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### **Tony Harrison, the Gulf War and the Poetry of Protest**

On 14 February 2003 a special edition of *G2*, the tabloid section of the *Guardian*, devoted sixteen pages to photographic images, many previously unpublished, of the 1991 Gulf War. The majority of these images was horrific and shocking in nature. The edition was edited by the renowned war photographer Don McCullin and published on the eve of the anti-war marches and demonstrations which took place, both in London and throughout the UK, to protest against the invasion of Iraq. The edition also contained articles, including a commentary by McCullin himself, which addressed the atrocities and horrors of the 1991 Gulf War. The centrepiece of the *G2* edition was Tony Harrison's poem 'A Cold Coming', which was printed opposite the photograph to which it responds: Kenneth Jarecke's image of a charred Iraqi soldier on the Basra Road. The poem was originally commissioned by the *Guardian*, together with its companion piece 'Initial Illumination', and both works were first published in the main editorial pages of the newspaper on 5 and 18 March 1991. The republication of the poem in 2003 reflects the special relationship that has developed between Harrison and the *Guardian*, so that Harrison has been described by Alan Rusbridger, a former editor of the newspaper, as 'the *Guardian*'s Poet Laureate'.<sup>1</sup> It also positions 'A Cold Coming' as a key contemporary anti-war or protest poem. In this article, I intend to explore the ways in which Harrison's Gulf War poems function as anti-war poetry. I will be questioning the ways in which Harrison intervenes into the political, and how he positions — or conceives the role of — the contemporary poet in a time of war or conflict.

Harrison's poem addresses Jarecke's photograph of the charred corpse of an Iraqi soldier, sitting in his burned-out vehicle on the Basra road. This image was

widely suppressed in the United States and in Britain it appeared only in the *Observer* on Sunday 10 March 1991. Although the photograph was not published on the front page, the newspaper was inundated with complaints. Jarecke observed of the suppression of the image:

No one would touch my photograph. [...] The excuse was that it was too upsetting, that people didn't want to look at that kind of thing anymore. The truth was that the US collaborated in keeping silent about the consequences of the Gulf War and who was responsible.<sup>2</sup>

The picture clearly demolished the propaganda that this was a 'clean' and 'bloodless' war. It showed the death of an Iraqi soldier incinerated in his truck on the Basra road. He was one of thousands of Iraqi troops who were bombed from the air by the allies as they fled north from Kuwait city, on foot or in tanks, armoured vehicles and trucks, at the end of the war. This slaughter, notoriously described by one American officer as a 'turkey shoot', took place on 27 February 1991.

The images promoted by the American military of the 1991 Gulf conflict were of a techno-war. For the first time, footage was relayed 'live' to TV viewers from the battlefield and the focus was on parading the latest military hardware.<sup>3</sup> In the images, war was waged at a distance and viewed primarily from the air. The conflict was visible through laser sights and appeared as the light traces from missiles and shells. Moreover, the war that was transmitted on TV was overwhelmingly filtered through the reports and press briefings of the coalition military, headed by General Norman Schwarzkopf. Haunted by the spectre of Vietnam, the coalition authorities instituted a 'pool system' of reporting in the Gulf — already successfully utilised by Margaret Thatcher in the Falklands in 1982 — in which a restricted number of journalists and photographers supplied copy and images to be transmitted home by the military, and their movements were strictly controlled by armed forces personnel. With this new level of military control, few photographers gained access to scenes of destruction.

Much of the commentary in the *G2* 14 February 2003 edition focuses on the restriction of reporting in the 1991 Gulf conflict, and in particular the absence from view of the bodies of the dead. In his commentary, 'This is War', McCullin contrasts

the aerial view, which renders the horror of war invisible, with the vision that the war photographer's camera can produce: 'Of course, it's the photographer's job to show some of that horror, to say: this is the real war, this is what it's like on the ground, this is what war does to you'.<sup>4</sup> McCullin's article is a statement of faith in the obligation to see and tell, and he presumes that once the horrific images of the 1991 Gulf conflict have been made visible, the only appropriate response to them can be one of protest: 'they are crying out for us to put a stop to it'.<sup>5</sup> McCullin's commentary faces a whole-page picture, also by Jarecke, of an Iraqi soldier burned to pieces during the retreat from Kuwait, although his head remains almost untouched. The juxtaposition rhetorically suggests that the Iraqi himself cries out in protest. This impression is reinforced by McCullin's argument that, in choosing to photograph the dead, the photographer has implicitly decided that 'it is still possible to speak for the Iraqis incinerated in the American ambush on the Basra road'.<sup>6</sup> Read in conjunction with 'A Cold Coming', which also faces a photograph of a dead Iraqi soldier by Jarecke, McCullin's article suggests that Harrison gives voice to a protest which is already contained by, or implicit within, the photographic image.

Underlying McCullin's rhetoric is a presumption that once the atrocity is made visible, it is also straightforwardly readable, that its meaning is self-evidently a protest against war. In a short article, 'Photographs of Agony', John Berger has reflected on McCullin's war photography and the responses that it evokes. He observes that McCullin's photographs typically record moments of agony — a wounding, a death, a cry of grief — which are discontinuous with normal time. Faced with images of such moments, Berger argues, the viewer often responds by treating the photograph as evidence of the general human condition, which accuses everybody and nobody. For Berger, this response marks a depoliticisation of the war which has caused the suffering in the image. He urges us when looking at images such as McCullin's — or Jarecke's — to remain critically vigilant and to replace a general abhorrence of war with a focused political critique or response:

Usually the wars we are being shown are being fought directly or indirectly in 'our' name. What we are shown horrifies us. The next step should be to confront our own lack of political freedom. In the political systems as they exist, we have no legal opportunity of effectively influencing the conduct of wars waged in our name. To realise this is to act accordingly and the only effective way of responding to what the photograph shows.<sup>7</sup>

Susan Sontag has made the related point that photographs of atrocity are not self-evident in meaning; they may give rise to a call for peace, but they may also provoke a cry for revenge. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she cautions: 'all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions'.<sup>8</sup>

Jarecke's photograph of the Iraqi soldier could give rise, as McCullin suggests, to an abhorrence at the atrocities inflicted by the coalition forces and lead to protest against another invasion of Iraq. However if the photograph was seen by the wives, children, parents, sisters and brothers of those conscripts who were killed fleeing in retreat from Kuwait, it could produce a call for revenge. Even though McCullin's rhetoric suggests that Jarecke's photograph speaks for itself, the presence of his article evidences otherwise; it acts as an extended 'caption' to position the photograph and our response. Likewise, Harrison's poem can be read as an extended 'caption', which suggests that the meaning of the photograph is not self evident; although the poem may also have a life away from the image in Harrison's publications, the photograph nevertheless remains its referent. Harrison's 'caption' does not conform to the traditional format, providing details of date, place and name. Rather, it confronts us with the difficulty of looking — and continuing to look — at the image of the Iraqi soldier. Jarecke's photograph may make visible what was previously unseen from the aerial perspective, but Harrison suggests that there is also something in the image itself which complicates or disrupts McCullin's dichotomous equation of blindness with the aerial view and sight with the (photographer's) vision from the ground.

