Should Images of Violence be Shown?

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Scenes of lynching, beheadings, corpses… Although easily accessible on the Internet, images of violence are often occulted in the French media. Why are some images shown while others are kept out of circulation? Are some forms of violence unfit to be seen?

The pictures of Darius, a young Rom who was lynched and left for dead in a supermarket trolley in 2014 in Seine-Saint-Denis, were not released in the French press. Discovering these pictures on the websites of foreign media comes as a shock to those who did not know such pictures existed. The pictures are distressing indeed: they show a swollen face covered in blood, a corpse-like body that could pass for the body of a war-victim, except that the assault took place only a few kilometres away from Paris.

In the uninterrupted flow of information released on television or in the press, images of violence are often left out. This statement may sound counter-intuitive in so far as death, terror and war are basically the stuff the news is made of. However, in France, news reports do not so much "show" as "talk", and TV viewers sometimes do not get any pictures of events taking place in their own country, unless they have access to foreign media, especially British one, which are less averse to publishing striking photographs, and not just the tabloids.

Unless again, in addition to the traditional media, they decide to browse the Internet for images that have been blacked out in the press but can be accessed in a couple of clicks – and not just on specialized websites (two years ago, the video of the beheading of a woman in Mexico remained accessible on Facebook for a long time before it was removed), which by contrast reveals the extent of occultation in the general-interest media. The Internet therefore stands out as an open, alternative media in which images of violence circulate freely, without any obstacles or limits. However, looking at these pictures implies a deliberate action as well as the assumption, on the part of the viewers, that they can bear seeing them.

This is the approach I have followed for the cases that will be presented here: my first goal was to assess the pool of existing images, the second to distinguish the different ways in which these images are treated, depending on the media and sometimes on the country. In the case of the beating up of young Darius, the general-interest media chose to occult a violence that had taken place just outside Paris, but other events taking place in more remote places are dealt with in exactly the same way. For instance, very few images of the fate of Iraq's Yazidi community at the hands of ISIS have filtered out. The media may have released images of flocks of refugees or distressed children – images illustrating the established "grand narrative" of the suffering inflicted on civilian populations in time of armed conflicts – but showed no or very few images of Yazidis being tortured, beheaded or even crucified.

The media have got into the way of treating images of violence differently from other types of images, as if what they reveal about the violence of the world were unbearable, as if this violence had better be talked about but not shown. What war does to the body is never shown,

nor are the beheadings of hostages, the victims of terrorist attacks, of lynch mobs, or the corpses artfully arranged by Mexican gangs in their urban wars against one another (30,000 people have been killed over the last few years), just as, in a different register, we never get to see pictures of road accidents or crime scenes. Thus, large parts of our reality escape media coverage, suggesting that what we do not see does not exist and that, for want of images, violence remains virtual.

On the other hand, on account of there being so few images, the images of violence that do get released are likely to reach the status of icons and will feature in a thousand different broadcasts and posts until they become fossilized in the meaning they are supposed to convey. That is how the images of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers on 9/11 became the symbols of global terrorism while their counterparts – pictures of the abuses at Abu Graib – were perceived as signs of the ruination of Western societies when they violate their own values. But those pictures that have sifted through the sieve of the media do not compensate for those that are absent from view. They cannot show what is occulted elsewhere. Therefore, such symbolization appears as exclusive, blinding us to other forms of violence which, being unsuspected, are likely to escape our understanding.

Should we then show images of violence, and if we do, should we show *all* of them? How do we decide what should be shown and what should be kept hidden? Does this decision depend on our tendency to try and spare the feelings of our contemporaries or do we have ulterior "political" motives, in the sense that any medium has an internal policy as well as an ideological orientation? What are the effects of "invisibilizing" images of violence? And what does showing them produce?

Violence made invisible

Concerning images of violence, François Jost made an illuminating distinction between images *showing* violence in a straightforward way (violent images) and images *suggesting* it (images of violence). The first category implies a direct confrontation with a plainly visible violence, or with its effects on the body, through images of throat slitting or of corpses for instance. The second category is wider: it contains images in which violence is out of frame, merely suggested, or visible, but at a distance. Typically, the 9/11 plane crash on the Twin Towers might be said to belong to this category in so far as however distressing the vision of the planes exploding and of the Towers collapsing may be, strictly speaking, the images are not violent: we do not see any individual people, we cannot perceive their pain, only imagine it, and their bodies are not visible. Conversely, the pictures of men and women hitting the pavement after they had jumped out the windows to escape the flames – if they exist at all – have never been shown.

