Imagining Warfare

by

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Abstract

This project analyzes the political language surrounding the conflict between the United States and Iraq beginning in 2003. The study is based on the 2003 State of the Union address, President Bush's speech delivered on the USS Lincoln to announce the cessation of hostilities, civic postcards, photographs of demonstrations, and reports on citizens' reactions. The thesis argues that Bush's speeches utilized abstract language and metonymic constructions in order to channel the American public's imagination by specifically invoking the intensely physical memory of September 11th and the strictly defined physical image of Saddam Hussein. Many civic voices resisted this rhetorical strategy and attempted to establish their place as the missing interlocutor in this public dialog, while simultaneously demanding that the physical and material effects of warfare on themselves and the Iraqi citizenry be heard. Through letters to the president and protests, the citizens relocated the political language squarely on everyday human reality, in particular, on the human body. Although these citizens continued to act as representatives of the Iraqis, they signaled the presence of the Iraqis' voices, rather than argumentatively privileging one viewpoint. Reading this relationship between the American public and the Iraqis as based on sympathy enables an analysis of the role of the imagination in the interaction between the groups, as well as the numerous obstacles, or 'distances,' that inhibit a full understanding of the plight of the Iraqi citizens in the American psyche. These limitations notwithstanding, this thesis argues that the sympathetic emotion and imagination are essential if there is to be a real incorporation of foreign voices into the American public sphere. The first chapter of the thesis deals exclusively with Bush's speeches, and analyzes his frequent use of hypothetical language, metonymy, and abstraction through the words terror, threat and evil. The second chapter looks at the civic postcards and protests/rally while discussing a schema of representation and the possibility of group authorization. The third chapter discusses the preceding material within the filter of sympathy as a form of response. This chapter incorporates several theories of sympathy and details the strengths and weaknesses of these explanations. The conclusions which follow the body of the thesis broaden the scope of the analysis to include the wider political effects of the presidential and civic discourse. The shift in representation provoked by the citizens' language— from covering over diverse voices to encouraging multiple speakers—is indicative of a structural repositioning of the warfare dialog away from its typical focus on abstractions (liberty, evil,) and onto the human map (a destroyed house, an injured body). This democratic trend operates with the caveat that the obstacles to sympathy may also privilege an emphasis on the observers' wants and concerns over and above those of the Iraqis, i.e. the direct sufferers of war. To remedy this problem, the American political dialog must rely on imagination and abstraction in order to visualize alternatives to the current political situation, while maintaining present the myriad humans that are affected by warfare in their daily realities.

CONTENTS

Short Titles

"USSL": Bush, George W. "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have

Ended." 1 May 2003. *White House.* 10 Oct. 2006

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html>

"SOU": Bush, George W. "2003 State of the Union." 28 Jan. 2003. *White House.* 20 Sept. 2006.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>

Figures

Introduction

The Iraq War that began on March 20, 2003 and formally concluded on May 1, 2003 has proved to have far-reaching consequences. Although the time lapse between the beginning and cessation of combat operations is relatively brief, years later the country is still deeply involved in the region as rival clans battle each other and the occupying troops. The war has been unique in that it was one of the first wars to be based on the so-called "Bush Doctrine," that argues for military action on preemptive grounds and through unilateralism. Additionally, the explicit rationale for the war was built on the alleged claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) *and* had the intention to use such weapons against Americans. Bush also took great pains to demonize the enemy, Saddam Hussein, which seems innocuous because of the record of atrocities Hussein has perpetrated on his own people and his rule as dictator over his country. However, this process led to the mythologization and abstraction of Hussein to the point that he became the monolithic presentation of Iraq to the American public. These political feats could not have been achieved without powerful and effective language–in short, rhetoric.

But President Bush was and is not the only actor who speaks about the Iraq War and America's involvement in Iraq. Myriad civic voices have made themselves heard, for and against military intervention, and more generally have utilized language in order to speak about warfare and humanity. This project will rely on Kant's distinction between public and private uses of reason in order to define the term citizen. In his essay "What is Enlightenment?" Kant states that when a person openly and publicly critiques and comments on society, they are acting as "scholars" (134-5). The role of the "scholar" will be used as the definition for citizen and civic throughout this project. When a person speaks publicly, offering their opinion and criticism on the affairs of their society, they are speaking as a citizen, irrespective of the fact that they may be

a professional politician. In marked contrast to the dominant political rhetoric of the time, these citizens speak and demand to be shown the physical substance and material reality that is so often obscured by authorized political discourse about the war. The demands are often regularly associated with claims for concrete evidence of WMDs and proof of any connection between Hussein and Al-Qaeda or other terrorist networks. Beneath the surface, the voices frequently demand the human content of the war.

This project aims to explore both the formal political rhetoric and the civic voices that speak about the Iraq War. It proceeds by analyzing a very small sample of texts that exhibit these two actors' speech. For formal political rhetoric, the analysis focuses on President Bush's 2003 State of the Union address and his "victory" speech aboard the USS Lincoln, announcing the cessation of major hostilities in Iraq. This State of the Union address was selected for various reasons: it is the most important presidential discourse of the year, and this speech was delivered only two months before the ground offensive began; unlike the 2002 State of the Union–the "axis of evil" speech–the focus of the foreign policy section of the discourse is specifically and consciously placed upon Hussein and Iraq; thirdly, the speech is especially relevant for this analysis because it showcases the use of abstract and physical language to such an extent that even this project's narrow focus can not encompass all of the material provided in this speech. The USS Lincoln speech is provided mainly as a counterpoint to the State of the Union address but it also complicates the analysis because Bush places greater emphasis on the human side of warfare in this discourse. Several explanations will be explored for this apparent shift in strategy, one of which is the way that a declaration of victory inevitably shifts the political goals.

For the citizen voices, the texts are a collection of postcards addressed to the president, photographs of civic protests and a civic rally, and responses collected by major news

organizations, both to the president's discourse and to the photographs of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib detention facility. The postcards are useful because of their informality: they are a project by a performance artist, who traveled to different cities in the U.S. and gave any willing citizen the opportunity to dictate a letter to the president. The spontaneous nature of the project produces some crucial material for exploring the desires and concerns of the American people during the war. Finally, the way that representation in these voices departs from the form of representation in presidential rhetoric signals the broader distinction between the goals of the speaking politician and the goals of the speaking citizen. The photographs of the protests and rally were selected because they are perhaps the most representative example of citizens explicitly using themselves, their own bodies, to proclaim the huge number and variety of people that are affected by warfare, on the aggressor's side and on the defender's side. The responses to the president's discourse give us real evidence of the effectiveness of the political language constructs, while the responses to the photographs of prisoner abuse will challenge and ultimately enrich our discussion of the linguistic and personal relationships between the American citizenry and the Iraqi people.

It is quite evident that this project does not aim at some fantastical goal of exhaustiveness. In a globalized world with information being transferred at an incredible pace and the veritable proliferation of voices in the various forms of media, exhaustiveness has become a mirage. It is especially important for a thesis that focuses on the intricacies of language to be grounded in a small number of texts that are analyzed fully, rather than quasi-statistical data. The question of representativeness encounters similar problems: American and, in some special cases, international voices spoke these words and although there are other voices that disagree with the texts that have been selected, the selection is representative of many citizens'

opinions and desires. As this thesis aims to show, our notions of representation must constantly be questioned because those that pretend to represent the viewpoints of others often obscure an important diversity of voices. With that being said, this project draws broader conclusions that attempt to explain more than the texts selected, without diminishing the possibility of other voices and other conclusions.

As alluded to above, this analysis explores our notions of representation in a democracy. It aims to break down the typical principal-agent relationship in conventional political analysis and investigates the many representative relationships that exist in language. We will see not only how the president represents the country, but also how Hussein is made to represent Iraq and how the American people represent the jeopardized Iraqi citizens. The final relationship, between Americans and Iraqis, deals principally with understanding and misunderstanding, by way of imagining, the common humanity that may exist between these two groups of people. Naturally, then, we will need to look at how the complex emotion of sympathy comes out of this relationship and where the sympathetic imagination expressed in the American voices becomes obstructed.

The dynamic that guides all of these questions is between the abstract and concrete, specifically the abstract in language and imagination, and the concrete in human struggles and the human body. These two categories only sometimes exist in dichotomized form. In fact, this thesis aims to prove that in order for a real and full understanding between America and Iraq–and between any two nations in conflict–there must be an unrestrained public imagination that is capable of thinking both the full effects of action against the other nation and seeing those effects as occurring on the field of common humanity, i.e. on the human body. This imagination, though it may dwell in abstraction in thought and language, must also not lose sight of human reality

encapsulated in the wounded human body or the disrupted daily life produced by warfare, nor should it rest on simple, fast conclusions, even if those conclusions are grounded in the concrete. In other words, the expression of the public imagination in language is susceptible to both abstraction that loses sight of human reality and to hasty concreteness, such as focusing on the physical image of the leader of a country and not the smaller, numerous images of the citizens of that country.

The in-depth analysis of small portions of text and on broader themes displays how a literary analysis may be applied successfully to unusual sources and explicitly political language. The exploration of representation and the interaction of politicians and citizens through language is fundamentally involved in the work of political science and communications. Finally, the work as a whole explores the sociological dimensions of the different strata of individuals in a society at war and the complex relationships between the citizens of one nation and their alleged enemies in another.

Lastly, though this work focuses on contemporary material, the methodology and conclusions surpass the ostensibly narrow and immediate subject. The project inevitably has nuances that derive from the two countries that have been analyzed, but the general frameworks between authorized and unauthorized political voices in a single nation and between two nations in conflict can be extrapolated to many other contexts. What is more, the interaction of human reality and abstraction is a universal phenomenon.

I. Questions of physicality and agency in presidential language

Presidential discourse leading up to and after the Iraq war helps us to understand the

dialog or absence thereof in the American public sphere. Bush's choice of language reflects the

political desire to establish support for an imminent war and control the interpretive faculties of

the American public, as will become evident in the 2003 State of the Union Address. At the

war's official conclusion, the rhetoric makes an apparent shift to focus on the human content of

the war, as evidenced by the references to American soldiers and the Iraqi citizens. This takes

place in part because the speech heralds victory and does not have to marshal support for the

war. However, the speech is still replete with examples of the political agenda that guided the

state of the union address and ultimately confirm the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the

pre-war discourse.

What is most interesting about Bush's language is the conflation of abstract language,

which yields agency to the American public, with categorical physical imagery, which removes

the possibility of diverse interpretations of the situation in Iraq. This complicated strategy is

politically useful because it performs the seemingly impossible task of controlling the emotional

imagination of the public. For a politician, this is necessary before and after a war because it

becomes a part of the justification for the initiation of warfare and for a retrospective assessment

of the purpose and the success of armed conflict over and against other alternatives.

One of the manifestations of the interaction between the abstract and the physical is what

may be termed the language of possibility. Unlike the war in Afghanistan, there has been no

concrete physical attack that would bolster Bush's argument for war. Instead, he must rely on

conjecture, and although he claims to have varied intelligence sources that describe Hussein's

ties to terrorist organizations and his possession of weapons of mass destruction, these pieces of

evidence do not suffice and Bush fills the void with conditional language in his 2003 State of the Union address. While delineating the possibility of biological warfare, he warns that "we must assume that our enemies would use these diseases as weapons, and we must act before the dangers are upon us" (SOU, 6). In one utterance, Bush predicates an imperative for real and immediate action on a hypothetical situation. That is, if America's enemies had the biological weapons, they would inevitably use them against the country and therefore we have to take preemptive action. Bush employs the public imagination in this instance to create proofs for a situation that lacks a historical reality. These proofs are especially effective because they are highly subjective and directly appeal to each audience member's individuality. A listener may picture a nerve gas attack on a local school, to propose an extreme example, and this image is burned into her psyche because it is personally relevant, geographically and visually close, and above all, the work of her imagination and consequently her possession. Furthermore, these images, though they may be the product of the imagination, have a certain material significance for the speaker that is meaningful because it attacks her most intimate reality: the human body. Bush does not need to detail specific, concrete possibilities because he has already provided the conceptual framework that will guide his audience.

This device appears elsewhere in the speech but with a greater degree of specificity as Bush revisits the events of September 11, 2001: "imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans—this time armed by Saddam Hussein" (SOU, 8). The effectiveness of the strategy is just as strong in this example, when the audience is encouraged—explicitly—to use their imagination, but with the protagonist selected by the administration at the end of the sentence. This instance is also of note because Bush invokes a cultural memory whose historical weight has already been established in the public imagination. Thus, there is the added illusion of

individual choice because few, if any Americans, will conjure up an image of September 11 that is not laden with pain and horror. Within this framework, each individual American will reassemble this memory in a personal way, and ultimately the rhetorical effect of allowing the audience member to take possession of her own mental construct is at work in this example as well.

It is evident from these examples that Bush shifts between what George Lakoff considers to be the two models of American political framing, the strict-father and the nurturing-parent, as he—like a disciplinary father figure—simultaneously directs the public's thinking and creates the illusion of interpretative choice. This framework doubling notwithstanding, it is no accident that Bush's speech is rhetorically weighed in favor of the strict-father because the audience's agency is a mirage and as Lakoff points out, "fear triggers the strict-father model" (42). Bush uses this model to simultaneously guide the country and activate fear, which in turn activates the strict-father model in the minds of the audience and puts them in the position of the child, following the paternal commands. The state of the union speech itself provides a moment in which this system of values effervesces to the surface and the structure is realized linguistically: "there are days when our fellow citizens do not hear news about the war on terror. There's never a day when I do not learn of another threat, or receive reports of operations in progress, or give an order in this global war against a scattered network of killers. The war goes on and we are winning" (SOU, 5). The distinction between 'our fellow citizens' and the presidential 'I' is of great importance. There can be no doubt that the speech intends to create two very distinct categories: those who do not know and must be guided and those with the intelligence reports who must take action.

