here contained, in a suppressed form, in the use of the affective/impersonal process *feared*.

Although there is an obvious analytical value in differentiating among the three narrative types, we should be aware of the fact that news texts often enact more than one narrative functions at once. Just like the semiotic modes of language and the visual are multi-functional, narratives, too, co-exist and complement one another. They are intertextual (Chatman 1991:30).

. Concerning the role of the verbal mode in the news text questions may include:

- Is the news verbal text cast as a description of facts? Or does the text also entail elements of exposition, with value judgements and normative proposals about the suffering? Could the news report be a narration of events with emphasis on drama and suspense and with little consideration of the facts?
- If the report combines more than one narrative types, how do these relate to one another? Which one frames the rest? Which role do the subserving narratives play in the development of the story?

The relationship between the verbal and the visual: Each type of realism, perceptual, categorical and ideological, brings together its own combination of linguistic narrative with image and, in so doing, it also establishes three distinct types of meaning relations in the news text. These are indexical, iconic and symbolic meanings. The realism of each news text depends then upon the distinct claim to the reality of suffering that each of the three types of meaning makes: claim to the facticity of suffering, in perceptual realism, claim to the emotion of suffering, in categorical realism, claim to justice around the cause of suffering, in ideological realism (Grodal 2002:67-91).

The claim to facticity is the claim of perceptual realism and builds upon an indexical relationship between the verbal and the visual. This means that perceptual realism relies heavily upon the image and uses descriptive language to tell us what we see on screen. Indexical meaning signifies precisely by employing language to establish some direct connection to the image and thereby to offer the spectator a 'window' to the outside world (Nichols 1991:171; Messaris 1997:xvi-xvii; Ellis 2000:193-4). Although hardly any news text relies exclusively on indexicality, not even paradigmatic cases of live news footage that show what happens right now, all news texts inevitably entail an element of indexicality that grounds them to the world out there.

The claims to emotion and, more explicitly, to the ethics and politics of suffering inform psychological realism, in its two manifestations: categorical and ideological realism. Claims to emotion and to justice depart from the reliance on physical perception, that is to say on the link between what we see and what we hear. In the case of categorical realism, fact matters less and the welling up of the spectator's feelings towards the suffering matters most. In order to bring about emotions, categorical realism often relies on story-telling or narration proper, which frames the visual representation of suffering with dramatic urgency and sensationalism. This relationship between image and narration gives rise to iconic meaning, meaning that is related to its referent not through some direct or 'physical' connection, but through similarity or family resemblance. Iconicity, then, does not attach itself to a concrete reality but, rather, represents an abstract reality by using image as the key-signifier of whichever generic condition it seeks to capture. In the typical 'famine in Africa' news stories, for example, images of emaciated children

evoke the referent 'starvation' and function in a cumulative way to overwhelm the spectator with the reality of children's imminent death by famine.

Ideological realism works, similarly to categorical realism, through the association of the image with an abstraction. But this time, abstraction does not take the form of a generic category such as famine. It takes the form of a specific ideological dilemma – for example, are we for or against humanity?- and urges the spectator to take a public stance vis a vis this dilemma. Here, the relationship between visual and verbal semiotic mode gives rise to symbolic meaning. Symbolic meaning is related to its referent neither by direct connection nor by family resemblance, but through discursive associations based on conventional knowledge and value, such as the doxa of 'us' as humane, 'them' as the savage. For example, in a news piece on a Nigerian woman convicted to death-by-stoning, the visual contrast between a close up shot of this young woman with her baby followed by a long shot of a crowd mobbing another woman in the streets evokes the cultural belief that Islam is an 'inhumane' culture. Let us keep in mind that the function of symbolic meaning to de-humanize Islam already presupposes the doxa about Islam as an inhumane religion and, in embedding it within the news narrative, the television text further reproduces this doxa.

In summary, each verbal-image combination makes a distinct claim to reality and thus activates a distinct emotional potential for the spectator. This analytical interest in the reality effects that the language and image of news texts bring about can be formulated in the following questions:

- Which role does each mode, language and image, play in the news narrative? Do the verbal and the visual mode unfold in parallel worlds with a minimal relationship between them? Or is there a substantial referential relationship between the two?
- If there is direct reference between visual and verbal, does the verbal 'accompany' the visual in a strictly factual narrative of depicted events? or does the verbal expand on the visuals?
- If the verbal expands upon the visual, which is the 'transfer effect' of language over the visual? Which extra-pictorial meanings does the news narrative evoke, by means of an 'over-interpreting' voiceover? Alternatively, does the voiceover stop to allow for the power of the visual or of sound effects to come through? How

does this type of verbal-visual combination impact upon the processes of news meaning-making?

