WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation offers a re-examination of core practices and principles that have survived journalism's transition to the digital. It reconsiders how we think about three fundamental aspects of reporting -- eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma – and examines them in one of the most fundamental types of reporting: covering war, the "litmus test of journalism" (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 4). It takes as a point of departure the actual, physical field of covering crisis in Syria and Yemen, two countries that are home to the worst crises of our time. This dissertation moves to denaturalize naturalized associations which mask selective normalizations, structural inequities and a troubling legacy of racism in the press. To do so, it offers a specifically grounded interpretation of three specific practices and principles as they play out among one of journalism's liminal bridges: stringers. It unravels claims to authority from the act of eyewitnessing, to accountability from transparency and to the claimability of experience through trauma.

This dissertation departs from the work of covering crisis, seen mainly through stringers' eyes, and moves from there into editorial hubs, psychiatrists' offices and elsewhere. It draws on years of ethnographic observations in the world of Middle East correspondence, in-depth interviews with stringers, staff reporters, editors and psychiatrists and close readings of journalistic and scholarly texts that inform how we think about journalism, how it works and who it includes. It finds that the privileging of certain frames or associations over others is not arbitrary. It has enabled metonymic discussions of journalism in which inquiry stops at the boundaries it aims to interrogate. Failure to specify exactly what is under interrogation in the study of journalism, and to look closely at how journalism functions on the ground today, has enabled the survival of problematic, exploitative structures and systems that trap all those within.

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Introduction: Metaphors of Journalism

"Instead, a question arises: What does visibility conceal?" (Strathern, 1999, p. 310).

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This is not entirely a dissertation about stringers. It cannot be, if it is to be about journalism. Perhaps a useful way to explain is by beginning with bridges.

A common metaphor for those of us moving between languages, navigating the multiple worlds within the world of Middle East correspondence, is the bridge. The bridge, like any metaphor (Jakobson, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), works in two ways simultaneously, drawing on pre-existing associations as it recreates them. Metaphors steer cognition along tracks that already exist, even if these tracks of cognitive association may not be conscious. The selective association on which metaphor functions thus inevitably foregrounds certain concepts while hiding others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Over time, those commonly-shared associations take on a systematicity that is self-regenerating, naturalized as mere figures of speech.

Metaphors are not, however, uniquely figurative. The source of metaphor is the body itself (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The visceral feelings of the body are also at the root of metaphoric association, which privileges certain meanings over others and is rendered innocuous over time. In the case of the bridge, those assigning the figure of speech to a lived experience may not be those embodiment is at its root -- whose bodies, whose existences, are at stake. Being a bridge, a cultural mediator of sorts, most immediately invokes a positive sense of agency, richness,

generosity. That selective association cannot, however, draw on the visceral experience of being the bridge. It can only draw on its own perception of what a bridge is and why it exists, a perception driven by good intentions, empathy and the ready deniability of experience outside the boundaries of those in control of language, discourse and meaning.

The bridge does not immediately seem to connect to a bodily feeling. Bridges are, at the heart of it, inanimate objects in suspension, at the service of those who need carrying through. But for those whose bodies are the site of experience of being a bridge, and who are not the creators of the metaphor, it has another association. A bridge is something one walks over, hardly noticing its existence, to overcome an obstacle – water, a valley -- to get to a desired destination. The bridge itself does not move. It can only exist by virtue of the lack between two things which made it necessary, hovering over an emptiness, belonging to neither of the lands it connects. It does not always openly reflect that traffic flows one way, or that travel over the bridge is not a privilege shared by those on both sides. It stays where it is, in a state of perpetual immobile suspension between two places, until it crumbles under the weight of travelers, or rusts in disuse. The bridge is at the center of the human ability to travel, literally, and to comprehend, figuratively. But it is also at its periphery.

The complexity of that vertigo-inducing duplicity, both duality and deceit-by-omission, must be suppressed as per the very attributes of the bridge. The structure must remain sound in order to remain functional. It cannot question its own positionality, because it does not know anything other than its own relativity as an absolute. It cannot recognize the disequilibrium of the protracted bodily experience of being the bridge. This is not to say, of course, that the more common metaphoric association of the bridge with

cultural richness and agency is entirely unfounded, nor that the metaphoric bridge is entirely invisible and voiceless. But heightened visibility falls within the boundaries set by meaning-makers, metaphor-makers, in the language in which meaning is decided, or the language of those who can speak and speak for, making the invisible even more invisible.

Assuming visibility is indicative of or a prelude to change ignores how institutions work and how power itself adapts and survives, shifting from explicit to more subtle means. It risks creating a false sense of empowerment and an illusory sense of progress towards equality and historic rectification. Endorsing the bridge as a metaphor for one's own existence, in a tongue foreign to the self, for an audience foreign to the self, not only represents the violence that language represents, but the violence that language does and the violence that language is. The metaphor may be internalized by those who embody it but who do not control its meaning. And when those who embody the metaphor speak, when they become visible in the press or in scholarship for example, they speak through those speaking on their behalf. Not only is the voice through which the bridge speaks not its own; it cannot be. Meaning-making happens through and for the language, the words and discourses, of those the bridge serves, which is not the language the bridge has claim to. The address is directed towards the meaning-makers and not those who embody the metaphor. They are not spoken to, even if they are spoken for. Being journalism's bridge, whether self-identified as such or granted that identity by others, is complicated in ways not easily recognized, unless it is your body that is the source of the metaphor, that is at the frontlines, and sometimes even then. Furthermore, the acceptance and reproduction of the metaphor in question points to an internalization

of narratives of journalism that do not necessarily reflect its actuality. That is where this dissertation begins: with the consistent, subtle mechanisms that throw into question some of journalism's most fundamental claims, with the rootedness of journalism in an identity narrative that must be interrogated beyond its current boundaries, and against the dominant frameworks through which we access and interpret both of those things – frameworks perhaps more clearly visible from their margins.

Statement of problem

This dissertation reconsiders how we think about three fundamental aspects of reporting -- eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma – and examines them in one of the most fundamental types of reporting: covering war, the "litmus test of journalism" (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 4).[1] It offers an interpretation of those three journalistic pillars as they play out among one of journalism's liminal bridges: stringers. It takes as a point of departure the actual, physical field of covering crisis in Syria and Yemen, two countries that are home to the worst crises of our time. I have chosen coverage of these two countries for two main reasons. First, I have covered both as a journalist. I speak the language and have firsthand access to those covering the two countries. I also group coverage of these two distinct crises together as they are critical to rendering visible the silent power formations that have survived the digitization of the press. This dissertation

[1] Ethnographer Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) notes that typical or average cases are frequently not the richest in information. "Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied," Flyvbjerg writes (2001, p. 136). With that said, the question of what is typical or normal, and why, is much more complex than indicated here.

goes into neither the details of the conflicts in Syria and Yemen nor the geopolitics of the Middle East more broadly. Its focus is how they are covered and what that tells us about journalism. It would be impossible for a study on journalism to do justice to the depth, complexity and brutality of the Yemeni and Syrian crises, each unique in its makeup and the geopolitics involved. But these are two of the most pronounced cases of stringer-based coverage in the press.

This dissertation moves to denaturalize naturalized associations, whether in the language of metaphoric or understandings of journalism, which mask selective normalizations, structural inequities and a troubling legacy of racism in the press. It unravels claims to authority from the act of eyewitnessing, to accountability from transparency and to the claimability of experience through trauma. Where most of the few studies on local newsmaking in the Middle East focus on fixers, I focus mainly on stringers, who do the vast majority of daily reporting from Syria and Yemen for major international newsgroups, particularly photo and video services. It is critical to highlight that this is not a study of "Arab" journalism, of specific cultural articulations of journalism or of citizen journalism or user-generated media. It is a study of what we call the "international" press – those northern-western newsgroups whose brands are recognized around the world. As such, it engages with literature produced from and for that same context and institution.

Choosing to study stringers, not fixers, also has a political implication. Fixers uphold the exclusive, exclusionary boundaries of professional journalistic identity. Studying fixers as "alternative" newsmakers does the same. Fixers are not used by news organizations as fully autonomous reporters and thus do not fundamentally challenge the

identity narrative of traditional foreign correspondence. Stringers do. Stringers are likewise not citizen-journalists. They serve are the "eyes and ears where we cannot be," as TV bureau chief Tom[2] said, providing as much as "95 percent" of coverage from Yemen, in the words of bureau chief Marc. Stringers are paid to report for news organizations on stories and are often trained and equipped by the organizations. Stringers out of Syria and Yemen have been nominated for, and gone on to win, everything from the Rory Peck award, as in the case of AFP's Zein al-Rifai, to the Pulitzer, where Yemeni Maad al-Zakri was part of a three-person team to land the award. Suspending critique of journalistic award culture, these are honors reserved specifically for journalists, and not user-generated content.

The unarticulated is sometimes difficult to articulate because it is difficult to pinpoint – because it is masked through the opacity of transparency. In the tradition of the double bind, it is not the one interaction, the one concrete event or message, that is contradictory and impossible to navigate; its combination with broader messages, such as context, make the paradox nearly impossible to articulate (Bateson et al, 1956, 1962). This dissertation thus takes journalism in context, seen mainly through stringers' eyes, from the institution to the conflict zone to the psychiatrist's office. It pairs interviews with close readings of journalistic and scholarly texts, informed by more than a decade as a practitioner in the world of news.

Scholarship on journalism has "long privileged a journalistic world that is narrower than that which resides on the ground" (Zelizer, 2012, p. 1). Journalism studies interrogates journalism's epistemologies, making the invisible visible and accountable.

[2] Pers. communication, May 2016.

That interrogation should push past the anomaly, the marked, and examine the infrastructure of claims to authority and transparency. If journalism is accountable via its own self-imposed ethics and to an audience which hails from the same societal group (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), scholarship on journalism falls along the same lines. It has largely stopped short of examining its own boundaries and frameworks, of recognizing that the same epistemologies which it queries in the practice of journalism may be driving scholarship. The privileging of certain frames or associations over others – for example, to think of certain newsmakers as a bridge and their narratives as alternative – is not arbitrary. Inquiry stops at the boundaries it aims to interrogate in its object of study. This dissertation stands at the intersection of journalism's limitations and the limitations of its study, with the aim to begin to make visible and push past the boundaries of how we think we examine journalism.

That narrow world of professionalized journalism has, of course, been critically examined from its very inception and construction as an authority (Schudson, 2001; Zelizer, 1993), practices of discourse (Benson, 2013; Fairclough, 2000; Gitlin, 1980) and broader practices of newsmaking in different media (Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; Gans, 1979; Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1988; Tuchman, 1978; Usher, 2014). That scholarship privileges a world much narrower than that of journalism on the ground is now complicated by a newfound transparency around local labor in the press, one which parallels journalism's own push for accountability. Like journalistic transparency, scholarly inclusivity wittingly or unwittingly upholds an order which draws on visibility to make the invisible more invisible. In other words, hyper-visibility works as a means of obfuscation. This is made all the more urgent by digitization. In addition to the well-

documented impact of digitization on journalism, digitization has ushered in new complications of visibility, linked but not limited to social media platforms and throwing into question journalistic authority and longevity. This dissertation addresses the faulty reliance on social media as a record and as a means to claiming one's work. We need a more detailed, critical, grounded and enduring record.

Freelancing and stringing are at least as old as we can identify journalism to be, even if their study is fairly novel. From "penny-a-liners" who were also not infrequently "great drunks" (Grant, 1838, p. 189) corresponding from the colonies to 16th century English pamphlet authors (Cohen, 2016), freelancing predates journalistic professionalization (Schudson, 2001). James Carey (1988) outlines the trajectory of stringers specifically, tracing stringer-based reporting to the 19th century introduction of the telegraph. He writes:

> Similarly, the telegraph eliminated the correspondent who provided letters that announced an event, described it in detail, and analyzed its substance, and replaced him with the stringer who supplied the bare facts. As words were expensive on the telegraph, it separated the observer from the writer. Not only did writing for the telegraph have to be condensed to save money -- telegraphic, in other words -- but also from the marginal notes and anecdotes of the stringer the story had to be reconstituted at the end of the telegraphic line, a process that reaches high art with news magazines, the story divorced from the story teller. (Carey, 1988, p. 207)

This passage indicates that stringers may have a longer history, and more central role, in the press than is currently reflected in journalism scholarship. The closure of foreign bureaus owing to the financial impact of digitization has been widely studied in journalism, framed as everything from crisis to opportunity. The subsequent reliance on stringers as eyes-on-the-ground and the assemblage of their reporting into stories by bureaus far from the conflict zone is perhaps not new. Thus, what we see today is as

much a return as it is a novelty. But it is nonetheless on the rise. In 2004, seven out of 10 journalists working for U.S. news organizations outside the United States were non-American, the majority of them citizens of the country they were covering (Wu & Hamilton, 2004). Over the past five years, in the cases studied here, that number reached 10 out of 10 at certain points in the conflict, particularly in areas in Syria and Yemen under siege.

Early ethnographies equated stringing with freelancing (e.g., Hannerz, 1998; Pedelty, 1995). After decades of an absence of studies of stringers and fixers, there is now a marked uptick in scholarly interest with a focus on intervening in the lingering ethnocentricity of northern-western news organizations. Fixers are foregrounded as integral to the framing of the news (Murrell, 2014; Palmer, 2019). While local views had long been represented in the news, they had gone unrecognized in scholarship (Murrell, 2014; Palmer, 2019). That has changed over the past five years, with fixers now conceptualized as entrepreneurs from Gaza to the Balkans, setting up their own agencies, taking control of billing and expanding operations beyond journalism into other fields of media production (Murrell, 2019). The complexity of the cultural mediator role fixers play has also come to light, with a focus on precarious labor that requires the ability not only to navigate different contexts but adopt different identities (Palmer, 2019).

Recent studies of fixers and stringers,[3] primarily in the Middle East, have shed light on that neglected "marginal majority" (Seo, 2016) of overseas correspondence,

[3] Fixers are not the same as stringers, as I will clarify shortly. Stringers are not hired to translate; photographers and videographers need not necessarily speak the language of the organization. Stories are often derived from what they file by the increasing number of bilinguals hired to staff newsrooms. As the case of photographer Vincent and others interviewed show, speaking the language of the organization is central to the stringer's position within the organization, regardless of the medium of coverage.

highlighting forms of agency either claimed by fixers, stringers and others or granted to them through an interpretation of their work and narratives. Fixers have been conceptualized as local producers (Murrell, 2014) and entrepreneurs advertising their own work and skill (Murrell, 2019). They see themselves as "building a bridge" through their translations and interpretations, processes which often involve fixers making news judgments based on their knowledge of the context.[4] In a richly grounded study on fixers, Palmer writes: "One of the fixer's main jobs, as an anonymous news fixer working in Palestine told me, is to 'be a bridge' – a task that resonates for the field of global journalism ethics, which seeks to find the best practices for working across cultures" (2016, p. 321). Fixers, Palmer finds, "sometimes find that 'being a bridge' is a messy job, especially when the correspondent and the fixer have different cultural understandings of what they see and hear in the field" (ibid). In a later study, Palmer notes the fixer is a perpetual cultural mediator, always "mediating culture by helping the journalist achieve her or his goals while operating in an unfamiliar environment" (2019, p. 15). With that role comes agency: "the fixer might veer in favor of the people who live in the region …

[4] The work of locals in earlier studies offers different interpretations of their experiences and contributions. Murrell's (2010) first study of fixers working in Iraq found that they did in fact have considerable agency in newsmaking. Safety concerns around western reporters at CNN and the BBC meant fixers had a significant say in what was covered and who was interviewed (Murrell, 2010). Murrell's interviewees did not believe, however, that this impacted the quality of the reporting. Palmer and Fontan (2007), on the other hand, found that their western interviewees were concerned that the work of foreign journalists could be jeopardized by unchecked fixers. None of the interviewees appeared to be as focused on the impact of parachute journalism on the quality of that journalism. And Where Murrell (2019) interprets the work of fixers as entrepreneurial, Palmer (2019) concludes that fixers are frequently voluntarily or forcedly erased from their own work – the story.

the fixer might translate a journalist's very direct questions in a way that is more palatable to the interviewee (ibid).[5][6]

The directionality of the bridge metaphor is hidden by the seeming innocence, in the form of cooperation, of one community at the service of another, more dominant one. Fixers *up*hold or *under*write the work of foreign correspondence. Their work does not end with producing and translating, but often extends to include welcoming foreign correspondents into their homes and social circles. While it is necessary and long overdue, rendering their work visible does not unravel the problematic, historic politics of being a "bridge" not only between cultures, but to guarantee others' safe crossing. And so, sotto voce, the local is made to be understood as perpetually invisible through their visibility.

Stringers and fixers are located at the juncture between the place journalism is covering and how journalism works – the bridge, so to speak. But they cannot be grouped into one category. To continue to think of fixers and stringers as two subcategories of the same category – "local" or "alternative" newsmakers – upholds the invisible markers of ethnocentrism that are at the heart of professional journalistic identity. In Syria and Yemen, stringers provide the vast majority of coverage of two of the world's most brutal contemporary conflicts. Unlike fixers, who work in conjunction with foreign correspondents, stringers tend to work autonomously, particularly in photojournalism and

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[5] These divisions, between the straightforward shoot-from-the-hip foreign correspondent and the apparent labyrinthine, not unsnakelike local interviewee, may be not only vast overgeneralizations, but stereotypes that no longer hold. In many contexts in the Middle East, particularly with persons in positions of regular contact with the press, there is a familiarity of how the northern-western news works.
[6] It is worth pausing at the bridgework of translation. Rubel & Rosman write: "The position of the translator in a particular culture needs to be ascertained historically. The translator is in a sense a *trickster*: he or she can clarify or obfuscate. To which side does he or she hold allegiance?" (Rubel & Rosman, 2003, p. 16; emphasis added). The assumption that any "local" is a trickster unless and until proven otherwise is not overstated.

video journalism, which require less fluency in the actual words of a specific language. Stringers thus fundamentally challenge the ethnocentric basis of "international" journalism's identity narrative and professional norms. Glossing over the differences, and framing the two as "bridges" between cultures, is an assertion of power. The visibility they are granted through studies framing their work as alternative means or narratives of newsmaking obfuscates the invisibility that still mars journalism. The authority to define is still controlled by those closer to the heart of the institution. In parallel, the visibility stringers appear to claim via social media, where some have tens of thousands of followers per platform, belies the inequity of recognition and credibility on those very platforms (see, for example, Chouliaraki, 2012).

As studies of fixers change the landscape of journalism studies, certain complications of visibility have thus emerged.[7] Visibility is critical to rights and recognition. Visibility also makes the invisible even more invisible. As traditionally marginalized newsmakers gain visibility, certain inner mechanisms, practices and narratives are rendered even more invisible. While the practice and product of journalism are increasingly regarded as immaterial, or digitized, underlying that immateriality is a corporeal materiality indispensable to the very production of the news. This is contextualized against a relatively consistent narrative employed in scholarship on stringers, who in recent years have gained some attention as an object of study, and coverage of stringers in the press itself. If more attention is now being paid to stringers by

[7] Technological, financial and cultural factors are among the many reasons for this. Facebook groups run by NGOs (Murrell, 2014) and later fixers themselves (Murrell, 2019) helped organize the work and network of fixers with foreign correspondents, as the visibility of fixers themselves on social media and platforms like World Fixer could no longer be as easily ignored. Again, fewer studies of stringers have emerged. Possible factors include the lack of awareness outside the world of journalism of the widespread reliance on stringers who, unlike fixers, can work independently.

journalism scholarship and journalistic institutions, less attention is paid to the ways in which frames and narratives are constructed and normalized around local newsmakers, narratives which have very real consequences in the work and compensation of stringers. In other words, it is not just what is studied, but how, by whom, and why. As Gans notes, we value our own values above all (1979, p. 42). These values can become differential: for example, the "undesirability of war *sui generis* (which does not always extend to specific wars)" (Gans, 1979, p. 42). This ethnocentrism, Gans notes, is most pronounced in foreign news. And more specifically, the "clearest expression of ethnocentrism, in all countries, appears in war news" (ibid).

If we are to truly move away from that ethnocentrism, then, this dissertation cannot be fully or even centrally about stringers. It must also be about journalism. It must presuppose their centrality, taking for granted that centrality, and turn the lens to see what can be learned about journalism as it is. What began as a study of the people considered the bridge has revealed itself not as a study of stringers but of journalism unexamined, complicated by a newfound focus on rights and visibility, rendered innocuous by the ability of journalism to evade forms of self-examination by virtue of its very examination in scholarship.

Taking for granted stringers' centrality as regular journalists neither glorifies them as more capable nor diminishes them as more suspect than other journalists, categorizations equally discriminatory in marking them as set apart. It moves away from framing the narratives around stringers, and fixers and others, as novel or alternative and from framing the actual work of stringers as replacement for an original. It moves away from bridges, suspended in midair in the service of others. It moves away from the

audience as the sole reference point for accountability. Only be reshaping the very position of the work – by making the experience and work of stringers a fundamental, and not alternative, part of journalism -- can we begin to move away from the violence done by the separation of selective boundaries, by good intentions, by the unexamined, unmarked frame.

The interviews conducted for this dissertation, the textual analysis used for context and some of the vignettes are driven by my own experience, as a journalist "from there".[8] Just over half of those interviewed requested their names and employers not be revealed. Given the small size of the community of journalists covering Syria and Yemen, I have opted to anonymize all stringers and staff reporters interviewed and the organization for which they work, all of which are U.S., British or French newsgroups. All but two of the journalists interviewed for this dissertation I knew personally, either through covering the same stories or through mutual friends. After nearly a decade covering the Middle East for a regional website and then Agence France-Presse (AFP), including a year covering Syria, I began a doctoral program which, many years later, ended with this dissertation. I had not gone to journalism school prior to that. I began as a local translator/fixer while pursuing my M.A., was hired by a regional news organization right out of university and 10 months later was hired by AFP. Coming to graduate school to study journalism, I had anticipated those transformative moments of the shock of recognition, to borrow from Melville, of finding oneself, and one's work, in literature. Those moments did occur, but were few and far between. The relative absence of

[8] See Appendix A, on methods.

recognition raised the question of what, exactly, we mean when we talk about journalism.[9]

In 2016, weeks after defending a dissertation proposal for a study on stringers covering the Syrian crisis, my former employer reached out to me for a position as the Gulf and Yemen correspondent. I suspended my dissertation and moved back to the Middle East as a regional correspondent for AFP. For just under three years, I had the privilege of covering Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE during a critical time, including the devastating war in and on Yemen and the rise of Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia. Returning to journalism, and from there returning to academia, helped clarify why the shock of recognition had never quite materialized. One need not, of course, recognize oneself in every text addressed to the question of interest. Studies produced in the time and space in which I worked and from which I come did not, however, speak to those they represented even as they spoke for them. The difference between the two addresses of speech is unlikely arbitrary, and the non-resemblance is not unlikely reflective of the domination of meaning-making, including deciding what journalism is, what it means and who establishes those boundaries.

This is not to assign blame. This dissertation does not examine the individual attitudes of stringers towards foreign correspondents, nor the attitudes of foreign correspondents towards stringers, even if mutual perceptions inevitably emerge. It instead looks at inherited, institutionalized systems and structures which entrap all those involved. Without truly looking at those systems, we cannot begin to speak without fear,

[9] The title of this dissertation is borrowed from Haruki Murakami's (2009) What I Talk About When I Talk About Running, which itself borrows from Raymond Carver's What We Talk About When We Talk About Love. In a nod to Carver, this contains an attempt to elucidate what is left in the dark.

around language and issues more profound than the passing tweet. We cannot begin to re/define the metaphoric associations built on our bodies and to articulate the authority and its underlying mechanisms which we enact from the field. We cannot bring into focus those parts of journalism blurry or indecipherable except to those looking very, very closely from within.

Those in the field, whose physical presence and work provide the grounds for journalism to claim authority, do not have immediate claim to that authority. Journalism's boundaries and the allocation of its identity are a function of those historically at the institutional center. Building on Weber, Goffman (1967) writes that those farthest from the institutional core are the most cognitively distant from institutional identity, and are thus rewarded the least and evaluated most harshly by the upper echelons of management. Applying this to journalism produces a counterintuitive assumption of distance, proximity and evaluation. Physical proximity to the story and social or professional proximity to the institutional center, and thus to authority and visibility, are inversely proportional when it comes to covering war. That is one of the many double binds of being there while being from there: the closer you are to the field, the further you are from authority over the story, the authority of which is based on proximity to the frontlines. While this dissertation focuses on two case studies, there are strong indicators that the systemic subtleties it highlights may be a much more common experience across geographies and journalistic categories.

Writing on the treatment of Indian journalists by foreign correspondents looking for local guidance, journalist Priyanka Borpujari notes "the difference between a correspondent and a 'fixer' is not one of experience or qualification, but of geography"

(Borpujari, 2019). Borpujari tells the story of Neha Dixit, an award-winning journalist who was contacted by a professor at Northwestern University:

> The subject read, "Fixer needed." The message: "My colleagues and I are working on a story about illegal organ trafficking in India and are in need of sources for the story. We were wondering if you could help us with finding sources and guiding us around Delhi?" Dixit was furious. In the following days she received more emails from reporters, with similar subject lines: "Looking for fixer to report on India's election." In each case, the language was blunt and unsolicitous. (Borpujari, 2019)

An investigative journalist for over a decade, Dixit was awarded the 2016 Chameli Devi Jain Award, the highest honor given to female journalists in India, for "exposing the trafficking of young tribal girls by Hindu fundamentalist groups" (ibid). While she contributes to a North American news broadcaster, Dixit requests her byline be omitted: "'Their storytelling is different than the way I do my work,' Dixit says. 'Since it is for an international audience, they try to simplify complex matters, and lose out on the nuance'" (cited in Borpujari, 2019). Some years ago, I received an email from a man requesting help on a story vaguely linked to the Syria conflict, a country which he had never visited and a beat he had never covered, because he had heard I had covered Syria and, in his words, "Google translate just isn't cutting it." The language was also "blunt and unsolicitous." Blunt and unsolicitous are not difficult to call out.

The most respectful such request I have ever received, from a Danish television station, still stands out in my memory, in part because it took me years to piece together why it was so troubling. I was already a regional correspondent for AFP. I have omitted identifying details and kept the email as is. This email stood out because of its relative respect for the Lebanese mother and the stringer who would potentially be involved. The email reads:

Dear Ms. Natacha Yazbeck!

I have your contact information from [omitted]. I am a journalist working as a researcher for a TV-documentary called [omitted] where we trace, find and reunite relatives who have lost contact with each other. In this connection we are looking for at fixer/stringer who can help us in Lebanon.

We have a case: a woman, who was the first child to be adopted from Lebanon til Denmark (1974) and she has approached us because she wishes to find her Lebanese birth mother.

We need help to locate the mother and this is why I write to you.