TV channels and newspapers are never totally transparent about the way they decide which pictures can be shown and which cannot. All they say is that following a preliminary viewing, the editorial board thought that some pictures were not « appropriate ». This is what Michela Marzano calls "the elitism of editorial boards," who consider that the public could never bear to watch the kind of images that they have seen. This is the reason why images showing violence never feature in the press while those showing it indirectly do.

However, the policy of the media is more complex, its argumentation varying according to the case. Besides, choices may differ from one newspaper to the next. The case of executions is a case in point. Executions used to be shown on French channels. For instance, in the wake of

9/11, France 2 broadcast a documentary entitled "*Kaboul, cité interdite*" ("Kabul: Forbidden City") which contained images of people being hanged or shot dead in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. But videos of beheadings have never been released. After the assassination of Nick Berg, who was taken hostage in Iraq in 2004, the format that was adopted for broadcasting has been more or less the same: either we only get to see the beginning of the video or a freeze frame showing the executioners standing behind their victim dressed in an orange jumpsuit. What follows, which may contain statements the victim may have been forced to make or images of the victim's corpse, is never shown. It would therefore seem that images of executions are less problematic than the methods employed to kill people. For example, the perception of images of a shooting will be deemed less painful than that of images of a beheading, associated with an unbearable level of pain.

Journalists can rely on other criteria, like trying not to « play into the hands of » image-makers, thus keeping their editorial independence. They may also want to avoid the "voyeurism" or "sensationalism" that go along with shocking images in which the subject is being dominated or humiliated. Sometimes, however, the desire to show prevails and TV channels will resort to elaborate blurring techniques aimed at hiding unwanted elements. This trick of showing only a part of the picture does not fall into any of the categories mentioned so far. And this "partial showing" has its own variations: in Abu Ghraib torture pictures for example, some newspapers chose to blur the genitals of the prisoners, presumably out of a sense of decency. But in this case, one may wonder if the shock comes from the exposure of genitals or from the act of torture itself. In other pictures, faces are blurred in order to preserve the dignity or hide the identity of the abused detainees. However, the violence of the situation never seems to be questioned.

Insert picture
Stencil graffiti subverting one of the most notorious photographs from Abu Ghraib, in Monastiraki, Athens (2007).

The choice to show or blur violent elements mirrors the categories of violence fit to be shown and violence considered unbearable. But in a paradoxical way again, some torture images (from Abu Ghraib prison) are presented as being unbearable and arousing reprobation, and yet are released while other pictures, which must be even more unbearable since they are not shown (images of executions) are likely to give rise to yet stronger reprobation, but via a distressing effort of imagination on the part of the viewers since they do not have access to all the images. Thus, the media seek to arouse the moral condemnation of unbearable acts through images they think fit to show, while not showing the most unbearable pictures, and consequently preventing a long-lasting condemnation of those acts.

Policies of concealment

The first hypothesis I will put forward in order to account for the occultation of violent images in the media is grounded in a historical civilizing process – as described by Norbert Elias – as well as in a related process of sensorial appeasement that has been identified by a historiographical movement led by Alain Corbin among others. These two movements have contributed to lowering the tolerance threshold to violence, making it more and more unbearable to look at, and leading to the removal of all the things that were offensive to the senses from the urban space. This is how butchers progressively came to be forbidden to slaughter animals in their backyards, and slaughterhouses as well as graveyards and prisons,

which disturbed the senses, were moved away from the cities, and visits to the Paris morgue eventually forbidden (in 1907). In the same way, executions were gradually "depublicized" until the point was reached when the guillotine was moved inside prisons, bullfights became a subject of criticism and public mistreatment of animals was prohibited by the Grammont Act of 1850. At the turn of the 20th century, the suffering inflicted on animals had definitely become a political issue.

The ambiguous relationship of our societies to violent images is grounded in this gradual construction of an urban space, and eventually of asepticized media and public spaces in which people's senses are at rest and violence in any form is considered unbearable. The very fact that we are no longer used to seeing violence has made us unable to cope with it even in a residual form.