### **Initial illumination**

The original publication of 'A Cold Coming' in the *Guardian* on 18 March 1991 was preceded two weeks earlier by the appearance of its companion poem 'Initial Illumination'. In the Bloodaxe collections *A Cold Coming: Gulf War Poems* and *The Gaze of the Gorgon*, published in 1991 and 1992 respectively, 'A Cold Coming' is likewise published alongside and preceded by 'Initial Illumination'. It is striking in this context that the *G2* edition published 'A Cold Coming' in isolation as an independent work. Harrison's title suggests that 'Initial Illumination' introduces and begins to shed light on 'A Cold Coming'. In this section, I therefore propose to engage in a close reading of the poem in order to consider the ways in which it relates to and acts in dialogue with its companion work.<sup>9</sup>

'Initial Illumination' is structured around the pairing of double meanings which is implicit in the poem's title. 'Initial' refers both to a beginning and to the first letter of a word. 'Illumination' means both the act of casting light and the action of adorning or decorating a manuscript. Harrison draws out all of the implied meanings in his reference to the monks' inscription of the '*In principio's* initial I' in the Lindisfarne gospels. The Latin words refer to the act of Creation, the beginning of the world, which was also an act of shedding or casting light. Harrison's meaning also encompasses the monks' illumination or decoration of the 'I', the first letter of the word '*In*'. The initial illumination, or the imagery of light which dominates the opening of the poem, darkens and is eclipsed as the work progresses. The description of Lindisfarne is associated with light, for it is 'the first bright weather for many weeks' and the Farne cormorants fly over a 'shining sea'. However, darkness overshadows the descriptions of Iraq at the poem's close. The speaker meditates on the 'burial of the blackened' and the cormorants are now clogged with oil from the 'black laquered sea' of the Gulf. The movement of the poem insists that the Gulf conflict brings darkness and leaves in its wake both incineration and pollution.

Harrison develops and complicates this dichotomy of darkness and light in his contemplation of the Dark Ages. The sight of the Farne cormorants brings to mind the association of the Lindisfarne gospels and the cormorants which decorated the

manuscript. In spite of the violence of the Dark Ages and the raiding and sacking of the monastery at Lindisfarne, the beauty of the gospels still ‘survive[s]’. For Harrison, however, the atrocities and conflicts that have marked his own lifetime, the second half of the twentieth century, and which are continuing in the current war in Iraq, have propelled us into an even darker age and he is left uncertain as to whether poetry still has a role or function to fulfil, feeling ‘doubtful, in these dark days, what poems can do’. The poem charts a gradual decline in the power or efficacy of the word. The words ‘*In principio*’ signal the act of Creation when the word of God first cast light upon the darkness. In the Dark Ages, this act of creation was celebrated by the monks of Lindisfarne in their own illumination or decoration of the ‘word of God’. In the dark days of the present, however, the word of God is not ‘scripted’ but ‘conscripted’; it is appropriated by the rhetoric of the Pentagon to justify acts of military aggression and destruction. The only light that this word spreads is the momentary flash of a military flare or the inflagation of a bomb — an initial burst of light which is rapidly replaced by the blackness of charred bodies and oil-clogged waters. At a time when words are ‘much bandied’ by political leaders, Harrison calls into question the role of the contemporary poet.

‘Initial Illumination’ also explores the meaning of illumination as clarification or understanding. In the Western philosophical tradition, there is a strong connection between the acts of seeing and understanding, as suggested in the slippage in meaning between illumination as casting light and as explanation. Harrison’s poem marks a crisis in this linguistic slippage, and he questions whether the act of shedding light also brings insight or understanding. This is demonstrated through the example of the ‘Baghdad cock’, which sees light and crows to greet the dawn. This is not, however, the light of morning but a fire raid and the bird merely heralds his own death. The light of the raid brings ‘confusion’ rather than understanding and the cock is ‘betrayed’ by his own trust in what he (thinks he) sees. At the end of the poem, the cock is transformed into the victors of the coalition forces, who ‘crow’ over what they ‘claim as victories’ — although Harrison insists that this is empty rhetoric. Although

the media feeds us images of victory, ‘trumpets bulled and bellicose and blaring’, we — like the cock — should not necessarily trust what we see, for these triumphant images obscure charred and ‘blackened’ corpses. At the close of the poem, Harrison describes the ‘slack-necked cormorants’ which ‘intertwine’ the ‘victory V’. The image of the cormorants refers back to the ‘Farne cormorants’; unlike the birds the speaker sees, these cormorants can no longer fly, for they are the victims of oil pollution in the Gulf. The image also refers back to the painted cormorants which decorated the Lindisfarne gospels; just as the Pentagon has appropriated the ‘word of God’, so it has ‘conscripted’ the image of the cormorant to serve its own rhetorical purposes.

The image of the ‘slack-necked cormorant’ refers to one of the key photographic images in the early stages of the Gulf war. The picture of an oiled crested cormorant was transmitted around the world on the weekend of 25-7 January 1991, to be followed shortly after by alarming footage of crude oil lapping the Gulf coastline. The cormorant was claimed to be a victim of Saddam Hussein’s act of ‘environmental terrorism’ in releasing gallons of crude oil into the Gulf for no apparent military purpose. The resulting slick was said to be fifteen times larger than the 1989 *Exxon Valdes* disaster. It emerged within a matter of days, however, that the image of the cormorant was from an earlier, smaller oil spill which the Americans claimed was caused by an Iraqi raid on a Saudi refinery, while the Iraqis insisted that the spillage was caused by the allied bombing of tankers. The question remained extremely confused in the media, but it does seem that the coalition capitalised on the power of the image. Taylor observes: ‘The point from a propaganda perspective was that a massive environmental disaster was being extrapolated from pictures of a relatively minor spill’.<sup>10</sup>

The image of the oiled bird was also central to Jean Baudrillard’s critique of the conflict in Iraq, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. For Baudrillard, the oiled bird symbolised that this was not the ‘clean war’ that allied propaganda claimed it to be. The image also signified for him the ‘slick’ of media propaganda, in which TV audiences in the West were stranded as inexorably as the cormorant in the oil:

this uncertainty invades our screens like a real oil slick; in the image of that blind sea bird stranded on a beach in the Gulf, which will remain the symbol-image of what we all are in front of our screens, in front of that sticky and unintelligible event.<sup>11</sup>

Harrison's image of the cormorant invites comparison to Baudrillard. The contrast of the Farne cormorant with the oiled bird reveals that this is indeed a 'dirty' war. Moreover, Harrison is interested in the cormorant *as image* in his implied comparison of the illuminated manuscript of the Lindisfarne gospels with today's media images. The image of the cormorant has now been 'conscripted' into the war and is inextricably 'intertwined' with, and inseparable from, the political and military rhetoric of the 'victory V'.