Aesthetic quality: The aesthetic quality of the news is a consequence of both its mode of presentation and of the relationship that the news text establishes between language and image. The aesthetic quality describes the overall semiotic effect of the news in terms of three historical tropes for the public staging of suffering, what Boltanski describes as ‘topics of suffering’ (1999). These historical topics for the representation of suffering are pamphleteering, philanthropy and sublimation. Pamphleteering is associated with the genre of political denunciation and aims to address the spectator’s affective potential for anger vis a vis the evil-doer who inflicted the pain upon the sufferer. Philanthropy is associated with genres of Christian care and aims to activate the spectator’s affective potential of tender-heartedness towards the benefactor who comforts the sufferer’s pain. Finally, sublimation distances the spectator from the actuality of suffering and orients her towards a reflexive contemplation of the conditions of human misery.

The broadcast genre may endow the reported event with a single aesthetic quality, say philanthropic appeal towards famine victims, or it may select and combine elements of many topics. For example, the aesthetic quality of terror attacks footage may draw simultaneously on tender-hearted philanthropy in the scenes of emergency aid, indignation against the perpetrators of evil in the public statements of eye witnesses and political figures, and voyeuristic sentiments over the remains of buildings, trains or buses in a city centre. In so doing, the event invites the spectator to at once denounce the attacks, empathize with the victims and indulge in the sublimated contemplation of the aftermath of the attacks.

The aesthetic effect of the news, however, is not only related to the emotional potential for identification with the sufferer. It is also related to the ways in which a regime of pity produces the spectacle of suffering as authentic for the spectator. Against ideas that consider the news broadcast to be ‘the’ hard genre of factuality, we just saw that the news actually construes the factuality of the event it reports by employing one or another version of narrative realism. One of the aims of the analytics of mediation is to describe how each of these types of realism resolves the question of the reality of suffering, precisely by articulating media and meaning, aesthetic quality and public values. For example, the aesthetic quality of the Iraq war

footage has been described as that of action films, drawing upon the spectator's cinematic experience. The political content of this aesthetics, media theorists have argued, is minimal. It exhausts the spectator's response to the suffering in the consumption of the war as spectacle without reference to the causes and possible effects of this military conflict (Brooks, Lewis, Mosdell & Threadgold T. 2003).

To conclude, the study of multi-modality in the news seeks to identify the process by which a concrete representation of suffering comes to articulate 'universal' public values, the values that connect the feelings of the individual spectator with the space of public action- with the urge to 'do something' about this sufferer. But which are these values? Which are the options offered to the spectator to do something in the world out there? And how can the spectator be guided to endorse such values and articulate them as her own? In order to study the content of these public values, we must now turn to the study of the representations of proximity and agency in the news text, that is to the ways in which the spectator-sufferer relationship takes on a specific ethical content on screen. This is the concern with mediation as difference outside the semiotic.

Difference outside the semiotic: the multi-functionality of mediation

Difference outside the semiotic points to a kind of difference that lies outside meaning-making systems, even though we can only encounter it through texts. Difference outside the semiotic lies in the asymmetries of power that traverse the social world and in the historical and political relations within or between social groups^{xiv}. The concern with mediation as difference outside the semiotic then is a concern with the social relations of viewing that map out the world in terms of spectator-zones and sufferer-zones or in terms of spacetimes of safety and spacetimes of danger. Even though these are not clear-cut distinctions, there is a historically-shaped topography of power, whereby it is the west that watches the rest of the world suffer.

By this token, the 'universal' values of the news broadcasts are the values of the west. Denunciation, empathy and aesthetic contemplation, what I have described just above as manifestations of the aesthetic quality of the news, are simultaneously historically and culturally-specific dispositions of the public life of western societies (Boltanski 1999:3-54).