Another way of accounting for the occultation of violent images is by looking at the editorial and political bias of the media, at the way editorial staffs feel more strongly concerned by one conflict than by another and at their ability to cover the conflicts. The French press for instance showed very few pictures of the genocide in Darfur in 2003 compared to the extensive media coverage other conflicts (Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel) get on account of the large number of reporters in these locations. In the media's own grand narrative, a binary point of view opposes the West to the East, the United States of America to Iraq, Israel to the Arab world, while other conflicts, because they are deemed atypical (like the genocide of the Christians in Darfur by Janjaweed militiamen for instance), are not documented by any images. This does not stem from any actual "censorship" but rather from a greater familiarity with some pictures than with others that never get integrated into the normal flow of information.

However, occultation can sometimes be explicit, either with a view to keeping control over images or to serve propaganda. And this is the last hypothesis I shall put forward to account for the absence of violent images. During World War I, none of the belligerents would show pictures of their own casualties; they would only exhibit the bodies of enemies. There was footage of combats, but the true extent of the carnage was never revealed to the public. Paradoxically, this type of occultation may raise doubts and the public may ask for images, as if they were "missing". The absence of images showing the bodies of 9/11 victims fuelled conspiracy theories as well as criticism directed at the USA for its unwillingness to show any weakness by exposing its dead to viewing. There may be nothing to see in the ruins of the WTC, but we may indeed wonder at this strange desire to gaze at corpses.

In an obscure way, in the civilizing process, the scopic drive, the desire to see, is all that is left of violent impulses. Aggressiveness lies in the gaze, says Norbert Elias, and concealing from the eye does not obliterate the desire to watch violence. The occultation of violent images is therefore never complete and the media specializing in shocking photos keep publishing pictures that are not visible elsewhere. A French weekly magazine, *VSD*, thus published the photographs of the mutilated bodies of dozens of young Australians killed in the Bali 2002 bombings, and *Paris-Match* documented the 2004 Madrid train bombings by publishing several pages of very distressing pictures, exposing the raw violence of terrorism, miles away from any romanticized view of political violence. One of the photographs showed pieces of human flesh spattered on the rails as evidence of what bombs do to the human body. This heap of shapeless flesh posed a very difficult problem for the French editorial boards who eventually and in their own separate ways, opted for the occultation of these pictures. (Some chose to touch up the photographs by duplicating zones showing ballast to mask the heap of

flesh or covering it with heading, others chose to publish it in black and white.)
By contrast, several Spanish editorial boards chose to show the photograph, considering that if they withheld any information they would not be doing their job.

Mirror images of violence

Because it is an offense to the senses, because seeing another person suffer is unbearable or because a person's dignity ought to be preserved in his or her last moments, violence is strongly rejected. Filming New York in a documentary called "9/11" (2002), the Naudet brothers stopped short of training their camera on a man on fire. In the same way, filming the 2011 tsunami, an anonymous Japanese video-maker would keep moving his camera so as to avoid the tiny figures being swallowed up by the ocean.

Step by step, violence disappears from the media, testifying to the existence of what could be called a "Perseus syndrome" in reference to the hero from Greek mythology who, in order to cut off Medusa's head, approached her by avoiding her gaze and viewing her reflection in his polished shield. We are no longer able to cope with violence, be it for political reasons or because it is too disturbing for our senses, and can only contemplate it through mirrors – especially those of fiction or of video games, which become subject to criticism for arousing aggressive behaviour through imitation. Fiction is therefore left with the task of dealing with violence, putting it at a distance and debating about it.

The Perseus syndrome compels us to turn our gaze away from straightforward images of violence. It makes them unreal, removes them from the normal order of things and makes them acceptable only in so far as they reach us as mere echoes or as fictional substitutes. The Perseus syndrome – avoiding Medusa's petrifying gaze – leads us to construct an ambiguous or hypocritical civilizing process in which violence can thrive only as long as it is out of view. Our gaze is definitely getting more "civilized", but it does not seem to be the case for our actions.

