

PROOF

Part I
Affect in the Age of the Digital

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PROOF

2

War By Other Means: What Difference Do(es) the Graphic(s) Make?

Patricia Ticineto Clough

*How is one to feel about war?
About a world map of hot spots,
laid out again and again before you?
Zones of conflagration, burning, burning
burning the ground
up into the lives
that ground once supported.
What does it feel like to be asked to do good in a world,
war-torn and burning still,
when there is war in hot spots all around us
but where we do not live? Where do we live?*

What follows is a series of reflections on the shifts in thought that I would argue are necessary to critically engage the graphic, both as a compositional form and as the quality or intensity of a visual display. I take as my focus the display of the effects of unending war appearing in *I Live Here* (2008) a boxed collection of four books, published by Random House with the support of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA).¹ *I Live Here* was produced by Mia Kirshner, an actress, J. B. MacKinnon, a writer, and creative directors, Paul Shoebridge and Michael Simmons. The works of 22 artists, writers researchers also appear in the boxed collection of the four books of *I Live Here* and the later developed website. Each is a collage-like composition of journal entries, stories, photographs, numbers and graphic novellas about the war in Chechnya, the ethnic cleansing at the Burmese border, the disappearance and death of women around the maquiladoras near the Mexican border and the AIDS epidemic in Malawi, Africa.

I Live Here proposes to address violence and abuse in four corners of the world by telling the stories of the silenced and the overlooked, making 'the lives of refugees and displaced people' speak both 'the personal and the global', to use the words printed on the back of the box of books. Promising 'a raw and intimate journey to crises' around the world, *I Live Here* means to use the graphic to stir shame, pity, sympathy, if not disgust and horror, in those of us who are not there and who, it is hoped, will bear some sort of responsibility and thus be incited to action in the local and global spheres.

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But, I wonder. These stories of children-soldiers, prisoners, sex workers, orphans left by parents who died of AIDS, those abandoned, depressed, near suicidal confronted by the hatred of neighbours of different ethnicities, if not the same ethnicities, communities and families, these stories really are not unheard of or overlooked stories. It is these stories that often accompany demands for humanitarian response to crisis, increasingly criticized, however, for the political economic circuit that these demands have enabled, the moral posturing that can lead to economic sanctions as well as covert and overt war. The particulars of these stories, it would seem, cannot but be remembered, forgotten, and remembered again and again, until there is little else but the stories' appeal, an appeal that has been made just as often in the branding of war, a branding that is meant to draw support for war's tactics and strategies, that is, branding war as interested in the protection and/or the liberation of victims, women and children especially, and therefore to brand war as modern, progressive, civil and democratic, as the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan at times have been branded by the US government.

As the horrific effects of war are made into a graphic appeal for the continuation of war-making, turning these same horrific effects into an appeal for a humanitarian response to war cannot be meant to end war, but rather to be ever engaged in alleviating the effects of war, to be ever engaged in war by other means: endlessly moving us within an affective circuit that gives us the sensations of being both victimizing and victimized, accusing and accused, shaming and shamed, guilty and innocent, like the music on the website of *I Live Here*, looping through the repeated sound of a child's music box as if it were broken, turning the sound again and again from child-innocent to perverse-eerie (see www.i-live-here.com/).²

I turn onto a page and before me is a collage of photographs taken at the Don Ban Yang Camp at the Burmese border. My eye moves quickly around the

1 *centre photograph with just a vagina miserably exposed with a finger stabbing*
 2 *a stick inside to bring about an abortion by bleeding out the foetus from this*
 3 *anonymous uterus. The surrounding photos show parts of children's bodies,*
 4 *a back of a young person with bones jutting out of its starved body, and sites*
 5 *of abandon and squalor.*