We need a stringer to do some research and if and when the mother is found - and if she wants to be found, we will come out with the camera team and sort of reconstruct the search and in the end reunite the mother and daughter.

In case of this, we will also need the stringer to line things up for us: we will go to the places where the search takes us (took you) and film.

I must emphasize that we make a warmhearted program where ethics play a role. We will not pursue the story if it turns up, that the mothers situation is of such character that a reunion is impossible.

Please press this link if you wish to see an example of our documentary.

(…)

I do not know at all if this is anything you could might be interested in doing, but please let me know. And in case of yes, please let me know your conditions.

I am looking very much forward to hear from you.

There is, of course, absolutely nothing "wrong" with stringing or fixing. But the visible innocence and simplicity of a straightforward yes/no question, articulated politely, belies its meaning beyond the immediate request. What does that question *mean*?

The ability to pose that question draws on the perception of the other in relation to the self. The visible respectfulness of the request belies its implicit ranking of classification and an unquestioned expectation of service common to the press, and in so doing, reveals a deeper problem than that reflected in openly blunt emails. The polite email, unlike the email Dixit received from the professor at Northwestern, was respectful in tone to all those involved. However, journalists ask other journalists, whom they perceive as equal to themselves, for contacts, for referrals to stringers or fixers. This is an unpleasant, ugly way to categorize journalists. But journalism is always structured hierarchically on a "totem pole" (Seo, 2016, p. 45). The simplicity of straightforward polite requests conceals the derogatory implications of the question, derogatory only in that they reflect that totem pole, in turn linked to identities, geographic locations and the hierarchical structure of interactions. It only works as innocuous if it can be flipped; if, for example, a Guatemalan, Nigerian or Kurdish journalist working on a story that involves Denmark, or France, or the United States, can reach out to a full-time regional correspondent for *Le Monde* or *The New York Times* with the normalized expectation that that correspondent will obviously still be their local fixer. It only works as an innocuous, collegial question if regardless of geographic location, the state of their economy, their ethnicity or race, or their recognition as an established journalist, the "local" is a universally applicable signifier for groundwork that will be placed under someone else's byline and compensated as per the local standard, rather than the organization's own pay scale. It may also be worth noting that both the emails from the Danish TV producer and the Northwestern professor were directed at "local" women of color. Herein lies the trouble with being "from there." It cannot be mutual. The same can be said for

scholarship, where the respectful framing of fixers and stringers is troubling in its unremarked assumptions and unarticulated strategic boundaries which help journalism maintain its exclusivity and which are concealed by the clear articulation of other, less fundamental boundaries.

Key terms

This dissertation examines systems, structures, policies and politics, explicit or implied. It hones in on the institution, and is not about individuals. Systems and hierarchies are always inevitably reproduced through collective behavior and attitudes which are not necessarily the doing of individuals, even if they manifest in individual cases. The terms used throughout this dissertation – eyewitnessing, transparency, trauma and language – are defined within the relevant chapters. Across the chapters, two key terms are at play which require definition and contextualization: stringers and institutions.

Stringers, fixers, freelancers

Who or what a stringer is has been a point of discussion in both the field and study of journalism, and like any role in journalism, its differentiation from other functions is malleable. Stringers occupy a unique space in newsmaking that exposes longstanding complications inherent to precarity, physicality, visibility, credibility, authority and other constituent parts of journalism. Traditionally used interchangeably with freelancing, stringing has unique attributes which become revelatory about journalism proper when articulated explicitly. Stringers can today be said to fulfil three functions. First, that of

beat reporters or reporters covering a certain country or conflict.[10] Second, that of aides to foreign correspondents dispatched to cover stories in countries and languages they are unfamiliar with. And third, that of justifying the dateline necessary for the journalistic authority that stems from "being there." Stringers are at once freelancers, fixers and translators, and geo pins.

In all of those capacities, they are not technically employees of the organizations they are working for. There is no consistent policy for payment, insurance or end-of-service rights. In its online handbook, Reuters states that it uses stringers "in places where the flow of news is not sufficient to justify the presence of a staff correspondent," "in countries where the authorities may not allow Reuters to assign a staff journalist," or ad-hoc for individual stories. The Reuters handbook advises that "reputable journalists" in the location be hired, whose remuneration is evaluated depending on "local and individual circumstances." According to the website, credit via a byline is likewise evaluated on the sensitivity of the story and the risk the stringer may face. At the height of the Syrian crisis, Anne Barnard, formerly *The New York Times'* correspondent in Beirut, reported that the publication did not have an official policy on stringers (cited in Bossone, 2014).

This precarity is at once physical, institutional, economic and existential. It is also relative. To address these in order: reporting from the frontlines is dangerous work.

[10] In the fascinating *Journalism's Roving Eye,* Hamilton (2009) identifies stringers as "foreign foreign correspondents" who may know the context better than traditional (in this case, American) foreign correspondents but who "may have a greater propensity towards bias" (p. 467). Stringers here, however, become the replicate of a missing original, doubly marked as second/ary. For a thorough analysis of journalism's problem with foreign correspondence as unbiased, see Allan & Zelizer (2004). For a thorough analysis of journalism's problem with accusations of bias within the United States, see Gans (1979), Epstein (1973) et al.

Reporting where one can be specifically targeted – as a journalist, as a foreigner or as "one of us" – is a particular kind of danger. Institutionally, there is no guarantee of continued employment, such as a new assignment elsewhere, once the war is over or interest in the story wanes. There are generally no pensions. Economically, precarity is complicated on multiple levels. The lack of a relatively secure income every month is rare among stringers. As some of the stories cited in this dissertation show, getting the money to the stringers can be a challenge for employers, in the absence of banks or Western Union. Those who are paid in local currency must contend with what the pay is worth. Since the escalation of conflict in 2015, the Yemeni riyal has steadily lost its value against the dollar. The Syrian lira hit a record low in June 2020. The Lebanese lira, the currency in which Beirut-based stringers and other journalists are paid, is in freefall. In all three countries, people are starving or face imminent starvation. Those who are paid in euros or dollars face different obstacles. The currency goes farther, if it reaches those to whom it is owed. But to gradually or suddenly stand out on your street as more economically privileged carries with it its own risks – and guilt. As one photo stringer, who requested all details of his identity and of this story be withheld, recounted, to suddenly be able to own a second-hand car not only makes you a target of political suspicion: it means you have taken it away from your neighbor, cousin, brother. Overwriting the economic is the precariousness of existence – what Judith Butler (2004) identifies as ontological precariousness. These conditions are not, of course, unique to stringers. Precarious workers in all fields face conditions that are difficult, and at times impossible, to navigate.

A few more differences between stringers and freelancers, and fixers and freelancers, are worth noting. As many of the Syrian and Yemeni journalists interviewed pointed out, freelancers can come in and leave; stringers cannot. After the murders of American freelancers James Foley and Steven Sotloff by the group that identifies as the Islamic State in Syria in 2014, AFP announced it would no longer accept work from freelancers in zones the newswire would not send its own reporters. Reuters, the A.P. and other news organizations soon announced similar decisions. They all went on to build their network of stringers, reconfiguring journalism in the process. Like freelancing, stringing entails a form of work where journalists are paid by the story, which may or may not be ready at the time the freelancer pitches the idea to the news organizations. Unlike freelancers, who are free to write different stories for different news organizations, stringers generally function under exclusivity. And while stringers are likewise independent reporters with no official affiliation to any one news group, unlike freelancers, in Syria and Yemen they are largely if not exclusively locals who are hired to report on the most dangerous stories in the world by an organization which may or may not grant them a monthly retainer or stipend in addition to the low fees paid per story and may be restricted from working for competing news groups. And while freelancers may travel to the story, stringers are *of* the site. "Being there," journalism's central claim to authority (Zelizer, 2007), is complicated by being *from* there.

From the standpoint of news organizations, some editors initially stated that stringers were viewed as freelancers. Many spoke of them like family, a relationship that becomes even more intriguing in the many cases where stringers had never met the staff with whom they interacted more often than their own families, and who shared their

everyday lives by proxy. But read against the actual decisions of their organizations, clear differences surface. It is important to highlight that some of these organizations have spared no means to help support their stringers, particularly those in Syria. The stringers with whom I spoke largely praised the news groups they work for, with few exceptions, for having their best interests at heart and treating them, again, "like family". Multiple stringers recounted stories in which their editors helped them, and in some cases their spouses and children, flee horrific conditions. Some were granted asylum thanks in no small part to the contacts of the organization. Some received medical treatment at the expense of the company. But family care is not earned rights. The compensation and permanency of work of stringers is at the organization's discretion and not a contractual obligation on the part of the organization or a right on the part of the stringer. Furthermore, there is often the expectation if not requirement of exclusivity, at least within the same medium. So, for example, the same stringer cannot sell photographs of the same air raid to Reuters and the A.P. Medical insurance and payment rates fall along a general spectrum, but are still on an ad hoc basis. And ultimately, there is no guarantee of continued employment or end of service benefits.

Scholarship meanwhile moves from confounding stringers and fixers to differentiating them over the past two decades. Pedelty defines stringers as "reporters who sell articles, radio pieces and photos to a number of news organizations" (1995, p. 69). These reporters may be foreign or local. In the case of the El Salvador war, Pedelty notes, stringers often actively chose to be in the country. For foreign correspondents, El Salvador was a stopover en route to Paris. In his discussion of the B Team, Pedelty's use of the term stringer appears to refer to what editors today would view as freelancing:

foreigners who are not staff. Pedelty later suggests that stringers and freelancers can be generally viewed as "less enfranchised journalists" (2004). Hannerz (2004) likewise suggests the terms freelancers and stringers can be used interchangeably, constituting what he calls the "informal sector" of foreign correspondence (p. 74). More than a decade later, in her study of stringers at the A.P., Soomin Seo extricates stringers from freelancers:

> A local youth who speaks reasonably good English may start as a fixer, a short-term position that involves setting up interviews and/or supplying short quotes or photographs. The next step up is the stringer, a more permanent position that involves writing stories or taking photos and videos for a small fixed salary or pay by item. The work of a fixer or stringer may overlap with that of a translator who accompanies foreign reporters for interviews, or a news monitor who keeps track of radio and TV broadcasts. (Seo, 2016, p. 44).

Palmer differentiates fixers from stringers, whom she defines as "freelancers who tend to write stories or sometimes appear in video reports" (2019, p. 3). Fixer, on the other hand, "refers to the locally based interpreters and guides who journalist hire to help them cover international news" (Palmer, 2019, p. 2). Fixers are rarely discussed in academic research and historically rendered invisible, struggling to get "even contributing credits" (ibid). Murrell offers the idea of fixers as "local producers" (2014, p. 98) or a "catch-all name for the person hired overseas to assist in the job of news gathering being carried out by a visiting reporter" (2019, p. 1679). Perhaps the most comprehensive, accurate definition of stringer, however, appears in *Keywords in News and Journalism Studies:*

> [A] part-time non-staff employee of a news organization, who is paid in proportion to his or her published or broadcast work. Stringers are often employed to report on events associated with a particular **beat** – law or education, for example – or a particular geographic location, where their value derives from the fact that they are usually well-versed in the

> specialism that they take on. Often doubling as **local news** reporters who boost their income by selling material to other news organizations, stringers are of particular import when responsible for a news organization's coverage of a geographic location. Because they are local specialists, they know the local language, customs, and lie of the land usually better than the news organization's own correspondent and thereby ease a potentially steep learning curve for journalists being **parachuted** to the location for the coverage alone. Additionally, in an age when **foreign correspondents** are becoming less financially viable for cash-strapped news organizations, stringers often lead the way in covering areas otherwise falling through the **news net** when crisis strikes, such as during times of war, terrorism or natural disaster. (Zelizer & Allan, 2010, p. 148; emphasis in original).

All of these definitions are accurate. In Syria, stringing cannot be said to be part-time. War, and the work of covering war, consumes you. These definitions furthermore do not account for geography (and ensuing identity, racial or otherwise). Geographically, stringer-based reporting naturally extends far beyond Syria and Yemen. The *Post* refers to its freelancers as stringers. The *Times* explicitly defines a stringer as "a journalist who is not on staff at a news publication but works on an as-needed basis, often doing the legwork at the scene of a breaking news story and providing 'string', or content, for stories" (Delkic, 2018). Both of these are within the context of the United States.

Upward mobility on the journalistic totem pole is not unheard of. Within my data, some of my interviewees began as stringers, particularly during the Lebanese civil war, and went on to have illustrious careers as celebrated journalists. Coverage of Vietnam likewise relied heavily on local stringers (Seo, 2016). Writing on stringers in rural India, Jessica Mayberry (2010) of PBS describes stringers as "the base of the pyramid" in contemporary media/journalism production. While we associate the idea of a "local" newsmaker with foreign news, stringer-based reporting is also on the rise within the United States. In 2015, the *Washington Post* rolled out the Talent Network, an online

platform aimed at bolstering its coverage. Stringers can submit pitches and file invoices via the platform. The website's FAQ reads: "Our aim is to open up the newsroom to more ideas for news coverage from across the country and the world, and to more easily locate the best freelance talent when breaking news occurs outside Washington." The network has received so many applications that review of applications has now been suspended. "If there is breaking news in your area and you are available, we would expedite your application," the website reads. While the website does not disclose funding, the project was financed by Jeff Bezos, said Eva Rodriguez, a *Post* editor tasked with reviewing applications to the network (cited in Friess, 2017). The *New York Times* has likewise invested heavily in its stringer network within the United States. In an article entitled "What Makes a Good Editor? A Long List of Stringers," the *Times* writes: "because stringer work is so dependent on availability and proximity to a newsworthy event, most editors have an extensive network of them" on the domestic desk (Delkic, 2017). And despite that visibility, stringers in the United States remain invisible, a two tier-model with a long history in the press. Noah Rosenberg, a former New York-based stringer for *The New York Times* and founder of online longform journalism portal *Narratively*, describes his experience as

> a rather thankless one … the stringer's name, and thus his "contributed reporting" credit, often goes unmentioned until the very bottom of the story he worked so hard to get to the bottom of – an italicized afterthought for the increasingly rare reader with an attention span. Meanwhile, the critical and conspicuous author byline at the top of the piece – rendered in all caps and boldface, right beneath the headline – is reserved for the staffer back at HQ who, ironically, sometimes does little more than string together all of the stringer's string, and is therefore far more deserving of the moniker. (Staff reporters, of course, frequently do much more than that). (Rosenberg, 2014)

That two-tier model is still in play. More than 20 years after Pedelty (1995) and Hannerz (1998) identified the division and differential treatment between local reporters and foreign correspondents, agencies, newspapers and television, but particularly agencies, are still working out their staffing:

> For decades, the AP has been criticized for a colonialist reporting model, with well-paid, often Ivy League-educated reporters parachuting in to filter local events, and especially America's many wars, through a uniquely Western lens. Meanwhile, local fixers, translators and stringers, who helped expat correspondents do their jobs, earned far less, with little status or influence[11] over the narratives told about their countries. (Frazier, 2019)

AP executive editor Sally Buzbee explains: "There are fewer expat packages than there used to, and that's not a bad thing long term. Local people who pursue a journalism career are now emerging as our most vibrant, and forward-looking, correspondents" (cited in Frazier, 2019). Buzbee did not refer to the local people pursuing journalism as journalists. She continued: "We have had an unequal system. It benefits the people who got expat packages, and suppresses the talent of those who didn't. I admit it might be unfair for the people who aren't getting expat packages anymore, but it was a two-tier system" (ibid).

The loss of privileges of expats does not necessarily spell out the restoration, or institution, of the rights of others. The hope is that the word "stringer" becomes obsolete, with the same rights and responsibilities afforded journalists no matter their race. Until then, stringers are caught in between praise and precarity, dependent on individual goodwill to maximize compensation and facilitate resettlement outside the warzone. The

[11] Scholarship is divided on the influence stringers and fixers have over news narratives. Bunce (2011, 2015) and Palmer (2016, 2019) find they do influence the making of a story. Looking at coverage of Iraq, like Syria and Vietnam a major turning point in journalism's history, Zelizer & Allan argue: "A stringer positioned in a distant location … provides sufficient justification for a news organization to employ a dateline, even if the stringer plays little role in the article's actual crafting" (2010, p. 29).

risks news organizations take by hiring "local people," to quote Buzbee, are offset by the benefit of cheap, expert labor, labor which is as proficient behind the camera as it is in the language of conflict.

Institutions

In line with new institutionalism, this dissertation takes the individual cases studies as "a product not only of an institutional setting but of a much larger frame of reference" (Koelble, 1995, p. 232. But despite its well-documented financial struggles, journalism as an institution remains "characterized by social, political, economic and/or cultural privilege" (Zelizer, 2004, p. 36), not least in coverage of foreign affairs and/or conflict. The institution, as used in this dissertation, pivots on that pillar: enacted by individuals and reflective of the society, rather than solely the profession, from which they hail and rooted in the past in ways not recognized in the institution's present focus. This is especially critical at a time when institutions have become "'catch-all' environments that are treated like exogenous variables in a structural equation model: they exist, but it is not important to explain them, detail their dynamics, or conceptualize them apart from their organizations" (Abrutyn, 2014, p. 3).

New institutionalism takes the institution as an inter-organizational constellation which cannot not stand alone. It is invariably networked with other institutions. It is likewise far from a stable entity (Abbott, 1998; Benson, 1999, 2006; Cook, 1998; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Sparrow, 1999). The catch is that, despite the flux of institutions, they may not change all that much. As DiMaggio & Powell explain: "once a

set of organizations emerges as a field, a paradox arises: rational actors make their organizations increasingly similar as they try to change them" (1983, p. 147).

This dissertation takes that paradox as central to journalism as an institution. To do so, it takes the institution as reflective of traditional bureaucracy at a time when journalism studies rightly focuses on how the institution is changing (e.g., Anderson, 2012; Usher, 2014). Narratives used in the press and patterns of behavior among journalists are thus taken as systemic, structural and more importantly *historical*, and not as individual acts of real or rhetorical violence between persons. The historical consistency of a changing institution can also be gleaned through journalism literature. Gans' (1979) observation that journalism was defined by male whiteness is documented in depth and breadth by current studies (e.g., Callison & Young, 2020; González & Torres, 2012). It is critical that we examine journalism's unaccounted-for remnants as we attend to technological change and its impact on journalism, its finances and its boundaries. As Zelizer writes:

> To regard journalism as an institution is by definition to address the *historical* and *situational* contingencies against which journalism performs a range of social, cultural, economic and political tasks or functions. That said, journalism by this view must exist institutionally, if it is to exist at all … But regarding journalism as an institution is limited by the difficulties of identifying journalistic institutions, which are by definition *invisible*. (Zelizer, 2004, pp. 36-37; emphasis added)

Thinking about the institution as a bureaucracy, bearing in mind that the pre-digital can survive digitization in journalism as in society, thus allows for the examination of what has been naturalized and rendered invisible. In the Weberian (1968) tradition, this dissertation takes the institution as characterized by a ranked division of labor governed by top-down authority – the hierarchical structure of editor, foreign

correspondent, local staff, stringer, etc. Like Weber's two notions of authority, authority in journalism is not solely legal (although it can be, such as in the contracts owed or afforded to stringers). It also stems from the individual charisma of the journalist or editor in charge. Most importantly, the naturalized rituals and patterns of this ranked authority survives past the lifespan of its members. [12] The valuation of labor and its hierarchization are decided by the rules established by those in positions of authority, rules that extend beyond the institution in question to the broader society in which it is positioned. Finally, the institution survives beyond the organization. It is reinforced and reproduced by the ritualization of interaction in daily work. Institutions come into being through the development of habitual action and the abstraction of that action into rules, or scripts, which are naturalized and rendered invisible over the course of history (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Goffman, 1967). Seth Abrutyn (2014) offers a useful, updated summary:

> [M]acro-level structural and cultural spheres composed of individual, collective and clusters of collective actors whose action, exchanges and communication are facilitated and constrained by their integration into divisions of labor and through the circulation of generalized symbolic media, regulated by the distribution of (material and symbolic) resources and authority and given a sense of shared meaning through the linkages, pursuit of resources and the legitimated vision of reality espoused by those actors with the greatest share of the resources. (Abrutyn, 2014, p. 11)

Those dynamics are at the heart of this dissertation. Throughout the chapters that follow, both the terms "institution" and "organization" are used. Organization is taken to refer to the actual, individual news organization. Organizations, specific newspapers or newspapers in general, may come and go, unfortunate though that may be. But, as

[12] While the division of labor is attributable to the earlier work of Durkheim, Durkheim believed it was not a "fundamental fact of social life" (1933, p. 227).

Anthony Giddens warns us, it is institutions, the invisible histories and patterns that ensure survival, that "by definition are the more enduring features of social life" (1984, p. 24).

The Syria turning point

A clear differentiation between stringers and freelancers surfaced between 2013 and 2014 as the Syria crisis spiraled, and specifically with the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or the Islamic State group (IS). Freelancers and correspondents, initially limited in number, reported from across the country as protests against the regime of Bashar al-Assad erupted in 2011, to be met with brutal force by Assad's troops and eventually escalate into a war that decimated the country, killing at least 380,000 people,[13] displacing millions and claiming the lives of 134 journalists, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). The magnitude of the crisis in Syria, its importance as a story and the relative visibility of Syria in the news attracted reporters, including staff correspondents, established freelancers and freelancers hoping to make a name for themselves. By the end of 2012, less than a year after protests against the regime of Bashar al-Assad had erupted, Syria had become the "world's deadliest place for journalists" (Phillips, 2013). According to data compiled by CPJ, local reporters and citizen journalists made up the "vast majority" of the 28 journalists killed that year. Syrians also comprise the majority of more than 100 journalists killed in the following

[13] This figure includes 115,000 civilians and was compiled by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in January 2020. The United Nations announced it had stopped compiling figures in 2014, given the difficulty of gathering and verifying numbers.

years. The rest include foreign correspondents and foreign freelancers, with photographers and videographers most at risk.

In 2013, just as news agencies had begun to rely heavily on stringers, *Foreign Policy* ran an obituary for Molhem Barakat, a young Syrian photo stringer who may have been underage when he was killed reporting for Reuters. Under the headline "The Controversial Death of a Teenage Stringer," the magazine did not mince words: "Reuters gave this kid a camera. Seven months later he was dead" (Kenner, 2014). Reuters confirmed in a statement to the BBC's Stuart Hughes that Barakat had turned 18 in March 2013 and begun to work for the agency in May 2013 (Hughes, 2013). In a brief story on Barakat's death, the agency identified him as a "Syrian photographer who took pictures for Reuters on a freelance basis" (*Syrian photographer killed,* 2013). The story does not mention Barakat's age.

Barakat's story is complicated, but to those who knew him, those complications are outweighed by what happened to him -- what one editor called "exploitation, simply."[14] According to Wolfgang Bauer, a German journalist who covered Syria and knew Barakat, there was a "silent agreement" not to look further into Barakat's age. "The point is that, as with child soldiers, a guy his age will risk much more than an adult. If you're 17 and need to feed your family by photography in a war area, that's a very, very dangerous combination" (cited in Kenner, 2014). Journalists who knew Barakat personally took to Twitter to say he was 17 at the time of his death and some said he may have been filing pictures under an older photographer's name (e.g., Bauer, 2014; Cassell, 2013; Marshall, 2013; Verheyden, 2013). Stanislav Krupar, a freelancer photographer

[14] Pers. communication. July 2019.

who met and befriended Barakat at a Free Syrian Army base that hosted journalists, told investigative journalist Corey Pein that Barakat said he was paid $100 for a day's work, generally upwards of 10 photos. Barakat received a bonus when one of his photos was picture of the day on the *New York Times* Lens blog (cited in Pein, 2014). This is in line with figures confirmed by editors, who said stringers could be paid $25 for a picture or around $100 for a day's work in the early days of the Syrian war.

Like other stringers, Barakat's links to the war at home also came under question. He did not hide the fact that he wanted to do something for the revolution in the early days and even considered becoming a fighter (Kenner, 2014). A video uploaded to YouTube weeks before Barakat's death shows him tying a tourniquet around the leg of a wounded fighter before heeding fighters' warnings of "*rasak, watte rasak khayyo"* ("your head, lower your head, brother") as an explosion went off (*Reef Ḣalab,* 2013). While it is not ideal, this sense of kinship is also not limited to Syrians or Yemeni as a function of their Syrianness or Yemeniness, so to speak. In coverage of any war, "ties and relationships are soon formed, and that is to be expected; bonding is an essentially human trait. The military calls it 'unit cohesion'" (Griffiths, 2005, p. 2). A clear example in recent history is US news reporters abandoning the professional tradition of appearing impartial in favor of patriotism in coverage of the 2003 Iraq war (Allan & Zelizer, 2004).

Suspending the simultaneous, contradictory importance and potential impossibility of impartiality in war zones, pictures shot by Barakat during battles were still bought by Reuters and picked up by the *New York Times.* The access Barakat and others like him procured specifically through those ties are the entry point for news

organizations to cover the conflict; again, it is through those very impartial ties that agencies compete with pictures from the frontlines. I expand on this in Chapter 2.

By 2013, Syria had become a "freelancer's war" (Pendry, 2013), even as multiple news organizations said they would no longer encourage freelancers to take risks in Syria, and therefore would no longer be purchasing freelance material out of the country. In February 2013, one year after Marie Colvin and Remi Ochlik were killed reporting out of Homs, *The Times of London* and *The Sunday Times* -- Colvin's employer -- announced the sister papers would no longer buy from freelancers to discourage the risks they were facing (Rodgers, 2013; Turville, 2013). The *Guardian*, the *Observer* and the *Independent* followed suit. The BBC also has a policy against taking freelance pitches from Syria. All organizations still dispatched their own correspondents on stories if and when possible (Rodgers, 2013).