But even if difference outside the semiotic draws attention to the macro-picture of power, the empirical focus in the study of mediation is the local semiotic practice of the news broadcast. It is the concept of discourse that connects these two components of the analytics of mediation, the macro-perspective of power and the micro-perspective of the television text. The concept of discourse implies that the relationship between power and meaning is a relationship of mutual constitution. As Foucault has argued, every attempt to put something in meaning comes about from a position of power, because power connects and organises the social positions from which meaning comes about (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; Howarth 2002). Meaning, then, makes a claim to truth precisely from that power position which enunciates it. This is not 'the truth' but always a truth effect, a truth that seeks to re-constitute and re-establish power through meaning.

In this light, the power asymmetry that is embedded in the social relationships of television viewing may not in itself bring about the economic and political divisions of our world, but it certainly reflects them and consolidates them. Who watches and who suffers reflects the manner in which differences in economic resources, political regimes and in everyday life enter the global landscape of information. Similarly, who acts upon whose suffering reflects patterns of economic and political agency across global zones of influence and their historical divisions, North & South or East & West.

In the analytics of mediation, the relationship between singular practices of meaning-making and the broader power relationships of meaning-making is exemplified in the principle of the 'multi-functionality' of semiosis (Halliday 1985/1995; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Hasan 2000; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 139-55). Multi-functionality assumes that every semiotic mode, language and visual, creates meaning that fulfils more than one function at once. These functions are performed through the semiotic system itself and, in this sense, they are meta-functions of semiosis. But these functions are simultaneously social functions, because they serve two fundamental communicative needs of society.

The first is the social need to name and represent the world, the ideational metafunction of semiosis. The second is the social need to engage in interaction and relate to other people, the interpersonal metafunction of semiosis. There is also the textual metafunction of semiosis, which looks inwards to the text

itself and serves the social purpose of creating meaning that is recognized as coherent and intelligible; in Jewitt & Oyama words, the textual metafunction holds together *the individual bits of representation-interaction* into coherent text wholes (2001:140). Insofar as it concerns itself with the combination of language and image in coherent texts, the textual metafunction obviously appertains to the multimodal analysis of television that I discussed earlier; it is part of mediation as difference within the semiotic. By the same token, insofar as the other two metafunctions concern themselves with the social effects of semiosis, that is with the representation of reality and with the orientation to the others, they appertain to mediation as difference outside the semiotic (Iedema 2001:191-3).

Critical Discourse Analysis

The analysis of mediation as difference outside the semiotic is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Critical Discourse Analysis is a method of analysis of the television text that treats the linguistic and visual choices on screen as subtle indicators of the power of television to mediate the world to the world. This is the power of television to classify the world into categories of 'us' and 'the other' and to orient the spectator towards this suffering 'other'.

In the analysis of representations, CDA looks into the construal of the scene of suffering within a specific spacetime that separates safety from danger. The category of spacetime refers to the place and the temporality of suffering. It tells us how close a specific instance of suffering is to the spectator and how urgent action on the suffering is. The analysis of spacetime then focuses on the axes of proximity/distance or urgency/finality.

In the analysis of orientations, CDA looks into the category of agency. Agency is about who acts upon whom in the scene of suffering. There are two dimensions of orientation that are relevant in establishing the social relationships of suffering. First, agency refers to how active the sufferer appears on screen and, second, it refers to how other actors present in the scene appear to engage with the sufferer. These two dimensions of agency come to shape how the spectator herself is invited to relate to the suffering, that is if she is supposed to simply watch, to feel for or to practically act on the 'other's' misfortune. Of course, those who live in poverty, destitution and war are by definition always 'others' for the safe spectator,

yet there is a gradation in the ‘othering’ of sufferers in the news, ranging from those that deserve no pity to those whose misfortune we share as if it were our own. The study of agency, in this respect, focuses on the analytical axis of ‘our own’/’other’.

This distinction between representation and orientation is a necessity that enables the analysis of television texts. In practice, representations and orientations are not separate parts of the television text and we must look at once into both meta-functions in order to determine how they are brought together in each news sequence (Halliday 1985/1995: 23).

Spacetime: The spacetime of suffering is the category that analyzes how the spectator encounters the reality of the distant sufferer in different degrees of intensity and involvement. In this sense, spacetime is responsible for establishing a sense of immediacy for the scene of suffering and for regulating the moral distance between spectator and sufferer. But spatio-temporal immediacy is a fragile construction. This is so not only because most pieces of news come from far away places, but mainly because issues like famine, war or death-by-stoning fall outside the spectator’s lifeworld, outside her structure of experience. Yet, rather than lamenting the fact that the connectivity between spectator and sufferer is impossible to achieve, as some media pessimists do, we must accept the fragility of this relationship and acknowledge the difficulties of connecting.