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9 In her discussion of what she calls 'aesthetic capitalism', Christine
 10 Harold (2009) points to a shift in the functioning of brand from
 11 its being about representation or the aura of the circulating sign to
 12 designing objects that themselves can stir affect, promising a trans-
 13 formative experience in the object's use rather than in the mere posses-
 14 sion of it. Modelling a user's future manipulation of it, the commodity
 15 is designed to sensually transmit a 'creative juice'³ that will be trans-
 16 formative for its user, bringing a not-yet lived future into the present.
 17 Thus, the aura and the value of the commodity now is its transmission
 18 of affect, where affect refers not to emotion but to a bodily capacity, a
 19 bodily readiness, a trigger to action, including the action of feeling an
 20 emotion. While emotions are commensurate with a subject, affect is a
 21 pre-individual and therefore a non-conscious, a-subjective potentiality.
 22 Affect is a vector of unqualified intensity seeking future actualization;
 23 it is a vehicle from one dimension of time to another. It is for its capac-
 24 ity to bring the future into the present that affective branding becomes
 25 useful in the graphic framing of unending war and the humanitarian
 26 response to it.

27 This is because affective branding actually works not by giving one
 28 future possibilities but by pre-empting the future. For Luciana Parisi
 29 and Steven Goodman the pre-emptive logic of branding is a 'mne-
 30 monic control' that aims to remodel long-term memory through an
 31 occupation of or the 'parasiting' on the dynamics of affective poten-
 32 tiality in the neuro-physiological plasticity of the body-brain (2011:
 33 265).⁴ Mnemonic control is something like 'a distribution of memory
 34 implants', which provides one with the bodily or affective memory of
 35 an actual experience which one actually has not had, nonetheless, giv-
 36 ing a base for the future rise of affect, the repetition of an anticipatory
 37 response (ibid.: 267). Thus, the power of mnemonic control is in this
 38 turn to affect as life's non-lived or not-yet lived potential. Mnemonic
 39 control brings life back to a non-lived potential in order to modulate
 40 affect's emerging effects. Brian Massumi calls this power *ontopower*,
 41 a pre-emptive power beyond the biopolitical control of life (2011).

1 Tiziana Terranova (2009), following Maurizio Lazzarato, describes this
2 power as 'the ontological powers of time-memory'.
3

4 *It is hard to look and not to look again at the series of scenes of violence at the*
5 *border between Mexico and the United States. Here are a series of photographs*
6 *that recreate scenes of passionate murders composed of dolls in miniaturized*
7 *rooms or back alleyways. In one, blood is splattered over women doll bodies*
8 *thrown on beds and floors, ripped apart and left with breasts exposed, legs severed*
9 *from torsos. The dollhouse furniture in pieces is thrown about the room. In*
10 *other photographs in the series, there are women dolls, who having prostituted*
11 *themselves, now lay with little clothing to cover them. One has the heel of her*
12 *foot ripped open and her hands are swollen from the rope tied around them.*
13 *Dead. I cannot see her face: no eyes, no mouth, no nose. Senseless doll. The*
14 *series of photographs ends with a man propped up against a wall. His pant's*
15 *zipper is opened and there is a doll between his out-of-proportioned legs. She*
16 *is wearing a knitted outfit with baby shoes on her feet and a teddy bear at her*
17 *side. Her face is lost in his crotch as he smokes a cigarette. I go back to previ-*
18 *ous pages and pages of women's names, who, it is alleged are missing from the*
19 *border between Mexico and the United States. It is difficult to read them. There*
20 *are no spaces between the names; they become a sea of letters.*

3

24 In *I Live Here*, mnemonic control pre-empt the future, remodelling
25 long-term memory, with a circulation of trauma. It overrides the psy-
26 choanalytic conceptualization and treatment of trauma as an event that
27 cannot be consciously or even unconsciously experienced but is suffered
28 as bodily memory. Thus, while trauma in psychoanalytic terms points
29 to a failure of conscious and unconscious registration of an event, the
30 event nonetheless is understood to have taken place and is treated as such
31 because of the individual's repetitious bodily production of traumatic
32 effects. In mnemonic control, however, while there is a production of an
33 affective bodily memory, it is of an experience that actually has not ever
34 been experienced, an experience yet to have happened. Not yet, or per-
35 haps not ever, identifiable as any one individual's traumatic experience,
36 the affective bodily response is produced for and through an anonymous
37 circulation across bodies, assembling an audience or population of affect-
38 ive receptivity. This pre-emptive parasiting on the non-lived or the not-
39 yet lived, I want to suggest, instigates a reconceptualization of the bodily,
40 memory and language, specifically in the context of a change in govern-
41 ance toward the deployment of ontopower, that is, the governance of

affect, or its modulation when assembled with new technologies of time-memory, new media technologies, bio- and neuro-technologies as well.