Freelancers had in parallel begun to publicly decry the conditions of their work in Syria amid a growing "double standard" (Pendry, 2013) among news organizations buying their work, publicly stating they would no longer encourage freelancers to risk going into Syria. Italian freelancer Francesca Borri (2013) made waves with her piece on the reality of reporting from Aleppo in the July/August volume of the *Columbia Journalism Review*. In "Woman's Work: The reality of an Italian freelancer in Syria," she writes:

> [W]hether you're writing from Aleppo or Gaza or Rome, the editors see no difference. You are paid the same: $70 per piece. Even in places like Syria, where prices triple because of rampant speculation. So, for example, sleeping in this rebel base, under mortar fire, on a mattress on the ground, with yellow water that gave me typhoid, costs $50 per night. A car costs $250 per day. So you end up maximizing, rather than minimizing, the risks. Not only can you not afford insurance -- it's almost $1,000 a month -- but you cannot afford a fixer or translator. You find yourself alone in the

> unknown. The editors are well aware that $70 a piece pushes you to save on everything. They know, too, that if you happen to be seriously wounded, there is a temptation to hope not to survive, because you cannot afford to be wounded. But they buy your article anyway, even if they would never buy the Nike soccer ball handmade by a Pakistani child. (Borri, 2013)

The next issue of CJR included another article on Syria which focused on editors' dealings with freelancers there. The piece traces a dynamic in which news groups were happy to buy freelance material out of Syria "so long as freelancers shoulder all the responsibility" (Pendry, 2013). Multiple freelancers detail charges of double standards under which news organizations desperate for material out of Syria used freelancers, despite public statements they would no longer buy freelance stories for fear of the safety of the reporter:

> Freelancers who had previously sold their work from other global conflicts say that, as the war in Syria has developed, their clients come up with ever higher hurdles to clear before they listen to pitches -- but they are happy to reap the rewards of dangerous reporting, so long as those freelancers shoulder all responsibility for insurance, possible medical fees, and kidnapping negotiations. (Pendry, 2013)

By 2014, that largely came to an end. Following the kidnappings of James Foley and Steven Sotloff in Syria, and as IS seized territory across the country, the "Big Three" announced they would no longer accept stores on spec from freelancers in Syria as the risk was too great. In August, AFP's global news director Michèle Léridon announced the wire would no longer accept material from freelancers in Syria (Léridon, 2014). But this did not include Syrian "freelancers." The agency would, she later clarified, continue to "take news and photos from people who live there, from Syrians" (cited in Mahoney, 2015). John Daniszewski, vice president and senior managing editor for international news at the Associated Press, also announced the A.P. would not accept spec material

from Syria. Reuters' editor-in-chief Stephen Adler said the company would not send a freelancer anywhere it would not send staff but would consider accepting material from a freelancer already there (Mahoney, 2015). In the meantime, as Chapter 2 details, news organizations had begun to cultivate networks of stringers on the ground, who had begun to supply news outlets with material -- most importantly photo and video -- out of the same areas and under conditions just as dire, if not worse. There is a distinct difference, then, between freelancers and stringers, even if locating it requires effort.

2014 thus marked a juncture not only in the Syrian crisis with the rise of IS, but also in how the conflict there has been covered: by the "people who live there", or stringers. That same year, a simmering conflict between Yemen's government and northern rebels known as the Houthis came to a head after strongman and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh abruptly severed his alliance with Yemen's incumbent President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi (once Saleh's vice-president).[15] Coverage of Syria after the 2013-2104 decision by newspapers and news agencies to stop buying freelance material out of Syria, however, did not cease. Someone remained in the field, taking photos and videos, often with company-provided equipment and even training. And in Yemen, largely but not entirely off-limits to foreign journalists amid a near-total port and airspace blockade, coverage is on the rise following the murder of journalist Jamal

[15]Saleh joined ranks with his enemies of decades, the Houthis, to drive the Hadi government out of the capital Sanaa and seize large swathes of Yemeni territory. The takeover triggered the intervention of Saudi Arabia and its allies in a regional pro-government military coalition in March 2015, setting in motion punitive military and economic measures aimed at rolling back the sway of the Houthis, who are linked to Saudi arch-rival Iran. These measures, which included a near-total blockade on Yemen's main port and freeze of travel to the country's international airport, triggered what the UN now calls the world's worst single humanitarian crisis, with millions of Yemenis at the brink of mass starvation.

Khashoggi[16] and increased attention to Saudi Arabia, with pictures of starving Yemeni babies regularly posted to newswires' photo service for clients. Yemen, the most impoverished Arab state, had never been a top news priority from the region, rarely seen in headlines focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lebanon, the Arab Spring and, later, the Syrian war. This is attributable in part to Yemen's geopolitical situation, being more distant from Europe and the United States and yet not part of the oil-rich Gulf, to the dearth of foreign correspondents who, with a few exceptions, tend to migrate towards the beat and lifestyle of cities closer to the Mediterranean and to the role of politics and policy. In the years after 2015, entry to Yemen became all but impossible, as Saudi Arabia and its allies took control of Yemen's airspace and key points on the maritime border. Some editors noted that Yemen was "too complicated" for foreign audiences to relate to. Sanaa International Airport is defunct. Entry to the country is largely blocked, with the exception of the rare, valuable story that surfaces. But coverage continues. Someone is doing the work of journalism on the ground.

While they initially said stringers were essentially freelancers, when editors are pushed for details, particularly on Syria and Yemen, multiple differences between stringers and freelancers surface. The editors interviewed all said stringers they worked with in Yemen and Syria were nationals of those two countries, although this is not strictly a rule around the world. Most stringers worked for photo and video services,

[16] Yemen as a story has received marginally more media attention in the wake of the October 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi, the Washington Post columnist and Saudi insider-turned-critic who was killed inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul. The Khashoggi murder thrust Saudi Arabia into the spotlight, and with it Riyadh's role in the Yemen war, albeit temporarily at best (Yazbeck, 2018). A quantitative study found that Syria stories outnumbered Yemen stories in the international press seven to one at the end of 2018, down from 11 to one in 2017 (Guidero & Hallward, 2019).

rather than text services. And while not stated explicitly, stringers appeared to be subject to more scrutiny or heavier editing than freelancers (who also tended to be foreigners, generally white northern-westerners). In the words of Andrew, head of the Middle East desk for a lead northern-western news organization: "Our network around the world is what puts us ahead of the competition. That's both staffers and stringers. You can't have one without the other. It doesn't work anymore." Sophia, head of the Middle East service at another major Western news organization, acknowledged the importance of stringers but said "we" had to be "very, very careful with what they give us and where they actually are". It is worth thinking through who the "we" represents, and why, and whether staffers ever in fact worked without stringers in covering war.

The rise of stringer-based reporting changed the way stringers themselves work. Editors at the agencies said demand for video was growing, with demand for text lagging. This translates to a need for more photo and video production on the ground -- in the case of Syria and Yemen, via stringers. Syrian photographers and videographers working for the three agencies in particular have received training, primarily in Turkey, and equipment.

This is not to argue that stringers are model journalists, beyond conscious or unwitting errors that undermine the credibility of the organization. It is to argue that they are journalists. Some of the biggest errors of contemporary journalism have been the work of high-ranking journalists at the organizations that stand as authorities par excellence. The *New York Times'* role in the Iraq war was not the work of a local Iraqi. Conversely, the A.P.'s 2019 Pulitzer for its astounding coverage of Yemen was the work of three local journalists, including a stringer. Waad al-Kateab, Channel 4's stringer in

northern Syria for years, is now nominated for an Academy Award for her documentary *For Sama.* In 2015, Zein al-Rifai, AFP's stringer in Aleppo, landed the Rory Peck Award for freelancers in the news category. For every story of a stringer who failed to be critical enough is a story of a stringer whose work rose to the top of the field. In parallel, for every story of a stringer who failed to be critical enough is a story of the professional press's failure to do due diligence in the run-up to the Iraq war. All this points to is that stringers are journalists. And it's unfortunate that it even needs to be said. To move beyond the identity demarcations of who or what a journalist is means to re-examine the fundamental pillars of what we mean by journalism. That is where this dissertation picks up.

The unspoken differentiation of journalists based on allotted institutional rank, the ensuing differentiation of credibility, authority and compensation granted to journalists and the often troubling narratives of much U.S., British and European journalism concerning conflict in the Middle East as well as the everyday life of communities across the region are not the "fault" of journalists whom the system privileges. They are reflective of a broader structure and system – a set of historical and situational contingencies and instrumentalizations of power – in which all journalists of all ranks, ethnicities and race often feel trapped.

Organization of dissertation

This dissertation is organized by the most central of the enduring features of the beat called conflict. It queries the fundamentals of journalism, some of which are largely agreed-upon among scholars, vis-à-vis those doing that fundamental work: stringers. It

opens with what Rodgers (2012) calls the gateway to any coverage of war: eyewitnessing. Chapter 2 examines the basic premise of eyewitnessing as grounds for journalistic authority. Looking at the reconfiguration of roles within news organizations, it traces the intra-institutional migration of authority and queries the root of journalistic credibility. It finds that not all eyes are created equal.

Moving from the field to the institution and its discourses, Chapter 3 looks at another key norm of journalism today: transparency. What objectivity was to print transparency has become to journalism in the digital era (Allen, 2008; Karlsson, 2010; Schudson, 2015; Singer, 2007). This chapter unpacks the paradoxical opaqueness of transparency, starting with its vertical self-referentiality within the news organization through the use of journalistic color and what it hides. It argues for the need for multivectoral transparency which extends beyond its current boundaries.

And from the news itself to the people making it, Chapter 4 turns to the personal experiences of those at the frontlines in their own neighborhoods. It unpacks trauma as a catch-all for experience which privileges certain definitions and causalities over others. It looks at the difficulty of claiming trauma through language, space and time. While the triad of words, time and space (or the dyad of time and space, through words) is always complicated in experiences of trauma, this chapter offers an interpretation of the unique functioning and absences of language and temporalities within the context of ongoing war and against a backdrop of historical silence.

The dissertation closes with Chapter 5, which articulates what exactly we mean when we talk about journalism. It suggests that eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma

are terms used metonymically, drawing on loose, asymmetric associations to amputate a complex whole into a concrete partiality.

As the chapters progress, so does the sensitivity of what they tackle. They build from the most technical, the field, to the most personal, dealing with pain and loss. The tone of each chapter is meant to reflect that. The discourse shifts from being centered on northern-western academic lexica in the first chapter, to the language of the press in the second, and finally to the struggle of finding language in the third.

Conclusion

Not long ago, an activist turned to Arab Twitter looking for a word. It was a miniscule little tweet, made of two words and a question mark: "'Stuckness' *bi-l-'arabi*? ['Stuckness' in Arabic?]" (Sallam, 2019). It was followed by a second tweet explaining, in English, that she was looking for a noun to capture "stuckness as a feeling." Replies to the tweet suggested the adjective *'aleq* [lit., suspended, hanging] and the noun *inhibas* [lit., the state of feeling imprisoned].[17] The conversation ended without consensus on a word for "stuckness as a feeling." No answer to the search for language across languages, for a metaphor to capture experience rooted in the body and uprooted in time and space, could be found.

The rarity of a study to which to relate on an intellectual, professional and even visceral level, or the rarity of connection between field and book, stems in part from self-referentiality made invisible by its very nature. The boundaries of interrogation, like the

[17] This refers to feeling trapped or caged in. it is not the same as imprisonment in Arabic, which has a separate word [*habs*], but uses the root word for "prison."

selective association of metaphor, are not arbitrary. As journalists reproduce the culture from which they hail (Gans, 1979; Tuchman 1978), scholarship unwittingly, intractably and inevitably reproduces the frames it seeks to amend. The boundaries of how we understand journalism are expanding to include, for example, fixers within the ranks of recognized newsmakers. Indeed, framing stringers as "new foreign correspondents" (Bunce, 2011) or "foreign foreign correspondents" (Hamilton, 2009) is motivated by the impulse to showcase or highlight the work these stringers are doing. But that framework also draws on foreign correspondents as the unmarked category against which stringers become the replacement for an original they may emulate, temporally lagging behind the original, the precedent. Questioning whether a study of the role of fixers in international news making wasn't instead "a study of a dying breed: the Western foreign correspondent" (Murrell, 2014, p. x) upholds and reproduces the natural place of the unmarked at the center, against which those doing the work of journalism become secondary replacements and against which they remain others, even as they are lauded and made visible. It highlights their foreignness to news at the expense of their journalistic identity and as a function of their non-foreignness to the country.

The internalization of that position is also troubling. Palmer (2016) offers a much-needed insight: that news fixers themselves identify as bridges. Self-perception as a bridge, coupled with the politics inherent to who can claim a global best practice, is at the same time another articulation of what Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965) would call internalized oppression, a reflection of Said's (1978) notion that the "modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing" (p. 325). Self-perception as a bridge, and the failure to think through the metaphor in context, silences anything beyond the dominant

voice, which is the voice of or internalized by all involved. To be suspended at the service of others, even as mediation comes with some agency, becomes morally depleting over time.

This is where the power of visibility becomes especially dangerous, and where this dissertation thus aims to intervene. It takes subtleties such as these as foundational. Taken jointly, discrete subtleties across different aspects of the work of reporting war and studies of those who cover war at home reflect a coherent, discriminatory system that has been exempt from the self-examination journalism is currently undergoing. To continue that exemption is to render literature incoherent with the world it studies and internally incoherent: where it interrogates what journalism takes for granted, it only does so from a certain vantage point and stops short of interrogating its own boundaries, which overlap with those of the journalism it is studying. It opens the lens to look back at the central norms of journalism from the field and reexamine the very baseline of both journalistic and scholarly pushes back against those boundaries, limited in both their depth and breadth. It paves the way for a shock of recognition, even if there is no solution, a shock which is at once validating to those who *are* there and *from* there, and indicative of a slow move towards the true dismantling of exclusionary boundaries.

Chapter 1: Eyewitnessing

Introduction: Being there while being from there

Not all eyes are created equal. The simplicity of the phrase "I was there" belies its complexity in journalism. What it means to see, what it is that is seen and who has the authority to answer those questions are subject to constant negotiation as technologies, cultures and the nature of war shift. Societal and journalistic reverence for the eyewitness war story, particularly because it is "subjective and incomplete" (Carey, 1987, p. xxix), have consistently survived journalism's many modulations. Eyewitnessing, "being there," remains the basis of journalistic claims to authority, eschewing the norms of objectivity, impartiality and even transparency upheld by the professionalized press while commanding a special sort of respect among fellow journalists. But not all eyes – not all subjectivities – are created equal.

All news organizations studied here rely heavily on stringers for daily coverage of Syria and Yemen. For stringers covering the wars at home, "being there" is both contingent on and complicated by "being *from* there." The fact that they are from there, from the cities and villages torn apart by the wars covered by the press, is the basis of news organizations' willingness and ability to hire them. Conversely, the fact that they are from there paradoxically appears to preclude their ability to "be there," to have their eyewitness reports immediately demonstrate news organizations' journalistic authority. This chapter explores that double bind, tracing journalistic authority from practice to specific practitioners.

In Syria and Yemen, home to two of the most brutal ongoing wars of our time, stringers have been central to news organizations' ability to "be there." The 2013-2014 decisions by major international newsgroups not to buy freelance material out of Syria, the danger and cost of sending their own staff there, and the circumstances of the Yemen conflict left journalism dependent on stringers for up to "95 percent" of coverage, in the words of editor Andrew. Stringers' identities -- their nationalities and global and institutional positionalities – have enabled news organizations to circumvent criticism and preemptively curb public outcry over the deaths of foreign journalists in Syria and Yemen all while continuing to cover the wars. But it is those very identities that simultaneously preclude stringers' authority as journalists and render them suspect to the institution hiring them based on that positionality. Exclusion on the grounds of belonging has a long history in the press.

Chapter Summary

This chapter re-examines eyewitnessing's venerated place as practice-as-proof in war reporting. It begins by detailing how stringers are recruited in the field or via social media before moving into an examination of how daily coverage happens. A close look at the details and inner mechanisms of coverage of Syria and Yemen reveals a complication in understandings of eyewitnessing as authority: the question of whether the authority long attributed to eyewitnessing as a journalistic practice was in parallel, or more fundamentally, linked to the practitioner. Stringers are recruited, hired and consulted in situ, through personal reference or via social media specifically because they are from there. With the visual, increasingly video, driving coverage of war, "being there" – the

traditional journalistic claim to eyewitnessing – is specifically dependent on stringers' "being *from* there." The literary aptitude once characteristic of journalism has been edged out by the rise of the image, still or moving, as the delivery vehicle of news. It does not necessarily follow, however, that language, or specifically fluency in English, is no longer key to one's career as a journalist for major international news organizations. Because they are from there, stringers cannot be eyewitnesses in the professionalized sense even as they carry cameras to the field.

By all accounts, authority, credit and credibility have historically been dependent on and the property of those in the field with the authority "gained by being on the site of an event… seen with one's own eyes" (Zelizer, 2007, p. 411). As newsrooms cut back on expenses with the rise of digitization and loss of advertising revenue, those historically in the field – foreign correspondents[18], often working in conjunction with local fixers and even stringers – who were not fired were relocated from field to desk. They transferred with them an authority carried by those legitimated by the institution as "professional," regardless of their proximity to the field. These "distant witnesses," as NPR's Andy Carvin (2013) dubs them, are physically, and professionally, far from the story yet close to the center of the institution.[19] From regional headquarters, staff have the task of, and authority to, cross-check and validate stringers' eyewitnessing. The ability to validate or dismiss an eyewitness report is where the authority lies.

[18] It is worth noting that, in the second half of the 20th century, across the Middle East correspondents who were local or dual nationals, fluent in English or French, were made staff reporters. Some of these reporters now serve as top level editors in their news organizations. Some scholars have made note of this. See, for example, Hannerz (1998) and Palmer (2016; 2019).

[19] To borrow from Robert Park (1940), these journalists have an "acquaintance with" the story, and a deeper "knowledge of" the codes and modes of norther-western professional journalism.

Drawing on extensive field observations and interviews, this chapter considers whether it is thus the distant witness, rather than the eyewitness, who can lay claim to journalistic authority -- to say what happened. It is the act of bearing witness to the stringers' eyewitnessing where the authority lies. This is also evidenced by the frequent use of paid stringer reports as sources within their own stories.

This chapter thus suggests eyewitnessing not by citizen journalists but by paid reporters serves as a source of information, contradicting journalism's basic premise, and pointing to the need to be more precise about what we mean when we talk about "being there" in the current moment. Scholars have honed in on the place of and need for mediation of eyewitness texts, increasingly audiovisual, in journalism's dealing with non-journalist reports by bystanders or protestors. Stringers, however, are paid and often trained to carry cameras on behalf of the organization employing them. They are frequently consulted on stories staff are working on for context or interpretation. And while all journalism does, and should, undergo editing, stringers' reports are subject to a unique form of mediation. That their eyewitness reports must be borne witness to by staff far removed from the field complicates existing theorizations, which focus on the role of "ordinary voice" (Ashuri & Pinchevski, 20019; Frosh, 2006; Peters, 2001) that has not been institutionalized to speak for the media.

Having distant witnesses validate the eyewitness, often by cross-checking with other sources, in turn renders the journalistic eyewitness report – the report by someone paid and often trained to carry a camera on behalf of the organization – a source. This theoretically breaches a fundamental principle of journalism, codified in writing by the *New York Times'* ethical guidelines among others: that journalists do not pay sources. If

stringers' eyewitness accounts implicitly require external verification via independent sources, then it again becomes imperative to rethink whether it was the practice of eyewitnessing or the person witnessing from which journalism drew its authority.

The repercussions of all of this, what it means and what it tells us about journalism's underbelly, cannot be taken lightly. Death, destruction and displacement in Syria and Yemen are difficult if not impossible to scale. Current literature tends to focus on the practice and product of journalism as immaterial, or digitized, and on the eyewitness as a non-journalist. Yet underlying that immateriality is a corporeal materiality indispensable to the very production of the news. The eyewitnesses for leading news organizations around the world are physically at risk by virtue of their being in and from conflict zones. But more relevant is the risk they face every time they pick up a camera on behalf of the institution, which cannot be confounded with the precariousness of life in wartime. It is a professional risk. In Syria, most of the hundreds of journalists who have been killed were Syrian (CPJ, 2018). While information out of Yemen is more difficult to verify, most of the journalists killed in the conflict there were likewise Yemenis (ibid).[20]

[20] As a story, Syria has been much more visible in the Anglophone and Francophone northern-western press than Yemen. Some editors noted that Yemen was "too complicated" for foreign audiences to relate to. The complexity of the conflict, and the relative dearth of journalistic attention to Yemen prior to the conflict, has also placed stringers in the position of consultants on newsworthiness of stories out of the country. Yemen as a story has received marginally more media attention in the wake of the October 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi, the Washington Post columnist and Saudi insider-turned-critic who was killed inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul. The Khashoggi death thrust Saudi Arabia into the spotlight, with the Post ensuring his case did not disappear, and with it Riyadh's role in the Yemen war albeit temporarily (Yazbeck, 2018). The sole quantitative study available found that Syria stories outnumbered Yemen stories in the international press seven to one at the end of 2018, down from 11 to one in 2017 (Guidero & Hallward, 2019). This is attributable in part to Yemen's geopolitical situation, being more distant from Europe and the United States and yet not part of the oil-rich Gulf. This has resulted in a relative dearth of foreign correspondents who, with a few exceptions, tend to migrate towards the beat and lifestyle of cities closer to the Mediterranean and to the role of politics and policy. In the years after

Recruiting at the *mafraj*

Stringers are often hired through either personal contacts or, less often, through their visibility and activity on social media. Khalil is a senior correspondent with a major newsgroup, based in the Middle East, who also serves as an editor for junior reporters. When the Hodeida clashes erupted in Yemen in June 2018, news organizations scrambled to find useable material, or preferable reporters, on the ground. Khalil began to notice an active account on a social media platform out of Hodeida. He traced their common friends, one of whom turned out to be a Yemeni journalist Khalil knew personally. He contacted him and asked about the profile and person behind it. After a test run in which the Hodeida-based ad-hoc stringer contributed to stories with color, the newspaper began to pay for his material.[21]

Most stringers had some level of personal connection or recommendation in coming to the organization. Rami, a Syrian stringer who has been nominated for a major award for his coverage of the war, was recommended to his employer by a foreign photographer who had spent time with him on the frontlines. He had never worked as a reporter prior to the war but showed "real promise," according to the journalist who recommended him.[22] Stringers Zahra and Khaled came with strong recommendations from Arab journalists who worked with them in the regional press. Until recently, Ziad, a

2015, entry to Yemen became all but impossible, as Saudi Arabia and its allies took control of Yemen's airspace and key points on the maritime border.

[21] I expand on the role of social media in Chapter 3.

[22] Pers. communication. Sept. 2016.

part-time correspondent for a major regional television network and stringer for an international news organization, used to run an informal stringer agency in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. "Basically, he knew everyone who was anyone and could vouch for them, and that was what we needed," Mark, his editor at regional headquarters, explained. Mark found him, and trusted him, through an editor friend of his at the TV for which Ziad reported. Through Ziad, the organization began to build contact with Yemeni stringers on the ground:

> We knew [Ziad] because of his work with [the television]. They called him the 'dean of stringers' in Sanaa [laughs]. He used to hold these qat sessions and everyone, Yemenis and foreigners, would come hang out in his *majliss*[23] the afternoon and chew qat. No one got any work done after 3:00 PM, I promise you [laughs] … Then he sort of fell out of grace with the Huthis and had to flee. He took one of the last flights out of the capital. Now he does his work from [abroad]. He still does a solid job. He trained our best stringer on Yemen, too, this kid who turned out to be even better than him, especially on Hodeida[24] and let me tell you, he is not happy about that [laughs]. [25]

While Ziad no longer lives in Yemen, many of the local journalists who attended his qat sessions -- where, Ziad said, they sometimes mingled with foreign correspondents and aid workers -- still report from the field.[26] Mainly, Ziad said, the afternoon qat sessions consisted of Yemenis who tended to stick together, in the same vein as Pedelty's (1995) description of "B Team reporters" who "work, live and play together" (p. 74).

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[23] *Majliss* (or *mafraj* in Yemen) is the common phrase for "living room" across the Gulf and Arabic-speaking parts of the Horn of Africa.

[24] While there are no empirical studies of news coverage of Hodeida (which points to the absence of scholarly attention to Yemen), the battle for the port there was a turning point in both coverage of Yemen and international intervention into the political conflict. For the importance of Hodeida in coverage of the Yemen war, see Appendix 2.

[25] Pers. communication, September 2018.

[26] Pers. communication, November 2018 - March 2019.

One of the Yemenis who was a regular at Ziad's afternoon *mafraj* was Samer, now a photo stringer in Sanaa whose work frequently appears on the news organization's webpage. He is on exclusivity, but not a retainer, with a major news organization. Samer said he first picked up a camera as a child thanks to his father, a photographer for a local newspaper. This was not mentioned by either Mark or Samer's colleague on the photo desk, who said he had helped train Samer during a trip to Yemen in 2014. When I ran the story of Samer's father by Mark, he said he was unaware but was "very happy, and not surprised" that Samer had grown up with a photojournalist for a father. The lack of awareness on Mark's part of Samer's personal history -- although a series of unstructured, lengthy interviews with Mark revealed that he knew the ins and outs of his staff reporters' lives and was happy to share the details -- is, perhaps, attributable to the language barrier between the two. Mark speaks multiple languages. Arabic is not among them. Samer only speaks Arabic -- and, as he joked, "I speak photography, too."[27] But Samer's work, like the work of other stringers, does not end at pictures. He is regularly contacted by staff for background on stories that they are working on.

Zahra is a stringer, fluent in three languages, for an international newsgroup, and a full-time correspondent for a local news organization. Alex, her editor, says he likes working with her as she is "credible" and has "fluency" in western languages. She regularly pitches news and feature stories on her own and while some of the news is "too local," editor Alex said, her feature stories are always welcome. Some have made the front page. After multiple phone conversations scattered over months, Zahra reached out to report an incident that had upset her:

[27] Pers. communication, Sept. 2018.

> I'm so sorry to bother you. You remember how you were asking me if there is anything that bothers me [in her work as a stringer]? Alex called and asked me to see if [politician] was visiting and what his meetings were. Okay. So I got the confirmation. From the ambassador! But I told them we could only source 'an official'. Then [Alex's deputy] called me to ask me the same question. So I answered him the same. He said he just wanted to be sure. Then I found out that they were still checking with other people. If you don't trust me why ask me?! Why do I work for you!? I am ashamed to even say this, but I was thinking I have an M.A. [from well-reputed university] in journalism! I'm sorry to be venting. I'm just so upset. It's like you are nothing.[28]

Zahra's story reflects a widespread, although not universal, understanding of the hierarchy of journalism and authority on the part of stringers, whose visibility in the press is unprecedented. The struggle to be recognized by the institution is not unprecedented. Appreciation for any novelty in how journalism is done, and who is doing it, has long been subject to protracted resistance and negotiation. Photojournalism presents a clear example.

Photographers, videographers drive text

The image is today taken as the ultimate eyewitness testimony, with photographers and videographers in high demand among stringers. The subjectivity of the lens only fortifies the authority of the eyewitness report, which as text or image is built on a rushed, subjective style (Carey, 1987). But the credibility of the professional war photographer and his lens have been hard-won. As the rise of social media helped force a public institutional contending with the role (and deaths) of stringers, changes in technology

[28] Personal communication, March 25, 2019.

were at the heart of photojournalism's shift from a marginal practice to the crux of war reporting.