According to Silverstone (2002:770), the acknowledgement that mediation cannot completely connect us with the ‘other’ should lead us to problematize the act of mediation itself and the manner in which mediation construes places as proximal or distant. Just how effectively each piece of news articulates the spatial axis of proximity/distance or the temporal axis of urgency/finality in order to establish suffering as a reality for the spectator is the first of the two analytical priorities of the study of news of suffering.

Concerning space, the analytics of mediation asks questions such as^{xv}

- Is space actively shaping action or is it only a background to action?
- Is space replaceable or unique?
- Is space internally differentiated or is it presented as a homogenous entity?

- Are the spaces of danger and safety in any form of interaction with one another or are they strictly separated?

In order to respond to these questions on the representation of space, we focus on the following semiotic choices of the news:

- i) visual editing* (for example, when footage from the Iraq war front is followed by sequences from anti-war demonstrations in European capitals);
- ii) camera position* (for example, filming from within the scene of action or from a location above and afar);
- iii) graphic specification* (such as a map, the presence of written text or the split screen) or
- iv) linguistic reference* (such as the use of adverbs of space; geographical references).

Concerning time, the analytics of mediation asks questions such as

- Is the event taking place in the present or in the past?
- Is time open, with multiple possibilities or is it scripted in advance?
- How does the past impinge on present?
- How does it impinge on possible futures?
- Which has the greatest value, the past, present or future?
- Which future, distant or immediate?

In order to respond to these questions on the representation of time, we focus on the following semiotic choices of the news:

- i) visual intertextuality* (for example, combining archive film, and hence a past reference, with on-location reports, thus shifting to right-now action) and
- ii) linguistic reference* (the use of temporal adverbials such as *simultaneously, previously* etc; the use of tense, present or past; or the use of modality or imperatives) (Chilton 2004; Fairclough 2003)

Depending on the broader multi-modal text in which these choices are embedded, the suffering may appear to be happening categorically in the right-here-right-now temporality or in the far-away-in-the-indefinite-past temporality. If emaciated children are placed in the time frame of a *fait accompli*, in the past tense, there is little to do about them; if they are represented in terms of an ongoing temporality where co-ordinated action develops as-we-speak, famine becomes an emergency and acquires a radically different horizon of action.

Suffering, however, may also be represented with a higher degree of ambivalence. It may appear to be happening simultaneously here and there, in the past and right now. In the September 11th footage, for example, long shots over Manhattan in smoke establish a voyeuristic distance from the scene of action, but paradoxically, they also establish a sense of proximity based on the temporality of reflection, on the chance they give to the spectator to ponder upon the circumstances and consequences of the terror attacks.

I would argue that the difference between categorical and ambivalent representations of spacetime is a difference in the degree of spatiotemporal complexity, in which the suffering is shown to occur. Although Bakhtin says that all events have their own chronotopic universe, I prefer to reserve the term ‘chronotopicity’ for those events, which involve more than one spacetimes (Bakhtin (1981: 84-85 and 243-58)). We can talk, therefore, of the chronotope of a news event as that regime of multiple spaces (danger and safety) and temporalities (present, past or future), through which the event ‘moves’ back and forth and, in so doing, presents the spectator not with one single reality of suffering but with multiple realities relevant to the suffering. I define, therefore, the chronotope of suffering as that spacetime which increasingly expands to encompass four elements:

- i) concreteness*, which shows the minimal context of suffering as a physical space;
- ii) multiplicity*, which moves the spectator through multiple physical contexts of suffering;
- iii) specificity*, which shows the context of suffering as a singular space, by elaborating on its unique properties, or which individualizes the sufferer as a unique person with a array of attributes and
- iv) mobility*, which connects the contexts of safety and danger suggesting a specific relationship of action between them.

The move from news defined by a minimum of these properties to news defined by increasing spatiotemporal complexity (chronotopes) is simultaneously a move from news with minimum potential for pity to news with maximum moral appeal and potential for engagement: the more complex the spacetime the less the ‘othering’ of the sufferer.