'Initial Illumination' sheds light on 'A Cold Coming' in several important ways. Like the latter poem, 'Initial Illumination' responds to a photograph which forms one of the iconic images of the Gulf War. Harrison warns us that these images do not speak for themselves and are 'conscripted' into military and political rhetoric on both sides of the conflict. The poem also insists on the necessity that poetry mirror something of the horror of the war. It seems that the job of the 'scribe' is no longer to 'beautify', but rather to record and reflect on the 'burial of the blackened'. Harrison questions whether contemporary poetry can provide 'illumination' or insight in these 'dark days'. The poem suggests that the act of shedding light does not necessarily bring insight or understanding. Nevertheless, 'Initial Illumination' describes a journey during which the poet himself is illumined, so that he at least can see beyond the rhetoric of war. Even as he voices his doubts, and is at times brought close to despair, he is not silenced or silent in the face of war, but continues to respond and to speak.

### **The chilled suspension of the Present**

In 'A Cold Coming', Harrison continues to question the role of poetry in the context of modern warfare.<sup>12</sup> Rick Rylance has pointed out that the poem is haunted by 'an anxiety that escape into art means that poetry loses purchase on the world's material issues'.<sup>13</sup> In the poem, the dead Iraqi interrupts the speaker's musings on Sophocles to

accuse him of precisely this. In spite of Harrison's doubts, however, he is concerned to suggest that poetry provides a way of coping with — and surviving — the darkest times; that it provides a means of facing atrocity and horror.

I believe that, maybe, poetry, the word at its most eloquent, is one medium which would concentrate our attention on our worst experiences without leaving us with the feeling, as other media can, that life in this century has had its affirmative spirit burnt out.<sup>14</sup>

In 'Facing up to the Muses' Harrison protests against the 'death' of poetry in the aftermath of the Holocaust, most famously articulated in Theodor Adorno's statement that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. He contests this loss of faith in poetry and asserts his conviction that 'language could take on anything and everything':

So when I discovered that there was supposed to be a 'retreat from the word', I wasn't prepared to retreat. And when I heard about the 'death of tragedy', I wasn't prepared to attend the funeral, because at that time of my life when I most hungered for articulation and models of eloquence, at the maximum point of my need and hunger, I was brought face to face with Greek tragedy, in which, I think, the primacy of language is paramount.<sup>15</sup>

Harrison does not suggest that poetry is unmarked by its encounter with the atrocity of modern war. Antony Rowland has argued that if the act of writing poetry after the Holocaust is barbaric, then Harrison explores the possibility of writing 'a poetry of barbarism'.<sup>16</sup> He forges a post-Holocaust poetics, which is characterised by awkwardness and embarrassment, and insists that it is better to confront the horrors of war from a distance than to remain silent. His poetry tackles distressing themes and dark subjects by confining itself within strict formal limits in terms of rhyme and rhythm; he imposes a discipline on the writing that enables him to engage with the horror:

That rhythmical thing is like a life-support system. It means I feel I can go closer to the fire, deeper into the darkness [...]. I don't have the heart to confront some experience unless I know I have this rhythm to carry me to the other side. It's an existential need, the metrical form, for me.<sup>17</sup>

‘A Cold Coming’ is written in rhymed iambic tetrameter couplets, which provides a strong rhythmic regularity that enables Harrison to confront the horror of Jarecke’s photograph.<sup>18</sup> Iambic tetrameter is traditionally the metre used in hymns, songs and ballads and is associated with a direct appeal to emotion. Harrison’s poem evokes Alfred Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam’, which was also written in this metre. This implicitly positions the poem as an elegy and claims the death of the anonymous Iraqi as worthy of such a literary form. The first line of ‘A Cold Coming’ also specifically recalls the opening of William Blake’s ‘London’ — ‘I wander thro’ each charter’d street’ — which locates the poem, from its beginning, in a tradition of political protest.

The title and epigraph of the poem are taken from T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Journey of the Magi’: ‘A cold coming we’ve had of it’.<sup>19</sup> Ian Gregson has criticised Harrison’s use of Eliot arguing that it implies ‘epiphany’ and ‘transcendent insights’ which are misplaced in this ‘least meaningful of wars/ made cosier by these metaphors’.<sup>20</sup> My own reading of ‘A Cold Coming’ seeks to demonstrate, on the contrary, that Harrison rewrites or revises Eliot in order to suggest that — faced with the photograph of the Iraqi soldier — poetry can no longer fulfil an epiphanic function. Rather than seeking to transcend or domesticate the horror of the image, as Gregson suggests, Harrison’s aim is precisely to ‘concentrate our attention on [the] worst experiences’.

Eliot’s ‘Journey of the Magi’ is narrated by one of the wise men who looks back on the experience of travelling to Bethlehem. The poem recounts the journey with a sense of weariness and the tone is flat and anti-climactic. The magus does not understand the significance of what he has seen and it is up to the reader to supply the meaning of the images. The landscape through which the man passes on his journey to Bethlehem has been transformed by the arrival of Christ, for it is suffused with the symbols of the Christian era. The most innocent details — the three trees, the leaves of the vine, the dicing, the pieces of silver — are charged with meaning and redolent of symbolic transfiguration. The poem was written in the same year as Eliot’s conversion and the description of the valley revisits and sanctifies the landscape of

*The Waste Land*: the barren desert of rock and sand is transformed to a scene suggestive of transcendence and miracle. The coming of Christ has transformed the world, even if the speaker of the poem is not yet able to grasp the full import of the change that has taken place.

In 'A Cold Coming', the wise men are transformed to the 'three wise Marines'. The 'cold coming' does not refer to the birth of Christ but introduces the trope of the frozen sperm. In Harrison's 'barbaric' and scatological rewriting of Eliot, the US soldiers have banked their sperm for posterity before the war began. Luke Spencer observes that this reveals on the part of the Americans 'an arrogant desire to cheat death privately while inflicting it on a huge scale publicly' and it also acts as a key symbol of 'superpower hubris' in the poem, demonstrating the absolute disparity between America and Iraq in this high-tech war.<sup>21</sup> Harrison's image of frozen sperm also echoes Baudrillard's argument in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* that the technology of the Gulf War mirrors the technology of simulation in artificial-reproduction techniques; the Gulf conflict bears the same relation to war as the latter to sex:

It has been called a surgical war, and it is true that there is something in common between this *in vitro* destruction and *in vitro* fertilisation [...] Except in the new Genetic Order, a child issues from sexual copulation. Except in the new World Order, war is born of an antagonistic, destructive but dual relation between two adversaries. This war is an asexual, surgical war, a matter of war processing, in which the enemy only appears as a computerised target, just as sexual partners only appear as code-names on the screen of *Minitel Rose*. If we can speak of sex in the latter case then perhaps the Gulf War can pass for war.<sup>22</sup>

Baudrillard provides an eloquent metaphor for a 'war' that was waged largely without engagement between the two sides because of the technology deployed by the coalition forces. Harrison's soldier likewise complains that he has been the victim of an 'ingenious technophile' and that the 'screen-gazing' boy who dropped the bomb did not even see his human target. The same 'high-tech' enables the US soldiers to 'bank their sperm', while the Iraqis are 'stuck with sex'.