The history of photographers as eyewitnesses to news largely revolves around war and is linked to technological changes, particularly with the advent of photo and video transmission in the 20th century. With changing technologies, eyewitnessing "could be claimed by whichever technological device was able to provide the more forceful eyewitness report" (Zelizer, 2007, p. 419). A major turning point came in World War II, until which time eyewitnessing had been the property of correspondents writing in the first person and sketch artists recreating what they saw. Newsreels were interrupted on June 6, 1944 to air radio bulletins from the frontline on D-Day and newspapers dedicated large sections to publish photographs that surfaced from concentration camps in 1945 (Zelizer, 1998).[29] That trend continues. Images serve as metonyms, from Tank Man, standing in the face of rolling tanks by Tiananmen Square the morning after the 1989 massacre, to Vietnam's Napalm Girl, the 1972 picture of children fleeing a napalm bomb in Vietnam including naked nine-year-old Phan Thị Kim Phúc, to, more recently, the picture of two-year-old Kurdish Syrian Alan Kurdi washing up dead, in a red teeshirt, on a Turkish beach and five-year-old Omran Daqneesh[30] covered in soot and blood, shocked and quiet, sitting in an ambulance alone in Aleppo.

[29] It was also at this time, as photographers rose in the ranks of the press, that the military began its process of accreditation and selectivity in designating specific reporters as stand-ins for the press (Carruthers, 2000).

[30] The video of Omran Daqneesh's rescue, just over 30 seconds long, is harder to watch. He twitches, he blinks, he tries to rub his eye -- the one covered in blood -- and then appears to feel something sticky. He looks down at his hand and, for a microsecond, is startled. He tries to rub the blood off on the orange upholstery of the ambulance seat on which rescuers placed him before leaving him there to rush back into the building to look for more survivors.

Less memorable with the passage of time is the image of five-year-old Buthaina al-Raimi, the only survivor of an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition on the Yemeni capital which killed her family. Pictures surfaced of rescuers pulling Buthaina, whose face was so swollen her eyes were forced shut, from the rubble on August 25, 2017. When journalists at the hospital began asking her questions, she used her thumb and forefinger to open one eye and peer at who was speaking to her. Yemeni photographer Karem Alzerii snapped a picture of the moment and posted it to his Facebook page, sparking a short-lived social media campaign to support Buthaina, in which people around the world posted pictures of themselves holding one eye open. Photo stringers for follow-up stories years later documented Buthaina's new life with her uncle, with news agencies publishing their stringers' photos alongside that posted by Alzerii to social media (e.g., *Young Girl's Tragic Story,* 2018).

Editors and staff reporters who deal with stringers on a daily basis offer understandings of stringers that are largely consistent but pivot on whether they are credible, how that is assessed, and how much their work is worth. Syrian photographers and videographers working for the three agencies may receive training, primarily in Turkey, and equipment. Editors at the agencies report demand for video is growing as demand for text lags. This translates to a need for more photo and video production on the ground, in the case of Syria and Yemen, via stringers. This is especially noticeable among the agencies -- Reuters, the AP and AFP – upon whom newspapers, television and online news outlets rely on for visual content (Paterson, 2005). While Syria in particular has been, as the editor Andrew said, a "visually-driven story," Yemen now appears to be

catching up on the visual front as well. Pictures of malnourished Yemeni children in particular "receive good play," according to Khalil.[31]

Stringers, primarily photographers and videographers, are frequently expected to liaise with writers to supply color for stories. The follow-up story on Buthaini al-Raimi, for example, was reported entirely by a photo stringer who located her in the Yemeni capital, and written up by a staff reporter in a regional bureau, the editor overseeing the story said.[32] And so, as the crises in Syria and Yemen escalated, many stringers who began working with photo and video editors ended up becoming close colleagues (and friends)[33] of writers, in some cases even replacing stringers who had been reporting previously. Samer, for example, is particularly close to two staff writers who are in contact with him almost daily. The photographer has all but replaced another, more "neutral" stringer who used to report for the text desk, editor Mark said. The assassination of Yemeni strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh[34] on December 4, 2017 tipped the power scale in Sanaa, with the Houthis rising unchallenged as rulers of the capital. Samer was closer to the Houthis than the text stringer, alongside whom he used to work on news and feature stories. Days of clashes between rebels and pro-Saleh fighters in Sanaa, which culminated in Saleh's death, rattled the text stringer, who later began to push

[31] Pers. communication, June 2019.
[32] Pers. communication, Oct. 2018.
[33] This is crucial in the positionality of stringers within the world of "international" journalism and plays a formative role in both how stringers are perceived by editors and management, and how they themselves perceive of their roles within the institution. I expand on this in the next section.
[34] Ali Abdullah Saleh was named president of the Yemeni Arab Republic, then North Yemen, after the assassination of his predecessor and was named the first president of unified Yemen in 1990. His ties to the Houthis were strained for decades. Backed by Saudi Arabia, Saleh fought multiple wars against the armed northern rebels. In 2012, he came under pressure from his allies in Riyadh to step down and cede power to his vice-president, Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi. Saleh ultimately stepped down, but in 2014 announced an alliance with his longtime foes the Houthis. The two jointly drove the Hadi government out of Sanaa and ruled northern Yemen together until late 2017, when Saleh announced he was ending their alliance and publicly made ouvertures to Saudi Arabia. He was killed shortly thereafter.

stories critical of the rebels and all but ceased pitching stories. “Our text correspondent has not been as reliable, probably out of fear for his family’s safety,” said Mark.

While cracking down on the press is not limited to the rebels in the Yemen war, the Houthis have come under harsh criticism for their treatment of journalists not in line with their politics. Reporters Without Borders, Amnesty International and other groups have documented the detention of Yemeni journalists accused by the rebels of collaborating with rival Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Anwar al-Rakan, a Yemeni journalist detained for around a year by the rebels, died two days after his release in 2018. Ten journalists, detained since 2015, now face trial for collaborating with the enemy, a charge which carries the death sentence, according to RSF (*Ten Yemeni journalists*, 2019). Unlike the widespread popular and political support for Assad’s ouster, the Houthis, until recently marginalized in state power, are not unsupported by Yemenis with tribal ties to the rebels. Three factors thus appear to be at play in the fear of the Yemeni anti-Houthi stringer in Sanaa: treatment of journalists by the rebels and accusations of collaborations with foreign entities (which could conceivably include foreign news agencies), the seeming minority politics of being anti-Houthi in Sanaa and the lack of attention to not only Yemen as a story, but the fate of Yemeni journalists.

But whether dependent on their work to feed their families or out of love for the job, photographers cannot phone in a story. The division between text, photo and video as separate news services staffed by journalists with separate areas of expertise has faded, with newsrooms now largely integrated across media and around the world (Anderson, 2012; Boczkowski, 2003; Boczkowski, 2006; Deuze, 2004; Usher, 2014). Photography and videography are only growing as the prime form of journalism everywhere, and

nowhere more so than in conflict zones. Audiences' tendency to gravitate towards death (Zelizer, 2010) renders war in particular a continuous site of journalistic authority claimed through eyewitnessing – a claim that has outlived the well-documented changes in newsrooms. In war, it is not only nor primarily the use of user-generated content that has upheld coverage. Across Syria and Yemen, dozens of journalists with cameras are filing every day, and being paid to do so. It is through their work, complex and messy as it is, that journalism claims authority over atrocity today.

Stringers are not citizen journalists

The academic debate around how journalism engages or should engage "eyewitness media" (Wardle, 2018) focuses on how news media engages with and can or should substantiate the subjective images of non-journalists as the, or at least an, authoritative account of an atrocity (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2008; Peters, 2001; Tait, 2011; Zelizer, 1998). As Peters, building on Ellis (2000) writes, "Cameras and microphones are often presented as substitute eyes and ears for audiences who can witness for themselves" (2001, p. 707).

But the work of stringers, including videojournalists, does not fit into this debate. Turning the lens on journalists producing video for journalists should yield a more straightforward picture. The basic work of journalism, particularly war reporting, is to report on crisis in words, images and moving images (and, more recently, graphics and other emerging formats). All of this is aimed at more fully capturing the experience as it unfolds (Zelizer, 2017). Photographers and videographers in Syria and Yemen often double as correspondents for written stories and consultants on analyses or editorials

written by staff. The work of stringers is met with varying degrees of trust and granted varying degrees of journalistic authority. Some editors said they had equal trust in their staff reporters and stringers; others said experience had taught them stringers were "too involved" in the story to be consistently accurate.[35] Stories of stringers filing major stories parallel stories of stringers misleading staff on what was happening on the ground, and both abound. How to "verify the report," particularly when there is no photo evidence, is an "important part of our work," as bureau chief Mark said. Prominent across my interviews was *that* stringer reports require verification and, less explicitly, can seemingly only be granted by those within the bounds of the institution the authority claimed unquestioningly by foreign correspondents.

There was one exception to this, a stringer with whom TV producer Jim worked in Syria and whose stories he pushed to the top of the agenda as soon as they were filed. Jim called the stringer "a better journalist than myself." But more broadly, in the case of Syria and Yemen, the journalist-as-eyewitness paradigm shifts when the journalist in question is a stringer. As Peters (2001) writes, "the journey from experience (the seen) into words (the said) is precarious" (p. 710). This is not to say that staff reporters and editors intentionally stripped stringers of authority over their stories. But the repositioning of eyewitnessing as property of the local, precarious media worker disrupts an identity. As Jude, a dual Arab national working for a major newspaper, explained:

> It's complicated [working with stringers]. Honestly I think that if they spoke English I'd be out of a job soon [laughs]. They're cheaper than me, and I'm already cheap. But [names organization] basically it's easier for them to deal with us. Because we are under the law of [country of headquarters] and, like, we are middlemen. Middlemen and middlewomen are always useful.

[35] I expand on the notion of involvement, and its links to access as capital for foreign correspondents, in the following section of this chapter. Access to some degree is paradoxical by nature: they need to like you to give you access, but if they like you, you are seen as 'close' to them.

> Or for now they are useful. (...) Basically the s*itshow of like figuring out what is really happening is on us. If you miss the story, like if you decide 'I'm not sure this guy [stringer] is 100% accurate,' the editors will make sure you never forget it. Okay but of course if you get something right, if you get a scoop, the credit is probably not going to be yours.

In delegating an institutional intermediary to validate eyewitnessing, or to "speak" the eyewitnessing, to borrow from Bourdieu (1989), Peters (2001), Butler (2004) and others, the stringer is re-repositioned as a source for those within the institution's identity borders.

The stringer-as-eyewitness, or eyes-on-the-ground, thus takes on a role that is at once central to eyewitness and yet doubly negated. When performed by those who do not represent a specific, exclusionary model of what a "professional" journalist looks like – even when they abide by the rules – eyewitnessing becomes a *source for* and not *proof of* journalistic authority. Journalists who officially represent the institution assemble the eyewitness report into a story in at least two ways: as both a report that requires external validation by foreign correspondents and editors, and, in the case of stories written at desks from videos and photos filed by stringers, as a form of preliminary witnessing which is borne witness to by a journalist whom the institution accepts as professional. Contra journalistic tradition, authority is no longer rooted in the rushed dispatch from the field, produced in this case by stringers. It is in the evaluation and writing up, or what witnessing literature calls mediation.

Bearing witness to eyewitnessing

While eyewitnessing remains what Zelizer (1993) calls a keyword of journalism, my interviews and observations suggest that keyword has been repositioned as, or even relegated to, a constitutive element of journalistic authority embodied by those not in the field. More often than not, stringers' eyewitness reports are treated as a source which may need verification via other sources – in line not with the tradition of war reporting but with the traditional web of facticity (Tuchman, 1978), in which a source must be cross-checked via other sources. Staff reporters and editors, largely absent from Syria and Yemen but constantly in contact with stringers there, have the complicated task of verifying eyewitness accounts from those stringers. "I was there" must often be ratified by what NPR's Andy Carvin[36] (2013), who covered the 2011 Egypt protests without ever being there, calls a distant witness -- "he/she was there." The final authority over the story reported by the stringer does not lie in the hands, or words or images, of the stringer. The question of whether foreign correspondents are becoming redundant (Sambrook, 2010) or represent a dying breed (Murrell, 2015), which dominates studies on "international" reporting, should not and cannot be undermined. The struggle may be not only to keep one's job, but to maintain the authority of the institution, its resources and the exclusivity of who represent it. Stringers in Syria and Yemen provide the institution with eyes-on-the-ground, and subsequently with authority over (the news frame of) events. But the interpretive authority over what those eyes-on-the-ground report they saw, to borrow from Zelizer (1993), is not theirs. It appears to be the property of distant witnesses who must bear witness to the eyewitness even as they rely on stringers, and local staff, to understand what is happening.[37]

Andrew, a top editor with an international newswire, said his agency was ahead of the competition "thanks to our reach around the world, into places where others do not have reach" and to the growth of the agency's TV service. Asked to define that reach, Andrew said it was a team effort. Asked who was providing footage for the agency's TV service, specifically from Syria and Yemen, Andrew said it was "probably 95 percent stringers" with the exception of embeds, particularly with US-backed troops fighting IS in Baghouz, the group's last stronghold in the eastern Syrian Deir Ezzor province, earlier this year. Stringers were, however, also part of the team covering the Baghouz battles, one of the biggest stories of 2019 thus far. Sophia, an editor at a competing agency, was more critical of the role and work of stringers but acknowledged they had filled a "huge reporting gap" for years:

> We were very hesitant to send staff in [from 2104 to the spring of 2019], especially as many of them are foreign, and even at this point, if they're Syrian or Lebanese or anything, if they're a journalist they're considered foreign in some parts of Syria... The stringers really did do a good job, some of them. For us, it was more difficult than photo to get verification of a story. There are really only a few stringers we can count one. I don't need the fingers of one hand to count them.[38]

Asked how many of her staff reporters she truly trusted, Sophia laughed. "Good point. Some. [Pause]. But at least them I can yell at them for fucking up without feeling, 'oh God, they're under the bombs'." At the other agency, staff still need to verify Yemeni photo stringer Samer's reports closely, says editor Mark, but his contributions have been a "major factor" in building the organization's reputation in coverage of Yemen. "Samer is great, but sometimes it's just propaganda, what he tries to sell us. You just have to be very cautious, double and triple check."

[38] Pers. communication, Sept. 2016.

The frameworks of journalism Sophia, Mark and Andrew draw on reflect the dual, and oft contradictory, pillars of journalism. For the better part of a century, journalism has hinged on two central norms: eyewitnessing and objectivity (Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Zelizer, 1993; Schudson, 2001; et al). In war, which presents perhaps the most chaotic conditions of a profession defined by constant improvisation, journalism's main claim to authority is through eyewitnessing (Carey, 1987; Zelizer, 2007). The history of war reporting among northern-western news organizations is built on the credibility claimed specifically through being there, there being a country, and context, unfamiliar to the reporter.

Sophia and Mark in particular tended to take authority and subjectivity as mutually exclusive. But the two go hand in hand in coverage of war:

> Eyewitnessing is thought to offer a kind of *proof* that is different from that provided by other types of reportorial chronicles. Drawing from the *authority* gained by being on the site of an event being reported, eyewitnessing refers to an ability to *account subjectively* for the events, actions, or practices seen with *one's own eyes*. (Zelizer, 2007, p. 411; italics mine)

Even the most "professional" of journalists foreground the subjectivity inherent to covering war. As BBC war reporter Kate Adie notes, "Any belief that the journalist can remain distant, remote or unaffected by what is happening tends to go out the window in a hurry in times of war" (Adie, 1998, p. 44). The foreign correspondent has nonetheless been granted more authority over the story than their local equivalents. Journalists who covered and scholars who study Vietnam, for example, have traced differentiation between the credit given to and treatment of Vietnamese versus foreign correspondents (e.g., Seo, 2016). The same applies to studies of coverage of the Iraq war (e.g., Allan & Zelizer, 2004).

The work of covering war necessitates someone seeing. Photo and video stringers in particular serve as the eyes of the institution. For a photographer, then, staying home is not an option. "You can't be afraid, even if you're afraid," Samer, who continues to string for the agency, explained. He is often the first to tip staff off to news in Sanaa, such as talk of an impending trip of the UN envoy, plans for a major rebel protest or, Samer's favorite, a city-wide art festival in which Yemenis paint the walls of the capital. His editors credit him with having helped them get ahead of the competition on multiple occasions, as he is often the first to arrive to the scene of an atrocity. "Finding out what's happening is actually easy, because I know everyone here," Samer said. "It's harder after, when you go home and realize what's just happened." One of the incidents that stands out most in his memory is the bombing of a funeral on October 8, 2016. A close relative called him and said "something was happening." Samer recalls:

> He said he didn't know what was happening, but something was happening, and I could hear screaming and crying. He said it sounded like a bombing and there had been a funeral nearby, and that the funeral might have been hit. I live nearby, so I was there in less than half an hour. By then the second bombing had already happened. I try to wait a bit before I get to the scene. We have all gotten used to waiting -- waiting for the second strike, the one that gets the medics and civilians who turn up to help. The funeral hall had been bombed. Civilians, bits of bodies, everywhere. It is still one of the ugliest crimes I have ever seen. My phone kept ringing, too, and it was the writers calling to ask me to give them the story.
>
> (...)
>
> To describe what it's like? Imagine. Imagine a butchery. But instead of animals, there are humans. No matter how you turn your head, bodies are burning, limbs are amputated. And then you turn this way, and you recognize your friend. You turn that way, and it's a dear colleague who arrived before you did. And you shoot and shoot and wonder if they will hit again, and you will die too. (...) I'm not traumatized so much as I think I am hit by depression. My heart is bleeding for this country and the people of this beautiful country. I wish you could have known how beautiful it was.[39]

[39] Pers. communication, Sept. 2018

It was Samer, Mark says, who tipped the agency off to the bombing on the al-Sala al-Kubra community hall, where hundreds had gathered that day for the funeral ceremony of Ali al-Rawishan, father of Jalal al-Rawishan, then interior minister in the rebels' self-proclaimed government in Sanaa. The UN, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other organizations have confirmed upwards of 100 people killed in the air strikes that day (*Yemen: Saudi-led funeral attack,* 2016). Doctors Without Borders said six of its clinics had treated over 400 wounded in a statement via Twitter. On October 15, 2016, Saudi Arabia's SPA news agency published an official press release stating that a "party affiliated to the Yemeni president of the general chief of staff wrongly passed information that there was a gathering of armed Houthi leaders in a known location in Sanaa" (*Press Statement,* 2016). The statement confirmed that an aircraft belonging to the Saudi-led coalition had "carried out" the raid "without obtaining approval from the coalition command," placing the blame on their ally president Hadi, who now lives in exile widely described as self-imposed in Riyadh. Human Rights Watch has called for an investigation into the attack, as well as a string of subsequent attacks on what it says are civilian targets including buses and hospitals, as a potential war crime. The Houthis also stand accused of acts that could amount to war crimes. The United Nations has blacklisted the Saudi-led coalition over the killing and maiming of children in Yemen.

The day of the funeral bombing marked a pivotal moment in Samer's professional life. It was then that he began to realize what his work had become:

> Before the war, I used to mainly cover cultural things. Horses, arts, families during *eid*[40] [Pause] If you asked me a few years back, 'would you like to be a war photographer,' I would have said no. [Laughs. Brief pause] Still I'd say no today I think, if you gave me the choice. I don't know. I never

[40] *Eid al-Fitr* is a three-day holiday marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

> thought about that. What for? Actually, you know something that's changed? No one was interested in 'art day' before. Now, [the organization] loves it and they ask for a story with pictures every year."[41]

The day of the funeral bombing likewise presents a crystallized vignette of how journalism claims authority over atrocity today. The collapse of newsroom divisions by medium has generated more work for photographers like Samer, who function as a two-in-one (or even three-in-one: photo-video-text) on the ground. Writers frequently create stories based on images, especially video, filed by stringers from Yemen. Samer, like most stringers interviewed, records interviews with people in his pictures on his iPhone and sends them to a WhatsApp group that includes all staff reporters with the news organization (but not the head editor). "It's great to work with the writers as well. Most of them are Tunisian, Egyptian, from the region,[42] so it's easy," he explains. (Samer does not speak English). "At first I just used to tell them 'here's what people are saying,' but they need quotes. So now when I know in advance there's news, like if [UN Yemen envoy Martin] Griffiths is coming or anyone from the international organizations, I send them a WhatsApp asking them what questions they need me to ask. Even if I know what the news [story] is, it's better to coordinate." To this date, Samer is in Sanaa taking pictures, sending soundbites and helping staffers understand what is happening, and why.

Rami adds a third skill to that combination: video. He started work as a stringer for an international news organization's photo service shortly after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis.[43] When the organization needed to find a new videographer after the

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[41] Pers. communication, Sept. 2018

[42] In the organizational hierarchy, these are equivalent to the "local hires" that Hannerz (1998) first noticed in Jerusalem. This is explored in detail in the next section.

[43] Stories on how the organization came to know of Rami vary depending on who is asked. One editor in the writing service said he found Rami via Facebook. A photoeditor said he found Rami through a network of stringers he was building in the region. Rami credits the photo-editor for "hiring and teaching" him.

stringer who had been filming for them was killed, they asked Rami if he could film. He pitched a story he thought he could handle filming. He got the green light and was sent a filming and editing manual. His editor was struck by the young man's skill. "We didn't even need to edit him. He followed the guidelines to the T. So we asked if he had another story, a human interest story. He sent us a story within a week and we were almost in tears on the desk. The images were so moving."[44] But it was the staff writers Rami wound up becoming closest to.

Like Samer, at first Rami would inform the team of anything he heard through his contacts. The team noticed he was exceptionally precise. "He'd say, 'look, I'm not sure, call your contacts, but I heard this or that might be happening," said Nidal, an editor who was particularly close to Rami.[45] "Then we started asking him for details for stories. Then we started asking him to pitch stories. He was our star player on the ground." Like most stringers, Rami was part of a WhatsApp group that included all staff correspondents, who eventually used it to check in on him every morning and evening. "Whoever was opening that morning or on call that evening would wake up and, I mean, the first thing you think of is [Rami]," Nidal said. "We would stay up with him all night, because who can bear to sleep when he's out there under the bombs with literally nothing to eat?!" As the days of conflict turned to weeks, then months, then years, Rami proved his worth, landing a number of international awards for his work -- some of which he was unable to claim in

[44] Pers. communication, Nov. 2018.
[45] Pers. communication, June, 2018.

person as he was trapped in the war. He became, Nidal said, "not 'like' family. Family."[46] (One problem with family is that the lines between love and free labor are blurred.)

But not all eyes are created equal. The proximity of photographers and videographers like Rami, Samer and others to the story should present a textbook example of field reporting in wartime. From Xenophon to Peter Arnett (Zelizer, 2007), claims to authority through eyewitnessing have for centuries been the property of journalists whose "accounts have the feel of truth, because they are quick, subjective, incomplete" and captured a form of "heightened realism" (Carey, 1987, p. xxxvii). Places and times of crisis thus *must* allow for a sort of journalism ordinarily seen as antithetical to objectivity (e.g., Allan & Zelizer, 2004) where "unshackled from the demands of conventional reporters, these writers find a different more powerful voice hiding within them, an authority that can only come from *being there*" (Clark, 2004; italics mine). The shackles of conventional reporting, however, continue to weigh heavily on stringers whose "being there" is capitalized on by news organizations specifically because they are "from there" and who, in a classic double bind, cannot bear witness through "being there" specifically because they are "from there."

Being "from there" disrupts traditional paradigms of witnessing as journalistic authority. The traditional triad of journalism-to-audience witnessing, outlined by Peters (2001) and developed by Ashuri & Pinchevski (2009) and others, is thus complicated by the emergence of a new form of mediation between the act of eyewitnessing and the

[46] Rami eventually made it out of his hometown and out of Syria. The horrors of his personal story match the horrors of the stories he covered: he has survived being shot by a sniper and more than one abduction, by different parties in power. While he was in detention, his family was killed in one blow, a strike on the family home. He lost his camera in a fire that did not appear to be related to the war, and mourned the loss on social media. After his evacuation from Syria, he struggled to adapt to the country he was resettled in. He has since moved back to the Middle East and it not working as a photojournalist.

report. Furthermore, considerations of eyewitnessing post-digitization have pivoted on the role of *non*-journalists as eyewitnesses and the nascent role of journalists as monitors, curators or aggregators (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; Chouliaraki, 2012; Deuze, 2005; Schudson, 2001; Usher, 2014). Authority is granted by the audience to the institution publishing the story (Frosh, 2006). Who the institution grants or denies authority internally, and the underlying reasoning, must also be unpacked.

For stringers who have adapted to multimedia production out of war zones, demand is high. They are lauded by their editors as indispensable to the coverage of news and, indirectly, to their ability to compete for audiences, in the case of newspapers and television, and clients, in the case of the agencies. Stringers are of particular importance to the wires, on which newspapers and television around the world are dependent for information and footage on so-called international stories (Paterson, 2005; Pantti, 2013).[47] Editors at the news agencies in particular said the ability of the wires to compete for clients was directly, although not solely, dependent on their networks around the world, particularly for visual and audiovisual production. Yet they also voiced pervasive skepticism of the ability of "amateurs," as editor Sophia phrased it, to do the work of journalism. Or, in the words of Mark, "they are too involved."

With Rami, an award-winning stringer who single-handedly covered a Syrian city for a period of time, politics became a post-hoc issue. Rami had been working for three services, photo, video and text, but had only met and trained with the editor of one of those services in person. That editor, Vincent, said he had warned the other services as

[47] The *New York Times* has invested heavily in its stringer network within the United States: "because stringer work is so dependent on availability and proximity to a newsworthy event, most editors have an extensive network of them" on the domestic desk (Delkic, 2017).

the war progressed that he sensed Rami was close to an Islamist group.[48] "I told them, 'be careful, he's close to [the group]," Vincent recounts.[49]

It is worth noting that eyewitnessing has "helped establish journalism's claim to authority in questionable circumstances" (Zelizer, 2007, p. 409). War presents questionable circumstances in their purest form. Conflict consists of events "that cannot easily be confirmed, challenged or tested but are made more credible by virtue of a correspondent's on-site presence … marking journalism's credibility and authenticity, particularly when audiences have no first-hand knowledge of what is being reported" (Zelizer, 2007, p. 411).

It is also worth noting that Rami's personal politics, which appeared to either have shifted or been revealed during the course of the war, have sparked some tension with his editors. Vincent, who had initially recruited Rami as a stringer, said he had warned editors he suspected the photographer had Islamist leanings based on his social media postings and "an overall sense": "I warned them. He might have changed since, but back when they were dependent on him I was pretty sure. The kid can take pictures, no doubt. But his story isn't what they make it, like a saint."[50] Samer likewise came under close scrutiny for his ties to the group controlling the Yemeni capital. Ziad, the TV correspondent and once-stringer broker in Sanaa, was upfront about his politics and how it linked to his work from the get-go. "I told them, if you want anything from [a specific

[48]The ties between stringers and local groups – the complicated ties necessary for the access necessary for the eyewitnessing that underpins war reporting – are explored later in this chapter.
[49] Pers. communication March 2019.
[50] Pers. communication March 2019.