In Bush's USS Lincoln speech, in which he announced the end of 'major combat operations,' he appears to adopt the nurturing-parent model by changing to a plural subject: "the scattered cells of the terrorist networks still operate in many nations, and *we know from daily intelligence* that they continue to plot against free people" (USSL, 4). The prevalence of a plural subject in this speech could arise from the fact that now that victory has been established, and Bush wants to extend that victory to the entire nation in order to make *his* decision seem justified and to spread any possible blame that critics find. However, there are key moments in this speech that reaffirm the strict-father model that the state of the union address favors. When Bush describes the broader military actions, he says "our war against terror is proceeding according to principles that I have made clear to all" (USSL, 3). Though Bush begins with a collective possessive, the weight of the sentence falls on the phrase 'I have made clear to all.'

The state of the union also illustrates the plural subject, which would suggest cooperation, multilateralism and many voices in the decision for warfare, but the conspicuously forceful language in the strong-father examples prevails. In the state of the union, Bush describes the decision to go to war and intelligence gathering. In the USS Lincoln speech, Bush describes the principles on which the war was founded. These are not light subjects and it is no accident that the President invokes the strong-father model here. Rather than encouraging a citizenry with access to information and a more equal portion of control, the hierarchy is reinforced with the knowledgeable, principled leader guiding the adolescent nation.

A second important element of Bush's claim on information is the temporal ambiguity. There is a disparity between the political time and civic time. The politician operates within the realm of information and action. The paternalistic politician knows the daily problems and 'gives an order' daily. In stark contrast, the civilian is not informed on a continual, daily basis and the

suggestion here is that without that daily information, the civilian is not able to make the decisions that will guide the nation. This issue speaks volumes to the questions of complex modern institutional structures and the ever-expanding arena that is only accessible to the civilian through "representation." Scholar Benjamin Page argues that mediating forces must come between the public and their government because of the highly complex issues that a modern society faces (4). However, what Page fails to indicate in his writing and what seems to be at work in Bush's speech, is that politicians themselves are mediating agents between the citizen and the international community and that their appropriation of the language of mediators can dangerously extend itself. Thus, Bush makes himself the intermediary between pieces of received information and the public. There is, however, another element in Bush's language that differentiates him from the news mediator: he has executive power, and what's more, is exercising that power, globally, *every day*. It is one thing for a professional journalist to constantly interpret information for the public, but he does not have the power to mandate action and also acts within a larger community of journalists that also have interpretive power. In the case of the politician determining the national interest, there is one administration that is in control and ultimately one paternal figure that can send his children to war.

Another way to describe the position Bush assumes is to consider the role of the sovereign in a period of crisis. Theorist Carl Schmitt addresses this political figure in his work, *The Concept of the Political*. Schmitt argues that this power is necessarily delegated to the sovereign because a state of emergency requires action and a single entity must decide the "controversy, that is, in determining definitively what constitutes public order and security" (9). If we pay attention to the language that Bush utilizes in the State of the Union passage, Schmitt's concept of sovereignty becomes very problematic. Bush's phrase, 'the war goes on and we are

winning,' implies a state of emergency that exists outside of temporal constraints. This of course becomes even clearer considering Bush's language of possibility. When the leader exercises this sovereign right in ambiguous terms, as something that *could* happen and on information that does not always reach the perception of the public, the idea of a state of emergency, a time period that should be demarcated from normal time, breaks down and Schmitt's exception becomes ubiquitous in society. Nothing could be less temporally bound than the words, 'the war goes on.' With the exception extended indefinitely, civic agency vanishes and the only comfort we have is Bush's assurance that 'we are winning.' This is quite evident in the USS Lincoln speech as Bush reduces the war in Iraq to a "battle" (USSL, 1). What appeared to be a full war then becomes a step on a path towards a larger, unrestricted military campaign. The speech's title is also instructive because it notably shies from using the word 'victory' and instead calls the event the end of "major combat operations in Iraq" (USSL, 1). The word 'victory' suggests a stopping point, a limit, and the speech is clearly not meant to limit sovereign powers or mark the end of the military goals of the administration. These prospects becomes even more troubling when we consider Schmitt's argument that it is impossible for a legislating body to define the state of emergency because jurisprudence is concerned with the legal order, not with the exception (12). Without a legislative check that can demarcate the crisis situation, the combination of Bush's conditional language with his paternal, sovereign authority leads to the possibility of unending warfare. Bush uses this formidable power as he sets out to construct the antagonist in his discourse.

The language of possibility has a significant inflection when applied to the enemy itself. Here, enemy is that which is posing a threat to the United States, not that which has inflicted some sort of harm on the bodies of the American citizens. This distinction is a crucial one to

establish at the start of the discussion because it illuminates the conceptual backdrop that informs Bush's engineering of the enemy. If we are to boil the concept of an attack to its most elementary, concrete level, then it is the infliction of pain on a body. As Elaine Scarry cogently affirms, "the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring" (63). This statement in no way intends to undermine the power and presence of psychological violence in human society. But psychological, non-corporeal violence is not the primary stuff of warfare. The psychological effects, in fact, are most often rooted in a physical attack: the mental trauma that a veteran continues to experience after being shot in the arm, the anxiety a mother feels knowing that her child's body is held captive in enemy territory, the horror with which citizens view the images of their fellow countrymen bloodied and wounded. Bush's idea of the current enemy, then, is removed from the inherent connection between the enemy's action and the victim's body. One may claim that Bush is incorporating this relationship on a macro level, in which the collective body of the terrorists has attacked the collective body of the American people. This is exactly what was at play during the war in Afghanistan and the surge of American patriotism that immediately followed the September 11th attacks. The terrorists, the enemy, by wounding certain American citizens had attacked the body of Americans. However, the present situation still lacks the concrete action, the attack; hence the conditional language of possibility that occurs so frequently in the presidential discourse.

It must be underscored that it is politically useful for the connection between the enemy's action and the victim's body to remain a void. The nature of the situation—a threat rather than an action—and the use of public imagination to create proofs, coexist in a symbiotic relationship with this void. Bush, however, is not satisfied after altering the enemy-victim interaction, and he devotes a considerable portion of the text to characterizing the enemy. This introduces a paradox

because it seems advantageous to leave the concept of terrorist and enemy as amorphous as possible, but the particular descriptions that Bush assigns to these figures only serve to fortify his argument.

Specifically there are two enemies in this speech: terrorists and Saddam Hussein. Bush does collapse the distinction between these two groups in certain areas of the speech, but he also wants the entities to have individual lives within the text. In Bush's rhetoric, the first of these entities must remain as bodiless as possible. In a post-September 11th America, the word terrorist has a connotation that is forever linked to these attacks and when this word is uttered in a political context, all terrorists, regardless of that fact that they may come from different countries and have opposing political goals, become part of the aggressors of the 9/11 attacks. When a politician makes use of this free association between disparate entities, then the societal reaction to the word terrorist ceases to exist merely as an emotional response and takes on a strong political force. It is also important to note that the post-9/11 societal definition of the word terrorist is both corporeally defined and disembodied. That is, the word evokes images of airplanes crashing into buildings, the panic-stricken faces of those fleeing the scene, the ash-covered firefighters' suits, etc. Yet this word also signifies unknown, unexplainable, disembodied evil, which easily loses its referent. Terrorist, in this second sense, does not necessarily describe the actual men who took control of the airplanes, nor the others who trained those men, nor the others that instilled in those men the mental state that led them to commit the act; rather, terrorist describes a force, a process, and an ideology that culminated in destruction of American bodies. The word retains its physicality in its effects, but the enemy, that which ultimately concerns politicians, becomes a full abstraction.

We can see that with the word terrorist civic agency once again becomes part of the politicians' vocabulary and strategy. This word is extremely effective in promoting a potentially boundless war because it furnishes a boundless enemy. It is also useful for rallying civilian support precisely because the public reaction to the term is inextricably linked to physicality. As was already discussed, an attack is an infliction of pain on a human body. Since the word terrorist is connected to a real, physical attack on many American bodies, another audience proof is possible and Bush uses the word terrorist to extend the possible individuals that may be included within the rubric of the enemy, assured that the mere mention of the word will provoke hostility from the American public and a demand for justice against an attack, even if a concrete attack by a concrete group of individuals has not occurred.

Bush complicates this already convoluted term by associating it with infection and an epidemic, two entities that attack the human body: "But chemical agents, lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained" (SOU, 8). The ostensible connection between these three groups is the way in which they deftly evade any forces that would hunt them down and try to eradicate them. However, placing terrorists in the same utterance as biological warfare and viruses offers a much richer portrayal of what Bush wants to propose, namely, that terrorist groups are inhuman and guided by some predetermined necessity to harm, and that these aggressors have direct, devastating effects on the body. The first of these implicit associations makes sense when we think of the agency of a chemical compound or of a virus. The chemical compound harms because it produces an injurious reaction in the human body. The virus, although an organism, does not have any mental capacities, and preys upon the human body with the sole purpose of propagating itself. Neither of these, then, has any volition. Both harm the human body because of biological and chemical codes. When a group of terrorists

enters in the association, it suddenly becomes unthinkable that a terrorist could do anything but harm, and this violence is no longer even predicated on a choice. The effects of this implication are tremendous because it not only makes diplomacy seem frustrating and passive, it makes the idea of diplomacy laughable: how can one have a dialog with and attempt to change the mind of a being that has no will? Realistically, it may be futile to negotiate with people that engage in terrorist actions and whose disposition towards a group of people is so dangerous as to necessitate much swifter and conclusive measures than diplomacy can provide. However, it is important to recall that even as Bush emphasizes what makes real dangers from real terrorists so fearsome, he blurs the lines between action and threat, and between individuals possessing an ideology and the ideology itself. As we will see in another example from the speech, Bush's language is weighted towards the side of threat and disembodied terror, which directly follows from the lack of a concrete attack.

This instance of the association between terrorism and a naturally-ordained violence is perhaps more effective because it is structural. Bush affirms that "this nation can lead the world in sparing innocent people from a plague of nature. And this nation is leading the world in confronting and defeating the man-made evil of international terrorism" (SOU, 5). This statement is meaningful in and of itself because the connection is again created between unconscious, impersonal destruction and human destruction—albeit with the human agency removed. Yet this passage becomes fully effective when considered within the body of the speech itself. This marks the point in which Bush begins to describe the nature of America's enemy. It also directly follows a lengthy discussion of AIDS and what the administration will do to combat this disease. The section on AIDS includes both alarming statistical data about those carrying HIV and an anecdotal appeal using the words of "a doctor in rural South Africa" (Bush,

SOU, 4). The 'plague of nature' that Bush mentions in the above quotation is most certainly

AIDS and all the horror that that malady entails. When the audience arrives at the moment in

which AIDS and terrorism are linked, they already have a great deal of recent information about

the disease and it is especially horrific in these moments directly following Bush's discussion.

When terrorism is introduced, this horror is quickly duplicated, or maybe even transferred to

terrorists. In this example, as opposed to the previous one, the association between a disease and

terrorism is qualified with the words 'man-made.' This continues the objectification of terrorism,

but in a different way. In the previous example, agency was stripped from the terrorists, the

people who committed acts of terror. With the words 'man-made evil,' the actions themselves

become things, they themselves are weapons.

After Bush converts both terrorism's actions and actors into artifacts, the logical question

arises: who is the creator? The speech clearly and unequivocally points to Saddam Hussein.

Once this causal relationship is established, Bush employs a strategy that takes the opposite route

of the one used with the terrorists but produces uncannily similar results. Instead of using a

vague term that can encompass a virtually limitless number of individuals and divests the enemy

of physical qualities, Bush names a single individual and thereby evokes a fully concrete image.

This dazzling inversion is achieved through metonymy, which is always a simplification. Jan

Oberg reads this simplification in the context of the rationale behind the war as the

"individualization of complex issues" (192). As rhetorician Schaeffer points out, "the metonymy,

through compression, treats a complex chain of events as immediate and automatic" (59).

Although the historical simplification that metonymy achieves is important in this case because it

obfuscates the processes, cultural factors and geographical issues that are essential to an

understanding of the conflict between the two countries, it is even more important in this

example to think of metonymy in terms of the reduction of a country of people into a single

person. The speech is saturated with examples of this process: "he has shown instead utter

contempt for the United Nations," "we will lead a coalition to disarm him,"[1] "twelve years ago,

Saddam Hussein faced the prospect of being the last casualty in a war he had started and lost"

(Bush, SOU, 7, 9, 7, respectively). These references to Hussein invest a single person with

complete agency and simultaneously make a single person the victim in the forthcoming war.

Saddam Hussein becomes a caricature of a villain, completely guilty and capable of constructing

terrorism. Thus, what appears to be a change in Bush's rhetoric, from the abstraction of war to its

physical incarnation in a person, is actually a continuation of removing warfare and the conflict

out of the concrete realm.[2] The only difference here is that the technique works through an

astounding reduction. Just as it is impossible that a single human being can start or prevent a

war, it is impossible that a single war can negatively impact a single human being. By

referencing Hussein throughout the speech, the many Iraqi citizens—with their variety of sizes,

ages, physical appearances, beliefs, etc.—assimilate to the person, the sole image of Saddam

Hussein. Even when Bush makes a direct appeal to "the brave and oppressed people of Iraq," it

does not offer them a face or any sort of agency (SOU, 9). In fact, it reinforces Hussein's power

as ruler and cultural representation of Iraq as it locates the Iraqis syntactically within Hussein:

"the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation" (SOU, 9).