For Baudrillard, the Gulf conflict is of a different order to previous wars: 'After the hot war (the violence of conflict), after the cold war (the balance of terror), here comes the dead war — the unfrozen cold war'.<sup>23</sup> Harrison develops the image of the 'unfrozen cold war' into a rewriting of Eliot's poem. This 'cold coming' does not represent a birth or incarnation, the miracle of flesh; in this 'Cruise/Scud cursed millennium' the 'test tube' remains 'frozen' and there can only be a 'bottled Bethlehem'. Harrison offers the reader no prospect of epiphany or transcendence: the birth of Christ has been reduced to the bathos of 'cold spunk'. Harrison's rhymes likewise deflate any possibility of a higher meaning, producing the bathetic pairings of 'God'/'wad' and 'fate'/'ejaculate'. At the close of the poem, the speaker turns from facing the Iraqi soldier to gaze 'the way the charred man faced'. The vista is of a 'frozen phial of waste', which is more reminiscent of Eliot's barren waste land than the sanctified landscape of 'Journey of the Magi'. Harrison does not even provide the sense of apocalyptic transformation that characterises Yeats's 'Second Coming'. Joe Kelleher discerns in Harrison's title an allusion to Yeats's poem and suggests that each poet is 'attempting to mediate global crisis with the mere resources of his imagination'.<sup>24</sup> Yeats replaces the Second Birth with the Second Coming, so that in this millennium the Christ child has been transformed into a terrifying and pitiless beast. He offers a bleak vision of impending brutality and barbarism, a fate which is inescapable as the beast slouches inexorably towards Bethlehem. In Harrison's poem, life and death are held in suspension in the 'chilled' and 'frozen' present. The ending suggests that there can only be change once 'the World renounces War', but there is little prospect of this in the insatiable hunger of the present for destruction. This state of 'frozen' deadlock is reinforced by the cyclical gesture of the poem's close. The speaker rewinds the tape of the Iraqi's voice and plays it over again, in a potentially interminable act of repetition. Unlike Eliot, Harrison offers us no prophecy of hope and no prospect of epiphany: the Iraqi is doomed to repeat his anti-war message, although there seems little chance that it will be heard or heeded.

### **The Gorgon's Gaze**

In 1992, 'Initial Illumination' and 'A Cold Coming' were published in the Bloodaxe collection *The Gaze of the Gorgon*. Most immediately, this placed Harrison's Gulf war poems in the context of his ongoing concern with the horrors of twentieth-century warfare. The imagery of fire pervades the collection connecting the charred Iraqi soldier to the victims of other modern 'holocausts' — the Nazi Holocaust, Dresden, Hiroshima. The title of the collection also suggests an alternative reading of 'A Cold Coming' in positioning the Iraqi soldier in relation to the figure of the Gorgon, representative in the collection as a whole of the petrifying face of modern warfare. Harrison introduced this interpretation of the Gorgon in 'Facing up to the Muses', in which he quotes Macneile Dixon, former Regius Professor of English Literature at Glasgow University, describing in 1921 the trench warfare of the First World War as 'the Medusa-like countenance of frenzy and despair'. Elaborating on this image, Harrison observes:

It's the frenzy and despair of the fifth age of mankind, the iron age, and the gaze turns men to stone and numbs their sources of affirmation. Sixty years since Macneile Dixon saw life turn its Medusa-like gaze upon us, there have been greater quantities of blood spilled, greater horrors, and it has created a very 'weary nine' [Muses] and a darker and darker Helicon.<sup>25</sup>

Characteristically, Harrison resists the notion that the role of literature is exhausted in these dark times. He turns to Greek tragedy as a means of confronting atrocity, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche's observation in *The Birth of Tragedy* that art forces us to gaze into the horror of existence 'yet without being turned to stone by the vision'. He also cites Robert Jay Lifton, an American professor of psychiatry who has worked closely with survivors of the Nazi concentration camps and Hiroshima, who resists 'the deeply numbing effect' of catastrophe on our imaginations and calls for 'a theatre of faith'. Harrison comments: 'It sounds to me like a call for the *rebirth* of tragedy'.<sup>26</sup>

In 'A Cold Coming', Harrison's evocation of the Gorgon incorporates the threat of castration: the 'Medusa' of modern warfare is also a castrating monster.

Throughout the poem, Harrison reiterates a focus on war's threat to the male procreative function. The idea of being petrified or turned to stone emerges in the image of the frozen semen of the American marines. Kelleher observes that this acts as a 'hubristic bid for posterity on the part of the three marines'.<sup>27</sup> Even as they set out for war, they seek to deny the threat of death and to be 'masters of their fate'. Although the gesture acts as consolation, it also implicitly acknowledges the threat of death and the corresponding dread or fear; it is a precaution that is taken precisely because it *could* be the marines' 'fate' to be 'gassed'. The threat of castration remains at the end of the poem, even though the marines return home from the war 'to sire their children in the sack'. The dead Iraqi becomes the Gorgon, the atrocious face of war.<sup>28</sup> Under his petrifying gaze, the 'cold spunk' is frozen indefinitely and perhaps permanently. The poem ends with a chilling vision of 'Mankind on the rocks', which refers to the frozen sperm that has been put 'on ice', but also encompasses the notion that humanity/masculinity has foundered and run aground. The persona of the poem, a Western journalist who interviews the dead Iraqi, is likewise petrified and demasculinised before the Gorgon-figure. His hand is 'shaking' as he holds the microphone closer to the charred features and he is castigated as a 'fool' to be peremptorily dismissed once the interview is over: 'Now go away'. He is unable to hold the gaze of the Iraqi, to outstare the Gorgon, and seeks to 'look away' as the dead man is speaking.