Yemeni political party], I have it and if I don't have it, I can get it. If you want anything from the others, I'll try but I'm not sure I can help you," Ziad explained.[51]

Ziad had trained a young man named Khaled who was a close, younger relative of his. Khaled worked as a contributor to a regional television channel until he had to flee his hometown. He resettled in another Arab country and was hired as a full-time correspondent by the channel, a competitor of that for which Ziad works. Khaled is also a stringer for a major international news organization. He did not conceal from the TV for which he reported that he had been approached by the international organization and, under an agreement with his full-time employer, he is a stringer whom staff rely on the Yemen war worsens and gains some visibility in the news. Khaled, Ziad and other Yemenis in particular have more leeway in working for multiple organizations which appear to be giving the conflict more attention. The value of "a good Yemeni stringer" is high, as editor Alex said. And yet this value, of being local, is undermined by the identities of Yemenis, and Syrians, as local.

'Distant witness' as mediator

The institutional policies, formal or tacit, towards what Andrew called the "95 percent" in Yemen and previously in Syria raise questions around traditional understandings of witnessing and journalistic authority – questions over who has the authority to witness as journalistic practice and profession. Broadly understood, witnessing involves "all three points of a basic communication triangle: (1) the agent who bears witness, (2) the

[51] Pers. communication, Oct. 2018.

utterance or text itself, (3) the audience who witnesses" (Peters, 2001, p. 709). But a fourth step, which shifts the entire paradigm, emerges in looking at stringer-based coverage of war, one that complicates all three pillars Peters (2001) identifies. Looking at journalists' use of user-generated content, Ashuri and Pinchevski introduce the role of what they call mediators, those "who determine who qualifies as a witness" (2009, p. 139). Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti (2013) have likewise looked at the changing role of eyewitnessing by what Peters (2001) calls "ordinary people" as a source for professional journalists to handle in newsmaking. Ashuri and Pinchevski suggest mediators are necessary precisely because the eyewitnesses are non-journalists whose testimonies or images are being used by the press. "On-site reporters," on the other hand, "might be considered a subcategory of the eyewitness, as actors in an institutionalized practice of witnessing … in other words, professional eyewitnesses" (ibid).

Peters (2001) likewise makes a critical distinction between witnesses in news media. Both correspondents and news anchors in studios -- in cities from the site of the story -- "can be institutionalized as witnesses" (2001, p. 707). Again, a distinction arises: "Ordinary people can be witnesses *in* media (the vox pop interview, 'tell us what happened')" (ibid; italics in original). The role of mediators, in this paradigm, is to vet -- qualify or disqualify -- ordinary people, i.e., non-journalists, as credible eyewitnesses. Non-journalists can be witnesses *in* media, but not *of* media. Looking at differentiations in coverage of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2011 Egyptian uprising, Chouliaraki (2012) likewise offers the notion of the "re-mediation of *ordinary* voice" (p. 272, italics mine) via major news organizations, a reference again to participants in events or bystanders, and not paid correspondents.

But stringers are not "ordinary people," in that they are not non-journalists. The question of who qualifies as a journalist, and who determines the answer, is consistently at play in their work, and pronouncedly at play between their filing footage and that footage being sent out for audiences. Part of this is formal, both in terms of official titles and familiarity with the standardized form of news: editors have knowledge of and time to apply the formatting of a story or the individual newsgroup's format. Another part of the ongoing negotiation of who qualifies as a journalist, and according to whom, is much more subtle, and much more powerful. Editors praised numerous stringers, including but not limited to Rami and Taym, both photographers/videographers who escaped death in Syria, and Yemeni stringers Zahra, Samer and Khaled -- who was recently covering a battle when his location came under fire and was not heard from for days. The problems of award culture notwithstanding, more than half of the stringers named here have been nominated for western national or international press awards. That their work needs to be "verified" and "frequently re-written," as editor Alex said, is not the issue unto itself. All journalism undergoes editing, in various forms; stringer-based reporting is another form of the reporting-writing-editing triad that has long formed journalism. That the editing that goes into their work *is* an issue, and why it is an issue, indicates treatment that is differential not only due to their inexperience (most stringers were under the age of 30, some just over 20, when they began reporting) but also to their very identities. *Who* has the agency to witness, whereby the witness who is "from there" cannot draw their authority as a reporter with "evidentiary proof based on bodily presence" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013, p. 963) that is followed by the utterance -- the story.

Who has authority has long been a struggle neither limited to nor defined by the industry at hand. Ashuri & Pinchevski draw on the Bourdieusian notion of a field to argue that underwriting witnessing is an ongoing struggle between different actors that is "inherently political" in the fight for agency (2009, p. 133). Witnesses can (or, in journalism's case, must) be *institutionalized* to carry authority. This is a pre-condition for the *journalistic* -- and not citizen-journalist -- privilege drawn from proximity to "facts." Their witnessing, as members of the media, involves the ability to both see and state. And linked to the ability to speak for what was witnessed, that ordinary people, or non-journalists, who did see can be sources for the media which speaks on their behalf. If stringers can see, they cannot yet speak in or through the institution without a mediator. But where, in Ashuri and Pinchevski's study, mediators are necessary because the eyewitnesses are non-journalists, they may be necessary to maintain a certain form of exclusionary journalistic authority long built on invisible labor and now dependent on maintaining exclusivity while attempting or appearing to redress its injustices. Those who can claim institutional authority can, to borrow from Ashuri & Pinchevski, "determine who qualifies as a witness" (2009, p. 139).

Social media

On a concrete, legal level, the use of eyewitness media by news organizations supports stringers' positionality as not "ordinary people" with cameras. News organizations hold the copyright to the material stringers file. Eyewitness media posted to Twitter remain under copyright of the creator: as per the social media platform's Terms of Services, third parties do not have the right to use content off platform without the permission of the creator. Amid lines of legal text outlining parameters of user rights, Twitter explains:

"What's yours is yours – you own your Content (and your incorporated audio, photo and videos are considered part of the Content)" (*Terms of Service,* 2019). News organizations must obtain written permission to air or publish images anywhere other than a repost on the same platform. In the case of the agencies, written permission is required to distribute images or audiovisual material to clients. This is bypassed in stringer-based reporting.

Previous conflicts and wars gave rise to reporters who became top regional editors, from Jerusalem to Baghdad to Beirut, especially among the wires, which place a high value on reach into the region to set them apart from their clients in TV and newspapers. Lebanese Samia Nakhoul, who joined Reuters in 1987 as a reporter covering the war in her native country, is now Reuters' head Middle East news editor. Nakhoul was wounded reporting from the Palestine Hotel in Iraq in 2003 by a US shell tank in the same attack that killed Reuters videographer Taras Protysuk and Spanish videographer Jose Couso. Maher Chmaytelli, who also launched his career covering the Lebanese civil war, heads the agency's new breaking news service in the Middle East. The AP bureau chief for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq is Zeina Karam, another Lebanese woman with decades of experience in the Middle East.[52] For the first time in its history, Agence France-Presse in May appointed a photo journalist to head its Middle East coverage. Sylvain Estibal, Mexico bureau chief and former regional photo director for AFP in Latin America, was selected for his experience in "quality multimedia journalism and also in security issues, having handled situations in Mexico where journalists are constantly threatened" (*AFP appoints photo,* 2019). AFP global news director Phil Chetwynd said the appointment

[52] I focus on Lebanon as Syria has been covered through teams and bureaus in Lebanon by agencies, TV and lead newspapers. The Lebanese civil war and the media attention to the conflict also sparked an increase in Lebanese reporters working for international news organizations.

was motivated by "the exemplary *transversal nature of journalism* at the Agency, where the culture of *developing image production* enables us to mobilise talent from all our editorial departments to serve our news mission" (ibid; italics mine).

The "transversal" nature of journalism, as Chetwynd phrases it, is linked to the way in which audiences consume news, what Bell et al call "the move from desktop computers to the small screen of the smartphone" (2017, p. 11). The resistance to images as central to news that marked the 1930s (Zelizer, 1995) and the division of journalistic labor that reporters held firmly to as digitization took hold (Usher, 2014) has been reversed and replaced by a push to integrate longstanding divisions of labor in journalism. Mary Angela Bock found that the news industry's post-digitization financial crisis was "likely to continue to foster a reliance on video journalists who can multitask" (p. 715). Editors today echo the same. Agency video editor Gabriel noted the now routine writing of feature stories out of Yemen based on videos filed by stringers. Rami, the Syrian photographer-turned-videographer, covered the conflict for his agency's photo and video service and played the role of full field correspondent for writers using his audiovisual material to produce alerts and stories.

WhatsApp

Key to the work of stringers in all media is access, and key to the work of deskers or staff reporters is access to stringers – mainly through WhatsApp. Not just any messaging app, but WhatsApp specifically. The app is massively popular across the Middle East. Its compatibility with both iPhone and android, and the fact that it is not banned, makes it especially ideal for teams covering Yemen, many of whom are based in either Beirut or

Dubai. Signal, which is almost unheard of in the Middle East, is banned in the UAE, as are VoIPs including Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp video and audio calls. Messaging via WhatsApp is not banned. Some editors pointed to WhatsApp's user-to-user encryption as a "safe" measure for their correspondents not only in Yemen and Syria, but also in places like Bahrain. "Bahrain is not active conflict like Yemen, or Syria for example, but with the censorship and the pressure there you have to think of it almost like it is the same," said bureau chief Mark. Mark said his reporters corresponded with their stringer there exclusively via WhatsApp. Not one email or phone call had been made to the stringer in at least two years. "Our former stringer – he is a photographer, very, very talented – was in prison for some time so now we are very careful. In fact we do not have a photographer there anymore," he explained. Lara, a former bureau chief who oversaw coverage of Yemen and Bahrain at a competing organization, had a different perspective:

> Yes, we hear a lot of talk about this encryption. I mean… [pauses]. I don't know. I mean, what is encryption? When they have you, they have your phone. It's not like they are waiting to see proof that you have done something 'wrong' or 'illegal' [uses air quotes]. They will take you, and your phone. And your family.[53]

The mobile phone is a complex entity. It is critical to the non-journalistic documentation of events, crimes and atrocities that would have otherwise been buried from public view. It is also critical to journalist's work, both in the ability to record and relay messages from the field to the "mediator team" in the bureau. Technology has also made journalists targets. A Washington, DC court found the Syrian regime guilty of deliberately tracking the broadcasts, likely through satellite signals, of journalists covering Homs and then targeting the media centre, killing Colvin and photographer

[53] Personal interview, March 12, 2019.

Remi Ochlik (Off, 2018). With the technological advancement that made real-time war reporting possible, then, came a new set of risks. But if those risks can technically be mitigated, through for example jammers or encryption, what cannot be mitigated is the risk of being arrested, with your phone. Jammers can also be counter-mitigated by ISMI catchers.

Cutting across all the technological risks is the traditional, time-tested risk of arrest, which circles back to the opening of this chapter: that physical access to the war zone is the "starting point" of coverage (Rodgers, 2012, p. 28).[54] The ability to claim authority through eyewitnessing hinges directly on those in the field. And yet, in the case of stringer-based reporting, those in the field but not traditionally included in institutional boundaries do not carry the same credibility for the same work precisely because of what underlies their access in the field. In order to maintain institutional authority against the disruption presented by stringers, authority is granted to the middlemen and women at regional desks, who must either validate the eyewitness story or vouch for the eyewitness' credibility. And the ultimate ramification of having distant witnesses validate the eyewitness is the cardinal sin of journalism. Treating the *journalistic* eyewitness report – the report by someone paid and often trained to carry a camera on behalf of the organization – as a source of information that must be externally validated or verified renders the eyewitness a source commissioned, i.e., paid, to do the work.

[54] This applies to the institution and is the concern of the institution. Differentiation of who is witnessing is the creation of the institution itself. Audiences do not appear to differentiate. Looking at the factors that underpin how testimony functions, Frosh (2006) highlights that the "witnessing status" is granted de facto by audiences to, for example, the BBC as a news organization (over a feature film or individual documentary).

Vietnam precedent

The centrality of stringing to journalism itself not just as a catalyst for foreign correspondents, and practices of subtle discrimination formalized as procedure or best practices, predate Syria and Yemen. Vincent, the retired photojournalist who trains stringers, noted:

> We are really messed up and these boys -- and girls -- are going to have a long life of struggling to try to be normal again. Even among photographers or the photographers' community, their experience will always be different. They will feel like they are still like alone. But look, every war creates the new generation of photographers. Look at Beirut, the Intifada, look at Iraq and now the next generation of [names famous Middle Eastern photojournalists] will be Syrians.[55]

The new generation to which Vincent referred echoes what is known in the press as "Horst's army" in Vietnam. Drawing on interviews with AP journalists and editors, Seo (2016) notes the "discrimination and ethnocentrism" towards Vietnamese stringers in the 1970s. In the words of the late German photojournalist Horst Faas, himself a two-time Pulitzer winner: "They were not taken seriously because they had funny names … there was a reluctance here … in the American desk to credit the Vietnamese with what was due to them" (interview with AP; cited in Seo, 2016).[56] Faas, who died in 2012, oversaw

[55] Pers. communication, March 2019.

[56] In his chapter on coverage of the Vietnam war, Phillip Knightley ([1975] 2004) depicts the world of professional foreign correspondents for the US press from a vantage point within that community. The correspondents, he writes "were not questioning the American intervention itself, but only its effectiveness" (p. 417). This reflects a clear "investedness" in the story by foreign correspondents. Additionally, with the exception of less than a handful of correspondents for the agencies and *New York Times*, correspondents were largely silent on civilian deaths. It was only after the My Lai massacre shocked the world that "suddenly, nearly every war correspondent who had been in Vietnam had an atrocity story to tell" (Knightley, [1975]2004, p. 431). This indicates that the history of "professional" war reporting is fraught with complications, politics and identity issues. Those complications are neither new nor unique to stringers.

the operations in Vietnam for the AP for a decade. Among his work is the photo of a US soldier wearing a helmet he had customized with the hand-scribbled words "WAR IS HELL." In an op-ed dedicated to Faas, the *New York Times*' blurb reads: "Horst Faas was the longest-serving foreign photographer in Saigon. In some ways, he never left." Involvement in a story is not limited to locals. Given the nature of the war and the work of covering war, it is also probably inevitable.

In 1972, Nick Ut, one of Faas' proteges, snapped the picture which became known as "Napalm Girl". The AP writes:

> The image was unprecedented at the time for the Associated Press news wire, due to full frontal nudity depicted of the bombing victims. Although somewhat controversial, Ut's fellow Associated Press colleagues, Hal Buell and Horst Faas (sic) deemed the photograph news-worthy and its value overrode the nudity in the image and it was widely distributed on the AP newswire. The photograph is thought to be one of the most memorable photographs of the 20th century.

Ut was one of the young Vietnamese, trained by Faas, who came to be known as "Horst's army." The younger brother of Huynh Thanh My, one of Faas' top proteges. Ut was hired after My was shot and killed in 1965 -- first wounded while photographing the battlefield, then shot again fatally while awaiting medical care for the first injury. My was 27 when he was killed. Ut was 15 when he replaced his brother. War is complicated, as they say. There is always the argument of needing to make money to ward off starvation. But no matter the complication, there are certain identity markers, or lack thereof, which enable the hiring of a minor, even in a darkroom, during war.

The story of how Ut became a war photographer, as the AP recounts it, is telling:

> The 11th of 12 children, he grew up idolizing one of his older brothers, Huynh Thanh My, an actor whose good looks seemed to have him destined for movie stardom until the Vietnam War got in the way. Huynh was hired

> by the AP and was on assignment in 1965 when he and a group of soldiers he was with were overrun by Viet Cong rebels who killed everyone.
>
> At his brother's funeral, Ut approached the late Horst Faas, photo editor for AP's Saigon bureau, to ask for a job. But Faas, a two-time Pulitzer winner, turned him down cold. He didn't want the Huynh family losing another son.
>
> After weeks of Ut's pestering, Faas finally relented, hiring him on Jan. 1, 1966, but giving the 15-year-old strict orders: Under no circumstances was he to carry his camera into a war zone.
>
> So Ut spent the next couple of years working in the darkroom and shooting feature photos around Saigon until one January morning in 1968 when the war came to him.
>
> "I remember Nick coming in later that morning very excited and saying, 'The Viet Cong are fighting near my house. I have pictures of Vietnamese troops attacking them, great pictures," [veteran journalist Peter] Arnett, who worked for the AP then, recalled in a recent interview.
>
> From that day forward, 17-year-old Huynh Cong Ut was a combat photographer. (Rogers, 2017)

At the age of 21, Ut landed the Pulitzer for "Napalm Girl."[57] The AP does not explicitly say anywhere in its public documentation that Vietnamese Ut was a stringer at the time. Post-hoc glorification risks obfuscating the conditions which had marginalized those not "institutionalized as witnesses" (Peters, 2001), as in Faas' description of the AP's treatment of local photographers. The concept of Horst having an "army" of local photographers whom he trained resonates in the Middle East.

[57] Ut, who still goes by his journalism name Nick after retirement, says his closest friend in the Saigon bureau was French-Vietnamese photographer Henri Huet. Ut said Huet proposed the name Nick to help foreign staff (cited in Rogers, 2017). Huet won the Robert Capa award in 1967 for a photo of a US military medic who, with a bandaged head and only one eye uncovered, was treated a wounded soldier in the field, entitled "An Thi, January 1966." Huet had volunteered to take his place on assignment. The helicopter carrying Huet and three other journalists, including Larry Burrows of LIFE magazine, the UPI's Kent Potter and freelancer Keizaburo Shimamoto for Newsweek, was shot down over Laos. "That's why I keep the name Nick Ut. In Henri's honor," Ut told the AP "in a voice momentarily thick with emotion" (cited in Rogers, 2017).

Eyewitnessing or/as source?

In their very position as eyewitnesses for journalistic institutions, often with cameras, stringers still do not necessarily function as journalistic eyewitnesses. Through their production of images and footage, they can function as what Mark Fishman (1980) identified as a source of "soft data." This positions stringers as a third party that can be, or is to be, cited as a source outside the institution of journalism within the very report the stringer may have reported (i.e., written up as news under a staff reporter's byline). The centrality of stringers' eyewitness accounts, especially through images and footage, is thus both reinforced by and juxtaposed with their functioning as third-party sources to those within the institution's boundaries. While journalists strive to uphold what Fishman (1980) calls "fact-by-triangulation,"[58] known in newsrooms as the (negotiable) three source rule, news out of Syria and Yemen often runs with less than three sources, relying instead on stringers' eyewitness accounts from the ground, their contacts with officials or parties in power and staff reporters' own contacts and ability to piece together and contextualize multiple pieces of evidence pointing towards a story.

Fishman (1980) tapped into the "quite limited" practice of journalists-as-sources in newsrooms of the 1970s. As opposed to bureaucratic accounts which function as "hard data" in news, "nonbureaucratic accounts are soft data, unconfirmed reports or

[58] Fact-by-triangulation has three component parts: (1) different perspectives may be attributable to different positions, whereby positions can refer to physical or temporal locations; (2) different perspectives may reflect different competence or knowledge of the event, whereby competence can refer to innate abilities (e.g., vision and hearing), experiential competence (e.g., novice or insider knowledge of context and background) or social structure competence (e.g., access to information); and (3) different perspectives of insiders or observers of an event may reflect their own interests. Knowledge of this schema, flawed as it may be, both points the journalist towards the next source in crafting an objective story and allows him to feel he is accounting for the limitations dictated by time and other organizational considerations.

speculation" (p. 87-88). Dependent on the individual organization's editorial policy, nonbureaucratic sources may include other journalists whose information functions as "inferences, hunches and theories of what's going on" (Fishman, 1980, p. 89). But where the use of other US journalists as soft sources is "generally quite limited in the American news media" (ibid), the use of stringers as sources of "soft data, unconfirmed reports or speculation" is quite common. All of this occurs rapidly, with an eye not just to the immediacy of newsmaking today (Usher, 2014) but with the need to beat the competition.[59]

On any given day, stringers in Syria and Yemen are out on the frontlines, filming human interest stories out of war zones or helping secure contact or background information. While not all stringers can produce visual or audiovisual material, those who can are increasingly consulted for written stories as well. Rami, the Syrian stringer initially hired to replace a photographer, eventually became the news organization's main photo, video and text correspondent on the ground. Samer, the Yemeni stringer whose father was a photographer in Sanaa, now helps staff writers with color from the ground and soundbites, sent via WhatsApp. But it is their images and footage that staff rely on to put together a story and even send out breaking news. Nidal recounted the story of a military siege on a major city:

> It was awful. I was so stressed that night I was sick. Oh my god. You're too worried about him [stringer], you need to make sure if he's going to be okay, but you also need to think if what he's saying or seeing is actually happening. Sometimes you can't believe it's happening. He was sending us video on WhatsApp, which he filmed on his phone. It lands faster than what he has to send to the video department, which has to be higher quality. My god, all these tanks are rolling in and people are running and you could barely make out what was happening. We had to believe him. I chose to believe him, because he had never faked a story.

[59] Some staff reported editors being disgruntled that "Twitter" itself beat them to a story.

(...)

> We wrote the alert and the first version of the story from the videos he sent us on WhatsApp and the voice messages. Now we are used to this. We know better how to check, who to ask, et cetera. But at the time it felt like we were navigating blind. (...) How we sourced it? We sourced it to a photographer on the ground. (…) Yes, we didn't mention his name, for his own safety, of course.

The idea of "navigating blind" is key. It points yet again to the subtle positioning of stringers as extra-institutional, supportive and secondary to those aggregating or validating at desks.[60] Zahra's complaint of mistrust by editor Alex is one of many stories recounted by stringers.

The issue of trust becomes more pronounced in the coverage of active conflict. Eyewitnessing generally, and in war reporting especially, hinges on what Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009) call "terms of trust," the "basic currency" for those who were there (p. 133). With stringers who are photojournalists and video journalists, the balance of power over the story becomes even more complex. Andrew, Jim, Alex, Mark, Vincent, Khalil and Nidal, all editors and bureau chiefs overseeing coverage of Yemen and/or Syria, all reported -- unprompted -- that the visual frequently drove the written story out of the wars. Gabriel, the regional head of video for an agency, said that with the rare exception of rare embeds with the Saudi military, all feature stories the wire had run out of Yemen over the past year had been written from video filed by stringers across the country without exception. "Sometimes, even more than sometimes, we have to hold the video

[60] If studies of new configurations of journalism largely focus on the relationship between journalists and non-journalists on the ground in newsmaking (e.g, Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; Chouliaraki, 2012; Ryfe, 2012; Usher, 2014), the few studies which focus on local media workers conceptualize stringers as a "bridge" between foreign correspondents and local context, culture and contacts (Palmer, 2016). See Chapter 2, "Rethinking Transparency."

until the desk gets a chance to watch it and write up at least a short story to go with it," Gabriel said. Gabriel, TV producer Jim and multiple people in management position also noted they had been encouraging their text reporters to produce video and, if they could not, then to generate stories from the videos produced by others. Here, again, the work of stringers serves as a source for writers on the desk. Khaled, the Yemeni stringer and full-time TV correspondent, said he was regularly contacted by the bureau for both contextual information of news and assessment of the newsworthiness of a story. The bureau chief confirmed the pattern. And while Khaled's stories generally check out, the bureau reserves the right to not publish them. This holds true for any journalist. One key difference is the agency, or right, to push back.

'This report could not be independently confirmed'

Another common practice is use of the disclaimer of "this report could not be independently confirmed" in coverage of Syria and Yemen, stemming from the question of access and whose reports count as fact. Partisan media and paid stringers are cited similarly within copy. For example, from an April 18, 2018 story by the AP: "Opposition-linked Syrian medics and first responders say a chemical attack in Douma late Saturday killed at least 40 people. The reports could not be independently confirmed" (*The Latest: Syrian,* 2018). A Reuters report on a suspected Saudi-led airstrike on the Yemeni presidential palace cites rebel-run media:

> The Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said at least six people were killed and more than 30 wounded in the strikes.
>
> Reuters could not independently confirm the reports.

> Photos and television footage showed a building reduced to a pile of smashed concrete and twisted metal bars. An armed Houthi fighter tried to stop people approaching the site. (*Saudi-led air strikes,* 2018)

Furthermore, the eyewitness report of a stringer, such as a photographer, working for the institution can be run as a story with the reporter sourced within the story as though they had not themselves reported it. An AFP story datelined Hodeida, the flashpoint Yemeni port city, cites multiple sources, including medics based in Hodeida and UN spokesperson Farhan Haq. Also among the sources cited within the story is "an AFP photographer" in Hodeida, whose presence helps justify the dateline critical to the authority of presence:

> An AFP photographer at Saleef port saw Huthi troops leave the facility, and men dressed in coastguard uniforms enter, adding that these movements were observed by the UN.
>
> But the governor of Hodeida, Al-Hasan Taher, said the Huthis were merely reshuffling personnel. (*UN confirms Yemen,* 2019)

Critical to the eyewitness accounts of stringers, some of whom function as multimedia journalists, are the images they provide. Editors working on news desks, and not only editors in photo and video departments, stressed the importance of visual material, without which stories were not only less interesting to audiences, but more difficult for writers to compose from a distance. In the words of Mark, the Yemen editor at a news group, "Without photo and video there is no story." Tom, a producer at a major international English-language television, said stringers had been his "eyes and ears" in Syria for years.[61] Hani, who leads a regional breaking news team at an international news

[61] Pers. communication, September 2015.

organization, explained how the role of images was changing. He recalled covering a war decades ago in the Middle East:

> I remember, in the days of the telex if you know it [laughs], there used to be this little grocery store at the corner at the end of [the main frontline]. And basically if you're a good runner, you would probably be the best reporter on that street [laughs]. It was like, whoever gets to that phone the fastest gets the news out first. Because we are all in that same street together. So you'd get there like [puts hand on chest, imitates panting], like out of breath, and you grab the phone and dial and for like the first minute you are just panting trying to say "they… hit…" [laughs]. And everyone's like standing over you shouting at you, *yalla khallesne* ("move it/let's go"). Now I have to get a personal trainer to run that much [laughs]. And that was it. You pass on the info, if you're lucky and there's a phone line, and you go back to your beer. Or to the battle. Whichever night it is.
>
> (...)
>
> I mean, it's changed now, everything. It's so different. For a long time, none of our staff reporters were actually in Syria. Actually it's harder also because there's more resources. Everyone has the ability to file immediately, everyone has their stringers. (...) Actually, it used to be that the writers would get some news and call up the photo desk and tell them, you know, 'hey we heard this, we need pictures.' And still, that happens, but now it's more regular that we take our news, even our breaking news, from the photos or videos that we get from our stringers. Sometimes now the photo desk will alert us, "hey we have these pics landing. Do you know what's going on?" And we don't, so we get on the phone to our stringers and get news to match the pics.