Also note in this fragment that the 'regime' is merely Hussein's tool, as terrorism is, and does

not incorporate other distinguishable enemies into the text. The use of the second person in the

above quotation performs the same function as Bush's appeal to the American public's memory

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[1] See Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* for a discussion of the word 'disarm' in war rhetoric.
[2] Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* presents another explanation of how seemingly concrete language slips into abstraction.

of September 11th. The Iraqi public that may be watching the speech are given the power to imagine what their lives will be like after Hussein is removed from power, just as the American audience is able to imagine what will happen if Hussein and 'the terrorists' attack. However, Bush controls the Iraqi imagination by concluding that Hussein's removal from power will be tantamount to the 'liberation' of the Iraqi people. The initial possibility to picture diverse consequences of the American military action is removed. Though this technique principally targets Iraqis who may have access to the speech, Bush's language use in this situation also works its effects on the American audience because the prospect that military action will free a country is likely to create further support for Bush's foreign policy.

The direct appeal to the Iraqi public may be an isolated event in the state of the union address but in Bush's USS Lincoln speech, references to individuals that feel the war's effects are commonplace. The victory in Iraq shifts the political need to create support for the war to the distribution of the spoils won by the military operation. Bush still maintains the paternal role and asserts his control over the political agenda, but the favorable outcome of his decision has softened the strict-father model somewhat as he magnanimously gives credit to others: "our nation and our coalition are proud of this accomplishment—yet, it is you, the members of the United States military, who achieved it" (USSL, 1). Additionally, Bush affirms that the "tyrant has fallen" and the speech focuses less on Hussein because as a symbol he is less dominant and ultimately less useful (USSL, 1). However, these new developments in the political rhetoric do not contradict the earlier analysis because the fallen statue of Hussein and the "images of celebrating Iraqis" become a new metonymic device, which seeks to narrowly define victory to correspond with the administration's interpretation of the outcome of the war (USSL, 2). Although many Iraqis did not welcome the American troops and many more did not welcome the

full effects of the removal of Hussein and the ensuing chaos throughout the country, Bush's language intends to promote the view in the speech as the dominant and accepted interpretation of the outcome. This is perhaps the most evident when Bush states that "men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air" (USSL, 2). To equate an abstraction, liberty, with the three components that are necessary for bodily survival is a clear illustration that the rhetoric that obscures physical content in the state of the union is very much at work in the USS Lincoln speech.

It still remains to be seen how Bush's treatment of Hussein interacts with American civic agency as audience members. After grammatically freeing the minds of the audience through the language of possibility in the state of the union, Bush reels them in and tells the audience where their detached mental images fit into the current political situation. In other words, after speaking in abstract terms that stimulate the imagination, Bush imposes a categorical, physical directive: the public's imagination must rest on the figure of Hussein. In the case of the terrorists, an image of a terrorist act became a proof of a nonexistent action, but in the case of Saddam Hussein, this figure becomes the vessel that can receive anger and confusion of the American public. At the moment of the speech, a real worry is in the minds of many American citizens—if that worry did not exist, then support for the Iraq war would not have existed either. The audience believes or is instructed that an enemy is threatening their bodies, their country's dominance, their freedoms, etc. and these fears must have an outlet. A single, concrete, 'evil' figure is perhaps the best and easiest target for these powerful emotions.[3] When these emotions find a target, there is an immediate relief because a solution has been found. According to the rhetoric, Saddam Hussein

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[3]See Samik Khader's discussion of American war propaganda and Saddam Hussein in *Control Room*.

has caused these problems and therefore we must eliminate him. It is immediately apparent that on both sides of this reasoning there are simplifications at work. A single person cannot cause these problems, nor will a war only concern a single person. In effect, if the audience adopts this explanatory framework, which Bush has laid out in his speech, they are relinquishing agency. An answer has been reached and all that remains is to take action against the enemy. However, the audience's principal source of control, as those that can discuss the speech, debate the issues, think of other alternatives—act as Kant's 'scholar'—vanishes once this issue is settled and the agency goes directly to the sovereign. That is, once war is accepted in Iraq, the civilians do not determine the process of the campaign. As has become apparent, however, this is hugely problematic because though the interpretation of the conflict adheres to the single concrete figure of Saddam Hussein, it is erroneous to suggest that by focusing on a concrete individual, the war is grounded on considerations of physical and daily human reality. In fact, Hussein as a metonymic construction functions as an abstraction because the physical dominance of this symbol causes the audience to lose sight of and forget the myriad physical realities in the Iraqi citizenry.

It is crucial to elaborate more on the terms 'threat,' 'terror,' and 'evil,' both because they appear frequently in the speech and have been mentioned frequently in this analysis, and because these abstractions also actively participate in questions of agency. According to Eubanks, "threat and terrorism are conceptually related by metonymy" (56) and they are connected by a part-whole relationship that Bush uses in order to imply that "whenever we detect the part (whenever we see a threat), we can assume there is a whole (we can assume the threat implies a terrorist

organization)" (57). Stepping back for a moment, a threat is based on perception,[4] and not a sort of perception that is the stuff of scientific observation but a perception that has much more to do with emotions, specifically with fear. When Bush speaks of the ways in which America's enemies threaten the country, it is virtually impossible to argue with these perceived threats. One may propose that the people of Iraq have not manifested a desire to harm the American people, but one cannot *disprove* Bush's conception of a threat. It is one thing to challenge the objective stimulus, the hazard on which one bases the perception of a threat, but the emotional component is much more difficult to alter and does not respond well to arguments about the rationale that informs the response. A textbook example of this dilemma occurs when a person tries to assuage his friend's fear of flying. He may repeat the statistical evidence that flying is objectively safer than driving *ad infinitum*, but the friend's emotional response will likely remain intact. This problem is complicated further in light of Eubanks' argument. A threat may be employed in order to make a claim that a terrorist group exists. This is important for the speech in question because it makes the connection between Hussein and terrorists appear to be justified. Terrorists, according to Eubanks, attempt to create the feeling of ongoing threat, so when Bush argues that Hussein *also* threatens the American people he not only becomes the terrorists' accomplice, he becomes a terrorist. Bush makes Hussein absorb the second enemy-terrorists—by the allegations that Hussein supports the terrorists' activities. As the word threat implies, Hussein becomes the most visible part of their ranks, their representative, because he practices their trade: the production of a constant threat. The ambiguity ushered in by the invocation of terror and threat

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[4]Threat is typically considered the subjective, emotional component in risk assessment, whereas hazard is the more objective, probability-based component.

rests squarely on Hussein. This homogenization of targets is important when trying to gain

support for war against a specific country and a specific group of people.

It is instructive to analyze three possible ways citizens may comment on and object to the

president's rhetorical strategy and how the language resists or complicates these challenges The

first is that the president's perceptions and his analysis of what is threatening or even the

perceptions of his administration are not representative of the will of the people and are therefore

not legitimate. Many Americans did not feel threatened by Saddam Hussein's government or the

Iraqi people as a whole. In this case, the president is simply wielding a disproportionate amount

of power and stripping the people of their agency. However, there are problems with this

objection because the objectors cannot eradicate either the president's perceptions of the threats

or the perceptions of their fellow Americans who feel threatened. As was stated earlier, it is the

nature of the word threat that it can escape to the realm of abstract emotion and thus safely

distance itself from persuasive reasoning. Feeling threatened is also very personal: one cannot

instruct another to feel unthreatened. Threat, like invoking the word 'terrorism,' is powerful

because it is simultaneously abstract and individually concrete. A listener is free to imagine what

he feels to be threatening, independent of his neighbors' conception of what is threatening. Thus,

'threat' is another very useful political word because it is born in the realm of abstraction but can

lead to physical violence through the imagination of the public. Again, it cannot be understated

how important this is for a politician who is trying to convince his people that war is necessary.

A second objection to Bush's use of threat deals with the way in which it allows him to

pair Hussein with terrorists and ultimately label Hussein as a terrorist. This objection comes from

commentators who believe that there is no provable connection between Hussein and Al-Qaeda.

They take issue with Bush's statement that "Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists,

including members of al Qaeda" (SOU, 8). This is a moment in the speech in which Bush makes a specific connection between two discrete entities and it is very possible that Bush's claim is based on faulty evidenced and may be disproved. However, the symbolic, metonymic relationship that Bush establishes between terrorism and Hussein is not dependent on factual evidence.

A third objection is that a threat itself is not sufficient grounds on which to go to war. If someone threatens the country, we must consider whether or not that person realistically has the means to attack, or if the threat can be taken seriously. This objection goes to the heart of Bush's argument for war, an argument that hinges upon the final term that will be discussed in this section: evil.

Evil is probably the most complicated of the three signs and will only be discussed as far as Bush employs it. Evil is both categorical and inherent: when we call someone evil, we do not allow that this person may change. Robert Hariman argues that "the term 'evil' is almost unintelligible within the standard lexicon of liberal-democratic political thought" (511) precisely because it is both categorical and inherent. There is the notion in modern democratic thought that human beings can progress and that no one is destined from birth to be one way or another. Bush's use of the term evil, following Hariman's reasoning, is both anachronistic and produces confusion in the audience members, but as Hariman admits, the term is ultimately effective politically because politicians are able to invoke the imagery that popular media has created around the term.

In addition to the cultural weight assigned to this word by the media, what Hariman calls "the popular theater of darkness" (512), evil is powerful simply by its cultural associations with villains, inculcated in people from a very young age. The fact that these villains are found in

narratives in which the characters are marked forever as bad or good reinforces the idea that what we designate as evil does not allow human complexity. The wicked stepmother in Cinderella does not make a progression towards a more understanding, kind person; she is locked in as the monster who challenges Cinderella's dream to find true love. In contrast, no matter how much we are dismayed by Oedipus' pride or King Lear's folly, it seems inappropriate to call these characters evil or villains. Evil, then, is culturally reserved for dysfunctional humans that cannot progress, embodied in the romantic/heroic genre of childhood tales as opposed to the more realistic, complex, and human characteristics of tragedy.

In presidential discourse, we have seen that evil has the effect of dehumanizing the enemy, but the term's effects extend much further. If the war is being conducted in order to remove Saddam Hussein, and Hussein is evil, then the war will not have real human consequences because the target of the war is a monster, even a disembodied force. Bush makes this phenomenon explicit in the end of his USS Lincoln speech, when he describes the *heroic* efforts of those servicemen and women who died in combat: "those we lost were last seen on duty. Their final act on this Earth was to fight a great evil and bring liberty to others" (USSL, 5). In this example, the disembodied force of evil is paired with the disembodied force of liberty and Hussein as the monster is paired with American soldier as the hero.

What is problematic when these abstractions—evil, threat, and terror—begin to take over from real human complexity? Liberty is a very common sign in the American lexicon, and doesn't it follow that liberty's antagonist, evil, should also be in the idiom? As we have seen thus far in the analysis, these abstractions easily lose sight of the fact that they continue to describe human beings and their activity, which resist being generalized into abstractions. If Hussein and terrorists merge into a single mass that is then applied to the entire population of Iraq, the

inherent evil and terror that these actors are said to produce easily adheres to Iraq as a country, to people that are not Hussein and are not terrorists. As we will see later in the project, the "positive" abstractions such as liberty are problematic for the same reasons, in that they suggest that the American military and the military's actions are absolutely good and heroic, thereby obscuring human error and immorality.

It must be emphasized that the moments of absolute physicality in the presidential discourse are not substantially different than abstract language in their effects. Both devices take away civic agency. This has ramifications for a democratic ideal that seeks precisely to place agency in the hands of the people. In addition, we can also conclude that this has implications for the American public's understanding of the Iraqi people because a more precise definition for agency as we have been employing the word is the ability to imagine different possibilities: the possibility that the country should not go to war with Iraq, the possibility that the chief outcome of warfare will not be the harm or punishment of a dictator, etc. As we will see in the next chapter, many civic voices became intuitively aware of the void of physical content in authorized political descriptions of the conflict and used their own language to search for those hidden possibilities.

II. Breaking the metaphor and finding the bodies

> Dear Mr. President,
>
> You should spend one day as a
> homeless person, one day as a
> citizen of Iraq, one day as a
> villager in Afghanistan, one day
> as an unemployed steel worker,
> one day as a parent whose child's
> school is closed.
>
> Sincerely,
> Iryna Kwasny
> San Francisco (Oring, vol. 2: 8)

The above letter is from *I wish to say...*, a two-volume compilation of postcards to the

President, written by American citizens. It is the brainchild of artist Susan Oring, who describes

her work in the following introductory statement: "*I wish to say* grew out of my concern that not

enough voices were being heard about the state of affairs in this country and my belief in the

value of free expression that is guaranteed under our Constitution" (vol. 1: 2).

Although the postcards exhibit a broad range of tonal and thematic scope, the majority of

the postcards express dissatisfaction with the current administration and many—either directly or

indirectly—connect this unrest with the administration's policy in Iraq. Most likely, President

Bush will never read these postcards, and it is probable that Oring was aware of this even before

she began the project and that each American who wrote a postcard knew that their words would

never reach the addressee. However, many people dictated their concerns to Oring and she went

ahead with the project and typed up each postcard. This book redefines the idea of a societal

voice because what matters to Oring and those who contributed is that the voice is heard, that the

concerns of an average American materialize in published form. Simply uttering a few sentences

and then printing them gives a material existence, and hence a power, to one whose profession is

outside of government. In addition to the power that comes from the objectification of a citizen voice, the letters are powerful as representations.

This section will specifically focus on citizens' voices. Again, we will be relying upon Kant's description of the scholar role—one that speaks publicly to critique the government—as a working definition for citizen. Upon studying the various civic voices that "spoke," (that is, whose thoughts and opinions were realized), about the Iraq War, it is clear that both the content and the form of these voices demanded the physicality and material reality that was denied to them by political rhetoric. Form in this case means the structure that one adopts while speaking, e.g. speech, postcard, essay. Content refers to the specific message or "text" within the form. We will analyze content semantically and through its interaction with representation.