Thus, rather than conceiving the relationship of the bodily, memory and language in terms of the disciplining of the organism, where body parts and affective intensities are expected to take the shape of a racialized, hetero/homo-normative unified body, bound to the subject of language and representation, I am proposing that we think of the body differently. I am proposing that we think of body parts and affective intensities without presuming their disciplinary enclosure in the organism. Language too might be thought to operate differently than being the representing medium of the speaking subject. Language might be thought to function to intensify or mute affect above and below the speaking subject of conscious and unconscious representation, as for example in the language of formatting, performance, programming or design. So while racialized, hetero/homo-normative formations still are operated to produce the disciplined organism as the unified body of the speaking subject, nonetheless these formations are being subjected to a reformulation as the disciplining of the organism into the unified body of the speaking subject is underdetermined by an anonymous circulation of body parts and affective intensities in assemblage with technologies of time-memory.

I cringe involuntarily, looking at the black ink drawings of Mi-su who at 11 becomes a sex worker in Thailand. The drawings show the young body of this girl on her knees reaching out to the paper money thrown on the floor. The sex act is made explicit through a series of drawings of bodies entangled in various positions. The seeming calm of Mi-su's non-resistant body makes the scenes seem like those of ordinary love-making, although there is no kissing or caressing. In the last of the drawings, Mi-su stands in front of a full length mirror, one leg drawn up and her head dropped down as she attends to the hose that flushes water over her vagina. The image in the mirror is more like a black smudge of a barely human body.

4

More than the content of the drawings, numbers, photographs and novellas of *I Live Here*, it is their collage-like design or formatting that produces affective modulation. Through an irrational or near-random cutting up of each page or the cutting across and between photographs, novellas, numbers and drawing, there is a disregard for narrative composition or the offer of identification that narrative usually carries.

1 So while *I Live Here* asks its audience to identify with those suffering
2 the terrors of unending war, bringing into play the disavowed displace-
3 ments of a racialized hetero/homo-normative formation,⁵ there also is
4 a disturbance in identification as the collage-like design of *I Live Here*
5 throws its audience back to the black between the cuts across the page,
6 back to matter, to body parts and affective intensities.

7 For sure, an invitation to identify is offered by Mia Kirshner whose
8 thoughts are presented at the beginning of each of the four books. Urging
9 the audience to join her in facing the horror she is about to recount,
10 Kirshner offers her reactions to being there, where she is in someone else's
11 memories, which mix, she tells us, with her memory of her family's mem-
12 ory of the experience of the Holocaust, the archetype of the psychoana-
13 lytics of trauma. Yet, this invitation to identify is not easily realized as the
14 formatting of *I Live Here* makes identification passing, short-circuiting any
15 sustained dialectic of I and other, not least because the audience's read-
16 ing and looking are shame-filled, edged with disgust, revulsion, fear and
17 excitement that is sexual and racial. There is the shrinking away of atten-
18 tion and the impossibility of not attending, being moved back and forth
19 from an ethical frenzy to an enthrallment attended with a kind of passiv-
20 ity. All of this is in the graphic composition that allows perverse arrange-
21 ments of bodies and body parts, which is as well a becoming obscene of
22 the social. That is, there is an undoing of the scene of the social, lost, as
23 sociality is, to an anonymous circulation of affect, an engaging and dis-
24 engaging of focus in the quick turning back and forth from the terrors of
25 unending war and the humanitarian appeals to alleviate its effects.