If the dead Iraqi is a Gorgon-figure, then Harrison is implicitly positioned as the hero Perseus, who killed the Gorgon by confronting her with her own image in the mirror of his shield. For Kelleher, the petrifying stare of the Gorgon represents the 'murdering machismo' of modern, technological warfare. Harrison positions himself in confrontation with the destroying gaze of the Medusa: 'the Gorgon's incorporation of terror for and hatred of humanity means that hers is an influence that must be *opposed* by the poet'.<sup>29</sup> Harrison transposes the Perseus story onto modern history to suggest that the poet's art acts as a mirror-shield and with this he can reflect (on) the horror of modern warfare and not be frozen into silence. The poet opposes the war by

reflecting its horrors in his poetry, which he catches and gives back. This gesture seeks to defeat the Gorgon of militarism by confronting her with her own atrocious image, and to capture in the poems a reflection of war that reveals its horror to us while also shielding us from its numbing or petrifying effect. Perseus's heroism simultaneously involves both looking and looking away. Jacques Derrida has observed of the various challenges that Perseus overcomes in defeating the Gorgon: 'Each time there is the ruse of an oblique or indirect gaze. A ruse that consists in side-stepping rather than meeting head-on the death that comes through the eyes'.<sup>30</sup> Harrison's poem involves a similar disturbance or disruption of vision. It offers us an 'indirect gaze' at the photograph of the dead Iraqi, enabling us to confront and engage with the horror of the death that the image reveals. Much of the 'indirection' in the poem comes through the 'I' of the persona, who substitutes his gaze for our own.

The picture of the Iraqi soldier can be read as the terrifying face of modern warfare, but it also represents a figure who has *already* been petrified by the gaze of the Gorgon. The Iraqi has been turned into stone, for he is now frozen inside — or as — his own memorial; he haunts his own death. Like many of Harrison's poems, 'A Cold Coming' is theatrical in form, staging a meeting or confrontation between opposites — the Western poet-journalist and the Iraqi, the living and the dead — and imagining the conversation between them. Harrison speaks not only in the persona of the poet-journalist but also *as* the dead soldier. In voicing his words, Harrison allows the 'crumbling' monument to speak and to voice its own epitaph. His gesture engages the impossible but necessary task of speaking for the dead: he finds words to fill the silence of the dead man, but he also recognises that there can be no authentic words or voice. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi articulated the impossible necessity of witnessing for those who have seen the 'Gorgon' and been destroyed by the vision, those who are no longer able to speak for themselves:

[W]e, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. [...] We are those who by prevarication or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned

mute, but they are the [...] complete witnesses. [...] We speak in their stead, by proxy.<sup>31</sup>

It is easy to criticise Harrison's gesture of speaking for/as the Iraqi, for he is not a 'survivor' like Levi and his relationship to the dead man is culled from a photograph in the newspaper. His words nevertheless give a face or identity to the soldier who has literally been de-faced and insist on his humanity: 'Though fire has flayed off half my features/ they once were like my fellow creatures'.<sup>32</sup> Harrison also resists the idea that the soldier's death is 'unspeakable' and 'unimaginable' — epithets which, as Jenny Edkins has pointed out, 'have often served as an excuse for neither imagining nor speaking about [the event in question]'.<sup>32</sup> Antony Rowland observes of Harrison's poetry: 'it might be more generous to condone his work for taking on board, and constantly questioning, the awkwardness of speaking for the dead'.<sup>33</sup> The issue of (in)authenticity is constantly highlighted in 'A Cold Coming', from the Iraqi's accusation that the poet-journalist will 'lie' and misrepresent his message to the Western public, to the blank space at the end of the poem which clearly signals that the Iraqi has no voice and it is only the artifice of the poem that has given him speech. The poem offers us a calculatedly unconvincing ventriloquizing, and foregrounds its own act of impersonation: there is no attempt here at the suspension of disbelief. Harrison insists that it is preferable to speak for the dead — even if that necessarily risks inauthenticity — than to remain silent.

For Harrison, it is the 'poet's task' to 'find words' for the 'mask' of the Iraqi's charred face. The rhetorical gesture of the poem is that of *prosopopeia*, the fiction of the voice-beyond-the-grave. In his study of William Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs*, Paul de Man elaborates: 'it is [...] the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech'.<sup>34</sup> Etymologically, the term derives from *prosopon poiein*, 'to confer a mask or a face'. In *Essays upon Epitaphs*, Wordsworth repeatedly returns to the figure, for he finds particularly affecting those epitaphs in which the deceased is represented speaking from his own tombstone because it brings

together the worlds of the living and the dead. De Man points out, however, that whenever the trope occurs, Wordsworth's argument becomes 'singularly inconclusive' and in places turns back upon itself, counselling against the use of its main figure. To account for Wordsworth's hesitation, de Man evokes the 'latent threat' that inhabits prosopopeia:

by making the death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies, by the same token, that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death. The surmise of the 'Pause, Traveller!' thus acquires a sinister connotation that it is not only the prefiguration of one's own mortality but our actual entry into the frozen world of the dead.<sup>35</sup>

'A Cold Coming' powerfully brings the dead Iraqi into the world of the living, through the fiction that he speaks and voices his own desire for life: 'I was filled with such a yearning/ to stay in life as I was burning'. The soldier inhabits a liminal territory between life and death, and Harrison's rhetoric captures an important aspect of the photograph itself. Jarecke has observed of the image:

I think the reason it stands out is that you can imagine the driver alive. [...] He is fighting to get out of his burning vehicle, and anyone looking at the photograph can understand how powerful the desire to live is.<sup>36</sup>

However even as the poem confers life upon the dead Iraqi, it is haunted by the idea of being turned to stone, trapped in the frozen world of the dead. Prosopopeia operates at the very limit or border between life and death, and it concerns what we can say or know — what we can imagine — of our own death. As Kelleher observes, the terror of inhabiting that border is of being petrified or frozen into death, and 'not, in fact, being able to *say* anything at all'.<sup>37</sup> The poet himself may be 'struck dumb' and this threat overshadows the end of the poem. The landscape in which the speaker stands is the perpetually frozen world of the dead and the blank space after the final colon represents the silence and dumbness of death, which threatens to encroach upon and overtake the speaker's words. The colon that closes the poem also suggests that the tape has proved to be blank, like all attempts to record ghosts. Again, Harrison puts into question the authenticity of the supposed recorded interview: the poet *does* 'pretend' and there is no mistaking his words for the real thing.