Agency: This is the analytical category that focuses on action upon suffering in terms of the agency of the sufferer herself and in terms of the system of other agents that operate in the scene of suffering. The type of action that these figures of pity play out on screen bears an effect on the spectator’s own orientation to the sufferer. This is because the spectator of television news becomes an object of the moral regulation of mediation by being addressed primarily as a free subject, that is as somebody who connects to television suffering through her own resources of emotion and capacities for action (Rose 1993, 1999; Barnett 2003:).

Agency, however, is as fragile a category as proximity and equally difficult to achieve. This is because agency in television can only take the form of action at a distance and there are only two paradigms for conceptualizing public action at a distance in western culture: the agora and the theatre. The first, the action of the agora, is contemplation and depends upon the spectator’s objective deliberation and judgement upon suffering. The second, the action of the theatre, is identification and depends upon the spectator’s participation in the psychological and emotional states of suffering (Sennet 1998).

The humane sufferer and the agora: In contemplation, which is the action of the agora, the spectator is expected to watch the sufferer’s misfortune without bias and to judge it objectively. But the position of true impartiality is impossible. This is because, as long as there is a hierarchy of places of suffering that divides the world, there will, inevitably, also be a hierarchy of the human lives that inhabit these places. It follows that the spectator is more likely to speak out about the suffering she is watching if the sufferer is construed as somebody like ‘us’ and, in reverse, she is more likely to switch off if the sufferer fails to appear as one like ‘us’. The agency of the spectator to engage in public speech about the suffering then depends upon the humanization of the sufferer.

In the analytics of mediation, humanization is a process of identity construction that endows the sufferer with the power to say or do something about her condition, even if this power is simply the power to evoke and receive the beneficiary action of others. The humane sufferer is the sufferer who acts. The difference, for example, between the September 11th sufferer and the sufferer in the Indian boat accident that I mentioned earlier is a difference in agency. The September 11th sufferer speaks; the Indian does not. The Indian sufferer, who is referred to as a number only, becomes an ‘Other’, with a capital ‘o’, in so far as her existence remains purely inactive (Tester 2001; Cohen 2001). Such a semiotic choice ‘annihilates’ the sufferer, in Silverstone’s words, that is it deprives the sufferer of her corporeal and psychological qualities and removes her from the existential order that the spectator belongs.

The first group of questions concerning agency, then, have to do with the sufferers’ voice and humanness:

- Is the sufferer given a voice, in language or in image?
- What kind of interiority is available to the sufferer? Is there a public-private boundary that gives her a certain ‘depth’ of consciousness?
- Does the sufferer co-exist or communicate with another or with other agents of suffering? What kind of ethical responsibility obliges these other agents in action?
- How does the sufferer connect with or communicate with the spectator? What kind of responsibility obliges the spectator in which type of action?

The humanization of the sufferer occurs either through the verbal mode or through the image. Concerning the verbal mode, the choice of the narrative type by which the news on suffering is reported plays an important role in the construal of the sufferer’s identity as humane. Narration, or story-telling proper, for example, includes dramatic elements that may animate the figure of the sufferer as an actor and thus may humanize the sufferer to a greater extent than the factual description of an event. Similarly, the lexicalization of the sufferer and the choice of attributes to characterize the sufferer’s condition are also instrumental in placing her within a hierarchy of active/ humane or inactive/inhumane values.

Concerning the visual mode, a key choice is camera position and angle. It makes a difference to film the sufferer from afar and above in a group or to film her frontally gazing at the camera. The gaze, in this context, is appellative action and the camera choice to capture the sufferer's gaze is also a choice to give voice and to humanize the sufferer, whereas the choice to film her through long shots may alienate and dehumanize her. Images of African people filmed en masse in some Darfur safety camp, shadowy figures gazing over their water-swept land or emaciated children's body parts zoomed into focus are just a few examples that show how visual 'Othering' contributes to sustaining powerful hierarchies of human life.

Another significant choice that regulates the humanization of the sufferer is visual juxtaposition. Montage may link the scene of suffering to the zone of safety in various forms of connectivity. One form of connectivity may be the cause and effect relationship, which evokes the thought that 'what happened there may affect us here'. Another form of connectivity may set up a request and response relationship between safety and danger, bringing up the thought that 'if this is what is needed then this is how we should act'. Depending on the conceptual relationship established via visual juxtaposition, the sufferer may be placed beyond a zone of contact with the spectator, both spatially (too far out there to reach) and temporally (a figure of eternal misfortune without past or future), or alternatively she may be placed in an active relationship with the spectator.