So much so that the keepers of images, being men of their times, advocate an occultation of violent images. In 2013, the CSA, France's Higher Council for Broadcasting, issued a "warning" to France Télévisions for broadcasting a report on Mali, in a programme called "*Envoyé Spécial*," which contained "repeated and particularly insistent shots of dead bodies without any corresponding analysis, and therefore liable to constitute a violation of human dignity." As mentioned earlier, the reference to "human dignity" indicates a refusal of any sensory contact with violence. But this general argument prevents us from interrogating the inherent power and information value of war images. *Paris-Match* was also condemned for violating human dignity when the magazine published a photograph of the dead body of the Prefect of Corsica, Claude Erignac, just after he was murdered in Ajaccio in February 1998, the judges considering that the dignity of the deceased ought to be protected.

TV channels failing to blur shocking images may be sued, which means that "partial showing" is becoming the norm for this type of images. In the case of Mali, France 2 and its news director, Thierry Thuillier, had pleaded that reporters could not show war without showing dead bodies. But we are getting more and more sensitive, and one may wonder if the iconic pictures of the last few hours of Omayra's life, as she was trapped in debris caused by a mudslide in Colombia in 1985, could still be released today, except in an unmonitored live broadcast.

Occultation was even officially enacted in French legislation on 15 June 2000 when a law was passed making the publication of images showing wounded persons or persons in a position of humiliation illegal. The law was passed after victims of the 1995 bombings in the Saint-Michel station of the RER filed complaints at having been photographed with blood on them. The pictures in question are considered distressing because they highlight the asymmetry between the person being photographed in a situation of humiliation or weakness and the viewers. Another law, passed on 5 March 2007, makes it illegal to record or release images violating human dignity (at the time, the purpose of the authorities was to criminalize happy-slapping, in which one or more people attack a victim while recording the assault). Again, the photograph of the "Napalm Girl" shot by Nick Ut in 1972, a picture that exemplifies what photojournalism once was, would today be considered as a statutory offence if the event took place in France. Based on the idea that a body that is subjected to violence may no longer be taken as a medium for information, these laws contribute to the avoidance of visible violence.

Absenting violence

The general occultation of violent images has quite singular effects: it contributes to making the use of violence as a political instrument unintelligible, it tends to absent its various forms and therefore to derealize it. In a society producing aseptisized images, the sudden emergence of extreme violence comes up against our incapacity to deal with it, which may, for instance, account for the fact that the video of ISIS beheading American journalist James Foley in 2014 was treated as a fake on various social networks, precisely because the "official" media had not shown it and because its viral circulation indicated that it might have been staged. This video gave rise to all sorts of interpretations inspired by conspiracy theories, arguing for instance that Foley was not really dead and that the gruesome images were intended to heap opprobrium on the action of ISIS.

The same conspiratorial interpretation was reactivated when policeman Ahmed Merabet was killed while patrolling the area around the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* during the attack, shot at point-blank range as he was lying on the pavement. Because they could not see any blood around Ahmed Merabet's skull, some Internet users claimed the killers were fake Jihadis and the video a fake intended to tarnish Islam's reputation. In a visual environment that is deprived of images of violence, its sudden emergence is immediately rejected and put at a distance. It can also be played down and presented as an exceptional event that is really somewhat artificial. Whenever the media ritually break the news of yet another attack in Iraq, and vaguely show a few cars that have been ripped apart, people with tears running down their cheeks or people covered in blood, what they suggest is that the attack corresponds to a peak of sporadic violence in a society that would otherwise be devoid of tensions. But these attacks are actually just a recurrent climax in a society that is permanently steeped in violence and in which social relations are subject to a severe brutalization.

Choosing not to show violence amounts to denying it in others, playing it down, failing to understand why others resort to it since in our pacified societies, people have given up violence and the right to carry weapons in favour of the state that now has the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical violence. This reluctance to display the violence of others results in an incapacity to understand that those who resort to it definitely see it as a political instrument, and that the widespread opinion according to which "violence can never be a solution" does not make sense outside our pacified countries.