Harrison's description of the Iraqi's face as a 'mask' self-consciously evokes the association of Greek tragedy. In 'Facing up to the Muses', Harrison develops a theory of tragedy and witnessing in which the mask plays a central role. He argues that the tragic mask, open-eyed and open-mouthed, is obliged to keep on looking and to keep on speaking in the face of the worst catastrophes. In situations that would render a person silent or speechless, the mask is compelled to find words:

Words might fail you or me at such critical moments when we see the city burned to the ground, our children slaughtered, devastation and horror in all their worst forms, but words do not fail the mask. It is designed with an open mouth. To go on speaking even at 'critical moments'.<sup>38</sup>

Harrison's discussion of the mask is notable for conceiving it in isolation, as if it is the mask itself that speaks and looks. In theatrical performance, however, it is the actor behind the mask who looks and who speaks the words of the poet. In tragedy, there is a complex intersection between mask, actor and poet. Behind the 'mask' of the Iraqi soldier is Harrison-as-actor who looks and who speaks the words of Harrison-as-poet. The ability of the 'mask' to bear witness depends on the capacity of the poet to keep on finding words. In order to speak for/as the dead man, Harrison must put on the 'frightening mask' of his charred and disfigured features. Derrida has suggested that the mask is inherently 'frightening', because of its inevitable association with death:

every mask announces the mortuary mask [...]. [A]s a result, [...] the Medusa effect: the mask shows the eyes in a carved face that one cannot look in the face without coming face to face with a petrified objectivity, with death or blindness.<sup>39</sup>

If Harrison speaks from behind the mask, his face is already frozen or petrified into death. Although he asserts in 'Facing up to the Muses' that the mask has a seemingly unlimited capacity to speak, he refers in 'A Cold Coming' to the 'dumb mask' of the Iraqi soldier and the trope seems haunted by a contrary movement towards silence and death. The task of bearing witness for the dead is a risky and hazardous enterprise, which seems to threaten the very existence or survival of poetry itself.

Harrison's positioning of the Iraqi as one who has been petrified or turned into stone by the Medusa works powerfully in relation to the rest of the poems in *The Gaze*

*of the Gorgon*, for it connects the dead soldier to the victims of other bombings, other wars, other holocausts. The poems speak across the spectrum of twentieth-century darkness and atrocity, to evoke in the reader a strong abhorrence at the violence unleashed in modern warfare. There is a potential danger here, however. Berger has warned against the dangers of responding to photographs of atrocity as evidence of a general human condition, which marks a depoliticisation of the event in question. He urges us to remain mindful that the war that we are shown in the photograph is specific, and is being fought in ‘our’ name. In evoking the gaze of the Gorgon, Harrison gestures towards *our own* act of looking as viewers of Jarecke’s photograph. In gazing on a figure who has been petrified or turned to stone, we are implicitly positioned as the Gorgon and Harrison confronts us with the question of our own relation to the Medusa of modern warfare. He seems to suggest that it is not enough to be horrified by this image. The poem urges us away from a sense of moral inadequacy and towards political critique and proactivity. Harrison implicitly asks us to distinguish our own presiding vantage in relation to the photograph from the same vantage occupied by the Gorgon. The poet has also gazed on the photograph and the poem is his response — a response that seeks to oppose the petrifying stare of the Gorgon and to (re)animate the frozen features of the dead man. Kelleher has argued that it is pity that distinguishes the gaze of the poet from that of the Gorgon and that reverses or undoes the Medusa’s work:

Between the horror and the image of that horror, pity’s gob is stopped: *or else* pity speaks, speaks that “image”, and speaks that “image” into [...] a being (*as* image) it did not have, could not have in the incomprehensible non-being of death, real death.<sup>40</sup>

The notion of ‘pity’ is, famously, central to the anti-war poetry of Wilfred Owen, and in what follows I would like to consider the ways in which ‘A Cold Coming’ positions itself as protest poetry by returning to and rewriting one of Owen’s most well-known and celebrated poems, ‘Strange Meeting’.<sup>41</sup>

### **A strange meeting**

In 'A Cold Coming', Harrison restages the 'strange meeting' in Owen's poem between the living and the dead, which in turn draws on and revises the classical motif of meeting the dead that runs through Virgil to Dante. In both poems, the speaker enters a landscape representative of the 'hell' of modern warfare and there he encounters a victim of war who engages in dialogue with him. In Owen, the speaker meets the soldier whom he has killed the day before with his bayonet. In the conversation that takes place between the two men, the dead soldier paradoxically greets his killer and former enemy as his friend and invites him to join with him in sleep. They are united by being out of sympathy with the war, by being in hell, by being poets, and by their status as soldiers. The parallels between the two men have led some critics to argue that the dead soldier represents Owen's double, an alter ego whose beliefs and career are parallel to those of the poet. However Dominic Hibberd has pointed out that, until a late stage of revision, Owen thought of him as a German conscript, 'an enemy counterpart rather than a *Doppelgänger*'.<sup>42</sup>

Owen's poem comments on the experience of prolonged trench warfare in which the front-line soldiers had more in common with their German counterparts than with those on the same side who had not experienced the trenches. The soldiers were fighting against and were expected to kill young men whose lives and experiences were very similar to their own. In Harrison's poem, the dead soldier does not encounter the 'crop-haired boy/ from Iowa or Illinois' who killed him, but the poet-journalist. The Iraqi fiercely rejects the notion of any understanding or affinity between them, in a deliberate echo of Owen's poem: 'That's your job, poet, to pretend/ I want my foe to be my friend'. Harrison's revision of Owen reveals the very different kind of warfare in which the Iraqi is engaged. Although the Iraqi troops often fought from First World War-style trenches, the US and its allies relied on airpower, high-technology intelligence and weapons systems, and the extensive use of electronic warfare. The failure of the dead Iraqi to meet in death the soldier who killed him mirrors the almost complete lack of traditional engagement during the conflict. Baudrillard has observed of the Gulf War: 'the fact that the Americans *never saw* the

Iraqis is compensated for by the fact that the Iraqis never fought them'.<sup>43</sup> The imbalance of military means was such that this was an entirely asymmetrical operation, which Paul Patton has termed 'an exercise in domination rather than an act of war'.<sup>44</sup> Owen's strange meeting could not take place after death because the Iraqi neither saw nor was seen by his killer.

Harrison explicitly challenges Owen in order to demonstrate that the Gulf war is not a war in the traditional sense of a conflict in which the survival of both sides is in play. In many respects, however, 'A Cold Coming' closely draws on and echoes Owen's poem. Harrison self-consciously writes in a tradition of anti-war or protest poetry, in which Owen occupies a central — if not canonical — position. In 'Strange Meeting', Owen explores the role of the poet in a time of war or conflict. He takes his title from a passage in Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'The Revolt of Islam' in which the two principal characters, Laon and Cythna, wage a campaign of non-violence against tyranny. Laon successfully stops a battle by stepping unarmed in front of a raised spear and receives its point in his 'arm that was uplifted/ In swift expostulation'. Following his intervention, the two sides are reconciled like brothers 'whom now strange meeting did befall/ In a strange land'.<sup>45</sup> Shelley offers a compelling portrait of pacifism and non-violent resistance. However, as Hibberd points out, Owen is a fighter as well as a poet and in 'Strange Meeting' he revises Shelley accordingly:

Owen [...] must have intended the source of his title and the irony in his allusion to be recognised. The Other has tried to parry a bayonet ('Lifting distressful hands') but has been killed, dying as a fighting soldier not as an unarmed pacifist. Owen's 'strange meeting' takes place after death, unlike Shelley's. The poet in uniform could not hope to emulate Laon.<sup>46</sup>