26 As such, the design or formatting of *I Live Here* undoes the centrality
27 of cinematic imaging and its narrative arch which makes the eye dive
28 into the depth of the image, offering the subject more than the surface
29 upon which to realize itself, offering, that is, a depth of identification
30 in recognition and resemblance. But as Timothy Murray asks, 'what if
31 the colossal projection of cinema were no longer the guarantor of a
32 culturally uniform memory', displaced by 'the mnemonic supplements
33 of something potentially disparate, something traveling quickly across
34 the neural networks of global communications?' What if the moving
35 image, he continues, 'were less a fading shadow of something higher
36 than us', but rather, 'a lively interiorized mark, a digital burn of densely
37 packed media bits' where the perceptual paradigm 'has shifted from the
38 spectacular projection and riveted reception of cinema to miniaturized
39 registration, temporal folds, memory theaters and playful interaction'
40 (Murray, 2008: 265). Something that is quite cryptic! We also might
41 think of what Thomas Lamarre calls 'animetism' to point to the layering

of images one on top of the other in the production of animation, in the production of an animated flat surface (Lamarre, 2009). Animetism reveals a tendency in the moving image, the potentiality for the manipulation of the interval or gap between layers of images, which when flattened, returns the image to black again and again and the audience to matter again and again, being affectively modulated again and again rather than being carried along by narrative to the end of the story.

I find myself counting the bodies of the young boys who are held at Kachere, Malawi's juvenile prison, awaiting trial, many even awaiting to be charged. Nearly half of them are orphans and have just recently arrived from the adult prison, where rape is rampant. The boys are shown with crude line drawings that they have produced themselves. One of the drawings is of the boys sleeping, crowded into cells, without even room to roll over. Their lookalike heads and an arm or two are all that is left to see; the rest of their bodies are drawn like sacks. The boys have written some words that make up several pages of a collage meant to suggest that the boys are still hopeful. They, at least, are alive; the drawings of their bodies follow the pastel coloured drawings of dead children, one lying so sweetly, with butterflies lighting upon it. One of the 550,000 orphans with AIDS, dead. One of Malawi's innocents, dead. Rape or death: I count against the rise of nausea.

5

Affect is at work. It is at work in a biopolitical governance that is moving beyond biopolitics where subject-formation through identification becomes lite and where governance is not so much a matter of disciplining the subject or inducing a socialized adherence to the ideologies of the nation-state, what Michel Foucault described as discipline, one form of biopower. For Foucault, there is another form of biopower, what he calls biopolitics, which focuses less on the disciplining of the subject, and no longer takes the family as the model of good governance, the sovereign as a good father who will provide (Foucault, 2007, 2008). Biopolitical governance focuses more on species life, expressed in terms of the capacity for life and the lack thereof across populations. The sociologic of biopolitics at first is concerned with rates, averages, norms and deviations, where populations such as the criminal, the insane, the healthy, are the effect of invidious comparisons. But, increasingly, however, a sociologic has come to function where 'classificatory and regulative mechanisms ... are elaborated for every recognizable state of being ... such that "normal" no longer is the opposite and necessary complement of "abnormal", "deviant", or "dysfunctional"' (Massumi, 1998: 57). This sociologic not only focuses

1 on populations but comes to treat the individual as itself a population,
2 complicating the individual in terms of his or her own propensities, his
3 or her affective capacities, which are calculated by drawing on digitized
4 databases from across institutional settings that carry the trace of the
5 individual's institutional behaviours to be read as a statistical profile of
6 the individual's behavioural tendencies: what the individual has done and
7 therefore can or cannot do in the future. The individual, like the popula-
8 tion, has become 'a sort of technical political object of management and
9 government ... dependent on series of variables' (Foucault, 2007: 70).

10 The family, no longer serving as a model of good governance, serves
11 instead as an instrument for obtaining data about the individual and
12 population. As the disciplining function of the family gives way, gov-
13 ernance is freed up to treat family violence, if not violence in general, as
14 one risk measure of the life capacities of the individual and populations.
15 This is a technicalization or socionormalization of violence that resets
16 the limits of obscenity in a redesign of the scene of the social that is
17 resonant with ongoing war and the humanitarian response to its effects
18 that justifies and continually revises the insidious comparisons that
19 target populations and individuals 'deserving' to die.