The cited letter's content calls attention to what the formally political descriptions ignore. The author, Iryna Kwasny, attempts to remove the president from the protected, political sphere by assigning him to various other lives, and although this may be a fantasy and a hypothetical maneuver, she invokes lives of real, defined human beings. There *are* homeless people, Iraqi citizens, Afghan villagers, unemployed steel workers, and parents whose children's school is closed. By suggesting that the president live these lives and become these people, the author simultaneously expands the letter to encompass more voices and divests one of the most powerful political figures in the world of his political authority. President Bush becomes Mr. Bush, someone we might encounter on the street. Kwasny wants to blur the distinction between professional politician and citizen and remove economic, social, political, and national boundaries. Without these abstract distinctions, there is simply one human being and others and there is nothing that would frustrate an understanding among Kwasny, Bush or an Iraqi citizen. In short, Kwasny emphasizes similarities and connections between seemingly unrelated

individuals, without collapsing their diversity. She calls on Bush to appreciate and experience these differences by paradoxically accepting some base similarities between himself and the people in the letter.

The letter semantically directs us towards the physical effects of political action and makes these effects uncomfortably intimate. She demands that Bush's person become the persons she names in the letter. He must wear the others' clothing, adopt their everyday lives and their cultural teachings. With each of the figures that Kwasny mentions in her letter, she implies a certain hardship or problem that the figure suffers and that the president must recognize and experience for himself. The homeless person lacks a home, the unemployed steel worker lacks a job, the parent lacks a functioning school for his/her children; the president lacks none of these. Interestingly, the author does not explicitly assign a shortage to either the Afghani villager or the Iraqi citizen. In the context of the United States foreign policy however, it is quite obvious that both of these figures are living in a war and what they lack is the physical[5] comfort and security of living in peace. That Kwasny does not need to write these words for her audience to understand what shortage she refers to strengthens the connection between the civic and the material. She assumes that bodily safety and daily order are so essential to her audience that merely naming those who live in the absence of these two necessities will lead the audience to her conception of the Iraqi and Afghani citizens. As a unified whole, Kwasny's letter attempts to remove the distance, both geographic and spiritual[6], between maker of war and sufferer of war.

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[5]Again, I concur with Scarry's argument that physical injury is war's central effect and purpose.
[6]Spiritual is meant as an umbrella term for such intangibles as differences (distances) in belief, cultural knowledge and ways of living. These are all abstractions, which may seem to clash with the central argument, but the civic voices intend to rope in these immanent entities and reconnect them to the body and immediate reality. For example, while an Iraqi and American citizen may have opposing religious views that threaten to cause conflict, their susceptibility to bodily harm

As we will continue to see, civic voices are especially preoccupied with this distance because it destroys the physical and intimate and leaves apathy in its wake.

A second letter from this collection is even more brief and distilled:

> Dear Sir:
>
> I've never felt more alienated
> from the rest of the world.
>
> Sincerely,
> Annik Prasad
> San Francisco (Oring, vol. 1: 13)

In Prasad's letter, the two most powerful words are "alienated" and "world." The image that the words have in tandem is very arresting: a lone human being surrounded by a separate, distant world. Besides being an instance of imaginative possibility, Prasad's letter functions argumentatively. This argument, though confined to a single sentence, is really various political opinions: there is the idea that the world forms a community, a nation from which the speaker has been removed and is now a political alien; it is consequently impossible to make such marked divisions because all the nations are somehow a single nation, and this challenges the 'othering' that an opposing political rhetoric attempts when creating America's enemy;[7] thirdly,

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and disruption of everyday life via warfare closes this apparent gap between the too. It is important to note that this emphasis on the body does not reduce the spiritual, rather to the extent that we are discussing warfare and injury, the spiritual differences are restricted from any preference over and above the immediate physical impacts of warfare.

[7] In this sense 'othering' is a political maneuver that establishes a commonality among groups that ignores the 'other's' participation and differing viewpoint while imposing some type of political agenda on the 'other.' It is a form of "taxation without representation" and one way of explaining the U.S. involvement in Iraq: the U.S. argues for action in Iraq because safety and democracy in an outside country is tantamount to U.S. national interest. In this way, Iraq is included in the U.S. political sphere, but without the attendant representation of the Iraqi viewpoint in the decision for action in Iraq.

there is a more implicit argument that encourages diplomacy and puts a political price on

breaking that diplomacy.

This letter is deceptively similar to some of Bush's rhetorical strategy in that both free the

public imagination through abstraction. As Bush delegates power to imagine a hypothetical

attack, perpetrated by Hussein and terrorists, Prasad too allows the reader to interpret 'alienation'

and 'world' to take away his own conclusions from the letter. We may extrapolate further to say

that even Kwasny's specific individuals—homeless person, Iraqi citizen—allow for creative

interpretation. Nevertheless, the use of abstraction in the postcards differs fundamentally from

Bush's strategy on two levels: the postcards do not restrict the audience's imagination by

introducing a dominant physical presence on par with Bush's Hussein; secondly, Bush's use of

hypotheticals lack grounding in concrete action (an attack) whereas Kwasny's abstraction

ultimately points to real homeless people and real Iraqi citizens, just as Prasad describes her own,

real emotions. In the discussion of representation later in the chapter, these differences will

become more apparent.

In spite of the richness of Prasad's letter, the initial and most literal interpretation is the

most compelling: an individual entity that is separated from a whole and experiences the loss of

that schism.[8] The speaker is expressing a feeling of distress that has two dimensions, both of

which are rooted in the body and an antagonistic distance. The speaker suffers emotionally and

psychologically because of an intangible distance felt between her and the world. The speaker

also suffers physically in a sense because she feels a physical distance between her presence and

the presence of others. It is not surprising that even the 'intangible distance' borrows the

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[8]Although this state of being has many philosophical resonances (e.g. Lacan's "Mirror Stage"), they are not relevant for this discussion.

language of physicality. We say that two people who are not on speaking terms are 'distant' even if they are sitting side-by-side. In other words, the intangible feeling that the two individuals experience is described *as if it were an explicitly physical separation*. Our preoccupation with this inherently geographic word, distance, is clearly based on the importance we place on bodily reality and the desire for the bodily reality of others, whether as intimacy or the affirmation of one's place in a community, e.g. a family gathering.

In this way, Prasad's letter supplies us with the subjects of Kwasny's writing: her feeling of alienation could be applied to the unemployed worker, the Iraqi citizen and the others. For the purposes of this analysis, the Iraqi citizen feels alienated and isolated from the process—in a very broad sense—that has resulted in the state of war that she lives in. She experiences the effects political 'othering.' It is here where we may draw a heretofore latent relationship between the body and the political: not only does the body receive the impact of the political decision to create war in Iraq, the distance between the Iraqi citizen and those that create the war has the effect of removing all political control or voice from the Iraqi citizen.

The authors of the two letters seem to be very aware of this lack of political power, both the Iraqi citizen's and their own, as they attempt to invest everyday, human phenomena—a person's identity in society and another's feeling of isolation—with political power. They also inversely relocate political ideas and political actions squarely on a human reality. Fighting without broad support can make a person feel ostracized from the world community, just as a president is also a citizen and more basically a human being. It is no coincidence that both letters claim this human reality because it is the authors' way of making sense of something as amorphous as war and trying to show that warfare and politics still ultimately affect people. If a treaty is signed between diplomats, the stipulations of the document will have consequences for

people. If a bomb is dropped and a building is destroyed, even if there are no casualties, there will be human consequences, such as disruption of work, loss of savings, feelings of fear or indignation. The authors shorten the distance between the dying Iraqi and the person hailing a cab in New York City, and this too is a demand for physical content. It is not just a case of bringing foreign issues to the home front; it is quite literally bringing warfare into the realm of perception. So much of what remains obscured in politics or in foreign affairs is distant from the average citizen's senses, and the authors of these two letters create situations in which this is not so. As Kwasny tells the president to adopt these various lives, she is also telling him to shorten the gap between his political decisions and the people they affect, to allow these people and the president to see the implications and their origins.

In another sense, the two authors challenge Weber's definition of the politician's "decisive psychological quality...his ability to let realities work upon him with inner concentration and calmness. Hence his distance to things and men" (115). It is precisely the things and men, i.e. material human reality, that the authors want the president to *perceive* and experience up-close. The authors' also criticize Weber's concept of allowing "realities to work" on the politician because if political relevance and power lies in everyday human interactions and survival, the politician may easily *overlook* the information that should inform his political decisions. As the letters indicate, abstraction may be useful by allowing the reader (politician) to incorporate more everyday knowledge into policy and action, but it is also imperative that he focus remain on the affected humans. Thus a correlate of the authorization of the nonpolitical in these letters is the deauthorization of the political.

One area of the letters that remains to be fleshed out is the authors' representations through their language versus Bush's representations in the previous chapter. It will be useful to

rely on a schema involving both the form and content of the civic and political voices. As we have seen in the first chapter, presidential speeches that Bush delivered represented both the direction of the nation and the plans of those with power in the nation. The institutional framework for the speeches and the ceremonial aura added to the speeches' authority. In the State of the Union speech, the president outlined an interpretation of the nation and his plan for the year to come, while the USS Lincoln speech defined the cessation of major hostilities in Iraq. The speech, as a form, also prescribes a unidirectional means of communication between president and nation. Without the second half that would create a dialog, the president's words *represented* and ultimately became a substitute for the other voices of the American people.

We have already seen how the speeches represent via their actual content and it will be sufficient to repeat the most salient features. Bush's reliance on metonymic representations, both Hussein for Iraq and liberty for war's purpose and effects, are reductive. The metonymies and the language of possibility, which paradoxically frees and channels the public imagination, are rhetorical because they reduce diverse voices into one and maintain control of the imagination with the administration. Any of these representations denies a physicality to the audience. Hussein as Iraq denies the public information/intimacy with the Iraqi citizens; giving the audience free reign to imagine terrorist disasters inevitably prevents the audience from looking beyond the boundary suggested when the president qualified the word imagination with the word terrorist. In the USS Lincoln speech, Bush's insistence that the Iraqi War was a "battle" (1) also has the capacity to simultaneously expand and reduce imagination: battle suggests that what has occurred in Iraq is merely a step towards a goal, specifically a larger war on terror; at the same time, calling an operation that is conventionally referred to as war a battle instead has the effect of diminishing the importance of the conflict. In sum, the form and content of the president's

speeches are convergent in that in both, representation is a means to establish a viewpoint—the administration's—that will become the viewpoint of the nation. Furthermore, the affirmation of this viewpoint is the negation of others, most importantly those that emphasize the real, human, bodily effects of the war.

If we turn our attention back to the letters, the analysis of representation yields very different results. As a form, the letters aim to increase the number of voices and perspectives that are in the public sphere. Prasad offers her own personal feelings about the current political climate. Kwasny, on the other hand, does represent the entities that she names in the letter, but it is important to point out that this representation draws attention to the entities and affirms their existence and political relevance, without asserting an authorial control that speaks as if she were the people mentioned in her letter. It is more precise to say that Kwasny *speaks of* the entities in her letter. Moreover, the letter attempts to shorten the distance between politician and civilian while abstaining from imputing actual words or opinions to the figures in her letter.

It is also vital to question whether these letters are realistically capable of representing in the sense of controlling, even if the authors wanted to wield this power. Bourdieu's writings on power are instructive and sufficient to help us understand this problem. He argues that those who look for authority within language itself are overlooking the fact that "authority comes from outside" (Bourdieu, 109). There is the claim that a rhetorically persuasive discourse will lose all effectiveness if it is pronounced by the wrong person: an unauthorized voice. When the president speaks on the deck of the USS Lincoln or in the House chamber, he is speaking in an authorized space and as executive and commander-in-chief, he is the *single* authorized person on such occasions. Although Susan Oring has provided a space in which citizens can create postcards, the voices are unauthorized in the sphere of American politics. There may be legitimate objections to

this lack of authorization for civic voices, but in the current political system, the authors of the postcards are unable to speak on behalf of others with authority.

This again raises the question: why did the authors bother to participate in Oring's project? We have already stated that the words have a power—if not an authority—through being uttered and becoming published. If we look again to Bourdieu, he gives two surprising explanations of the way in which representation can engender its own power:

> the political labour of representation (not only in words or theories but also in demonstrations, ceremonies or any other form of symbolization of divisions or opposites) gives the objectivity of public discourse and exemplary practice to a way of seeing or of experiencing the social world that was previously relegated to the state of a practical disposition of a tacit and often confused experience (unease, rebelliousness, etc.) (130)

> Every language that makes itself heard by an entire group is an authorized language, invested with the authority of this group, it authorizes what it designates at the same time as it expresses it, drawing its legitimacy from the group over which it exercises its authority and which it helps to produce as such by offering it a unitary expression of its experiences. (129)

The first of these explanations is compelling because it treats cohesion and like-mindedness as characteristics that confer the 'objectivity of public discourse.' Not only do the authors offer their individual voices to make them manifest, but also implicitly look for reverberations from others, from a community. Even if the content of the postcards never reaches the ears of the president or a congressman, there is the hope that in the American public, a dialog will form

between reader and author. In this sense, the authors' words are representative precisely because they may not speak for others in the sense of control, but they do reflect words and opinions—in short, voices—that others have. It is this view of the world, this 'symbolization of division' that gives the words a certain power and a raison d'être.