The soldier in Owen has died bearing arms; he is also a victim of the poet-speaker. Speaking from *within* the experience of combat, Owen cannot write the poetry of pacifism. Instead, he seeks to concentrate our attention on the terrible face of modern warfare. Hibberd convincingly argues that the Gorgon's paralysing stare haunts Owen's poetry and provides his most compelling images. The 'fixed eyes' of the dead man in 'Strange Meeting' echo and revive the imagery of his other poems:

the bulging eyes of the sentry at Serre, the ‘white eyes, writhing’ of the gassed man, the frozen eyes of ‘half-known faces’ on Redan Ridge, and behind these and other wartime horrors the petrifying stare of the Gorgon-Despondency at Dunsden.<sup>47</sup>

For Owen, the task of the modern poet is to ‘tell the truth untold’; to capture and reflect in his poems ‘[t]he pity of war, the pity war distilled’. ‘Strange Meeting’ records both the petrifying stare of modern militarism and the ‘piteous’ gaze of the dead. The poem also calls into question the efficacy of the soldier-poet to convey the ‘pity of war’. This is in part because he is a killer who bayonets his equivalent on the other side. However it is also because he may in turn meet his own death, in which case his message will be cut short and the ‘truth’ of war will remain ‘untold’.

Harrison does not — like Owen — write from the perspective of the soldier-poet. His response to this is twofold. He establishes a poetics of embarrassment, which highlights or foregrounds the issue of inauthenticity. In speaking for/as the dead, he also adopts an impossible subject position for which there could be no authentic or ‘true’ voice. In responding to Jarecke’s photograph, ‘A Cold Coming’ distils the ‘pity’ of war that is captured in the image and tells the truth that remained ‘untold’ because the picture was suppressed. The poem echoes Owen’s description of the dead soldier’s ‘undone years’ to reveal the pathos of life cut short, and Harrison also focuses our attention on the grief of those left behind: ‘hearts growing older by the minute/ as each truck comes without me in it’. Although he invokes pity for the dead Iraqi, Harrison emphasises that he was also a soldier and killer who was implicated in ‘the deaths, the torture and the plunder’. He goes further than Owen, however, for he implicitly contests the notion of pity and the emotional resolution that it suggests. The poem evokes pity for the dead soldier whose suffering was documented in Jarecke’s photograph. However, Harrison also makes clear that 0.5% of the Iraqi population has been killed in this war; that is, approximately 100, 000 people. The poem reveals a disproportion not only between the Americans and the Iraqis in the conflict, but also between the anonymous deaths that the speaker ‘idly ... calculate[s]’ and the specific death of the single, dreadfully killed Iraqi soldier in the

photograph.<sup>48</sup> Pity is inadequate — and possibly irrelevant — because it is most powerfully evoked in response to the suffering of an individual. In contrasting the death of the Iraqi soldier in the photograph with anonymous statistics, Harrison implicitly questions whose deaths are we not seeing or recognising. He asks what it means to ‘calculate’ deaths in the form of statistics, and how it is possible to quantify suffering. The poem confronts us with the urgent issue of how we can attain a proportionate response to suffering, when it is by its very nature disproportionate and incommensurable.

In the *G2* edition which was our starting point, the leader article takes its title — ‘The pity of war’ — from Owen’s poem. The article suggests that the photographs from the 1991 Gulf War, the ‘disturbing pictures of death and charred decay’, tell the truth untold and convey or distil the ‘pity’ of that conflict.<sup>49</sup> The piece quotes Sontag’s insistence on the necessity of looking at or confronting such terrible images:

No one after a certain age has the right to this kind of innocence, of superficiality, to this degree of ignorance or amnesia. There now exists a vast repository of images that make it harder to maintain this kind of moral defectiveness. Let the atrocious images haunt us. Even if they are only tokens, and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say: This is what people can do to each other. Don’t forget.<sup>50</sup>

Sontag proceeds in her argument to qualify this assertion with the caution that remembering should be supplemented by reflection. In addition to responding to and identifying with the suffering of others, we should also question the causes of that suffering: ‘Who caused what the picture shows? Who is responsible? Is it excusable? Was it inevitable? Is there some state of affairs which we have accepted up to now that ought to be challenged?’<sup>51</sup> The photograph cannot in itself repair our ignorance about the causes of that suffering which it isolates and frames, but it can lead us to reflect and to examine the rationalisations for suffering that are offered by the established powers.

In meditating on Jarecke’s photograph, Harrison’s poem reveals that the Gulf War is a media war, a war of images. He insists that the interpretation of the

photograph depends on who is looking at it and how it is framed. His reference to the jingoistic *Sun* headline of the Falklands war — ‘GOTCHA!’ — suggests that newspaper captions seek to pin down or capture the images to which they refer, although the photograph inevitably remains more elusive and challenging than this and ‘stares out’ the reader, who eventually ‘ducks behind his headline’.<sup>52</sup> Like ‘Initial Illumination’, ‘A Cold Coming’ reflects on the positioning of the photograph to which it responds and the ways in which images are inevitably ‘conscripted’ in this media war. The photograph of the Iraqi soldier provokes horror and revulsion at the suffering that it portrays; however, as Sontag suggests, this response is not sufficient in itself but should lead us to question the causes of this man’s death and the explanations or rationalisations that are offered for it. I have argued that Harrison’s poem invites precisely such an act of reflection by implicitly positioning Jarecke’s photograph as a mirror. He does not suggest that we should see ourselves in the dead man but rather that we should reflect on our own relation to the ‘Medusa’ of war — if this atrocity was caused by a war fought in ‘our’ name, then what relation do we have to the way in which this war was conducted? What does this act of domination — this ‘turkey shoot’ — reveal about us?

The photograph of the Iraqi soldier confronts us with evidence of violence both inflicted and suffered. The urgent question that is raised by the image, and by Harrison’s poem, is how we respond to violence. In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler questions how it is possible to arrest the cycle of violence and heightened aggression that has arisen in response to September 11 2001. She critiques the US government’s decision to retaliate with further violence, and argues that the dislocation of first-world privilege revealed in the attacks on the World Trade Centre — the recognition that the US is vulnerable to violence from outside — allows the potential for thinking through interdependency as the basis for a global political community. In order to acknowledge our interdependency — the precariousness of all human life and the ways in which we are all potentially subject to violence inflicted on us by others — we need to recognise that, at present, some human lives are seen as worthy of grief,

while others are perceived as undeserving of grief. This is partly an issue of visibility in the media: if certain deaths are not displayed in the media, then they are not recognised or mourned. It is also, as we have seen, an issue of how images are framed. Butler argues that, all too often, photographs ‘capture’ the face, and mask human suffering as much as make it visible.<sup>53</sup> In order to conceptualise an alternative mode of framing, Butler draws on Emmanuel Levinas’s notion of the ‘face’, which makes visible a cry of human suffering that cannot be directly represented.<sup>54</sup> The ‘face’ is therefore always a figure for something else; it necessarily fails to capture what it delivers. In order to convey or speak suffering, in other words, representation must both fail and *show* or make visible its failure.