20 The technicalization and normalization of violence needs to appear
21 behind a human figure. Here, the imprisoned orphan, the prepubes-
22 cent sex worker, the refugee, and the innocent toddler dying of AIDS
23 are such figures, figures of an appeal, a sex appeal that is racial, that is
24 meant to humanize and naturalize what otherwise functions merely as
25 a calculation of risk. The ongoing graphic circulation of the horrible
26 conditions of individuals and populations is a political and economic
27 resource of profitable information, even as the local settings of the ter-
28 rors of endless war go on being economically and politically devastated.
29 As such, the humanitarian appeal is to attend to, to care for, an appeal
30 that is entangled with the appeal for unending war, entangled with
31 the governing of the not-yet lived, at the point of emergence, where
32 ontopower is shadowed by necropolitics.

33
34 *In the camps, the women, cold, hungry and diseased, do most of the work. It*
35 *is hard to tell their ages. The graphics make each of them look as if suddenly*
36 *thrown into old age. I can imagine the sights that haunt their minds, of bodies*
37 *exploded by missiles, and the horrid noises banging in their heads all but*
38 *driving them mad. Their headscarves are torn and their dresses no longer fit*
39 *properly. I see the devastation all around them but I am drawn to the women's*
40 *eyes, again and again. Although blank, they still are transmitting exhaustion,*
41 *disgust, terror – all edged with a dark despair. They have almost nothing.*

The Internally Displaced Persons of Chechnya, 320,000 of them, will not go back to their homes even when encouraged to do so. After a war that killed between 30,000 and 80,000 people, the displaced are literally war-torn, so they stay in the cramped and dangerous camps of Ingushetia.

6

Measuring affect is not easy. Indeed, in political economic terms, affect has been described as immeasurable, a description that comes by way of a comparison of measuring the value of a potential or the not-yet to measuring value when it is surplus value produced through the exploited hours of workers' labour (Clough, 2007). As a non-lived, or not-yet lived potentiality, affect works otherwise; it works presently in financial capitalism where wealth is produced external to capital's organization of labour, or external to the accumulation of capital through production. What has been called the knowledge economy or the information economy or most recently the affect economy of an aesthetic capitalism points to an accumulation of wealth through the working of a generalized intelligence brought about through past investment in the education and welfare of workers and the upgrading of technical management, which increasingly is not considered to be opposed to creativity and invention (see Fumagalli and Messadra, 2010). However, through the privatization and rarefication of education, health care, control of fertility, social security and other social welfare provisions, and as the openness of digital networks continues to hold allure for giant corporations who wish to contain it, creativity and invention are being made scarce.

It is in this political economic environment that a measure for affect is found. It is a measure other than the measure of probability, which, as Foucault suggested, was the measure par excellence of biopolitics. Affective measure functions differently; it is a measure that probes for the immeasurable as it generates an enthrallment with measure, formatting words, numbers, images and diagrams in order to turn measure into alluring evidence of an already present future, a pre-empted future in the technological modulation of time-memory. As such, the measure of affect is singular but productive as measuring affect cannot but modulate and change its intensity with each measure; measure cannot but move affect toward actualization. As such, the metric or the unit of measure necessarily will change with each and every measure. In this sense the measure of affect is an aesthetic measure, understanding aesthetic measure to be singular, non-generalizable, particular to each event, or each capture of the not-yet. If this is the measure par excellence of

1 ontopower, beyond biopolitics, it is because governance by mnemonic
2 control is operating affectively and pre-emptively at a scale that is both
3 above or below human consciousness or even unconsciousness.⁶