Bourdieu's second assessment of language is startling because it appears to contradict his claim that 'authority comes from outside.' In the above passage, every linguistic expression is capable of self-authorization when an entire group utters the expression. Following Bourdieu's logic then, authority comes from some sort of objectivity, but this does not inhibit a group from forming and creating its own objectivity. In this sense, the body of marginalized, unauthorized voices may harmonize with each other, form a group and become a public object. We may even speak of this public object as its own society or institution that wields an authority by virtue of its ability to represent and speak of many. It is once again important to distinguish between a more traditional representative group and a group that may form out of the voices that speak in the postcard collection. In this postcard group, there is no Weberian charismatic leader to whom control has been ceded. Even the one who compiled the postcards does not exercise significant editorial control and her only writing included in the project is a brief introductory note. In the above passages from *Language and Symbolic Power* Bourdieu is right to eschew any discussion of a necessary leader. Although Weber has reason to emphasize the charismatic leader as the head of political parties and government, he ignores the phenomenon that Bourdieu implies: the possibility of a self-authorizing group that remains leaderless.

Thus, the collection of letters is both powerful for its form and content and authorizing because of its presentation as a group. Another prominent social voice during the Iraq conflict is an even fuller manifestation of an objectified group: the protest. In this civic action, the political

distance that separates physical from concrete becomes so small that it disappears and political action becomes intimate, a part of the body itself. The protests are frequently accompanied by words, whether on a sign that a protestor shoulders or when an organizer delivers a speech at a rally; however, even when such words and metaphors are employed, they are in the service of a spectacle and a material force that begins and ends in the protestors' bodies. People removing themselves from their daily activities and demarcating a physical space that they will occupy with other bodies is what separates a protest and a rally from a political treatise or the speech of a rival political party. Understanding the protest's emphasis on a physical presence is crucial for understanding one of the most important forms of speaking that the American citizenry has as its disposal and for explaining how the form of the protest informs the content. The power that the protest wields is evident from the "sit-ins" of the American civil rights movement to the "unknown rebel" that halted a group of tanks during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. We see the same process in the protests against the Iraq war.

As President Bush delivered his 2003 State of the Union address on the night of January 28, citizens gathered in the Capitol to protest. The Washington Post covered the event and according to reporter Manny Fernandez, there was a concert, a march, a rally, speeches, tussles with the police, a broadcast of the state of the union speech, as well as a video montage of past speeches that the President had delivered (A7). As a form, this protest is difficult to piece together because of these diverse and apparently disparate elements. A variety of media and types of voices are at work here and it is difficult to tease out a coherent response. Fernandez's article quotes a couple of the protestors' words, yet the driving message that all participants share and that harmonize into a single voice is simply negation: the people are opposed to the

administration's decisions, the people are opposed to the impending Iraq war. This does not

mean that the protest is unproductive, it simply is the overall message that the voice delivers.

This verbal message is merely a restatement of what a protest is as an action. To protest is

to go against something. What is interesting about this message, in this form, is the fact that it is

inseparable from the action itself: the manifestation of the activists' bodies. As protestor Dave

Zirin stated, "on a night when they're telling us we're supposed to sit in front of our TVs and

passively consume their message of war, we're going to come out, leave our homes and say loud

and proud that we're not buying it" (Fernandez, A7). Zirin's words imply that the protestors

willingly bring their bodies into a public space and that by performing this action they are

protesting and in effect 'speaking.' Although it is tempting to conclude that 'loud and proud'

refers to verbal language, this is not what makes a protest especially powerful. Any one of the

individuals could have remained in front of that TV and criticized the decision to go to war, but

it is their physical presence in the streets of the Capitol that is the reason that they have decided

to go beyond this verbal criticism.

Before moving on to a discussion of the content of the protest, it is vital to flesh out the

reasons why the form of such a voice is powerful and why civilians go to the trouble of removing

themselves from their comfortable homes and standing for hours in the freezing, open air. In

other words, why for the protestors is it not enough to stay in front of the television and criticize?

Zirin's comment is revealing because it acknowledges a dialog between 'them'—the

administration—and 'us'—the American public. This is significant first because the protestors

are creating a space for dialog that did not previously exist. Political speeches are unidirectional

and this is intensified by the television, a medium that separates an audience member, who

theoretically could yell something at the speaker if attending the speech. By leaving their homes

and congregating in a public space, the citizens are reestablishing the other half of the dialog. As was the case with the letters to the president, the protest does not require some sort of recognition by the political powers in order to be meaningful for the citizens or to be a powerful voice. The physical act of protesting is a material reality, and the photographs and the article about the protest are also a material reality. Above all, the unified spectacle of many bodies exhibited as a political opposition is a material reality. This is a second reason why the citizens protest and do not 'passively consume.' As the organizers themselves affirmed, "the turnout of 1,000 was a message all its own" (Fernandez, A7). The organizers are recognizing that the *presence* of 1,000 bodies became a message, not that 1,000 people described various reasons why war was wrong or that 1,000 people cursed Bush's decision to their television sets. Furthermore, the collection of bodies in a specific physical space is the objectified group par excellence. The group as a whole represents by *speaking of* and *pointing towards* the attitudes of the individuals without controlling or *speaking for* the people. One may argue that the organizers of the event act as leaders whose decisions constituted representation as *speaking for*, but the organizers certainly do not impute their language upon the group as a whole and neither the article nor the accompanying photos identify a leader of the group. Moreover, saying that the organizers' message of negation has been used to control the group ignores the fact that this message belongs to the group and by becoming protestors, the individuals were already asserting this voice for themselves.

As far as the specific content of the protest, the myriad, international protests that took place throughout 2003 after the war had commenced, make it even clearer that the protestors are principally concerned with visual language, which is directly related to the nuances of the protestors' argument. For this section of the analysis, the focus will be on images of these

protests, collected in the text *2/15: the day the world said No to war* and provided in the body of this project. Although this section of the thesis diverges from the focus on solely American civic voices, the international protests—especially the images—are not defined within national boundaries and frequently the protests occur concurrently across geographic borders, which means that to focus on "American protest" would be to miss the point of these universalized actions.

The first image (fig. 1) is from a March protest in Detroit, Michigan. Part of the caption for the photograph reads: "they read an indictment charging the Bush administration with 'crimes against peace.' Then they blocked entrances to the courthouse in a protest against war with Iraq. Twenty-seven were arrested" (*2/15*, 75). Instead of simply congregating in a public space, the protestors further utilized their bodies as obstructions, and when they were punished for the blockade, the police 'arrested' them, that is, put their bodies into custody. The words that the protestors offered up prior to blockading the courthouse were not censored but their bodies were. The protestors' use of their bodies closely parallels the direct consequences of war: the injuring done to the Iraqis. The protestors have placed themselves in uncomfortable, abnormal positions, mirroring the disruption of order on Iraqi soil. The composition of this photograph is revealing because juxtaposed with the figure of the supine man are a pair of feet, presumably those of an authority. The feet, which are using the staircase in the conventional manner, highlight the incongruity of full bodies in the same frame. This protest is effective because bodies are intentionally where they should not be, in the normative sense. This is, in effect, a direct commentary on warfare: it is an aberration of human reality, which begins and ends with the human body.

DETROIT
USA
2.18.03
PHOTO BY
JIM WEST
THE IMAGE WORKS

SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE
FROM VARIOUS RELIGIOUS
GROUPS MARCHED FROM
CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH TO THE FEDERAL
COURTHOUSE WHERE THEY
READ AN INDICTMENT
CHARGING THE BUSH
ADMINISTRATION WITH
CRIMES AGAINST PEACE
THEN THEY BLOCKED
ENTRANCES TO THE COURT-
HOUSE IN A PROTEST AGAINST
WAR WITH IRAQ. TWENTY
SEVEN WERE ARRESTED

Fig. 1 (*2/15*, 75)[9]

The second photograph (fig. 2) was taken in Rome, Italy and displays "protestors behind a banner of Picasso's *Guernica*" (2/15, 164-5). Although the focus of this photograph is on the banner, the painting is especially powerful in this image because of the sea of people holding it and behind it. In fact, as the protestors grip the banner in their hands and wield it as their opening message to the public, the banner, the bodies and the painting merge and simply become elements of the same message. The choice of the painting is no accident: Picasso's work depicts the destruction caused by an aerial attack that specifically targeted a civilian population. Although there are many interpretations of the symbolism in this painting, the images of suffering bodies are the most immediate and affecting. Picasso's cubist style is especially apt in this context because the bodies appear broken and abnormally disproportionate. In the hands of the protestors, then, the painting *speaks of* the horrors of war as direct impacts on civilians' bodies.

As we move to the third photograph (fig. 3), it appears as though the language of the protest has changed. This image, consisting of thousands of protestors in the streets of London, England, is dominated by words. Most of the participants are holding signs with various, concise messages: 'stop the war,' 'not in my name,' and a categorical 'no' (2/15, 93-4). Whereas there is a variety of messages, they all point to the negation of war. This collective, linguistic negation is powerful because it is visual. The giant 'NO' inscribed on so many signs stands out in the photograph because it is visually dominant. The protestors are appropriating words, which are of course the normative means of expression in political discourse, and changing them so that their linguistic value is reduced down to a negation and they simultaneously acquire an extraordinary, material power. The amount of ink used and the exaggerated physical dimensions

Fig. 2 (*2/15*, 164-5)

Fig. 3 (*2/15*, 93-4)

of the words are the tools at work here. Each picketer adds their own image and the words become the spectacle of the protest in aggregate.

The fourth photograph (fig. 4) is especially significant as an example of the role of costume and dramatic spectacle in the protest. The image depicts a New York protestor in a statue of liberty costume, wearing a skull mask instead of the statue's face. The protestor covers his forehead with his hand, as if in a gesture of despair. The figure uses his body as a means to appropriate and ultimately transform perhaps the most dominant symbol of America. The choice of the statue is especially relevant from a foreign perspective because it is has historically been the first symbol that foreigners associated with the new country upon arriving, many of them on their way to Ellis Island. The skull mask deconstructs the neoclassical perfection of the statue's face and in its place, substitutes an unequivocal image of death. One way of interpreting this reversal is to posit that the protestor reveals the fragile body behind the statue and in doing so comments on the presence of death lurking behind the current war rhetoric. Another dimension to the image is the ostensible mixing of emotionless death and the emotional gesture that the figure performs[10]. This paradoxical image is a provoking description of a time of war: even those who still live are confronted with extreme emotions and the constant specter of death in the background.

As mentioned above, this image exemplifies a more creative use of symbols. Part of the tendency for creation in the protests may be to counteract the overarching negation that

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[10]Foucault's description of the aim of torture is notably similar to this paradox. Torture was historically a way of giving the extremely brief moment of death an elongated time span (Foucault, 12); hence the combination of death with the impossibility of bodily feeling in death. Imagery and torture will be treated extensively in the following chapter.

Fig. 4 (*2/15*, 117)

dominates the protest. Although nascent and largely incoherent, the imaginative exercise of the protest *speaks of* a possible alternate reality that does not involve warfare in Iraq. In light of Bush's political speeches, the protestors also reassert their control over their imagination. Furthermore, by dressing up as the statue of liberty—or politicians in other protests—participants attempt to mock and invert the normal structures of representation that *speaks for* the citizens. Elaine Scarry offers another compelling explanation for the individuals' use of creative techniques for protest: "physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it;" "war empties the bodies of specific (distinguishing one country from another) cultural content" (4; 118). Scarry's description of 'cultural destruction' consequently opens the possibility for a means to fight pain and war: by acting creatively, giving the sufferings of war a name and a language. All the protest photographs work towards establishing a language that both confers power and authority to the citizenry and represents the Iraqi people on American soil by *speaking of* their sufferings, their problems, and dismantling the political 'othering.' It is important to reemphasize that this interaction between Iraqi citizens and American/international citizens—in a sense, the transnational citizenry—occurs on the terrain of bodies. For citizens in and out of wartime, the body is the most intimate reality and what warfare ultimately attacks.