The republication of ‘A Cold Coming’ in the 2003 *G2* edition implicitly connects anti-war protest with the question of how we respond to violence. Harrison’s poem intervenes, in the first instance, to make violence visible, so that it is displayed in the media and acknowledged in public discourse. Moreover, there is an affinity between Harrison’s use of the ‘mask’ and Levinas’s notion of the ‘face’. In order to reveal or convey human suffering, Levinas argues, the ‘face’ is revealed as a figure for something that is not literally a face. Harrison uses the idea of the mask — the ‘face’ that both is and is not a face — in order to underline that rhetoric and figuration are at work, that the poem necessarily *fails* to capture or directly represent the suffering of the Iraqi soldier: Harrison puts on the mask of his ‘face’ but he simultaneously foregrounds the artifice and pretence of this gesture. ‘A Cold Coming’ also implicitly addresses the notion of interdependency by de-centering the first-person narrative. The poem combines a first-person account (albeit an ‘I’ that is a displaced version of the poet) with an address from the second person — the ‘you’ of the dead Iraqi — to whom the ‘I’ of the speaker responds in an imagined dialogue. Again, Harrison makes clear throughout that this is a rhetorical device — the tape is blank at the end of the poem, signalling a failure to record the voice of the dead — but the very act of imagining that voice and giving it form emphasises that this is a life that matters, that counts politically; and that this is a death that we should acknowledge and grieve. The

poem insists that we have an ethical relation to the life of the Iraqi, and a political relation to his death. As an anti-war poem, it seeks to open up responses to violence that are both reflective and self-reflexive, and that offer a viable political alternative to retaliation and a cry for war.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alan Rusbridger, 'Tony Harrison and The Guardian', in *Tony Harrison: Loiner*, ed. Sandy Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 133-6 (135).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Susan Mitchell, 'Beyond the Lens', <http://www.worldpress.org/Europe/665.cfm>, accessed 3 June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Marita Sturken has observed that because military censorship was instituted so strictly the images were not seen live, although claims that the footage was 'live' nevertheless predominated. See *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Don McCullin, 'This is War', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,895618,00.html>, accessed 27 May 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> John Berger, 'Photographs of Agony', *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 288-290 (290).

<sup>8</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> See Tony Harrison, 'Initial Illumination', in *The Gaze of the Gorgon* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992), pp. 46-7.

<sup>10</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> See Tony Harrison, 'A Cold Coming', in *The Gaze of the Gorgon*, pp. 48-54.

<sup>13</sup> Rick Rylance, 'Doomsongs: Tony Harrison and War', in *Tony Harrison: Loiner*, ed. Sandy Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 137-60 (145).

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Bloodaxe Critical Anthologies I: Tony Harrison*, ed. Neil Astley (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Tony Harrison, 'Facing up to the Muses', in *Bloodaxe Critical Anthologies I: Tony Harrison*, pp. 429-54 (p. 437)

<sup>16</sup> Antony Rowland, *Tony Harrison and the Holocaust* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), p. 26.

- <sup>17</sup> Quoted in Richard Hoggart, 'In Conversation with Tony Harrison', in *Bloodaxe Critical Anthologies I: Tony Harrison*, pp. 36-45 (p. 43).
- <sup>18</sup> For a detailed analysis of rhythm in 'A Cold Coming' see Martyn Crucefix, 'The Drunken Porter Does Poetry: Metre and Voice in the Poems of Tony Harrison', in *Tony Harrison: Loiner*, pp. 161-70 (162-6).
- <sup>19</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber, 1974), pp. 109-10 (109).
- <sup>20</sup> Ian Gregson, 'How does it feel? Thoughts on Tony Harrison's poem "A Cold Coming"', *London Review of Books*, 14 May 1992, p. 23.
- <sup>21</sup> Luke Spencer, *The Poetry of Tony Harrison* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 118, 119.
- <sup>22</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 62.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>24</sup> Joe Kelleher, *Tony Harrison* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996), p. 67.
- <sup>25</sup> Tony Harrison, 'Facing up to the Muses', p. 436.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.
- <sup>27</sup> Joe Kelleher, *Tony Harrison*, p. 53.
- <sup>28</sup> The CBS cameraman Jim Helling, who was with Jarecke when he took the photograph, has described the image as 'the face of war'.
- <sup>29</sup> Joe Kelleher, *Tony Harrison*, p. 50.
- <sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 87.
- <sup>31</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1988), pp. 63-4.
- <sup>32</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Antony Rowland, *Tony Harrison and the Holocaust*, p. 79.
- <sup>34</sup> Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-Facement', in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 67-82 (76).
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in Sarah Jackson and Annabel Merullo, eds., *The Eye of War* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 2003), p. 255.
- <sup>37</sup> Joe Kelleher, *Tony Harrison*, p. 54.
- <sup>38</sup> Tony Harrison, 'Facing up to the Muses', p. 445.
- <sup>39</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, p. 72.
- <sup>40</sup> Joe Kelleher, *Tony Harrison*, p. 53.
- <sup>41</sup> See Wilfred Owen, 'Strange Meeting', in *War Poems and Others*, ed. Dominic Hibberd (Sydney, Australia: Random House, 1987), pp. 122-3.
- <sup>42</sup> Dominic Hibberd, *Owen the Poet* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 177.
- <sup>43</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 82.
- <sup>44</sup> Paul Patton, 'Introduction', in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, pp. 1-22 (19).
- <sup>45</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Revolt of Islam', in *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 31-158 (81, 82).
- <sup>46</sup> Dominic Hibberd, *Owen the Poet*, p. 176.

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<sup>47</sup> Dominic Hibberd, *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 2002), p. 311. The latter reference is to Owen's 1912 poem 'Supposed Confessions of a Secondrate Sensitive Mind in Dejection'.

<sup>48</sup> For more on disproportion in 'A Cold Coming', see Dominic Rainsford, 'Numbering Pain: Testimony, Quantification and Need', *Discourse* 25.1 & 2 (2003), pp. 19-35 (22-4).

<sup>49</sup> 'The pity of war', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/leaders/story/0,3604,895202,00.html>, accessed 10 June 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 102.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>52</sup> In the 1991 Gulf War, *The Sun* almost equalled its performance in the Falklands War by printing a full-colour front page which carried only a Union Jack flag with the face of a soldier in the middle. The newspaper appealed to its readers to display this in their windows to pledge their support for the war. Harrison combines his reference to the Falklands with this 'flag-bedecked page 1'.

<sup>53</sup> Judith Butler, *Precairous Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), pp. 131-51.

<sup>54</sup> See Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985).