This also prevents us from realizing that violence is almost always staged. The only purpose of the videos showing beheadings or the high-resolution video of a Jordanian air force pilot being burnt alive in a cage that have been released by ISIS is to instil terror both in the countries where they took place and in the Western world. Violence is an instrument and so is its filming. In *Purify and destroy*[1] , Jacques Sémelin shows how, by humiliating their enemy, mutilating him and arranging his corpse in a certain way, perpetrators not only deprive their victim of a "good death" but also convey a message to whoever may see this act of violence and know how to interpret it. Not only is it a message of terror and power, but it is also a setup aiming at desecrating the values of a group. An inhuman death tends to disqualify the enemy as a human being: he is treated as an animal, reified, deprived of his identity, and becomes so completely "other" that any form of post-conflict reconciliation becomes impossible, allowing the torturers to exclude him from a common humanity. Los Zetas in Mexico for instance have a habit of arranging the victim's corpse in a certain manner and of leaving messages warning that this is what happens to whoever tries to resist them. Recently, a cartel kidnapped blogger Maria del Rosario Fuentes Rubio and used the Twitter account associated with her name to announce her death. In a gruesome mirror game, the kidnappers tweeted a photo of her lifeless body on the very medium that had turned her into a target. The press released the photograph her kidnappers had taken of her looking into the camera with a glum expression on her face, but the picture of her dead body does not feature anywhere in the press.

In this case as in others, the fact that media coverage is what perpetrators are after ought not to deter the media from exposing this violence. For by doing so, they might also absent their crimes, anonymize the deceased, prevent identification with the victims and their suffering and, once again, occult the very existence of violence. The seclusion of images of violence "behind the scenes of social life", to repeat an expression used by Norbert Elias in *The Loneliness of the Dying*, has turned into genuine "repression", making pacified societies unable to confront an upsurge of violence. This may be the reason why the Paris attacks in January 2015 prompted such a strong reaction though people had always been fairly indifferent to more "abstract" attacks taking place in other parts of the world and of which no images had reached them.

What if violence was shown?

The age-old movement towards greater sensitivity to visible violence cannot be reversed. Unbearable images remain so. However, showing some images might arouse people's concern to some extent or could at least help them understand some situations. At the beginning of his memoir (*The Patagonian Hare*), Claude Lanzmann recalls that the images of Weidmann, condemned to death and guillotined in front of the prison gate at Versailles in 1939, as well as the picture of an Australian prisoner about to have his head cut off by a Japanese soldier during WWII, both played a role in his political commitment. Similarly, even if the Holocaust cannot be represented, archival films showing mechanical diggers lifting bodies at the liberation of the Nazi camps often feature in documentaries.

Insert picture
Execution of Eugène Weidmann in front of the prison at Versailles on June 18, 1939. Weidmann's was the last public execution in France.

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[1] *Purify and destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007

Does this mean that some images escape occultation because they might have educational value or serve revelation purposes? This may be the reason why videos showing police violence, for instance, like the beating of Rodney King en 1991, or the video showing a policeman from North Charleston, South Carolina shooting a young man in the back in 2015, are still circulating in spite of their extreme violence. This latter video fits François Jost's definition of a "violent image", and as such, it could have been occulted. And yet, it featured in the biggest news organisations.

This is due to the fact that these videos are taken as "evidence", evidence of police brutality or of state violence, and are therefore considered as having a political dimension, a capacity to construct a cause, which other images are supposed to lack. These pictures belong to "the topic of denunciation", which, according to Luc Boltanski, breeds feelings of indignation and the urge to accuse persecutors, or, according to Daniel Dayan following John Austin, deliver a "verdictive utterance" whereby viewers are expected to condemn violence and take sides with the victims.

Images credited with having "historical value" are shown as such, even if they contain a degree of violence. This is the case with the photograph of Prefect Erignac, mentioned above, or of the photograph of one of the Kouachi brothers published online by *Paris-Match*. Lastly, harrowing images will sometimes be released in order to show "distant suffering," which pertains to "the topic of sentiment," whereby people identify with the suffering of others to the extent that their conscience is stirred and they feel the need for action, but not the urge to denounce. This is the case with the images of desolation of the 2010 Haiti earthquake or of the tsunami in Thailand, of burials of war victims or of images symbolizing suffering. The idea that a picture intrinsically "says" something is still very much alive.

Insert Picture
Photograph of the body of Saïd Kouachi after he was gunned down by the police at Dammartin-en-Goële, published on Twitter by the editorial board of *Paris-Match*.