Before moving on, we must see what happens when we look at the protest's positive (read: supportive of the war) analog, the rally. In another collection of images from the Iraq War, *Fear This*, there are several photographs of supporters of the American military involvement in Iraq. The most compelling of which is a two-page spread of a rally in Richmond, Virginia (fig. 5). Most of the supporters are waving American flags, while others carry signs that show support for "our president and our troops" (Suau, 92-93). Still others carry homemade posters with the face of an armed service member, presumably a friend or relative, often accompanied by a
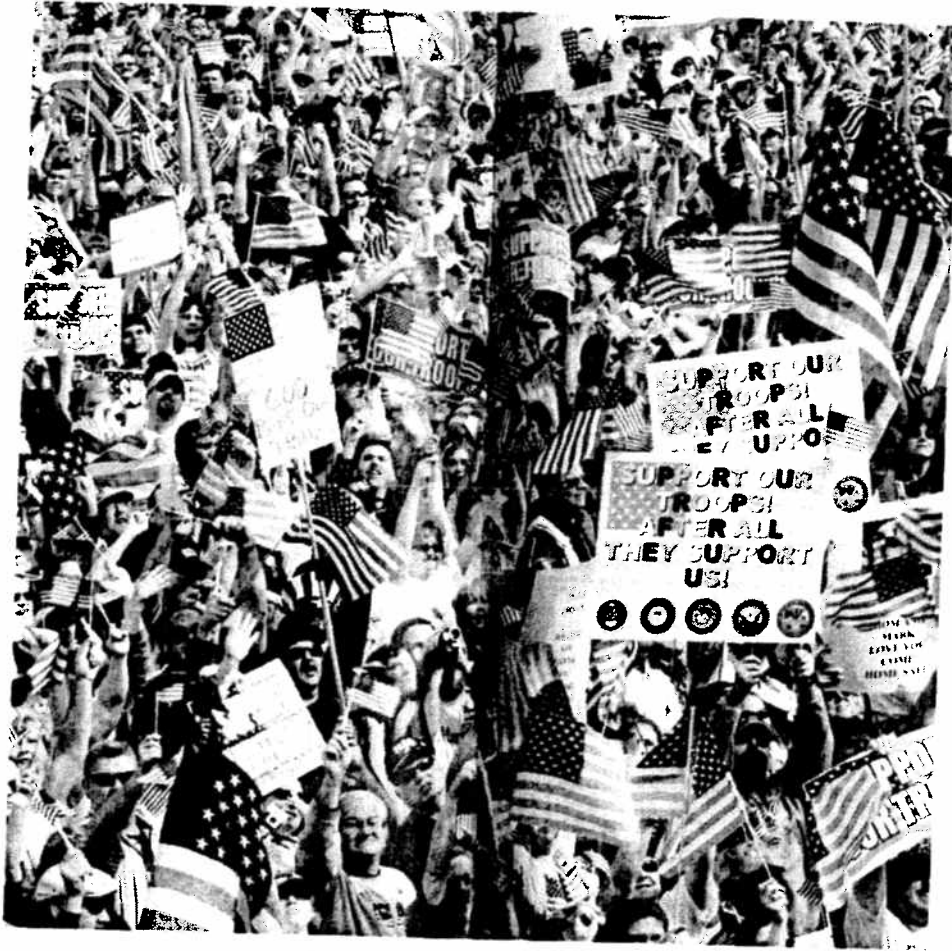
Fig. 5 (Suau 92-3)[11]

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heartfelt message. Although the formal message of the rally is the antithesis to that of the protest, the supporters' expression is remarkably similar to the protestors. The supporters also invoke American symbolism by waving the flag, and deconstruct this symbol by showing the individual faces and bodies of some of the citizens that are "behind" it. The sheer number of the flags in the picture also aids in dismantling the archetype and tying it to a human reality. The prayers for the president and the troops also inject the war with humanity because they *speak of* the individual human troops that are deeply involved in the conflict. Even when speaking of the president, the supporters treat him both as the symbolic leader and a human who has made the decision for the military action. The faces of individual servicemen on the posters are the quintessential technique for breaking the abstract war and pointing towards its human pieces and impacts. We may even extend the similarities to conclude that the link between American citizen and Iraqi citizen is still present in the sense that the supporters use their bodies to achieve these effects. However, there is still a clear distinction between the relationship between Iraqi citizen and protestor and Iraqi citizen and supporter because of the formal distinction between rally and protest. As will become clearer in the third chapter, the emphasis on the effects of war on American bodies is also a point of distinction between the two forms of civic demonstration.

These various civic voices, then, all strive to explain the effects of warfare as principally located in the realm of human existence, over and above an alleged 'war of ideologies.' It may appear that the weight of the focus has been placed on the image-laden protest and rally over the linguistic expressions of the postcards. Part of this is inevitable because the protests as a form of speech are most explicitly connected to the material reality of the human body. Not only are the demands of the protestors seeking physical content, the instruments for achieving this end are their physical bodies and physical public space. Thus, the protest and rally are analytically more

involved in the realm of material reality and it may be the case that these forms of speech are ultimately more effective than their strictly linguistic counterparts. However, this does not belittle the expressions of those that participated in Oring's project and dictated letters to the president. Instead of creating the literal dialog of the protest and rally, the letter writers relied on the widely recognized literary dialog between author and public, which is another valid way to encourage democratic exchange among individuals. Furthermore, the content of the letters clearly aimed to describe real human consequences of political action. In the end the forms seek both their own lost position in the democratic process and attempt to create space for a new figure in the process, occupied by the Iraqi citizen.

III. The distance that remains and the limits of sympathy

> "All of the fifty acknowledged attacks targeting Iraqi leadership failed. While they did not kill a single targeted individual, the strikes killed and injured dozens of civilians. Iraqis who spoke to Human Rights Watch about the attacks it investigated repeatedly stated that they believed the intended targets were not even present at the time of the strikes."
>
> --Human Rights Watch (6)

We have seen that non-Iraqi civic voices strive to introduce physical content into the gaps left by political, abstract language on the war. By using their bodies as both expressions of material reality and mediums on which cultural and imaginative symbols may be projected, the citizens ultimately *speak of* the human consequences of destruction. This special representation aims to create an understanding between the groups, a sympathy[12], which in turn establishes a generalized disapproval with the war and a general feeling with the suffering Iraqis.

However, the global civic voices cannot *be* the Iraqi voices; they can never avoid some form of representation, some distance from the Iraqis. This chapter will explore possible reasons for this indelible distance that permeates the conflict and has its maximum expression in the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison.

A large portion of this chapter will be devoted to analyzing competing theories and ideas dealing with sympathy and imagination in the context of the civilians' suffering in the Iraq war. Our point of entry into this discussion is by way of Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which provides us with a compelling introduction both into the interaction of sufferer and observer and into the moments in which the imagination—and therefore, sympathy—fails.

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[12]Sympathy is preferable to empathy here because it is broader in scope and includes the emotional component that empathy lacks.

According to Smith, the only way we can sympathize with another and get a sense of the sufferings that another endures is via the imagination (11). It directly follows that the context and the situation that provoke the suffering are more instrumental to the production of sympathy than the suffering itself. This makes intuitive sense because if our means by which to 'experience' another's distress is impossible without the imagination, then we need some sort of narrative structure or stimulus that would allow our minds to recreate the pathway to reach that suffering. Without that pathway, the pain—in this context emotional and physical—would need to directly transfer from sufferer to observer, which is impossible. In fact, even when two individuals have weathered the same calamity they would still need to imagine one another's suffering because their mental and physical reactions to the stimulus would not be equal.

This argument has profound implications for the discussion of abstract and concrete political language. As far as their capacity to provoke the imagination, the two language registers can be equally successful. As Bush recalled the audience's memory of the September 11th attacks, he supplied the citizens with the context through which to imagine both the suffering of others and their own suffering at the hands of Hussein and the terrorists, working in concert. In this strange hypothetical situation, the citizen became an observer of his own future self, not just the observer of others in pain. Context matters more than the *real* pain endured, therefore it is possible for us to sympathize with others, based on an unreal pain and a hypothetical attack. This is politically important because sympathy may be translated into a sense of indignation which may lead to support for warfare to prevent the suffering from taking place. Nevertheless, it becomes immediately apparent that the dual applicability of abstract and concrete language when creating the context for imagination is not a benign fact. We sympathize with others unequally and if there is a context for sympathizing with others that are more personally, culturally and/or

geographically closer to us than others in pain, we not only will sympathize with the former

group, we will resist imagining the context in which the latter group suffers. This is based on a

simple assumption: my pain (and the pain of those close to me) is more important than yours

(and the pain of those further from me).

Martha Nussbaum gives the name "possibilities," to the imaginative pathways by which a

non-suffering individual can sympathize with (she prefers the term 'compassion') a suffering

individual (342).Nussbaum references Rousseau's *Émile* and concurs with his idea that social

distinctions between people, which are normally impediments to sympathy, easily vanish when

one stops and thinks about the real similarities that exist among all human beings. In other

words, the imaginative 'possibilities' are always present in a given context, it is just a matter of

personally overcoming any impediments to reaching those 'possibilities.' This idealized

conclusion may have some merit if we limit our field of inquiry to distinctions in economic

classes among members of the same society. It is easy to imagine a hypothetical case in which a

wealthy individual is confronted with a beggar on the street and after initially rebuking the

beggar's entreaties, the rich individual realizes the connection between himself and the beggar

and returns in order to buy the poor person dinner. However, Nussbaum's conclusion seems

extremely hasty when we consider the real situation that exists between the comfortable

American citizen and the suffering Iraqi. Not surprisingly, Nussbaum is nearly silent about the

'possibilities' of sympathizing with those on the opposite end of a war zone. In one such

instance, she argues that "they [American citizens] should understand that many of the problems

to be faced by politics are shared problems, requiring shared transnational solutions" (421). This

position may be tenable as a rationale for multilateralism, but once two nations are at war with

one another, the muddy 'shared problems' become even muddier. That is, Nussbaum's

'possibilities' are much more difficult to achieve when the context involves two individuals that not only may be of different economic class, but also are geographically distant, culturally distant and in a situation in which sympathizing with the suffering citizen of another country may conflict with sympathizing with a fellow countryman, i.e. a U.S. soldier.

One of the most striking examples of this problem is in *Control Room*, a documentary that follows the coverage of the Iraq War conducted by Al-Jazeera, the Arabic news channel. The station is very controversial in the United States because it broadcasts photos and videos of wounded and dead American soldiers. One of the individuals that is repeatedly interviewed in the documentary is Captain John Rushing, a liaison between the American military forces in Iraq and the world press. While describing his reaction to seeing the footage of the wounded and dead soldiers, Rushing calls the images "revolting" but confesses that previously, when he had witnessed similar footage of Iraqi citizens, he did not feel the same way (Noujaim). In fact, he feels frustrated with himself for not feeling the same way about the Iraqis that he feels about his countrymen and quickly concludes that this phenomenon makes him "hate war" but admit its present necessity (Noujaim). Rushing's tension is instructive because he is faithfully acting as Nussbaum or Rousseau would urge him to, thinking seriously about his feelings towards the Iraqis and the Americans, but he is ultimately stuck with an irresolvable bias towards the American soldiers, and hence an irresolvable obstruction to sympathizing with and understanding the plight of the Iraqi citizens. The specific object involved in this context, suffering bodies, and Rushing's reaction to these bodies will become important later in the chapter.

Some may object that Rushing's situation is exceptional because he is a soldier and the pressures of this position render his case unrepresentative of the dynamic between the

American/international and Iraqi populations as a whole. However, we find similar problems when comparing the concerns and desires that plague the Iraqi civilians and those that plague the American—or non-Iraqi—civilian. An Iraqi woman who lived in the United States and earned her doctorate there wrote a letter to President Bush while in Iraq during the conflict. Most of the body of the letter deals with the daily problems that Iraqis must now face because of the chaos following the American military occupation: many residents do not have electricity, the water is polluted and coalition soldiers constantly search the Iraqis for weapons. On the subject of employment she confesses: "I am a mother and wife and my heart is bleeding to see these people suffering from unemployment. Not every Iraqi is from the Baath Party, so why are they out of their jobs? We have a saying in Iraq sir, 'hunger is murder'" (Enders, 78). With the exception of the reference to the Baath Party, this context is easily transferable to American soil and it is easy to imagine the same sentiments expressed by an American citizen, perhaps one of the many victims of hurricane Katrina in Louisiana. We can extrapolate further to conclude that the majority of the problems mentioned in the letter may be experienced by any and all citizens when faced with hardship and therefore, the letter is easy to sympathize with.

This becomes more obvious by looking at another letter from the collection of postcards relied on in the previous chapter. Kimmie Hill, in her petition to President Bush, demands that the war be put to an end "because I feel this war is for nothing. We have a war in L.A. People are trying to survive, they're trying to keep a roof over their heads and they're trying to do something for their kids" (Oring, 11). The central argument presented here is that a war on foreign soil is irrational because we already are fighting a domestic war. In the writing, there is virtually no pause between the military operation in Iraq and the daily troubles of living in downtown Los Angeles. This, however, is not sympathy. The author has used the conflict in Iraq

as a springboard into a discussion of domestic issues, and although her concerns are undoubtedly real and of great consequence, she makes no explicit connection between her problems and those of the people in the war zone. Once the Iraq war is mentioned, the Iraqi citizen drifts into oblivion and the focus is on domestic problems.

At the letter's conclusion, Hill returns to the Iraqi conflict: "the war is for nothing. A lot of people are dying for no reason at all. So please, if you have any compassion at all, end the war" (Oring, 11). There is a strange tension at work at this point in the letter because the conclusion betrays the body of the letter. Hill began her text with a reference to the war in Iraq and concludes that the war is futile, but the substantive middle portion has nothing to do with war in Iraq, rather it delineates some of the daily hardships that residents of Los Angeles must face. Hill's petition for peace may also refer to domestic resolution of the 'war' in Los Angeles. This reading further complicates Hill's relation to the Iraqis and makes tracing a sympathetic relationship between the two even more difficult. Though the juxtaposition of the problems in Los Angeles and the problems in Iraq suggest that Hill was aware of the similarities between the two scenarios, the bulk of the letter gravitates towards the problems in Los Angeles and the need to address those problems. The degree of relative urgency of each of the situations is not for us to decide here; what is important is that Hill's letter places a preference on the local, less distant, which acts to impede sympathizing with the concurrent plight of Iraqis.

Hill notably chooses the word 'compassion' in her plea to President Bush. This word choice is the example par excellence of the tensions inherent in sympathizing with one group over another. Syntactically, Hill appeals to Bush's sense of compassion in order to put a stop to the war. Out of context, one would conclude that Hill feels sympathetic towards those who suffer the brunt of the war: those in the war zone. However, following Smith's logic, the context in

which a person suffers and by extension, the context in which another person tries to understand another's suffering, are the essential elements to consider. Thus, Hill's ostensible compassion for the Iraqis is actually compassion for those who suffer in Los Angeles. Nevertheless it is important to remember that the ambiguity in the placement of the word 'compassion' in this letter implies that a tension exists, not an obvious conclusion. Hill could have written this letter, solely focusing on the problems in Los Angeles and asking the president for aid. She consciously chooses to speak of warfare and when she originally speaks about war, we can infer contextually that the 'war' she refers to is the current Iraq conflict. Her letter takes a clear standpoint against the war. In the same way, though Rushing may feel a psychological bias towards his countryman, he recognizes this bias and feels angry at himself. In other words, there is evidence in both Hill's letter and Rushing's comments that the limitations on sympathy in the Iraq war are not unassailable and the American/international voice is resisting these limitations.