The processes Nidal, Mark, Tom, Hani and other editors describe complicate routines of fact-making and eyewitnessing, which are separate albeit not disjointed, as understood both pre- and post-digitization. Part of the routine of newsmaking is datelining the story from its origin, tied to the byline of the journalist who is on-site. In Syria and Yemen, some stories are datelined from the city where the journalist, most frequently a local photographer and at times a stringer, is located. Some of those stories, datelined from the city from which the stringer is reporting, still cite the stringer as a

source within the story. This is particularly the case among the three main news agencies, the prime sources of stories from Yemen and Syria for newspapers, news sites and television around the world (Paterson, 2005; Pantti, 2013; Guidero & Hallward, 2019; Hannerz, 2004). A 2018 Reuters story on Syrian government forces closing in on the Golan Heights, the disputed, strategic territory bordering Jordan and Israel, reads:

> A Reuters photographer saw uniformed men raise the Syrian national flag and the black, white, green and red flag of President Bashar al-Assad's Baath Party in the long-abandoned city. No weapons were immediately visible.
>
> The photographer was reporting from a vantage point on the Israeli-occupied western section of the Golan Heights. (*Syrian flag raised,* 2018)

The story is datelined "Golan Heights/Amman." Images throughout the story, including the main picture under the headline, are credited to local staff photographer Ammar Awad. Credits at the bottom of the story read: "Reporting by Ammar Awad; Writing by Maayan Lubell and Suleiman al Khalidi; Editing by Andrew Bolton." While Awad did the reporting for the story, the "eyewitnessing" that establishes "authority gained by being on the site of an event being reported" (Zelizer, 2007, p.411), he is still cited within the broader story as a source. In a May 12, 2019 story on Houthi withdrawal from a Hodeida port following a landmark UN deal between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels, datelined Hodeida, an AFP photographer is sourced as an eyewitness within the story, but his eyewitness account is not the story. The withdrawal marked the first major step towards brokering both a ceasefire in one of the most intense battles of the Yemen war and ending a de facto blockade on Hodeida which had all but cut off imports, including humanitarian aid, to governorates across the country. The story reads: "An AFP photographer at Saleef port saw Houthi troops leave the facility, and men

dressed in coastguard uniforms enter, adding that these movements were observed by the UN." A stringer is credited on the images of the rebel withdrawal from Saleef. To establish facticity, journalists have long relied on quoting bureaucratic officials, stopping at giving an account of what happened sourced to the account-giver (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). This also appears to apply to non-bureaucratic sources, or the eyewitness.

How clearly a stringer and his/her proximity to the story are identified is also a point of contention. A journalist with a major Western newspaper was once upset over what she suspected was a stringer working for her and a competitor. The competitor had inserted more vivid details from, and about, her stringer's eyewitness account of a major battle, including some details on the stringer's identity. This admittedly made for a more riveting account. She called out her stringer, who denied it was him. She then called the other foreign correspondent's editor at the rival paper to report what she called "unethical behavior that is just unacceptable" on the part of the rival journalist.[62]

The motive for all of this is often cited as the photographer's personal safety. Photographers are, however, most often credited for the photos accompanying the story. Editors at the three agencies confirmed that staff reporters who send in raw bits of information, color from the field or eyewitness accounts are bylined for the story, even if the writing and editing are done entirely by a desk in a regional office. Editors at two of the agencies said they had begun to byline stringers over the past two years, either under their real names or pseudonyms, adding "with [staff reporter] in [bureau]" to credit the

[62] Personal interview, August 12, 2016. I have omitted details on the persons and organizations involved for their privacy.

writer who handled the assemblage of the story. This is dependent in part on who is on the desk. "Some journalists don't like to share too much credit," editor Khalil joked.[63]

Reporting, in this case, fades as proof of eyewitnessing -- as news -- and emerges as one of one of multiple sources of supposed facts that, as Tuchman (1978), Fishman (1980) and others note, present themselves as the truth when taken together, while protecting the authority over the story by sourcing that story to the account-giver. The journalist-source relationship has been redefined as eyewitnessing is redefined and repositioned. Unlike Fishman's (1980) observations, other journalists can function as sources, with the caveat that they are not acknowledged as "as journalistic" as those closer to the institutional center. What Tuchman (1978) once identified as the relationship between what is known and how it is known involves a third facet: who *can* know. With the exception of rare dispatches to Syria and Yemen, the role of the staff reporter, editor and those in between (such as senior correspondents or deputy bureau chiefs) have become closer to that of an aggregator -- not in the sense of the "networked" or "convergent journalism" (Boczkowski, 2004; Anderson, 2012) in which non-journalists provide the eyewitnessing, similar to Murrell's (2015) notion of "team work," in which (sporadically) paid, often trained (local) journalists are doing the field reporting. As Tom, the TV editor, said, Syrian stringers have been "our eyes and ears on the ground." But in this team, as perhaps in all teams, not all players are created equal. The act of aggregation is seen as the role which establishes and claims journalistic authority over these stories, and not the act of eyewitnessing.

[63] Pers. communication, June 2019.

The aggregation and verification done daily by staff reporters are crucial for accuracy. But stringers are not bystanders who happen to have a smartphone when something exploded. In the case studies here, in stark contrast with previous studies of war reporting in which the journalist in the field was proof enough, the "distant witness" (Carvin, 2013) is given more credit and authority than the eyewitness. The eyewitnessing in this case is done by journalists with cameras, trained and paid by the news organizations. And although this may not be explicitly articulated, their witnessing requires an institutional intermediary for validation.

Nidal, who said staff reporters felt "constant guilt" eating at their desk or "drinking Nespressos" while writing up material sent by stringers under bombs, described the process succinctly: "It's your job to work with the stringer and to work with the bosses. You feel, literally, it feels like you are being torn in half." Asked to whom, or what, she felt she had the stronger duty, Nidal replied:

> Honestly, it depends on when you ask me. If you asked me at this time last year, I would have said to the Syrians no doubt. Of course it's not that you trust everyone blindly, or anyone, but these boys are working *so hard* and day and night, and then you have an editor in [Western city] saying, "oh I see what you just filed. Are you sure?" Well, first of all, if I filed it, I mean, obviously I am sure! I mean, what is this question! The whole team spends hours trying to understand what is happening, and we get all the sources, and we clearly say this is what we can verify for now. And then an editor decides, "Hmm, I don't know." And then the competition will have it, and they come back to you, "oh where is that story."

Again highlighting the complication of the recurrent theme of the news team as family, Nidal said the risks of working with "strangers" were very real, but did not discount the work dozens of stringers had done for her organization:

> Honestly, you have to remind yourself that, okay, these are people, and maybe I don't agree with their decisions or maybe I feel like they used me for support or something only when they needed it. But never will I say that they didn't do their job even better than I could have done it.[64]

Nidal's description of "spending hours at a desk" drinking Nespressos and trying to verify information was echoed by staff in other newsrooms. Adam is a senior correspondent covering Yemen at another agency. He too described long hours at a desk liaising with foreign editors and local stringers:

> I mean, the amount of work is too much. And you're always afraid that they're waiting just around the corner for you to slack off or not keep up. Between the news which never stops, having to write your own stories, the explainer pieces on Yemen which cannot be f*cking explained just like that [laughs], and the constant breaking news. (...) Breaking news is maybe the most stressful. And of course if something goes wrong, you are the first to blame. If something goes right, of course you are not the first [to take credit]. Nonstop. (...) Too bad we can't drink at work. [Laughs]. Or maybe it's better we can't.[65]

When asked what their "sources" were for breaking news, interviewees named bureaucratic officials, as was the practice prior to digitization (e.g., Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), to a Tweet by a bureaucratic official or uploads by individuals present at an event as common post-digitization (Boczkowski, 2004; Anderson, 2013; Usher, 2014; Ryfe, 2012), reports or tips by rights groups, activists or employees of aid groups speaking on anonymity and, frequently, stringers. Stringers thus occupy a double, and doubly negated, position. They serve as eyewitnesses -- "eyes and ears where we cannot be," as TV bureau chief Tom[66] said -- and yet they are perceived by the institution of journalism as a source external to the institution. Unlike citizen witness images, or the "citizen-created photographs and videos that have become a routine feature of

[64] Pers. communication, June 2018.
[65] Pers. communication, April 2019.
[66] Pers. communication, May 2016.

mainstream news coverage" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013, p. 960), stringers are paid to report for news organizations on stories and can be and, according to Vincent and other photo and video editors, increasingly are, trained and equipped by the organizations. They go on to win awards specifically for journalism. Stringer Zein al-Rifai won the 2013 Rory Peck Award for his coverage of Aleppo for Agence France-Presse. Stringer Waad al-Kateab won the 2017 Prix Bayeux-Calvados, France's most prestigious award for war reporting, for her coverage of Aleppo for Britain's Channel 4. She has since gone on to win the 2019 award for Best Documentary at the Cannes Film Festival for a film dedicated to explaining to her infant daughter why Kateab and her husband, a medical doctor, chose to stay and have her in a country at war. While professional awards are a mark of recognition by one's peers, or what Tuchman (1978) calls an "agent of legitimation," they also "raise fundamental value problems … concerned with recognition processes" (Heinich, 2009, p. 86).

Recognition and legitimation are at the heart of the qualification of eyewitnessing by paid journalists as a source of news which may necessitate external verification. Also key to this deflection are concerns around stringers' ties to or investment in the story. I will expand on this in the following section, on access.

For every standalone TV story shot by or eyewitness report written by a stringer is a tale of how and why editors and staff saved the organization from publishing or airing inaccurate news sent by stringers. Editors, staff reporters and even some stringers recounted multiple cases in which local media workers misreported or misled correspondents. In some cases, they had been misled by sources, a risk of the profession. In other cases, editors believed they pushed news along political lines. The vast majority

of stringers' work, however, was nonetheless deemed "invaluable," "essential," "crucial," and "exploited" by all those interviewed. Editor Hani recalled a story in which a stringer had confirmed a certain breakthrough in the Yemen war:

> To be fair, we had called him to say, 'be on alert, we hear something is happening'. Plus he's close to the Houthis (Yemeni rebels) anyway, so I don't know if part of it was him trying to make them look good. But anyway, he called [staff reporter], saying he had all these sources saying it was going to happen. So [the staff reporter] decided to alert it. It never happened.[67]

The organization never retracted the story, which quickly faded (as news does). Hani was unable to tell whether the stringer had knowingly and intentionally pushed a story he knew to be biased or had been misled by more than one official, who all spoke on condition of anonymity and were the only sources on the story. Khalil, the agency editor, had a similar story:

> Ok, let me tell you, once we killed [Yemeni ex-president Ali Abdullah] Saleh's nephew. [Laughs]. Oh my god it was... a disaster. Our stringer came to us to say, "Tarek Saleh is dead." We said, "Are you sure?!" He said, "Well, not really, but I think it's true." We go like, "Okay. Let us wait and see." So in the meantime we did our own research in the office and we weren't sure. Then [the stringer] came back and said, "Okay, look, here is the obituary from the GPC [the General People's Congress, Saleh's political party], and here is the Facebook post of a top party official, and it [the obituary] is posted on her page too. So we said, okay, let's do it. Go. We made it breaking news, that the nephew of the leader who is a top leader of his forces is dead now. And then, *weeks* later, suddenly he appears, I think in south Yemen[68], in this WhatsApp video that everyone is sending on WhatsApp. We were like, what the hell!?
>
> (...)

[67] Pers. communication, April 2019.

[68] Ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh and his family have no ties to the south. Saleh was killed in the capital Sanaa, as southern Yemen was being fought for by forces loyal to rival leader President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and forces loyal to a southern political movement demanding the reinstatement of an independent south Yemen, at the time of writing represented by the Southern Transitional Council. Saleh hails from the Sanhan tribe in the highland mountains surrounding Sanaa. Tarek Saleh may have been smuggled to the south for his own protection after his uncle's assassination in the rebel-held north, according to Khalil.

> Eventually, we worked a correction into a story. A new story, not the original.
>
> (...)
>
> You know Saleh once said [ruling] Yemen is like dancing on the heads of snakes? Well, covering Yemen is like that, like dancing on the heads of snakes. [Laughs] I swear![69]

As it turns out, the GPC had itself misreported the death of Tarek Saleh. Whether stringers intentionally push stories or whether they themselves are misled by official sources are neither novel complications of journalism nor exclusive to local journalists. Precedence abounds -- the history of foreign correspondence is replete with scandals of varying degrees and forms. Janet Cooke's 1980s "Jimmy's World" won her a Pulitzer Prize at the *Washington Post*. Days later, under pressure, she admitted the story was a fabrication. *The New Republic* acknowledged 27 of 41 pieces written by and bylined by Stephen Glass between 1995 and 1998 were at least in part fabricated. In 1998, *The Boston Globe* columnist and Pulitzer Prize finalist Patricia Smith resigned over fabricated figures in her stories. In 2003, CNN admitted it had evidence of Saddam Hussein's torture practices but had chosen not to report it to keep its Baghdad bureau open, protect its correspondents there and protect Iraqis who were on the company's payroll and who had helped the company without pay (Jordan, 2003). In 2005, the administration of George W. Bush admitted it had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars, from public funds, to columnists to promote No Child Left Behind and other policies (Kornblut, 2005). That same year, Judith Miller reached an agreement with *The New York Times,* resigning after, in her words, she had "become a lightning rod for public fury over the intelligence failures that helped lead our country to war" (Miller, 2005). In 2018, the

[69] Pers. communication, June 2019.

Times announced that Washington correspondent Ali Watkins had been reassigned after "revelations that she had a three-year affair with a high-ranking aide on the Senate Intelligence Committee, which she covered for several news organizations before joining *The Times* in December" (Grynbaum, 2018). NBC's Brian Williams repeatedly told the story of how his helicopter was hit and forced to make an emergency landing in Iraq in 2003. He later admitted he was never on the helicopter that came under fire. The list goes on.

This is to illustrate that it is the structure of journalism, in that it is performed by people dependent on other people to tell stories to more people, that runs the risk of fabrications, bias, agenda-pushing and more. Crisis reporting, revered among journalistic genres (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 4), is no exception. Some of the most memorable moments of journalism have diverged from the voice of objectivity.[70] Edward Murrow's struggle to describe the scene at Buchenwald, and his refusal to apologise for material considered too harsh for audiences, is still remembered for its eyewitness testimony: "I pray you to believe what I have said about Buchenwald. I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it I have no words. (...) If I've offended you by this rather mild account of Buchenwald, I'm not in the least sorry" (Murrow, 1945). Marie Colvin's last report from Homs the day before she was killed, made via phone to CNN's Anderson Cooper, captivated the world for a moment: "We just watched this little boy, his little tummy, heaving and heaving as he tried to breathe. It was horrific. My heart broke." Colvin also openly accused the Syrian regime. I brought up Colvin's public statement in multiple interviews with editors and staff reporters who mentioned that

[70] While the next chapter looks at objectivity, it is worth highlighting here as the binary of eyewitnessing and the basis for institutional skepticism of stringer testimony-though-reporting, or eyewitnessing.

Syrian stringers were too often anti-government (which can no longer be taken as one camp).

In both content and lexicon, Colvin, Murrow and others consciously broke with the objectivity norm to claim an authority effected through the binary of that norm: eyewitnessing. But while the subjectivity of journalists' words was accepted as proof of authority achievable only through physical proximity to crisis, newsrooms were resistant to embrace the image as a mode of eyewitnessing. Demand and appreciation for photojournalists, without whom the journalists interviewed would struggle to find colour and testimony from the battlefield, is now high, as editor Andrew and others said. But that appreciation was hard-won, partially forced by changing technologies and largely revolving around war (Zelizer, 2007).

The contradiction that is access

On a warm summer day in 2012, journalist Sami was in the Bekaa Valley, the eastern Lebanon region home to astounding Roman ruins and an impressive, technically illegal cannabis economy. Accompanied by his news organization's longtime Bekaa stringer, Sami was working on a feature story unrelated to the war across the border. Early in the afternoon, he made a call to his bureau chief informing her that he was on the back of a beat-up motorcycle en route to Syria. It would be the first of many trips there as the war spiraled. Riding pillion on a second beat-up motorcycle was the stringer, whose distant cousins lived in a Syrian village not far from the border and who had volunteered to drive the two journalists to their town, where tensions between residents and Assad's troops were rising. The cousins were part of a local group, with ties to a lead armed Syrian

opposition group, that was readying to fight the regime crackdown. Sami ate with them, slept with them and used their intermittent internet connection for 48 hours. The trip was not pre-planned. Neither Sami nor the stringer had ever received hostile environments training. "How to tell you. They were not secular oppositionists," Sami recounted calmly:

> They were not going to let anyone in who they didn't think was on their side. So I let them think that, and [stringer], God bless him, made a convincing case for me. I ate with them and prayed with them and just listened for two days. Then we went back across the border, had about six beers each and I went back to Beirut and wrote my story. And [headquarters] loved me. But basically it was [the stringer]. He got us in. He got us out. He got the story. [71]

It is not far-fetched to say Sami would not have been granted access to the group – affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front – had the stringer not vouched for him with his cousins. Sami did not need a translator. As local staff, there was no added pay to compensate for risk. He did not have war insurance. While those conditions have improved in recent years, stories of local staff, chief among them stringers, as the key to accessing war zones. And yet those ties are also what exclude stringers from the ranks of professional reporters.

"The ability to witness," the central tenet of war reporting, is immediately dependent on access (Rodgers, 2012, p. 45). Access is the detail that holds the key to a longstanding contradiction at the heart of war reporting. It is immediately dependent on contacts, which frequently come in the form of or develop into ties to a person, place or group. Again, examples of this among journalists widely acknowledged as professional abound. US news outlets attention to Yemen after the Khashoggi murder led their

[71] Pers. Communication, December 2017.

reporters to southern Yemen, an area largely under the control of troops trained and backed by Washington.

Access to a conflict zone enables the reporter to claim authority above any alternate explanations of the same event (Matheson & Allan, 2009; Zelizer, 2007). But this presence has a long and convoluted history. Questions of detachment, which editors frequently raise in dealing with stringers, have a long history in coverage of war which predates the emergence of stringers as central to Syrian crisis coverage. Read against this history, stringer involvement in the story may emerge as an extension of the tensions already inherent to any journalistic practice. Access has been a point of contention starting with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and culminating with the rise of the Islamic State group in Syria, Libya and Iraq.

Transparency around conflict of interest is crucial to access and discussions of access. In addition to the physical ability to reach the site of the story, access also includes access to *sources*, which in any context "reflects the social structure outside the newsroom" (Gans, 1979, p. 81). And as not all eyes may be created equal in the field, not all access carries the same legitimation. In a field where the craft is always learned on the job and where multiple instances of conflict of interest have come to light, the assumption with "professional," or foreign, correspondents appears to be credible until proven otherwise. The assumption with stringers appears to be unprofessional until proven otherwise. This is not to call for a universal acknowledgement of every stringer as credible, but for an acknowledgement that the root of the issues of their work stem from journalism proper.

Credibility and access function in tandem, and in paradox. If English or French, in the news organizations studied here, represents the primary language of institutional authority, they are secondary in terms of access to sources in the field, who generally speak the language of the country at or in war. Yet Arabic, the language necessary for access to the field and sources, represents a potential lack of expertise that may preclude the journalist from claiming her or his capital. In other words, the capital which allows the journalist access to places and persons does not translate to, or can rule out, credibility within the institution. These two forms of access, to the field and to sources, jointly form the symbolic capital of individual journalists within the institution, to borrow from Bourdieu (1989).[72] A clear case in point is Iraq, where many a journalist who remains credible today made their way to the battlefield through the access effected by embedding with the military of their own country.

Access always involves an interplay between newsmakers and news sources, with the latter highly influential in the formation and framing of news (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 1991; Zelizer, 1993). In the "tug of war" between official sources and news media, Gans (1979) finds that ultimately the sources have the upper hand (in the form of power and information) – in Tuchman's (1978) words, bureaucracy succeeds in "taming the news environment." The blurring of lines between the personal and professional can and has, as this section will show, resulted in spectacular failings of journalism. But bureaucracy also succeeds in taming journalists physically, particularly in war.

[72] Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as "the form that the various species of capital assume when they are *perceived* and *recognized* as legitimate" (1989, p. 17; italics mine).

Entry to Yemen is largely controlled by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and journalists' access to the country is largely facilitated and controlled by either of the two Gulf powers.[73] For Yemenis inside Yemen, travel from rebel-held territory to government-controlled areas can also prove difficult. Ray, a senior correspondent covering the Gulf, has been to Yemen a handful of times since the outbreak of the conflict. He recounted his last trip as a military embed with a regional army to Yemen:

> The process of accreditation was shockingly easy, because it was upon invitation. If one had been trying to get accreditation to go into Yemen as a non-embed, it would have been a totally different story. I have not been able to get into Yemen without being embedded.
>
> (…)
>
> What haunts me is the food. There was so much food everywhere, all the time, in a country that is standing at the cusp of famine, as you know. One wonders how far just one of the meals we were fed would have gone with a Yemeni family.[74]

If what haunted Ray was the food, what haunted experienced war photographer Tarek was his inability to take pictures from the port city which they visited: "What kind of journalism is this? You try to talk to them, to talk to the soldiers, 'brother, let me just go around and take a few pictures.' Don't bother. You're imprisoned. I told them to come with me if they wanted. I begged. I yelled. Nothing." Ultimately, Tarek's frustration led him to push aerial pictures of the coastline that he took from the airplane as his top shots from the trip. "What kind of work is this? I've been an embed in [Arab country] and the war was disgusting, much worse, and even with the Americans, they always let us see something,

[73]One clear outlier is Egyptian reporter Maggie Michael's year-long investigative story series for the AP, which won a 2019 Pulitzer. See Michael, 2019.
[74] Pers. communication, Jan. 2019.

some part of the field," he said.[75] Another source of frustration for Tarek was what he described as perpetual skepticism, which he attributed to his identity. Tarek's editor was displeased with what he said was "troublemaker" behaviour with the Saudi military.[76] Ray, whose stories did not push back against the official narrative, was met with praise by that same editor. Another editor, a subordinate of Sean's, did voice skepticism of how Ray had framed the story.

Tarek, the artist-turned-photographer who began as a stringer nearly two decades ago and is now a staff photographer, does not speak English or French. He says he does not understand why a photographer in the Middle East would need to:

> I'm a photographer, correct? [pats camera next to him]. This is my weapon. I cover the Arab world. What does a journalist need to cover the Arab world? You need a camera, and you need to be able to talk to people. Right? In what language? Arabic. No? To my knowledge Yemenis are not fluent in Shakespeare.
>
> (…)
>
> I've been doing this for more than 15 years, and now I have a boss who is 15 years younger than me, does not speak any Arabic and has never once stepped in a conflict zone. I don't think he has ever carried his own camera. What kind of logic is this? This kid, this, this… child, is going to be handling my pictures? *Isti'mar* [colonialism].

Ray and Tarek were embeds with the same army on the same dispatch. The bureau chief was shocked by the banquets laid out for officials and journalists on the trip. Ray, who does not speak Arabic, went on to author multiple stories out of that daylong trip, including a feature story. Tarek detailed the banquet, which he took full advantage off, and then went on to attempt to break away from the group. He was stopped by the soldiers in charge. In the absence of personal translators, Tarek has the language skills

[75] Pers. communication, Feb. 2019.
[76] Joint personal interview with editor and his deputy, Feb. 2019.

necessary to navigate access to citizens and local officials as sources. He also landed the front page and a double spread in one of the most coveted publications in Europe for a feature story. But he complained of mistrust by his bosses:

> Some of the bosses are great, like [names former bureau chief]. But now, with this one, *tafeh taa'ban* ["petty, useless"]. He is always calling to ask me, 'oh did you really go there?' Because of course, you know, all of us [nationality] are liars and thieves. Except for when they need something. Then he calls you and he's the nicest person ever. 'Ah, [Tarek], we were looking for a contact here or there,' and of course you get them what they need.

Stories out of Syria reflect the same messy, complicated question of access and credibility. James, a correspondent for a major US TV network, had just returned from Syria when we met. In response to how long James was in the city from which his story was datelined, he appeared frustrated with the question and said: "A few hours." On whether he was able to get enough footage for a few minutes on the newscast in a few hours, he said: "Yes." James said he had paid a Syrian on-site to translate for him. His Lebanese producer/fixer had set up the trip and interviews through her contact with a Syrian faction. He did not name either the fixer or translator in our interview. This is not necessarily a pattern, however. In contrast, a reporter for a major US paper made it a point to name her fixer in Syria and longtime stringer and point out that she was crucial to coverage.

Losing an eye, gaining asylum

News organizations have had to grapple with the injuries and deaths of stringers, and with the complication of compensating their families with no clear policies in place and

logistical difficulty in getting the money to families. Many of the stringers interviewed had relocated to cities across the Middle East, Europe and Britain. While not all of them had done so with the help of the news organization, a surprising number of them did credit the organization for brokering their papers and those of their families. Yet this remains a personal, individualized act, and not a policy or right.

A turning point in Taym's life, and career, hinges on a bizarre, cruel twist of irony. While covering an intense battle between government forces and armed groups for control of a city, Taym was hit by shrapnel in the eye and his camera damaged beyond repair. He is still upset by the loss of that camera, his first, which he describes as *ḥabibti,* [my love]. Rami, who lost his camera in an accident during but unrelated to the war, also said he had lost his "best friend." The organization for which Taym worked covered the costs of his evacuation, a protracted, risky trip that involved days of travel by bus or car through battle zones to reach a functional airport. The actual logistics of the evacuation were handled by Taym, the team in the regional office and friends and local groups involved in the war. The organization covered all Taym's medical bills and helped secure him asylum in a Western country.

Taym underwent multiple surgeries, months of rehabilitation and psychotherapy and ultimately lost his eye. He maintains, with a wink: "I only need one eye to see, and as long as I can see [makes camerahole shape with his fingers around his eye], I can work." While his carrying a camera may have made him a target (there is no way to know for sure), Taym sees the world through his lens. If he could not work, he says, he could not survive: "I don't know what would have happened to me if I couldn't take pictures, or if I never knew I could take pictures. Now, here, for sure something would have happened to

me, I would have gotten depressed or maybe committed suicide. The camera protected me." Now reunited with his family, who have joined him, Taym is out shooting every day, commissioned or not. He lands front pages at an impressive rate and was nominated for a major award in 2019. And he is constantly looking through that lens. "If there's nothing happening that day, I take my camera and just ride the metro or walk around the city," he said. Taym, who credits a veteran war photographer for training him during a workshop near his hometown, is building a name for himself (and has a large Instagram following). Everything Taym said was carefully worded, positive and grateful. But he does not want to remain a stringer. He has applied for staff positions but has yet to be hired. "Sometimes it's [trails off]... *Ya'ni,* sometimes you're there and the staff photographer is there and he takes a few snaps and goes home, and you stay there all day and all night for the perfect shot… [trails off]," Taym said. He is also constantly looking to improve. Like Rami and other young photographers, Taym said he had begun studying the work of professional photojournalists who were covering Syria while he was still there, and has now expanded that to include photographers covering, among other things, fashion and sports.