The figures of suffering and the theatre: If, in contemplation, the agora model of action at a distance, the what-to-do vis a vis the sufferer depends on the representation of the sufferer as properly humane, in the theatrical model of action at a distance, where the witnessing of suffering occurs mostly through emotions, the what-to-do takes a different twist. The witnessing of suffering is now mediated by the dynamics of social relationships that are already at play into the scene of suffering, the benefactor or the persecutor. Agency in the theatre, then, depends on the orchestration of these two primary figures of action who connect the reality of distant suffering to the spectator's private feelings vis a vis the spectacle she is watching. We should not think of the benefactor and the persecutor only as 'real people' on the television screen, although this is very often the case. Rather, we should think of them as symbolic figures that focalise the affective potential of the spectator towards a particular emotion. It is only when this private potential for feeling leads the spectator

to identify with a cause, such as philanthropic care in the case of tender-heartedness or denunciation in the case of indignation, that the spectacle of distant suffering is able to constitute a group of spectators into a public- a collectivity with a will to act.

It is evident that the symbolic figures of the benefactor and the persecutor are here taken to be metonymic signs. They are, that is, carriers of meaning that use the private feelings evoked by the actors on suffering so as to articulate a public value of how-to-act towards the suffering. Whereas the tender-hearted impulse to protect or comfort the sufferer articulates the moral value of care for the 'other', the indignant impulse to denounce or even to attack the evil-doer articulates the moral demand for civil justice. In this respect, the task of the analytics of mediation is to show how the figures of agency, benefactor and persecutor, literally incorporate the moral value associated with suffering in each particular piece of news and how they make it part of a persuasive theatre of action.

The second group of questions, then, has to do with the presence of agents in suffering:

- Is the scene of suffering populated by agents?
- If yes, who participates in the suffering and under which capacity?
- Does the text evoke or explicitly represent a benefactor, individual or collective, acting to alleviate suffering? Does it evoke a persecutor, individual or collective, inflicting the suffering?
- Which is the overall dramaturgical composition of these figures? Which potential for emotion and/or practical action does this composition induce?

In which way does the agency dimension of the analytics of mediation help us understand how television might cultivate a cosmopolitan sensibility? It indicates that neither too much emotion, the stuff of theatricality, nor too much impartial rationality, the stuff of the agora, are adequate and sufficient conditions for cosmopolitanism. Whereas the emotional bias risks to overwhelm the spectator with sentimentalism and prevent the pursuit for an objective judgment of suffering, the bias in favour of impartial rationality risks to remove the spectator from the drama of suffering and altogether postpone the urgent demand for action (Boltanski 1999: xx).

It is the task of the analytics of mediation to trace down the concrete manifestations through which news broadcasts negotiate the tension between objectivity and tender-heartedness, between the generality of facts and the particularity of emotions as well as the subsequent effects that such negotiations have on the construal of the cosmopolitan disposition in each news item. As I have shown elsewhere, the cosmopolitan disposition seems to be emerging out of these multiple representations of the distant ‘other’ not as a full and positive presence but, rather, as a fleeting glimpse, as a temporary possibility.

The ‘analytics of mediation’: an example

Let us now turn to a concrete example of the analytics at work. It comes from the Iraq war footage on BBC, March-April 2003, and concerns the regular ‘updates’ of the Baghdad bombardments- some of the most visually arresting and emotionally compelling pieces of warfare on television (Chouliaraki 2005; 2006b).

In the analytics of mediation, the war footage is seen as a semiotic accomplishment, which combines camera work and voiceover, or television’s multi-modality, in order to establish a degree of proximity with the scene of suffering and to propose certain possibilities of action upon the suffering.

The mode of presentation of the ‘update’ is moving image (the edited video of the previous night’s footage) accompanied by voiceover, which comments on the image. On the visual plane, the point of view of the filming is from afar and above with a steady camera, probably from a terrace of the ‘Palestine’ hotel where foreign journalists stayed during the war. The camera captures Baghdad in its visual plenitude, allowing for the powerful audio-visual effects of the bombardment (blasts, explosions and fire) to fill up the screen. This pictorial composition conveys a strong sense of unrelenting action, with the harshness of repeated rattles and blasts turning the bombardment of the city into a spectacle of rare power and intensity.