The limitation that stems from cultural, intimate, and geographical difference is aggravated and in some instances, created by the efficacy of political rhetoric. As described in the first chapter, Bush's metonymic constructions and imagination channeling left a psychological imprint in the minds of many American citizens. In the New York Times' coverage of the 2003 State of Union address, an entire page of the paper was devoted to the reactions of some Americans after watching the speech. Several of the interviewees focused their discussion about the war solely on the figure of Saddam Hussein and on abstractions, usually based on morality. When one observer, Mike Fletcher, spoke of Hussein he affirmed "there's really only one answer…given the potential of what he is able to do, he cannot be allowed to survive" (LeDuff, A15). Another observer, Richard Brunhaver, said "Saddam is a bully and he's going to get whacked" (LeDuff, A15). The echo of Bush's rhetoric from the 2003 State of the

Union is clear: "If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him," and when describing Hussein's interrogation tactics, "if this is not evil, then evil has no meaning (SOU, 9). The figure of Hussein is the metonymy for the country of Iraq and in effect, Bush makes Hussein *speak for* the thousands of Iraqis. By focusing on a single, mythic individual, it becomes very difficult for the American public to see beyond this construct and sympathize with the individual Iraqi citizens that will bear the major burden of the war. Again, Nussbaum's 'possibilities' are difficult to reach through careful deliberation because the context of the State of the Union is the eve of war and it is very difficult for many Americans to *imagine* the Iraqis beyond the monolithic and imposing figure of Bush's rhetorical Hussein. The overwhelming specificity and materiality that Bush assigns to Hussein is effective precisely because it gives a target on which the public's imagination can rest. Hussein is a concrete individual that allegedly threatens the concrete reality of the public. When such a construct is achieved rhetorically, there seems to be little hope for a full understanding between the American and Iraqi publics.

Even after the official end to major combat operations, the effects of the political language remain in the American psyche. One soldier that was stationed in Iraq to take part in the 'post-war' occupation said: "why are people protesting? What don't they like? I thought they were happy because this Saddam guy was gone" (Enders, 22). In these words is the echo of Bush's USS Lincoln speech as he addressed the American troops: "because of you, the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free," "in the images of falling statues, we have witnessed the arrival of a new era" (USSL, 1). Even when the outside world has come into direct contact with the individual Iraqi citizens, the Hussein construct continues to dominate the imagination. Once again, there is a tension here because the soldier appears to be honestly confused. He wants to understand and

work with the Iraqis but the political argument that Hussein is not only the problem, but the solution–or at least the pathway to the solution–is limiting a possible sympathy.

These are some of the different limitations on sympathy engendered by the geographic, intimate and cultural distances, and politically created distance. We have treated sympathy as occurring in contexts in which people suffer generally, but it is important for this analysis to focus specifically on bodily suffering because as we have observed, the body is of special importance in the context of warfare because it is simultaneously the direct recipient of war's harm and the first and most intimate physical reality that humans have.

With this renewed focus, Captain John Rushing's reaction to the wounded and dead bodies takes on special importance. Rushing called the images "revolting," which reveals the disgust and discomfort he feels when witnessing the soldiers' bodies in such a state (Noujaim). Whereas Rushing interprets his reaction and lack of a similar reaction to viewing Iraqis in the same context as a bias he has towards his countrymen, his word choice betrays this initial analysis. In other words, why doesn't a feeling of disgust have the same sympathetic currency as feeling a sense of pity or compassion, and why can't we conclude–like Rushing–that a feeling of disgust is compatible with understanding? Finally, why does disgust take the human body as its object?

If we return to Smith's theory, his writing makes particular mention of the suffering body and the special difficulties that observers encounter when witnessing this object: "our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon his imagination, than our bodies can mould themselves upon his body" (35). Also in this section, Smith further explains the difficulty in aligning sufferer and observer: "my hurt, however, is no doubt, excessively slight, and upon that account, if he makes any violent out-cry, as I cannot go along with him, I never fail to

despise him" (35). The first of Smith's conclusions needs some unpacking. If the tools by which we can 'suffer with' the body in pain are the same that we employ when we attempt to sympathize with the mind in pain, why is there an unequal chance for success when the object is the human body? All humans have bodies, just as they all have minds, and this simple observation suggests that the imagination should be able to 'mould itself upon' each with equal ability. Each situation still requires a narrative context to elicit sympathy in the observer, and as Smith himself has pointed out earlier, this context—not the actual suffering—is the crux of the sympathetic response. The second conclusion cited above brings us forward somewhat because it suggests that when the body is in pain, it creates barriers that even another's imagination cannot overcome. Although Smith never denies that mental pain may be extremely severe, he nevertheless argues that in the case of the body, the observer is overwhelmed by the gravity of the object's physical suffering. One possible conclusion that we can draw from Smith's theory of the body is that the physical reality enshrined in the body is so present and personal for the individual, that an outsider is never able to access the object's suffering in a satisfactory way. To extend this further, if the sufferer's physical reality is so personal that it resists interpretation, then the observer's comfortable body is so personal to the observer that it resists participating in the exercise of sympathetic judgment. To restate a point made earlier, even inflicting a like hurt on the observer's body would not facilitate sympathy both because individual reactions to physical pain will always be distinct and because 'my body is more important than yours.' When one is in bodily pain, it is extremely difficult to 'feel with' another in pain at the same time.

The last important element of Smith's theory of the body is his confession that "I never fail to despise him" (35). Not only is the observer not able to sympathize with the object, instead of leaving with a feeling of indifference, she reacts with hatred towards the object that has

resisted her imagination. Perhaps a better description of this emotion is indignation because the observer feels as though she should be able to participate in the suffering, but fails. Theorist Elaine Scarry argues that "pain has the effect of distancing the observer, even if the patient is very close" and "pain can demarcate absolute certainty–in the patient–and absolute doubt in the observer" (4). The creation of doubt is in line with Smith's indignation because we are doubtful of the path by which the sufferer came to her present state of pain. In the vocabulary of this project, distance is the primary mechanism by which sympathy is disrupted, and so the distance created by pain, (Scarry means physical pain here), also frustrates the willing observer.

This may explain the feeling of hatred or indignation, but Rushing's revulsion is still a mystery. Nussbaum's work offers a different reading of the observer's reaction to the failure of sympathy: "we see that disgust, which always serves the purpose of setting us at a distance from our own animality, easily takes as its object other persons and groups, who come to represent what is avoided in the self" (347). Notably, the word 'distance' appears in Nussbaum's analysis, but in a very different way than the word has been utilized up to this point in the analysis. This distance, which still acts conventionally to limit sympathy, has the novel characteristic that safeguards the observer from his own shameful 'animality,' or what is tantamount to his own shameful physicality. Rushing's disgust is his basic instinct to protect himself from recognizing the frailty of his own most intimate reality. In this new distance, the closer sufferer, the countryman, elicits the reaction not because Rushing sympathizes with the closer individual but because the closer individual more explicitly reminds him that his own American, military body is as susceptible in the war zone as his comrade's. It is one thing for protestors to use their bodies as part of their message and for civic postcards to demand that the real sufferings of Iraqis become part of the American political dialog, but it is quite another when the speaker/observer's

reality is threatened and he confronts the near possibility that he will no longer be an observer or commentator; he will become a sufferer. The ominous presence of his own bodily harm is unbearable because literally nothing, or very little is left to the imagination. The level of comfort that is requisite for sympathy vanishes. We have come to the end of extension of physical content, denied in political rhetoric and reclaimed in citizen language: an excess physicality. We will see how this new information functions in a case study of the abuses at the Abu Ghraib detention facility.

In April 2004, information and photographs were released to the public, detailing the abuses of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of military personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in central Iraq. According to an official investigation conducted by Major General George R. Fay, the abuses included "physical abuse, use of dogs, humiliating and degrading treatments, nakedness, photographs, simulated sexual positions, improper use of isolation, failure to safeguard detainees and failure to report detainee abuse" (Fay, 111-14). The photographs that were taken by military personnel and later exposed in the international media caused the largest uproar in the popular consciousness, which is expected both because of an image's evocative power, and in the context of this argument, because an object–the photograph–is the site of a possible sympathetic relationship between sufferer and observer, and strong reactions occur in such a situation irrespective of the production of sympathy or the production of disgust. One of the most notorious of these photographs is that taken of 'incident no. 10': a man stands on a wooden box, draped in a black cloak which covers his entire body except his hands and feet, his arms are extended and wires are attached to his "fingers and penis" (Fay, 132). The torture tactics involved in this incident include sensory deprivation, the physical discomfort of standing in this position for an extended period of time, but perhaps the most insidious one is the fact that

military personnel told the detainee "if he fell off he would be electrocuted" (Fay, 132). All of these techniques directly target the body's frailty and exploit the intimate reality of the detainee's body, but it is the final technique that proclaims the body's weakness. The detainee is forced to recognize that his body is capable of being thrown into pain at any moment. This last practice is most closely aligned with the idea that the body in pain, or in this case, pain hovering around the body, will produce the disgust or horror response provoked by the excessive materiality that the frail body imposes on the individual. Once again, it is possible for the sufferer to become an observer of himself because he sees his future self in pain. This of course is the end of this tactic: the detainee will imagine, and be horrified by himself, electrocuted sometime in the future after falling off the wooden box.

Naturally, images such as these did produce the disgust response from both the American military and American civilians.[13] In one of the first reports of these abuses in the American media, General Mark Kimmitt was interviewed on the CBS program, *60 Minutes II*. Kimmitt, responded to the abuses in these words: "the first thing I'd say is we're appalled as well" (CBS, 1). Similarly, one viewer who responded to the program said "your coverage of the abuses of Iraqi captives was difficult for me to watch" (Byrne, 1). Although one dimension of these reactions can be easily explained by the argument that extreme physical pain makes explicit the fragility of all human bodies, Gen. Kimmitt later nuances his reaction, which obviates the need for further analysis: "these are our soldiers. These are the people we work with every day, and

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[13]Some observers stated that they did not feel repulsed by watching the photos. One viewer made it clear that she was not affected because these actions were conducted by American military and surely the enemy's tactics were far worse (Ainsley, 1). It seems very unlikely that this viewer, and others, did not initially feel the disgust that was widely felt around the world. Furthermore, the viewer's after-the-fact statement tries to use political concerns to block a basic reaction to a human in pain, which is fundamentally apolitical.

they represent us. They wear the same uniform as us, and they let their fellow soldiers down" [emphasis added] (CBS, 1). Kimmitt later becomes angered, saying "some of our soldiers every day die by our values, and these acts that your see in these pictures may reflect actions of individuals, but by God, it doesn't reflect my army" (CBS, 3). Here, Kimmitt has shifted the focus away from the individuals who have suffered and onto the perpetrators of the injustices. Kimmitt is angry because he feels that the soldiers are part of himself ('there are our soldiers') and because the soldiers are representatives of the entire army. To place this instance of representation within the overall analysis, Kimmitt is worried that the actions of several individuals will *speak for* other members of the army who had nothing to do with the abuses. Interestingly, there are others who see these events as symptoms of structural problems within the American military. Though the authors of the official Abu Ghraib report, commissioned by the Pentagon, place the majority of the blame on the individual military personnel, they admit that "other incidents resulted from misinterpretations of law or policy or confusion about what interrogation techniques were permitted by law or local standard operating procedures" (73). In this sense, the actions of individuals *speak to* other larger problems in the military operation. This is complicated further because those that have suffered and the photographs depicting the suffering do not directly stimulate these responses; the agents behind the suffering provoke such doubts regarding the competence of the entire military operation. Torture and intense physical pain, then, not only force us to confront our own frail materiality, they also force us to look upon the torturers and recognize our own susceptibility to abusing that frail materiality ourselves.

We must inquire further into this heretofore disregarded actor in the sympathetic exchange. What does it mean to shift focus from the sufferer to the perpetrator and what does this new triadic structure add or subtract from the conventional duality between sufferer and

observer? In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, one of the central arguments at work is the idea that as history advances "punishment, then, will tend to become the most hidden part of the penal process" (9). He develops this idea further, saying "antiquity has been a civilization of spectacle...our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance" (216-17). It follows from this that in our modern age, the relationship between the executive of the punishment and the sufferer should be invisible to the citizenry. Foucault, however, neglects to say what would happen in the present situation, when the supposed progress away from both torture and away from the spectacle of punishment has become instantaneously dismantled while the whole world watches. As shown in the previous analysis, the initial result is disgust and outrage, but specifically towards those who are responsible and our own susceptibility to become responsible. It is immediately clear that the general sentiment is that this is an aberration–we hope–and we must punish those who, by being so similar to us, have suggested that we may commit similar deeds. We must deal with those who have suggested that the progression towards a hidden penal process is flawed. This shift inevitably leaves the tortured Iraqis behind because the relationship now principally exists between the perpetrator of the action and the observer. Even when observers clamor that the Iraqis are human beings and should be treated as such, this does not arise from an understanding of the Iraqis' problems, in and out of torture; it comes from a feeling of disgust towards the action.