Taym lives with his young child and wife, who he says is struggling to adjust to her new life, in state subsidized housing. He is saving up for a new camera and his first telephoto lens and plans on asking the news group if he can use the company discount. Taym recognized one key factor that had put him at a disadvantage: "I can't do anything about the fact that I'm Syrian. But I can learn new languages." He is now fully conversational in the language of the country in which he is based and continues to take

language classes.[77] Taym's editor bristled at the photographer's being "too pushy": "He kept pitching and pitching pictures and showing up at the office." Asked what the editor would have done if it were his children who had escaped war and needed to be fed and clothed and educated, the editor said: "Who told him to have kids."[78] This was the only case in which an editor spoke ill of a stringer.

Like Taym, stringer Jad was wounded and ended up losing an eye and, eventually, a limb. The organization for which he worked could not extract him. Jad was initially treated at a local hospital which, like other or all hospitals in countries torn by war, had few doctors and even fewer supplies. He sent pictures of himself with a bandaged head flashing a thumbs-up and later with a bandaged head and bandaged, part-amputated limb to Gabriel, his editor at the organization. "We could not get him out, and we could not get any money to him because there's no Western Union out there," Gabriel said. "All we had to work with was God's will. We were just praying he would not die."[79] Mark faced an issue when one of his stringers died while on the job, leaving behind two wives with children: "I mean, what do you do?! Do you send the money to one of them, to two of them, to his mother?" In response to a question on how much was sent and to whom, he replied: "I don't remember exactly. We had a collection in the bureau for him, and we sent it to [headquarters]." The stringer did not have insurance in case of death. His death shook the team to its core. "I remember we could not believe it. It was the only time I saw [names senior reporter] cry in almost 20 years of knowing him. He was a great photographer, and a great spirit. He supported his whole family and was always positive.

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[77] Pers. communication, Nov. 2018.
[78] Pers. communication, Nov. 2018.
[79] Pers. communication, Nov. 2018.

I still can't think about it too much." The way editors speak of many of their stringers and their families, particularly after death or injury, is markedly compassionate and benevolent. But it is worth looking at compassion and benevolence, especially when genuine and consistent, against the rights they engender, accompany, replace or obfuscate.

Starting with the high-profile death of Reuters stringer Molhem Barakat (see Chapter 1), the question of how to compensate stringers not only for their work but after their death is charged and unresolved among news organizations. As there is no paperwork, or contract, there are no rights. This is further complicated by the love of the work. Syrian stringer Taym said he was willing to "work for free" out of sheer love for the job. The same theme surfaced in interviews with staff and even editors. Gabriel, a regional editor whose contract is not on a par with other editors around him, said the work itself compensated for the benefits he had been denied.[80] "I get up some days and I'm fed up. I… I can't do it anymore, the dirt and the politics. And then I get to work and there's a new story, or there's a new assignment. Where else would life be this interesting?" But for the risks faced by Yemeni and Syrian stringers daily, the bait of meaningful work may amount to, to again quote an editor, "exploitation, simply." Compensation following a stringer's death is even more troubling when an act of care and compassion, and not a right.

Before and after the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, access has been and will likely always be a tightrope act. Access has been and will remain dependent on contacts, or sources, who are hierarchically indexed and who form the narrative of coverage (Gans,

[80] Gabriel was hired as local staff before being promoted to editor.

1979; Tuchman, 1978). The "entry point" to war coverage, as to any reporting, is knowing people. Yet stringers' ties to the story, which make them employable and which make news coverage possible, are also what strip them of institutional legitimation. As editor Khalil says, "it is your job as someone not involved in the story to make sure you are being fair and being accurate." But as the history of war reporting shows, no one is not involved in the story. Furthermore, minimal involvement in the story runs its own risks. The taken-for-granted portability of professional journalism –Hannerz's (2004) "spiralists" or Pedelty's (1995) "A Team" – has resulted in multiple scandals of agenda-pushing and conflict of interest. These cannot be taken as rooted in stringers' Syrianness or Yemeniness.

Conclusion: What we talk about when we talk about eyewitnessing

How do you replace an eye?

Taym opted for a prosthetic. US journalist Marie Colvin, the *Sunday Times* reporter killed in Homs in 2012, was known for her trademark eyepatch. Brazilian photojournalist Sérgio Andrade da Silva, who lost his left eye in 2013 when he was shot by military police, also wears an eyepatch, featuring a pirate skull symbol. And faced with dwindling revenue, the beheadings of foreign reporters and the relative invisibility of stringer deaths, and the cost-efficiency and reach of local journalists, newsrooms continue to opt for local labor.

War reporting has long been venerated as one of the highest and most prestigious forms of journalism, and for good reason. The dedication of journalists who choose to cover war, and the risks they willingly face, cannot be overstated. Yet the prestige and

authority granted to those who cover war also belie the nature of the work: chaotic, complicated, contradictory and crucial. At the heart of that work and the journalistic authority it establishes is the subjective eyewitness report, the hallmark of war correspondence. Eyewitnessing remains what Zelizer (2007), building on Raymond Williams (1983), calls a keyword of journalism post-digitization, as evidenced by the respect still granted to correspondents who risk, and have lost, their lives to tell the story. But the processes and politics underwriting the practice today throw into question whether it is in fact the practice-as-craft from which journalism claims its authority over war.

Recent studies have honed in on changes in eyewitnessing's place and use in journalism. Studies of journalism's use of eyewitnessing focus largely on the role of "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2006), produsers (Bruns, 2008), pro-ams (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) or non-professional journalists (Zelizer, 2007) who are at the scene. Although it may seem at first glance to account for the work of stringers, that framework still takes as extra-institutional all those who do not carry the tacit stamp of institutional approval – including those employed, equipped, trained and sent to the frontlines by the institution. News organizations' decisions not to use freelancers in Syria, and the difficulty of access in Yemen, meant that stringers, differentiated from citizen-journalists, became journalism's eyes-on-the-ground. Stringers' positionality as not only "being there" but "being from there" is their main asset for news organizations – and the source of the double bind in which they find themselves. As being "from there" is necessary for access and employability, it is also indirectly what precludes their integration into the institution.

Stringers fulfill the institutional need for insider knowledge beyond the work of fixing on the ground. They provide information that will help news organizations assess the importance of a story, evaluate the facticity of the story, contextualize the story and provide photo and video evidence of a story. Their ties to the story, whether to local armed groups or against parties in power, present an involvement in that story at the root of the skepticism voiced by editors.[81] Yet it is those very ties, and the presence of stringers "there" -- and, following the 2013/2014 decision by major news groups not to commission work by freelancers, specifically stringers' being *from* "there" -- which fill the industrial void that would otherwise throw into question the institution's relevance in times of war.

There is a marked difference between editing procedure, applied across the board, and the subtle stripping of authority from certain eyewitness journalists, and their ability to speak for their own stories. The latter hints that authority may not have been rooted in the occupational practice of eyewitnessing, of being there, but of being there where one is not from. Rendering visible local labor as "bridges" or "cultural negotiators" is a crucial first step in attending to the gaps and exploitation in journalism's history. But it also risks concealing and exonerating the discourse and practices of those who still control the institution and its resources. Close attention to how journalism's use of eyewitnessing has changed when the eyewitness changed yields a different picture, one more dangerous in its very subtlety – one that throws into question the very pillars of the professionalized press.

[81] Another possible cause for that skepticism is broader systemic discrimination, not always intentional. It may be defensive when identity is under threat.

On another continent and within the context of a different sort of crisis, Gans brought attention to the identity politic known in journalism studies as paraideology: a set of casual, seemingly innocuous values including ethnocentrism, a commitment to small-town pastoralism and a belief in "responsible" capitalism (Gans, 1979, p. 47).[82] During the civil rights movement, the professionalism confounded with paraideology meant editors would not hire black Americans to join newsrooms on the grounds that they were too involved in the story to maintain the necessary objectivity (Gans, 1979). In a sense, they too were "from there" – from within the story, even if not from within the city. Yet every US journalist covering the civil rights movement, black, white or otherwise, was inevitably implicated.[83]

The question of whether stringer Rami's inability to "remain distant" precludes his ability do the work of journalism, or that of any stringer or journalist on a story close to home literally or figuratively, far predates the wars in Yemen and Syria. Yet skepticism of the political ties of stringers -- of, in the words of Mark and Andrew respectively, their ability to remain "objective" and "impartial" -- surfaces as a major factor in managers' explanations or justifications for the positionality of stringers as *outside* their own parameters, and by extension the parameters of who is a journalist for their organizations. Furthermore, those politics, troublesome as they are, are arguably the portal to the most glorified asset of "strong" journalists: access. Getting in. Without

[82] Epstein (1973), Roshco (1975), Tuchman (1978), Fishman (1980) and other early ethnographers of journalism echo this finding -- at the time, that the average American journalist was a young man from a middle-class Midwestern with values in line with the official narrative of his nation.

[83]This becomes even more pronounced when dealing with coverage beyond the borders of the United States (including "non-incorporated territories" such as Puerto Rico) but in which the U.S. is implicated. "Foreign news adheres less strictly to objectivity than domestic news … [but] as in most other countries, American foreign news is ultimately only a variation on domestic themes" (Gans, 1979, p. 38).

discounting institutional skepticism towards the impact of stringers' politics on the selection and framing of news, those very politics, and specifically the ties to groups and persons, are central in securing news and information from sources in wartime. By its very nature, eyewitnessing is contingent on access. An individual can only physically be in one place at one time. With only two eyes – or, in the case of Marie Colvin, Taym and others, one eye – only one vantage point is possible. Only one massacre, and its suspected or known perpetrator, can be witnessed. Yet editors pointed to the singularity of witnessing as unique to stringers and necessitating validation by those at a distance from the field but closer to the institutional center. And while editing, which can include fact- checking, is universal in journalism, it becomes a vector of differentiation against those who are not admitted to the institution but paid and trained to carry the cameras. This differentiation is also evidenced by multiple cases of ties between high-profile journalists and authorities implicated in the story.

Perhaps for the first time in journalism's recorded history, there is an institutional admission of the role of those "from there" in coverage of conflict. But institutions and individuals help stringers escape death and resettle elsewhere out of benevolence, and not as an obligation or a right. It is stringers' identities as citizens of the countries in which institutions will not, cannot or do not send their correspondents – stringers' physical and positional precarity -- which enables the institution to hire them as its eyes and ears on the ground yet differentiate in the allocation of journalistic authority and rights. That authority is claimed in times of war specifically through eyewitnessing (Allan & Zelizer, 2004).

If eyewitnessing has been dethroned as grounds for immediate claims to journalistic authority, with foreign correspondents now staffing the desks on which authority now rests, it is worth rethinking whether the longstanding tradition of war reporting is a manifestation of an authority claimed on grounds linked more to identity and less to the work. As with any form of discrimination, none of this can be taken as universal. Like racism or misogyny, it can be difficult to "prove." But journalism, like its study, is a field based on interpretation as, or over, proof.

The nature of reporting in crisis zones involves the daily struggle to make decisions which often have no right answers, such as whether not to report a story for the protection of the people involved. And while the reverence traditionally allotted to eyewitness accounts of atrocity is still allocated to stringers, it is also worth questioning whether that respect is on the grounds of their work as a journalist or on the grounds of what Judith Butler (2004) identifies as "ontological precarity," as Syrians and Yemenis remain "trapped" in wars that have decimated their personal lives.

Chapter 2: Transparency

Introduction: Hypervisibility, invisibility and the opacity of the seen

The maintenance of the order of things (Hall, 1986) takes work. Maintenance is work. The journalistic work that goes into the maintenance of the exclusivity of credibility and legitimacy of journalism is not immediately recognized as work. The maintenance of the order of things is obfuscated by the current focus on transparency in journalism, and further obfuscated by an apparent recognition of the work of stringers, fixers and others in the press and scholarship. This chapter examines the opacity of transparency.

Scholars converge on a broad common denominator for journalistic transparency: openness in showing how a story was reported and/as accountability to one's audience (Allen, 2008; Karlsson, 2010; Rosen, 2017; Schudson, 2015; Singer, 2007). What it means to "show your work" is contingent on what is recognized as work, by whom it is or can be recognized, to whom it is credited and how or in what form or format it is revealed. In its dominant definition, transparency is strategically, albeit not always consciously, limited to one vector, the endpoints of which are journalism's traditional gatekeepers and the audience they are addressing. Transparency conceptualized as disclosure or accountability to the organization's audience thus reproduces a self-referentiality that complicates the implicit binaries endemic to foreign correspondence, reinforcing as it appears to dismantle them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter redirects discussions of transparency towards the relationships, mechanisms, dynamics and policies internal to the work of journalism, specifically coverage of war – the fundamental parts of newsmaking not included in the hyperlinks. Supplementary to current horizontal understandings of journalistic transparency, it offers a vertical interpretation of transparency within -- and about -- the institution, with credibility and accountability to its own "on the ground." It takes as its point of departure a basic premise: that transparency obfuscates as it discloses, and that the act of disclosure enables obfuscation. It examines the opacities and limitations of transparency, as defined by and in journalism, through patterns of interactions in newsrooms and rhetoric used in news coverage. It offers a close, contextualized reading of journalism's use of color, metaphor and other tropes with an eye on the innocuousness of ideology (Gans, 1979) or what Hall identifies as language and "imagery of thought" as reflective of systems of representations (1982, p. 29).

If objectivity was the defining norm of journalism in its print heyday, transparency is the norm of journalism in the digital age (Allen, 2008; Karlsson, 2010; Schudson, 2015; Singer, 2007; Weinberger, 2009). Driven in part by changes in the media of journalism, transparency today "subsumes objectivity" (Weinberger, 2009). In its most basic form, journalistic transparency is conceptualized academically as openness, or the voluntary disclosure of how news is made. It is operationalized professionally by and through the affordances of digital media, [84] including linking to outside sources, end-

[84] The idea of transparency as a strategic, protective measure predates digitization; one example is the work of Levy (1981). I place Levy's arguments in the current moment later in this chapter.

of-story crediting of all (or most) of those involved in the making of the story and at times the disclosure of the politics, limitations and shortcomings of the news report. Such measures aim to foster credibility and legitimacy with audiences at a time when the expertise and insider knowledge once exclusive to the reporter have been eroded by the rise of bloggers -- and audiences' own ability to cross-check reports (Allen, 2008; Singer, 2007). This is not, of course, to assume that linking to external sources or audiences' ability to cross-check news reports ensures facticity.

As it is conceptualized and operationalized, transparency reflects a planar understanding of journalism, reproducing an opacity exacerbated by the complications of covering conflict. Transparency is generally delineated as a *horizontal* process between journalist and audience that makes explicit only parts of the journalistic process, those aimed at the interest of the public "back home" and which do not fundamentally challenge the identity narrative of professionalized journalism. This chapter flips transparency inward. It argues that what has rhetorically been seen as a means of accountability can in practice be leveraged between journalists and their cohorts (both audiences back home and other journalists), resulting in a paradoxical lack of accountability. This chapter thus applies transparency vertically, as something *about* or *within* the institution and not *between* journalists and audiences.

By most accounts, the replacement of objectivity with transparency serves the dual function of more internal accountability and increased credibility with audiences. But if accountability is self-referential, in the sense that it is owed only to those officially speaking and being spoken to, transparency presents a new mode of opacity. As Jonathan Fox (2007) notes, transparency can by its very nature be "opaque or fuzzy," involving

"the dissemination of information that does not reveal how institutions actually behave in practice, whether in terms of how they make decisions, or the results of their actions" (p. 667).[85] Strathern (1999) goes further, arguing that transparency is by its very nature tyrannical. She writes: "in a social world where people are conscious of diverse interests, such an appeal to a benevolent or moral visibility is all too easily shown to have a tyrannous side -- there is nothing innocent about making the invisible visible" (Strathern, 1999, p. 309). Applying transparency vertically, through a close reading of the contextualization of stories, coupled with the interpersonal interactions beneath those stories, suggests transparency works to do the thing and its opposite: to conceal as it reveals. Change can make the invisible even more invisible.

Thinking about transparency vertically, or turned internally, the emerging norm affords a seemingly ethical, moral way to maintain or uphold discrimination. As stringers come to the fore, as they are "made" visible, they are silenced and sidelined. That is the fortuitous possibility of anodyne transparency, flattened to a surface level. Work is not recognized as work, nor craft as craft. While not all news organizations underpay or fail to credit their stringers, and some have gone above and beyond in helping them relocate and adapt, most stringers interviewed had multiple stories of providing services and content for free. Indeed, there was a pervasive expectation of service to foreign correspondents, including sharing contacts and providing translation services. This expectation indicates a belief system that drives the news, including the informal

[85] Fox offers the notions of opaque and clear transparency with the aim of increasing institutional accountability. As opposed to opaque transparency, clear transparency refers to both information access and information about institutional performance, including the allocation and spending of funds. The distinction "is grounded on the premise that if transparency policies are going to meet their goals of transforming institutional behavior, then they must be explicit in terms of who does what, and who gets what" (Fox, 2007, pp. 667-668).

interactions that go into the making of every story and the decision of what stories make the front pages, and when. Gans (1979) offers the idea of paraideology, a specific set of seemingly innocuous values espoused by professional journalists which do not seem to be ideological and which exclude others. Zelizer (1992) offers a set of narratives journalists tell themselves and the world about journalism and through which they constitute themselves as an authority and through which problematic practices become professional triumphs. To borrow from Jakobsonian linguistics, it follows the categorizations of the marked and unmarked, but complicates what it means to be visible versus invisible. To borrow from literary criticism, it is all driven by one master narrative which journalism ignores and upholds (Rosen, 2003), and which eludes current understandings of transparency as it is reinforced by those same understandings. Journalism makes public things about its work and is accountable to its audience. Journalism does other work that it does not recognize as such, and is not accountable to those whom that work impacts. This does not just include the victims of war. It includes other journalists.

Journalists live within the master narrative (Rosen, 2003), reproducing it while working to dismantle it. The set of implicit, invisible systems and assumptions which shape and continuously legitimate discriminatory interactions and rhetoric is rendered invisible, or innocuous, through journalism's daily, unquestioned practices, such as including "color" in stories. That belief system is reflected paradoxically in a specific manifestation of transparency around the work of stringers: coverage of stringers *as a story* under someone else's byline. Rather than the authors of the (often lucrative) journalistic war story they are covering, stringers are thus positioned as subjects outside

the ranks of journalism -- even as, or precisely because, it appears to glorify them. And even one such story is one too many.[86]

These stories grant stringers, fixers and others some measure of visibility in the press. Covering stringers, as a story, conceals them as it reveals them (concealment, handily enough, being inherent to the act of "covering"). In scholarship, a small but growing body of literature has shed light on the place and work of fixers, and to a lesser degree stringers. These much-needed studies present the points of view of fixers as alternative narratives in journalism (Palmer, 2019), granting them agency as their own entrepreneurs (Murrell, 2019). As argued in Chapter 1, thinking of the "local" (for lack of a better term) as a businesswoman or man, or a cultural bridge, positions fixers and stringers outside of journalism at the periphery and service of the northern-western press. While scholarship has interrogated journalism's use of narrative, journalism draws on another, more subtle use of metaphor. Publishing a front-page story on a nation's mistreatment of a local hyena, as security forces crack down on millions of protestors and a crumbling economy sparks a wave of suicides – reflects a metaphoric association, a politics implicit to Rosen's (2003) idea of journalism's master narrative.

Transparency thus complicates, or inverses, the traditional sociological understanding of visible versus invisible (e.g., Goffman, 1971), or the Jakobsonian tradition of marked versus unmarked. Gans' (1979) notion of paraideology, the enduring set of conscious or unconscious values taken as *non-ideological* by news organizations, goes unmarked. The abnormal, the marked, is seen and recognized. In the case of

[86] Complicating the question of color is the question of metaphor, addressed in Chapter 1. Journalism has long thought of itself in metaphor – for example, the mirror (Berkowitz, 1990) – and of its topics of coverage in metaphor – for example, a country "struggles to give birth to itself" (Cohen, 2019). Metaphor also becomes a technique of invisibility that complicates, or dismantles, the visibility/invisibility binary.

stringers, they are seen and marked even as they are rendered mute and, indeed, invisible. Visibility and recognition have long been closely linked. Hypervisibility and invisibility can co-exist in the same subject. This chapter draws on Nancy Fraser's (2000) concept of recognition and misrecognition. Recognition is only possible when members of all identity groups are full partners in the social interaction. "To view recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors" (Fraser, 2000, p. 113). To be misrecognized, Fraser writes, is "not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in others' attitudes, beliefs or representations. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (Fraser, 2000, pp. 113-114).

Misrecognition does not necessarily mean the denigration of the person or group represented. It refers to "institutionalized patterns of cultural value" that do not openly present in the form of dismissing or rendering invisible the other. This chapter looks at some of the forms that misrecognition takes. Those forms constitute the work of maintaining the institutionalized patterns of exclusion within the frame of transparency. Being invisible means being unrecognized. Being invisible can also mean being recognized and *made* visible. Hence, by virtue of being covered, as a story or a different (read: second) journalistic culture, stringers are made invisible specifically through transparency around their existence. By virtue of their *being* covered, and how they are covered, reinforces what the late photojournalist Horst Faas called "the colonial outfit" of

foreign correspondence (cited in Seo, 2016, p. 46). Transparency's second function is the work of maintenance – to maintain what it does not repair.

Rethinking Transparency

A young boy, at the cusp of puberty, watched as his neighbors and cousins picked up their weapons, put on their fatigues – not those of the national army – and knelt before their mothers for a last blessing. Most were only a few years older than him. If and when they would be back was a constant unknown, an unknown the young boy's daughter would have to contend with for very different reasons long after the end of the war at home. Too young to join them, the boy would collect bullet casings from the rooftops of buildings on his street – the Green Line[87] of Beirut – and bring them back to be refilled. This was a regular occurrence throughout puberty.

At 17, when it was his turn to train with the militia, the boy discovered immediately that he was not cut out to fight. "I didn't have the stomach for guns," he explained. "I could not kill. I didn't want to. But I wanted to do something. I wanted to feel like I was fighting too."[88] The boy's father had a camera, which he strapped around his neck as he left their upper-middle-class neighborhood for the frontline a few streets

[87] The infamous Green Line, dubbed after the foliage that grew there when it was cut off to traffic, divided what became east Beirut from what became west Beirut during the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war. The line cuts upwards from the harbor, through Martyrs' Square and over the millennia-old Roman baths (straddled on the other side by a shiny Virgin Megastore), towards the Barakat house. The Barakat building, or the "yellow house," still stands, abandoned and riddled with bullet holes. It is now home to photo and cultural exhibits, including a 2019 public concert by Yoyo Ma and Lebanese and Syrian musicians. The street is now home to an upscale, underground sushi restaurant and an assembly of hotels, banks and exclusive and exclusionary prime real estate developments.
[88] Pers. communication, September 2015.

over. And so, at 17, photojournalist Vincent inadvertently launched an international career that would span nearly four decades, as many continents and wars too painful to count or recount. As a freelancer, his work appeared in major U.S., British and French newspapers and magazines throughout the 80s before he was hired full-time by a major newsgroup. In the world of Middle East reporting, he is famous. Now retired from the craft, he has trained and continues to train stringers covering war.

Jonathan is a British journalist whose career also took off through the Lebanese civil war. He arrived to the country in the early summer of 1975, weeks after the outbreak of the conflict. He stayed through the end of the war and covered the 1991 war in the Gulf, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 2005 withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, the ongoing (at the time of writing) crisis in Libya and, finally, the Syrian war. "There was a lot less insistence at the time on 'How are you getting there? How did you get this information?'," Jonathan recalled of the Lebanese war:

> It was a magnet for foreign correspondents, Beirut, as you well know, and a lot of us really cut our teeth here... as well as the Lebanese, and a few Palestinians, who were starting out in their careers… It was a different era. No one asked questions, really. And in hindsight, I don't know that the work was any worse without that constant oversight and distraction [social media/writing for the web]
>
> (…)
>
> Covering Syria last, it is an entirely different beast. Not just as the war, as a job. But the editors seem to get younger every year, they're school-age [pauses] but then again, I'm quite a bit older [laughs]. There was a clearer division of who did what. Now the editor, who frequently has no experience in anything really, needs to know where you are going and how you are going and why you are going. I suppose part of this is liability or what – whatever it is, it filters into the work and let me tell you, the work today is no better than it was in the 80s.[89]

[89] Pers. communication, Sept. 2015.

Both of these stories do not seem to be about transparency, but they hit straight at its heart. To ask a journalist "what is transparency" yields a different answer than to ask about things that constitute work about which journalists are now encouraged to be transparent -- how they came to the story, how they do the job. The assemblage of the latter may give insight into how transparency functions in the field. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, when Vincent, Jonathan and others honed their craft and built a name in the streets of Beirut, Jerusalem and elsewhere, objectivity was the ruling norm of journalism in the United States, and print, followed by television, was the ruling medium. Even if objectivity had to be proved on the printed page, the underlying dynamics that enabled its criteria to be met were far from objective.

They were also far from transparent. Tales of how foreign correspondents finagled access, and sometimes outright stories, are rampant in the Middle East. If the verification of a story met the criteria of objectivity, the underlying motives and access were certainly not part of the work that was shown (i.e., transparency). As correspondent Adam said: "Sure I can get you three sources. Anyone can get you three sources. Half the time they are bullshit sources. Who's going to know? Your editor?"[90] And, as Syrian stringer-fixer Nour notes, "When they are your sources, they doubt you because you know them from school or they are in your family or your neighborhood. But they [foreign correspondents] can use those same sources and call them, you know, like 'a source close to the case'."[91] Adam and Nour's depictions of differential forms and levels of transparency complicate the idea of what it means to "show" "your" "work" (each of these terms signaling a different part of the process – what work means, what one owns

[90] Pers. communication, April 2019.
[91] Pers. communication, October 2019.

as work and what is revealed/concealed). Transparency, like its normative predecessor, is constructed and circumscribed in particular ways and to particular ends.