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7 Judith Butler has argued that ‘without the assault on the senses, it
8 would be impossible for a state to wage war’ or to be in a state of
9 ongoing war. For Butler the frames of war carry this assault either by
10 ‘rendering sensational losses that are borne by nations with whom
11 identification is intensified through the individual icons of death’ or
12 by ‘rendering insensate certain losses whose open mourning might
13 challenge the rationale of war itself’ (Butler, 2010). Butler’s hope for an
14 open mourning against the sinking of hope in ongoing melancholia is
15 in that possibility of more fully rendering what is made all but invisible
16 by the frames of war. But it is precisely this understanding of frame as
17 that which functions to make reality all but invisible that *I Live Here*
18 challenges. *I Live Here* points to another function of framing, one in
19 which no outside reality remains accessible for fuller rendition. Instead,
20 what is made possible with affective branding is the ongoing shifting of
21 a framing back and forth from one milieu of circulation to another, back
22 and forth from sensational to insensate, back and forth from an appeal
23 for ongoing war to an appeal for a humanitarian response to war’s effects
24 that also transports an audience back and forth from one dimension of
25 time to another. Thus, it is not so much that *I Live Here* makes invis-
26 ible the geopolitics of choosing the place rendered in each of the four
27 books or the particular histories of these four locations, or their specific
28 normative arrangement of bodies in terms of class, race, sex and gender,
29 and more. It is rather that the particular histories, the geopolitics of
30 choice, the specific normative cultural arrangements, these are what are
31 folded into the graphic displays that makes them affectively intense or
32 makes for the anonymous circulation of these intensities. These folded
33 realities cannot be rendered more fully; they can only be unfolded with
34 the affective resonance that they have acquired or the temporal scram-
35 ble that they have been subjected to affectively and then to circulate
36 again. This is another way to understand that each measure of affect
37 changes the metric for the next measure, calling for a method to criti-
38 cally engage the temporality of affect, its potentiality. It is a call for a
39 method of an analysis of rhythms, resonances and modulated intensi-
40 ties that are not so much haunted but trembling and as such assembled
41 with technologies of time memory.

And so it is that I am still irritated by the graphic displays in *I Live Here* of the horrific effects of unending war, the displays of lives not merely ungrievable, but as such, usable to produce a surplus value of affect for reinvestment in an aesthetic capitalism. I am uneasy circulating these displays once again, but nonetheless take up the task, which Susan Sontag suggested, of setting aside the sympathy extended to those beset by unending war in order to consider oneself on the same plane as their suffering and implicated in it, a task 'for which the painful, stirring images supply only the initial spark.'⁷

Notes

1. On the inside of the box, however, there is a disclaimer: 'The text, testimonies, opinions and artwork included in *I Live Here* are the work of the individual authors and artists who collaborated on this project, and none of the people interviewed or the material derived was corroborated by AIUSA research. While AIUSA strongly supports freedom of expression, the organization considers some of the depictions in *I Live Here* potentially inappropriate for young people.'
2. The descriptions I offer below draw on the images and excerpts from stories from each of the four books in the boxed collection. My choices of images and stories are intrinsically part of my response to the books and as such are meant to reproduce their affect on me when I first read them. While these are my choices I do think they are fairly representative of the collection as a whole.
3. This expression is taken by Harold quoted in Brown (2001).
4. For Parisi and Goodman, affective potential can be 'conceived as a time-span that lasts a second or fraction of a second and 'which lives actively in its antecedent world' (p. 265).
5. There has been much discussion among critical theorists of these formations, noting the use of particular bodies, like those often displayed in *I Live Here*, to draw certain sympathies or arouse affect (see, for example, Chow, 2002; Sharpe and Spivak, 2003; Grewal, 2005; Ahmed, 2004; Ong, 2006; and Puar, 2007). While it has become common to speak of the influence of heteronormativity on bodies, for the effects of homonormativity I refer readers to Puar's text.
6. There is much yet to be developed in a discussion of measure in relationship both to contemporary governance and capitalism that most likely also will pressure rethinking the methods of the social sciences. Here my introduction to the need to discuss aesthetic measure draws on Steven Shaviro's work on beauty versus the sublime (1998, 2009).
7. I want to thank Jasmine Zine who reminded me of Susan Sontag's remarks (2003: 102). And Melissa Greg too for turning me to Judith Butler's work (2010).

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