An additional consequence of focusing on the agent, or executive, of the harm is that it forces us to confront an undeniable narrative context. In fact, in the Smithian duality between sufferer and observer, the executive is the narrative context. It is she, who by showing and enacting the process whereby a human being moves from comfort to pain offers us, and forces us

in the case of Abu Ghraib, to approach the human suffering, to close the distance between observer and sufferer. In less extreme cases of suffering or when the culpability of the executive is difficult to identify, the reaction against this entity is likely to be relatively mild: it is difficult to imagine a family becoming infuriated with a virus that has killed a relative, just as the traditional masks worn by executioners served to obscure the executive and make public reaction against him less likely. For both the virus and the medieval executioner, the lack of identity and physical presence limits the role of the executive in the relationship between sufferer and observer.[14] In the case of Abu Ghraib, however, the executives (American soldiers) were notoriously as visible in the photographs as the abused prisoners. The perpetrators of the action are a clear bridge between an American watching the photographs on the news and the prisoners in the images. Though we may search for this context in order to understand the Iraqi civilians in certain situations, when torture and extreme suffering is involved, the excess physicality is too much to bear, and we react against the executive instead of reacting because of our sympathy with the sufferer. The physical presence of the American soldiers is a preferable alternative to the horrors inscribed on the Iraqis' bodies. In other words, the executive has the power to create a physicality that is so imposing and categorical, it limits the imagination, and the public loses sight of the suffering Iraqi. We have seen this before and it is no accident that Bush as executive, exercised the power in his political rhetoric to offer up the 9/11 attacks and the figure of Hussein as the physical imagery that would dominate and channel the imaginations of the public. Whether, an executive's actions are approved or disapproved by the public depends on many political factors which are beyond the

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[14]By linking terrorists with the HIV virus in the state of the union address, Bush may have inadvertently limited the public's ability to feel anger towards the enemy.

scope of this analysis, but suffice it to say that the physical content that an executive projects can be very powerful, even when the response from the public may be disapproval. The protest during the 2003 State of the Union was more concerned with using the protestors' physical presence to counteract the physical power of the executive, but the assault was on the executive's ability to impose that physicality, not on real effects on the Iraqis, thousands of miles away.

The Iraqis, as a culturally defined group, lose relevance in this situation and only serve as the proof that the perpetrator has acted immorally. The man draped in a black sheet exemplifies this phenomenon: the ravaged Iraqis are citizens of Iraq by accident, not by necessity. That is, it is their suffering bodies that produce the public reaction, but the same reaction could occur if we were ignorant of their ethnic origins. Or, as Susan Sontag puts it, "all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions" (10). Whereas a situation in which the political origins of the objects are unknown or unimportant may not matter if our goal is to eradicate the inhumane treatment of human beings, they most certainly do matter when we are dealing with a war that directly damages a group of people defined by a political boundary. Drawing away from the *Iraqi* civilian does not help us understand the Iraqi civilian. In fact, it merely confirms one of war's destructive effects: "[emptying] the bodies of specific (distinguishing one country from another) cultural content" (Scarry, 118).

Having placed the chief executive within the sympathetic duality between observer and sufferer, it is obvious that the framework for sympathy is malleable and can produce very different sympathetic responses from the observers. In the triad that consists of the American public, President Bush, and the Iraqi people, Bush's language effectively edges the Iraqi people out of the third slot and in their place, installs the historical American public and the future

American public. When the abstract language and the 9/11-Hussein association function, the American citizens sympathize with the historical American public that has suffered the attacks of September 11th and with the American public that may suffer attacks in the future, as predicted by Bush's language of possibility.

Therefore, perhaps it is better to consider the limits that sympathy imposes rather than the limits imposed on sympathy by distances. Some theorists doubt whether a sympathetic response is ideal in a situation when people suffer. Susan Sontag argues that

> the imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the faraway sufferers—seen close-up on the television screen—and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is yet one more mystification of our real relations to power. (102)

Although Sontag means this passage to explain the inadequacies of sympathy as a response to others' suffering, it can be equally applied to the case when it is our own past and possible selves that may be objects of our sympathy. Sontag instead proposes that we

> set aside the sympathy to others beset by war and murderous politics for a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may—in ways we prefer not to imagine—be linked to their suffering. (102)

Sontag's argument is compelling but she fails to make the distinction between the sympathetic framework, which may distort the relationship between sufferer and observer, and the sympathetic feeling. To 'reflect on our privileges' and to then make some possible connection between these privileges and the suffering of others is to certainly make use of the sympathetic imagination, which tries to shorten the distance between sufferer and observer. Sontag's language choices make this fact clearer: 'our privileges are located on the same *map* as their

suffering' [emphasis added]. Sontag uses this geographic idiom in a very literal way to suggest that separations between people obscure the basic connections among humans and the human effects that do not always occur in close proximity to their causes. Furthermore, this call for 'reflection' and imagination betrays her earlier claim that sympathy creates a 'link between faraway sufferers...and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue.' Sontag is defining imagination too narrowly in this context as that which produces fantasy and fiction. But as she inadvertently recognizes in the second passage, imagination is more generally creating a reality that is not immediately apparent. The connection between suffering and privilege may not be readily clear, but to say that one must imagine that there is that connection is not to demand that one falsify reality. Thus, Sontag's actual concern, that sympathy may provoke a 'mystification of our real relations to power' is a concern over systemic problems in society. Much of this dissatisfaction stems from the myriad ways in which understanding among two entities may be obstructed. In a society with limitless wants and desires and limited resources—including the resources of openness and understanding—this relationship often becomes the difference between one who has and one who has not. This is a more general way of defining the relationship between sufferer and observer, what this analysis has designated 'the sympathetic framework.' It must be stressed that even though the framework may fail to produce the desired results—better understanding, better allocation of benefits—this does not vitiate the goal or efforts to reach that goal. When Sontag concludes that the *sympathetic feeling* fails, she ignores the structure behind the feeling and also does not realize that a third entity may enter into the framework and push the goal further out of reach. In short, there is a real danger that a third entity can block the relationship between sufferer and observer.

The effects of the third entity have surfaced throughout this project: the third entity may be an executive that, through rhetorical devices, blocks the physical content of warfare, or by introducing powerful physical content, blocks the physical content of warfare as it actually affects those in the war zone; the third entity may be a real geographic, intimate and cultural distance between observer and sufferer that privileges the observer and those close to him; finally, the third entity may be an excess of physicality, which functions in the same way as the executive's use of physicality by impeding the observers from looking beyond the hegemonic reality in front of them to see the realities of the Iraqi citizens.

Separating sympathetic framework from sympathy as a feeling helps to explain the ambivalence some commentators feel when critiquing sympathy. Berlant asks–much in the same way that Sontag does–"we can feel bad about it; we can feel compassionately about those who suffer: why isn't it enough to have meant well, or not to have meant badly?" ("Compassion (and Withholding)," 6). Berlant's confusion and frustration with sympathy stem from a lack of separation between the framework and feeling of sympathy. 'To have meant well' and to 'feel compassionately about those who suffer does not lead to an undesired outcome, rather the observer's goodwill towards a sufferer may not extend far enough, to the root of the problem. This issue is structural and also a final third entity: an overly hasty sympathetic feeling may be appropriated out of its context and act as a way to block more useful and effective sympathetic feeling. Additionally, by scrutinizing the list of third entities, time is another important element in each of them. Accepting a political device that blocks an understanding of the Iraqis' problem is in part effective because the American citizens quickly settle on the image of Saddam Hussein and the terrorists. Though Nussbaum's faith in the ability to dispel differences between sufferer and observer may be more complicated than she describes, taking more time to think about any

distances between individuals will likely make a fuller sympathetic response possible. Although this temporal lapse may mitigate the feelings an observer has for a sufferer, this loss is surpassed by the benefits from reaching a more complete knowledge of political consequences So, if an initial sympathetic feeling becomes part of the framework, by resisting that quick conclusion and allowing the imagination to more fully assess the situation, sympathetic feeling can and will become more beneficial for understanding the Iraqi citizens and preventing the pain created by warfare. In addition, Berlant and Sontag's concerns about systemic problems involved in human suffering will also be satisfied.

Sympathy, then, as an emotive response, and the sympathetic imagination are still essential to shortening the distance between observer and sufferer, or in the present case, between the American public and the Iraqi public. The danger of this emotion lies in the framework in which it is engendered. The framework allows the connection between the American citizens and the Iraqi citizens to be obfuscated in any number of ways, many of which act quickly and effectively. Therefore, the observers have the responsibility, not the sufferers, as Smith argued (27). If they seek to sympathize with and understand the plight of the sufferers they must resist anything that restrains their imaginations from stopping short of recognizing the harm. A certain distance may always remain between subject and object, but the observers must always fight to shorten it, not knowing what distances are real and artificial.

Conclusions

In light of the recent conclusions dealing with sympathy as an emotive response that needs the imagination and is engendered in a three-part structure, it is imperative to revisit the civic and political voices of the U.S. military involvement in Iraq.

How effective were the American/international citizens at introducing physical, and by extension, human content into the public sphere? As we have seen, the effects produced by the civic voices are twofold in that the citizens may assert their own presence in the public sphere as an authorized, formidable group of entities and the citizens may demand the recognition of the human impacts of political action. In what may be called an ideal situation, the civic voices achieve both feats and this seems to be the case with the protests: by congregating in a public space and speaking as a group, the protestors assert their own collective power as a recognizable force, even as they *speak to* the silenced voices in Iraq. However, it is easy for this happy balance to be upset by some form of distancing that renders the principal–the citizens–the main beneficiary of the activity and not the agents–the Iraqis. As Americans gathered in Washington D.C. to protest the 2003 State of the Union address, the overwhelming message of negation directed at the speech is much more concerned with asserting the participatory rights of the American citizenry than it is with explicitly describing the human horror that the war will cause on foreign soil. One may argue that the citizens are rational actors and are naturally concerned with their own self interest, but it is perfectly reasonable to think that by succeeding in asserting their own political weight, American citizens will *ultimately* help Iraqi citizens because a more human focus on a decision to go to war will produce a human focus when considering the war's effects. This second interpretation still encounters problems: the time line from speech to warfare and–what amounts to the same thing–civilian deaths was extremely quick and any discussion of

the ultimate effects speaks of a process that takes time to arrive at a full conclusion; secondly, this conclusion stems from the optimistic belief that aside from speaking, these civic groups may radically alter the dominant political system. There is not doubt that this has happened historically and even happened quite recently.[15] But it is impossible to predict with any level of certainty whether a certain civic movement or voice will have direct impacts on the overall political system. This thesis has shied away from making such predictions, and instead has described the language that such voices use and the effects of the language itself. Analyzing the language reveals the full impacts of these speech choices and also suggests where these choices may be particularly effective or ineffective at achieving their apparent goals. Thus, when examining the analysis of a protest as a language, it is important for the protestors themselves and commentators to recognize that their actions are more nuanced than a simple rebellion against the status quo. Just as they demand that the full effects of politicians' action must be accounted for, they must account for their own political action's full effects.

Another challenge to the ideal balancing in civic voices occurs in the example of the rally. Here the group of ralliers manifest the human element of the support for the war, and in a sense, by expressing their concern for individual troops they are speaking of the effects of the war on humans. But this concern for the troops' bodies is not an equal concern for the Iraqis' bodies as victims of warfare. In fact, there is a marked disparity between the American soldiers and the Iraqis, and this derives from the political and cultural distinctions and distances between the two groups. This brings up another question: is the ideal balancing of human content in political action always ideal? The ralliers are concerned that individualized support be expressed for the war and that there is public recognition of the danger for American troops and also a

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[15]Blogging is having an increasing impact on American politics.

danger for the American public if the war is not waged. Are these linguistic expressions sufficient, or has the sympathetic imagination of these citizens stopped short on a quick physicality that leaves the full physical impacts of warfare out of popular consideration? As this project has aimed to show, the citizens have stopped short.

A brief conclusion about formally political language will suffice here. The first chapter described the many ways in which politicians employ rhetorical language to create support for the war. Popular support for the war by many Americans suggests that this language either succeeded in creating new support for the war or succeeded in solidifying the support of those that already backed U.S. involvement in Iraq. This language was notably absent in the discussion of sympathy because this political language of possibility and metonymy creates distance rather than seeking to understand the other across a distance. To say that the political language sought to create an understanding, a sympathy between the American public and the administration is to misinterpret the political language's role in the sympathetic framework. As we have seen, the politician is the authorized mediator, the executive that brings the public into aggressive contact with the Iraqi population or with the Americans' own hypothetical suffering, should war be forsaken. It follows then that to ask political language and those that wield it to consider the full range of imaginative possibility is to dismiss the goal of this language to manipulate the sympathetic framework and create or shorten distances. It is to ask those in power to relinquish it.

In all these questions, representation and representations are always present. The politician that sets the sympathetic agenda, so to speak, does so by acting as a traditional representative, *speaking for* others. Though citizens may strive to get away from representation as they describe the war, they are simply moving away from a representation that *speaks for* and

silences others to one that *speaks to* and *of* the desires, concerns and voices of other. In other words, it is a representation that encourages polyphony in the political system. This shift from one representation to another is very powerful because unlike the ideal balance of human content, which may easily tend towards the concerns of the observers, encouraging other voices directly addresses the systemic problem of silenced humans in the political process and can operate without a strong value judgment. It is important to recognize the place of language in this shift to a different form of representation. The present society is saturated with voices that already circulate in the American public sphere, so to break through this cacophony, effectiveness of language and argumentation are still very important to those that seek to *speak of* the voices of those on foreign soil.

We have seen that an imaginative response is one of the most important tools for effective language. Bush's political speeches literally captured much of the American imagination and by controlling the sympathetic framework, were able to direct the audience to a politically advantageous physicality: Hussein and the audience members' own bodies. So to conclude that the physical describes the human and apolitical and the abstract describes the disembodied and political is simply incorrect. The Bush administration consciously balanced these two registers in language to achieve a political goal. Similarly, the citizen voices must also utilize both for effective language. The imagination's promise to create symbols and envision different possible outcomes allows the mind to go beyond commonplaces and quick conclusions. It is the only means that we have to circumvent the physically shocking or comforting. The physical register is the beginning and end of abstract imagining: humans, with their frail bodies and physical contact with the world, create these imaginative musings and are ultimately affected when the imaginative possibility is translated into political action. For the imagination to

comprehend the full range of political action, it must balance the two. It must ride on the abstract while seeking the physical.

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