And yet, historically, things evolved in quite the opposite way. In France, the judiciary ceased to believe that public executions could edify, dissuade or be taken as a warning, therefore, in 1939, not only were executions depublicized and the guillotine moved inside prison walls, but filming or recording executions were also made illegal. There is a similar ban on access to executions today in the US. The refusal to immortalize executions is grounded in the fact that their meaning lies in the very performance of the execution and is lost once it is accomplished, and that stealing and reproducing an image of it would only lead to the meaningless exhibition of the brutality of executions. On the other hand, some proponents of the abolitionist movement in the US call for every lethal injection to be filmed and broadcast on television in order to raise awareness of the horror of the death penalty. John Bessler notes that indeed most Americans are totally unaware of what executions are really like and tend to downplay the suffering endured by the convict.

The use of images for cautionary purposes has not altogether disappeared though: pictures of diseased lungs are placed on cigarette packets, pictures of wrecked cars feature in hard-hitting road safety campaigns, and more recently, the French Ministry of the Interior launched a campaign to deter young citizens seeking to join jihadi groups. In the background, we could see black and white pictures – offering a partial representation again – of acts of violence perpetrated by ISIS, and more precisely of (allegedly) gay prisoners being hurled from the

roof of a building. Without jumping to any conclusions regarding the mechanical effect of these images, which had never been broadcasted before, we can say that the Ministry's message relies on the idea that the violence of the spectacle can ultimately be denounced by the spectacle of violence.

If images of violence are always inherently political, we may wonder what kind of policy might cover the broadcasting of such images? Releasing unbearably violent images in a straightforward way would only confirm their unbearable character. We would be unable to cope with them. They are so distressing, so incongruous in a public space where violence is tamed that those who dare confront them remain haunted ever after. Michela Marzano even thinks that these images are devoid of any informational content and should not be broadcast by the mass media. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as education through images, be they violent or not. Just as "showing, but not without a commentary" sounds somewhat inadequate in view of the power of images.

In my view, three measures need to be taken. First, audiovisual media need to come up with a charter guaranteeing a homogenous policy concerning the broadcasting of violent images – to what extent should they be blurred, for instance, when individuals are visible? Some TV channels will opt to hide faces while others will show everything. In the case of hostages in particular, blurring the face could become the norm.

My second recommendation would be that when mentioning an event, the media make it clear that images concerning this event do exist and explain their reasons for not showing them. They should justify their editorial choices and not let people think that there are no images, since every editorial board receives them through the EVN (Eurovision News Exchange) for instance, and because they can be found so easily on the Internet. Occulting problematic images would be appropriate if the media wanted to show that an ethical code or a particular policy played a part in the construction of the information: they might decide not to broadcast images that are particularly violent or humiliating, they might want to avoid unwittingly supporting propaganda images, and conversely, they might want to arouse awareness of a particular issue. It is the media's responsibility to reveal the gap between "what we can see" and "what we want to show you". If the media fail to do this, the public will be unable to identify the event or understand its violence, as in the case of the touched up photo of the Atocha bombings in which the press literally removed images of death from a death scene; events might be unclearly labelled, violence might appear inconsequential, and the suggestion might be that terrorist attacks leave people wounded but do not claim lives, any casualties mentioned pertaining exclusively to the realm of discourse. Occulting images makes it impossible to resurrect at least the visual experience of violence.

My last recommendation concerns the necessity for the media to provide a thorough education on how to deal with violent images. In so far as they broadcast violent images, the media should educate the public through programmes about the press or by going into schools. If they decide to broadcast a violent image, or part of it, the media ought to inform the public on how such images are made, why they have decided to broadcast them and how to interpret them. And what the public needs is not a standardized commentary but an interpretation that gives a full account of the different meanings of these images: the meaning those who shot a given image wanted to convey, as in the case of the murder of an hostage for instance, and the meaning given to it by those who, by broadcasting it, appropriate an image they have not produced and share it with the public. This calls for a reading that deconstructs the content of the image, especially if it is staged, and offers an interpretation that leaves room

for the effects and the reactions that violent images produce and which are part of the viewer's experience: rebellion, indignation, empathy, disgust, shock. If these conditions were fulfilled, the media would no longer be torn between showing and occulting images of violence. Giving viewers details on what they are watching does not mean obstructing their gaze but confronting them with the unbearable, instead of broadcasting images that no longer spark any reaction, so that the unrepresentable may never be mixed up with the unimaginable.