The spectacular quality of the screen is framed by a complex verbal narrative, which combines narration with description and sporadic elements of exposition. Narration is the main narrative type of the voiceover, organising the verbal text into a coherent whole and structuring the bombing activity in terms of the journalists’ sense of time. This happens through the use of chronology: *by morning the buildings were still ablaze, or then we heard...we looked up...above us a buster...it swooped*

down...and it blasted^{xvi}. Narration is also organised around the journalists' own point of view, evident in the use of first person plural in *we heard, we looked*. Chronology, the human perception of time, together with the use of the personal point of view, *we*, in perception verbs such as *hear* and *look*, construe the voiceover as a particular type of story-telling: the testimony of an eye-witness. Description uses language referentially to illustrate visual action, as in *the buildings were still ablaze and still under attack*, or *anti-missile flare spewing out of its wing*, both of which are followed by shots zooming on building in fire or on a plane releasing fire. In this manner, description invites the spectator to study the military action and its effects together with the eye-witness. Finally, exposition appears marginally and is dispersed across sentences: *a terrible deafening sound as though the earth was being ripped open... ..anti-missile flare spewing out of its wing..., let loose a ferocious barrage*. Such quasi-literary use of adjectives, together with the metaphors *spewing* and *let loose* and the simile *as though the earth*, seek to convey a sense of the horrific and the extraordinary that the sight of the bombardment impressed upon the eye-witness.

Concerning spacetime, the total visibility of the camera manages to keep the spectator resolutely outside the scene of action. She is an onlooker, who is watching from a safe distance. The quality of proximity of this detached perspective is cinematic, a witness position that turns the reality of the war into a spectacular panorama. Simultaneously, the temporality of the 'update', past tense about the detail of military action, reinforces the emotional distance of cinematic proximity. The scene of the bombardment is not a scene of suffering but a terrain for the study of the logistics of warfare.

Finally, concerning agency, the 'update' contains no visualisation of human beings but only a panorama of military action. At the same time, the linguistic choices that verbalise the sufferer and the persecutor deprive these figures of any sense of humanness. The sufferer is mostly a collective entity or a non-living being and the persecutor is either diffused in the activity of airwar or erased from the narrative. By cancelling the presence of the persecutor and the sufferer, the footage presents the bombardment of Baghdad, again, not a scene of suffering but a site of intense military action without agency.

As I have argued elsewhere, these features of the footage construe the bombardment of Baghdad in a "sublime" regime of pity (Chouliaraki 2005:).

The sublime is a specific regime of pity that constitutes distant suffering less through emotions towards the sufferer and primarily through aesthetic appreciation derived from the horror of suffering itself. Unlike many other reports on suffering, which portray human beings that strongly appeal to the spectator's emotion and action, the Iraqi sufferer enters this footage only on the condition that her very humanity is cancelled. And, with it, what is also cancelled is the potential for emotion and engagement with the sufferer that the spectator may have had the potential to feel.

Conclusion

In this paper, I propose a methodology for the study of contemporary norms of public action that moves away from 'grand' theory and its dilemmatic approaches- approaches that either celebrate the role of the media in disseminating the values of global citizenship or disapprove of the media because they disempower the spectator and undermine the hope for a cosmopolitan sensibility.

Drawing on Aristotle's concept of phronetic research, I argue that the public values of, say, philanthropy or social justice always find their local enactment in particular practices of discourse. I therefore suggest that we begin our search for the possibility of a cosmopolitan disposition, that is to say the ethical disposition that connects the spectator with the distant sufferer, in the capacity of the discursive practices of television to produce proximity with the sufferer and offer to the spectator a sense of agency over the sufferer's misfortune.

The 'analytics of mediation' is a method for the study of the various representations of distant suffering in television news- its regimes of pity. Capitalising on the post-structuralist views of meaning and power of Derrida and Foucault, the analytics conceptualises the process of mediation in semiotic terms, as textual difference, and takes the television text to be its object of study. The study of mediation as hypermediacy looks into the media technologies that produce meaning of suffering on screen, what I term difference within the semiotic, whereas the study of mediation as immediacy looks into the social relations of suffering that these meanings represent, what I term difference outside the semiotic.

It is these recurrent doubles of mediation between hypermediacy and

immediacy or difference outside and within the semiotic that render possible the study of the television text as technology and meaning, as semiotic and social, as aesthetic and political.

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ⁱ Arendt (1973), McGowan (1998), Villa (1999) and Peters (2005) for the historical argument that the discourse of ‘universal’ morality, a form of ethical practice informed by ideas of Christian care and civil responsibility, was first articulated into the public realm in the Europe of Enlightenment and today constitutes a powerful discourse of public ethics in the western world.

ⁱⁱ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a24-1140b12, 1144b33-1145a11 (transl. by A.K. Thompson, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976).

ⁱⁱⁱ For the connection between pity and citizenship see Boltanski (1999:20-34) and Arendt (1973/1990:59-114); for the connection between private and public disposition see Peters (1999:214-225) and for the connection between the communication of the private self in the public sphere of television see Scannel (1991:1-9).

^{iv} For semiotic analyses of suffering see van Leeuwen & Jaworski (2002) on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Perlmutter & Wagner (2004) on the violent conflicts under the G8 Summit in Genoa; for the language of mourning in public and, specifically, media discourse see Butler (2003); for the language of mourning concerning the September 11 events see Martin (2004); for the analysis of spacetimes see Chilton (2003). For Discourse Analysis of discourses of pity in the context of migration see Reisigl and Wodak (2000); and for Discourse Analysis of the language of involvement in news broadcasts see Wodak (1996:100-30).

^v As Peters reminds us, the core controversy in social and media theory reflects a deeper rivalry between Marx’s conflictual view of society and Durkheim’s consensual view of the social body (Peters 1999:223).

^{vi} Whereas some theorists seek to work around the ethical impasses of this paradox, others remain resolutely negative. The most radical version of pessimism on the role of the media in social life is Baudrillard’s thesis, where the media are considered to be responsible for the disappearance of the real into a *simulacrum* - a mirror image of reality that is nowadays the only authentic reality of the spectator (Baudrillard 1988). This position entails a nihilism,

which leaves no space for us to consider the ethical content of mediation, let alone the demand for public action that the television spectacle of suffering may raise.

^{vii} This optimistic account of the ethical force of mediation goes as far as considering the media to be changing democracy today towards a deliberative model. Deliberative democracy, as opposed to representative democracy, is a non-localized, non-dialogical model of democracy, which comes about when audiences use media information to form judgements about distant events and undertake public action in the local contexts of their everyday life. In the face of the crisis of representative forms of public participation through political parties and social movements, deliberative processes contain today the hope for new practices of politicization and collective action. See Thompson (1995:114-16) for examples of such possibilities; also Alexander J. & Jakobs R. (1998:22-41) on American civil society.

^{viii} Audiences, we are told, must turn their sense of responsibility *into a form of moral-practical reflection* because this is *the best- the only option we have* (Thompson 1995:265).

^{ix} For a criticism of this position, accusing Derrida of cutting the semiotic system off social relations see Butler (1997:150-1); see also Said (1978:703).

^x Derrida's criticism of Saussure is a philosophical argument that explains the inferiority of writing in terms of the broader historical biases of western thinking, which takes the form of the opposition between conceptuality/ language and materiality/visuality. See also Shapiro (1993: 6-12) for a criticism of the *linguistic reduction* perspective, which suggests that the verbal has a far greater range than the visual; and see Jay (1994:493-542) for a critique of the 19th and 20th c. suspicion to visual culture, what he calls the *antiocularcentric discourse*, particularly in French thought. Shapiro and Jay's accounts on the antagonism between linguistic and vision-centred discourses reveals unresolved tensions in the debate.

^{xi} I here adapt Chatman's categories of three main text-types in communicative practice: *description*, *argument* and *narrative* (1991:9).

^{xii} For the use of Peircean semiotics in visual analysis and in media texts see Hall (1973); Hodge & Kress (1988:19-20); van Leeuwen (2001:92-118); Schroeder (2002:111-16).

^{xiii} Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2001); van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) for the grammar of the visual; see also van Leeuwen & Jaworski (2002); Perlmutter and Wagner (2004: 91-108). The Peircean typology corresponds to other classifications of meaning types, such as Panofsky's (see van Leeuwen 2001:100-17).

^{xiv} This is one of Foucault's basic claims (Foucault 1970, 1972) and a major premise for the post-structuralist anchoring of Discourse Analysis in critical research; for discussions see Fraser (1997), Torfing (1998); Chouliaraki (2002); Howarth (2002).

^{xv} These questions are adapted from Morson & Emerson's discussion on Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope* (1990:366-375).

^{xvi} All examples taken from voiceover transcript of April 8th, 2003.