Scholars whose work forms the "first wave" of newsroom ethnographies made visible the constructed, strategic nature of objectivity and the identity politics that inform the hiring of journalists and framing of news narratives (e.g., Epstein, 1973; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1972, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979).[92] These apply to journalism in times of peace, or to certain spaces of non-violence in times of war. Studies of journalism in wartime have highlighted the contradiction in journalistic values generated, or at least exposed, in covering war. Tumber (2006) offers a visualization of that contradiction within the context of the 2003 war on Iraq: "On the one hand the journalists carried the occupational ideology of impartiality and objectivity while the military rucksacks on their backs symbolically carried more than the single source of their provisions" (p. 201). As TV producer Tom said, after covering Syria for a few months: "If you even *claim* to be impartial in the face of a massacre, there's something wrong with you as a human being. You can't put the perpetrator of a massacre, the criminal, on the same level as the dead children."[93] Yemeni stringer Ziad offered an even more nuanced view: "We all have our politics. But there's a limit. The limit is humanity. When a child dies, no matter who, no

[92] Objectivity served as a "strategic ritual" to help protect news organizations from libel suits (Tuchman, 1972) and as a means to legitimate journalism and differentiate it from other fields such as public relations (Schudson, 1978), among other functions. At the same time, it was seen as journalism's best way to adhere to facticity, itself constructed through the means available to journalists (Fishman, 1980). Scholarship largely agrees that the selection and framing of news more broadly is not, and cannot, be objective given multiple factors including, but not limited to, the selection of journalists based on specific identities believed to be detached enough to have the capacity for objectivity (Gans, 1979; Epstein, 1973; White, 1950).

[93] Pers. communication, Sept. 2015.

matter where, or when you marry off an eight-year-old girl because you can't afford to feed her, your politics have to be poured towards the innocents."[94]

The complications of objectivity in wartime – of carrying an occupational ideology and a rucksack, real or metaphorical, supplied by an army or other party – apply to any journalist covering any war. But for those journalists long invisible to foreign audiences, objectivity was not expected of them. All of this applies to the journalists one can *see.* Then there are those like Vincent, who began as a stringer before rising to the ranks of award-winning international photographer, and Taym, Rami, Samer, Zahra, Khaled and others who came to journalism from the bullet-riddled streets of their own neighborhoods.

Some in managerial positions were skeptical of stringers' loyalties, concerned largely with facticity and the credibility of the organization. Bureau chief Sophia, whose region of coverage includes Syria, explained:

> In addition to all the other basic considerations, it is really very difficult to work with someone you have never met in person. It's different than interviewing in person and having them on the desk in your office and having a chance to see yourself how this person works.[95]

Sophia said the other "basic considerations" included the stringers' background, such as his ties to local groups, and education or lack thereof. Those ties are frequently at play in journalism. In 2012, Barbara Walters, the "grande dame of American television" (*Barbara Walters apologises,* 2012), publicly admitted to conflict of interest after a Syrian opposition group obtained email exchanges in which she tried to use her leverage in the United States to help the daughter of a member of Bashar al-Assad's inner circle

[94] Pers. communication, Sept. 2018.
[95] Pers. communication, Dec. 2018.

secure a spot at an Ivy League university and an internship with the press. The email exchange came at the heels of Walters having secured a coveted interview with Assad as the Syria war spiraled. This is one of many examples.

Theoretically, the contradictions that entrap stringers, including the contradictions of objectivity/impartiality and war reporting, are rooted in the broader complexities of journalism. Practically, as Sophia noted, it is the institution's credibility that is on the line when a stringer mis-reports or consciously pushes an agenda (as happens on a regular basis in journalism anywhere). On the flipside, that some stringers showed a knack for professionalized journalism was met with exclamations of pleasant surprise by some editors. When Yemeni stringer Khaled consistently provided fast, accurate news and hard-to-come-by contacts for his news organization, for example, bureau chief Mark said the young man had been "the best surprise I had since moving to" the city where regional headquarters was based, nearly five years ago. This is discriminatory in its own right – suspending expectation of adherence to a professional norm, unrealistic though it may be, without training in how to adhere to that norm. Yet it points to another complication at the heart of war, where objectivity is perhaps neither expected nor desired of stringers even as it is incumbent upon them. The stories of Vincent and Jonathan help situate this theoretical complication in a concrete context, highlighting the selectivity in applications of transparency.

Vincent, winner of major European and U.S. journalism awards, did not learn his craft at journalism school, a qualification Sophia pointed to as potentially problematic. The lines between Vincent's personal beliefs and his pictures – his work -- were not blurred. They were nonexistent. He picked up a camera because he could not fight and he

wanted to do something alongside his community, which birthed a militia, armed to the teeth, which in turn trained Vincent. He trained with them because he wanted to fight. When he discovered he could not shoot a weapon at another person, he picked up a camera just to be with his friends. This is how some people come to journalism. Were he and others like him *not* part of the community at war, had he not been motivated to "do something" alongside the militiamen, Vincent may not have discovered his skill as a photojournalist – and the newswires, newspapers and magazines that published his photos on their front pages would not have had access to moments that became emblematic of the civil war. And unlike most stringers, Vincent holds a foreign passport alongside his Lebanese nationality, attended private schools and universities and is fluent in multiple languages. This enabled him, he said, to pitch his pictures to foreign newspapers and magazines and speak to editors in person, without an intermediary. In the later years of the Lebanese civil war, he was sent abroad to cover another war for his employer, and then another, and another, for nearly four decades. Coming from that kind of unique background, Vincent has a unique view on stringers. Some of the stringers interviewed in this dissertation were trained in person by Vincent in Turkey. One of them credited the retired photographer for his career, as he continues to work as a freelancer photographer in the new country where he has resettled.

These ties were, however, invisible to audiences around the world who learned of the Lebanese civil war through his lens. Decades later, it would be difficult if not impossible to tell whether the editors who first paid Vincent for his pictures knew of the extent of his ties and whether they cared. With changes in both the technology and culture of journalism, it would also be difficult if not impossible to hide the background

of stringers – as well as their existence. Vincent, whose own ties to a local militia facilitated his entry into the world of journalism, notes:

> You can't assume because he is X or Y [referring to stringers' political leanings], then he cannot do his job, or her job. But in some cases, I did warn the journalists who were working with the stringer. With [names stringer], I told them, 'be careful, he's close to [Islamist group].' I don't know, you can't know, if this means that it is affecting the work. For photos, it's different. At times you need that proximity, to get a perspective [that] that's the only way to get. But passing information to the desk, that's a different issue.[96]

At the same time as notions of objectivity are giving way to transparency as the defining characteristic of professionalized journalism, multiple lines are blurring, lines between text (or "information") and images, between "professional" and "amateur," between paid labor and free service. Journalism has long been, and must be, predicated on routines that help distinguish it from other media practices and survive as a field (Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 2001). Like objectivity, transparency takes the form of routines or ritualized practices conscribed by and oriented towards a specific end. The next section draws on extant literature on transparency to offer a different model, vertical transparency.

Re-defining Transparency

Amid the current outcry over mis-information and dis-information, transparency has been lauded by some as the "antidote to fake news" (Aronson-Rath, 2017). The Knight Foundation's 2018 report on indicators of news media trust in the United States found the

[96] Pers. communication, March 2019.

vast majority of respondents – 71 percent – ranked transparency alongside accuracy and lack of bias as the most important factors in the trustworthiness of news (*Indicators of News,* 2018). The Knight Commission in 2019 called for standardized methods on "how to disclose the ways they collect, report and disseminate the news", including labeling news, opinion and fact-based commentary, issuing corrections, fact-checking, and use of anonymous sources. The Nieman Lab's list of journalism trends for 2018 also focused heavily on transparency (*Predictions for journalism,* 2018). But what transparency is exactly, and how it is operationalized, is still ongoing debate.

Transparency, writes David Weinberger (2009), is the "new objectivity." And like objectivity, transparency is an abstraction concretized through ritualized practices. Driven in part by changes in technology as well as broader societal changes, journalism's commitment to truth -- a "god-term" of journalism (Zelizer, 2004) – has left it no choice but to be transparent about parts of the newsmaking process. As a journalistic corrective, transparency leans *into* the elusiveness of clean, impersonal, formalized reporting to counterintuitively bolster credibility. Weinberger (2009) writes: "Objectivity is a trust mechanism you rely on when your medium can't do links. Now our medium can." While the medium cannot be said to produce transparency, it has produced ways of knowing that have forced journalism to reconsider how it defines and positions itself vis-à-vis knowledge production.

Within the context of journalism, transparency has been conceptualized as an ethic (Allen, 2008; Phillips, 2010; Plaisance, 2007), norm (Karlsson, 2007; Singer, 2007), ritual (Karlsson, 2007; Phillips, 2010) and spirit (Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014). Across the various frameworks of transparency, scholars generally converge on the idea

of "openness" as its central feature (Allen, 2008; Hayes et al., 2007; Karlsson, 2010; Plaisance, 2007; Singer, 2007). In its most general form, Singer (2007) defines transparency as "accountability to the public" (p. 79). Stuart Allen defines transparency as "making public the traditionally private factors that influence the creation of news" (2008, p. 323). The Knight Foundation provides a concretized definition through specific journalistic guidelines: transparency takes "the forms of disclosing potential conflicts of interest and making additional reporting material available to readers" (*Indicators of news,* 2018). Kovach & Rosenstiel go even further to argue that if the revelation of a potential conflict of interest "cases one in a clearly compromised position, don't take the work" ([2001]2014, p. 147). The reporter's "willingness to be transparent is at the heart of establishing that the reporter is concerned with truth" and "has a public-interest motive, which is the key to credibility" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014, p. 115).

Kovach and Rosenstiel ([2001]2014) offer perhaps the most multi-directional definition of transparency: the idea of a "Spirit of Transparency," a top-down practice that starts within the organization which is reflected in news, and thus extends to audiences. Transparency "starts at the top," with executives opening meetings to staff or making them public in columns. The idea of transparency within the institution sets Kovach & Rosenstiel ([2001]2014) apart from dominant discussions of transparency. The "Spirit of Transparency," however, still aims to "signal one's respect for the audience" and "establish that the journalist has a public-interest motive, which is the key to credibility" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014, pp. 114-115). Alongside the public-interest motive, journalism's perception and treatment of, and transparency around, stringers are also key to credibility. As the work of stringers raises questions around

journalism's actual use of and ties to eyewitnessing in spaces of war, it also complicates the linear notion of transparency.

Like all or any change in journalism, and indeed the creation of institutionalized, professionalized journalism itself, this cannot be traced down to a singular powerful root cause. Transparency is, however, necessitated by and facilitated through changes in the medium. Without veering into technological determinism, Lasica (2004) and Singer (2007) point to the rise of bloggers in journalism's partially-forced adoption of transparency in the place of objectivity. Bloggers' focus on transparency in how they secured information or formed their views – their espousal of particular forms and degrees of political transparency to legitimate their own existence -- forced journalism to be more accountable to its publics to subsequently legitimate *its* existence (Singer, 2007). In one of the earlier studies of blogging, Lasica (2004) traces the roots of transparency to motive and ability:

> Bloggers are transparent in both their motive, including their biases, and their process. They have greater autonomy to speak from the heart than journalists, constrained by institutional norms of objectivity and distance form any given subject. And blogs are characterized by extensive use of links to documents, sources and other evidence to buttress their views and, ultimately, establish their authority.

Weinberger (2009) notes a key difference between the work and media of journalism:

> We thought that that was how knowledge works, but it turns out that it's really just how paper works. Transparency prospers in a linked medium, for you can literally see the connections between the final draft's claims and the ideas that informed it. Paper, on the other hand, sucks at links.

Karlsson (2010) terms the same notion – the ability to see through the report – "disclosure transparency," which "implies that news producers can explain and be open

about the way news is selected and produced" (p. 537). Disclosure transparency communicates processes "*to* but not necessarily *with* the audience" (ibid; italics in original).[97] This translates concretely to audiences' "embedded ability to see through the published draft" (Weinberger, 2009). At the heart of transparency, then, is journalism's decades-old attachment to public interest, a public defined narrowly and problematically as that from which the reporter her or himself hails. Again, the accountability necessitated by and effected through transparency is enclosed within the institution and those it speaks to.

Current conceptualizations of transparency in fact do away with the idea of the "view from nowhere" (Rosen, 2010). Yet in so doing, they continue to fall within the limits of one plane. Even if the view is defined and disclosed, discussions of transparency are oriented horizontally, toward the relationship between the reporter and audience. Accountability, while external, is still self-referential: the institution speaks to an audience representative of its own dominant identity. Accountability to those doing its work from the frontlines both requires and engenders a different form of transparency, one which not only throws into question the fundamental identity narrative of the foreign correspondent but the practices which upheld it in the heyday of journalism as the writer's profession.

[97] Karlsson also offers the notion of "participatory transparency," which "aims at getting the audience *involved* in the news production process in various ways" (2010, p. 538; italics mine). Neither of these forms of transparency bring stringers into the picture.

Vertical transparency

The Middle East correspondents interviewed here – most of them northern-western or with dual citizenship -- voiced strong support for another form of transparency, a sort of controlled, vertical disclosure. Thinking of transparency along a vertical axis, extending through the institution rather than across to the audience, yields a slightly different picture. With the exception of Kovach and Rosenstiel's ([2001]2014) journalism manual, vertical transparency is all but absent from the literature. Weinberger's (2009) analysis on links and how journalism works, Karlsson's (2010) idea of disclosure versus participation, or the limitations of journalistic transparency, and even Kovach and Rosenstiel's ([2001]2014) idea of a comprehensive "Spirit of Transparency" do not push past the official boundaries of the institution and its walls, literal or metaphoric.

In the newsroom, today's transparency requires a specificity and accuracy that kills the literary, narrative voice central to "good" Anglo-American journalism. That specificity is a tricky equation, and one that is not equally applied across the board. Among the practices that muddy the idea of transparency are dealing with sources to secure information, and not upsetting the sources so that they will no longer give you information. This goes back to Adam's questioning of who the unnamed sources so often cited were, or Nour's description of different credibility given to the same sources depending on who is citing them. For example, "if a piece reports 'experts say,' how many experts did the reporter actually talk to?" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014, p. 115). Phillips (2010) and Kovach & Rosenstiel ([2001]2014) highlight the issue of source confidentiality within the push for journalistic transparency. In her discussion of

transparency as the new ethic, Phillips notes that "protection of confidentiality is not an issue with the vast majority of material routinely handled by journalists" (2010, p. 380). Protection of confidentiality is however a norm in journalism in certain parts of the world where any interaction with the press may put officials or private individuals at risk, including Saudi Arabia and Yemen. And yet anonymity – such as in this dissertation – lends far less credibility to the story than identifying all sources.

Journalists have long struggled with making this call. Kovach & Rosenstiel ([2001]2014) offer a means of negotiating source confidentiality and transparency: If a source or subject is granted anonymity, the journalist must clearly state why. "Sources say" is not untruthful unto itself; withholding that the news is a report stated by a source, and not an actual event, is. Walter Lippman illustrates:

> There is no defense, no extenuation, no excuse whatsoever, for stating six times that Lenin is dead when the only information the paper possesses is a report that he is dead from a source repeatedly shown to be unreliable. The news, in that instance, is not that "Lenin is Dead" but "Helsingfors Says Lenin is Dead." And a newspaper can be asked to take responsibility of not making Lenin more dead than the source of the news is reliable. If there is one subject on which editors are most responsible it is in their judgment of the reliability of the source. (as cited in Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014, p. 119)

The debate still wages, particularly among the agencies which bank largely on being first in their constant competition for clients. Whether to withhold the story until a more reliable source is available or run with a source and later issue a correction if necessary is under continuous negotiation in newsrooms. Claiming transparency in a story to which one has minimal access also throws a wrench in the equation. The other option, in the cases studied here, is to leave atrocities uncovered. In the absence of offices inside Yemen, most northern-western news outlets today regularly source stringers,

official media and local officials (more often than not via stringers; see Chapter 2). "This report could not be independently confirmed" and "government representatives were not immediately reachable for comment" are also regularly inserted into copy filed by stringers. As Nour noted, the same sources are treated different depending on who is sourcing them. (This is not to say that all stringers are or should be trusted all the time). The same goes for Syria. The last of several chemical weapons attack in Syria, in April 2018 in the Damascus suburb of Douma, was not covered and could not be covered by a single foreign correspondent. As *The New York Times* wrote, in a story headlined "Dozens Suffocate in Syria as Government is Accused of Chemical Weapons Attack":

> It was not possible to independently verify the reports because Douma is surrounded by Syrian government forces, which prevent access by journalists, aid workers and investigators. (*Dozens Suffocate,* 2018).

That is transparency at work in war. The news is often pushed to journalists, primarily locals who may be staff, stringers, fixers or contacts, via groups party to or involved in the conflict. The deaths of dozens of Syrian is reported as a fact in the lede: "Dozens of Syrians choked to death after a suspected chemical attack … with aid groups on Sunday blaming President Bashar al-Assad's government … and Western governments expressing outrage" (ibid). No one is sourced for the deaths, which usually implies the journalist was there. The story out of Douma is datelined Beirut. The second paragraph reads: "Rescue workers in Syria reported finding at least 42 people dead in their homes of apparent suffocation" and sources videos circulating by "antigovernment activists" (ibid). The story openly states why secondary sources are so heavily relied on: Douma is surrounded by government forces which will not let journalists in. Images and videos in the *Times* story are credited to the three wires – Reuters, AFP and the AP –

which received the footage or images from the White Helmets or stringers. The newsmaking process is convoluted and far from ironclad. Its defense is in the openness it shows in the text.

Thinking of the spirit of transparency as a bottom-up practice, stringers are also aware of the link between transparency and credibility, or the utility of transparency to boost their legitimacy. As transparency, or a certain articulation of transparency, is a means for journalists to boost credibility with their audiences (Allen, 2008; Singer, 2007; Karlsson, 2010), it is also the stringers' best defense. Whether transparency in how they secure access plays in their favor or against them within the institution seems to depend on the staffer in charge. Generally, showing an awareness of the sensitive nature of balancing personal ties with professional trust in sources seemed to boost stringers' credibility with the institution.

Stringer Khaled, who reports for a leading Arabic-language news organization and strings for a western organization, turns to transparency somewhat strategically to manage the different demands of his employers. In discussing how to get the facts out of a conflict as complicated as Yemen, and whether it was possible, Khaled put it bluntly: "Don't listen to what I say on TV. That's for a specific audience. What [the international news group] publishes, that's closer to reality."[98] Khaled's editor, Alex, sang his praises. "He's fantastic. He has this ability to know, 'okay this is what is real, this is what I need to promote on the TV, this is what I think' - because, of course, he is Yemeni, he has an opinion. But anything that happens in Yemen, we are on the phone to Khaled. Even if it's not in his hometown. He has been consistent and trustworthy."[99]

[98] Pers. communication, Feb. 2017.
[99] Pers. communication, Sept. 2018.

Helen, a bureau chief in charge of coverage of the early years of the Syrian war, recounted another instance in which she pushed a stringer on the source of his information. The stringer had initially cited *masdar muttale'* ("an informed source"). When pushed, Helen said, the stringer said the source was his maternal cousin.

Transparency: New word for old instinct?

Disclaimers of being unable to confirm information – now reflective of transparency – have long precedence in the press. Transparency is a new word for an old journalistic instinct, or, as Jay Rosen (2017) writes, "transparency is not a new idea… we're finally starting to see what it means to build a value proposition around it."[100] The first edition of Kovach & Rosenstiel's *The Elements of Journalism* stated "the willingness of the journalist to be transparent about what he or she has done is at the heart of establishing that the journalist is concerned with the truth… Too much journalism fails to say anything about methods, motives and sources" (2001, p. 96). With an eye on motive in particular, Mark Levy's (1981) pre-digital idea of "disdained news" captures journalists turning to strategic transparency (although he does not conceptualize it as such) long before they could be called out by bloggers or audiences with access to multiple sources of news. In order to distance themselves from stories they were weary of but pressured to write by their bosses or the competition, or stories they did not consider "serious" enough to warrant their byline, journalists introduced expressions like "this reporter" and "some

[100] Rosen offers 11 concrete points (plus a 12th overarching guide – "show your work") of how transparency works or can work. These include a disclosure page (or dropping "the voice of god"), the cost of the story versus the money made, and what the journalist does not know. See Rosen (2019).

observers" as well as "editorially judgmental words or phrases which clearly suggest the journalist's point of view about the tainted phenomenon" (Levy, 1981, p. 28).

Misleading sources are a historic complication of the work of journalism. The current trend of transparency (journalism, like fashion or medicine or any other industry, also goes through trends) both makes imperative and gives journalism the chance to disclose to audiences how complicated that is. To return to the example given by editor Khalil on the death of Yemeni ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh's nephew, better sourcing could have been a better option (although still not ideal). Tarek Saleh's death was announced by his own political party or, as it turns out, a few persons within the party. When he appeared in a video weeks later, the agency ran a story incorporating that he had believed to have been killed in the lede. Another wire had a similar issue with being given a scoop from a high-ranking source. The agency alerted news of a major event that would reportedly happen within 24 hours from a military official. The event never happened. The agency did not issue a retraction. The initial story did not note that the news could not be confirmed from other sources.[101]

"Disdaining the news," writes Levy (1981), "is similar to objectivity as a strategic ritual in that both behaviors are fundamentally defensive, seeking to organize and routinize work in a way which minimizes risks and maximizes individual and organizational autonomy" (pp. 27-28). In her discussion of objectivity long before the advent of the webpage, Tuchman (1972) noted that a central dimension of that ritual of newsmaking was the publicness of its performance: "the correct handling of a story, that is, the use of certain procedures discernible to the news consumer, protects journalists

[101] All details have been omitted per request of the journalist who relayed the story. The story is still accessible online.

from the risks of their trade, including critics" (Tuchman, 1972, p. 661). Likewise, transparency is a fundamentally defensive strategy – one which must be *discernible* to certain parties and audiences for it to be effective.

Put succinctly, the willingness to "show your work" (Rosen, 2019) requires making public the steps – the dynamics, ties and decisions – involved in making a story with "openness" to the public and the interest of the public at heart. [102] These steps, however, are defined by the journalist and editor and do not involve the stringer;[103] as members of the same institution, transparency becomes planar and self-referential. The question of reflexivity, or whether it is possible to recognize or identify *all* steps of the production of news and who has the authority to claim transparency has been sufficiently met, is much more difficult to address. Transparency has been crafted to atone for specific shortcomings to audiences – again reflecting a planar understanding of transparency. Showing one's work is immediately contingent on what work one recognizes, and to whom it belongs. That process is defined by those already within the institution. This self-referentiality of accountability contradicts its very aim, accountability.

Among the journalists interviewed for this dissertation, there was a universal agreement that stringers, as well as fixers, are indispensable to coverage of Syria and

[102]Contrary to the bulk of studies on transparency and journalism, Allen (2008) cautions against journalism's adoption of transparency as a means of boosting credibility with audiences. He instead makes the case that legitimacy "is maintained not through transparency, but rather by making difficult ethical decisions that often involve difficult story decisions" (Allen, 2008, p. 336). Transparency, in his view, is a "good in itself" that "will aid in the establishment of democratic discourse" (ibid). The limitations and problems of coupling journalism and democracy have been well-documented. See, for example, Zelizer (2012).

[103] This links back to the *New York Times* story on Syrians suffocating to death in Douma. While it stands out as exemplary of openness, it is nonetheless limited to that one plane of accountability. A local journalist is credited as a contributor in the footnote.

Yemen. Recognition of their work, and the rights afforded stringers by the institution, have improved over the course of the Syrian war in particular. The reasons for improved work conditions for stringers include both principle and pragmatism. Horizontal transparency, as described by scholars, is driven at least in part by the impact of changing media. Chief among these is the rise of blogging (Singer, 2007), the need to publish stories immediately, with decreased time for multi-source verification (Karlsson, 2010) and an increased sense of honesty and responsibility towards one's audience (Kovach & Rosenstiel, [2001]2014; Singer, 2007). The same can be said of vertical transparency: in its problematic, fuzzy form, it is driven by reasons both principled and pragmatic. The two are not always easily separated.

Social media: a new mafraj

Prior to training stringers, finding them can sometimes present a problem – both in terms of recruitment and following up on stories or for payment. Studies of fixers point to two main methods through which they are hired: by word of mouth (Murell, 2019; Palmer, 2019) or through the local press for which they are already working as journalists (Palmer, 2019). Social media is also a crucial tool to recruit field reporters and build contacts (in addition to the challenges presented by micro-blogging and other online novelties and apps). Twitter in particular, among English-speaking journalists, helps correspondents covering "international" stories find local "help" (Palmer & Fontan, 2007; Murrell, 2013; quotation marks mine). However, these are often framed as "coincidental' or 'serendipitous' encounters with fixers" (Palmer, 2019, p. 23). And they

are met and matched by stringers' own presence and visibility on those same platforms through which they were seen, and therefore recruited, by the news organizations.

Correspondents interviewed here said they actively scour social media platforms with the explicit intent of finding contacts, including stringers. This part of the newsmaking process remains largely absent from literature on war journalism, including studies on the use of social media for UGC (e.g., Bruns, 2008) and journalists' person social media brand (e.g., Usher, 2014). It is a volitional act, not only serendipitous, which has, of course, its utilities and drawbacks. Actively seeking stringers on social media can lead to employment of talented journalists. It can also entail compromising the safety of people in the field, as was editor Tanya's experience.

In Beirut, Tanya began as a correspondent for a local newspaper before becoming a regular contributor to the northern-western press. In 2016, she met for coffee with a foreign correspondent of a high-profile newspaper, upon his request. The conversation was very friendly, she said, and the foreign correspondent asked her how she had managed to crack a particular story. "It was my mistake. I let it slip that I had someone inside," Tanya recalled. He asked her to share her contact, a fixer and stringer with whom Tanya had spent more than a year building a relationship. The contact was key to a political story closely linked to the Syria crisis. Tanya said she had the immediate instinct to tell the foreign correspondent she would get back to him: "I went home and thought about it, and decided no I don't want to, first of all, I don't want to do anything to jeopardize my contact. And second because no, f*ck that, I worked f*cking hard for that s*it."

The next day, her contact messaged her to say that same foreign correspondent has reached out to her via social media. The contact was panicked and asked Tanya, the only journalist with whom she was working, if she had shared her information with him. "We finally figured out how he might have got to her," said Tanya. "I swear I think he went through all of my Twitter followers and found, like, the ones that could be them, and for all I know he might have he reached out to them all."[104]

Alongside WhatsApp, crucial for field reporting,[105] and the *mafraj,* crucial for recruiting, social media platforms were a key means of *recruitment* of field reporters. That recruitment is the foundation of the complexity of the relationship between journalism, as a professionalized institution, and stringers. Sophia, regional chief editor with the prime competitor of Andrew's organization, explained:

> For a time we put people on the ground to complement that, to try and find human stories. At the beginning that was a priority, before it became too dangerous with the kidnappings and killings around 2013.
>
> So once that avenue was shut off, we were faced with a new challenge. How do we do that? How do we try and report on a place we're not in. That slowly led to the building of a stringer network of some sort. It was complicated in the beginning because there was sort of a great mix between activists and journalists and so on. And then, in a sense that evolved a little bit I think, over time. But it still was imperfect, because you're starting form an imperfect situation, with sort of unique difficulties.

A senior correspondent at an international news organization, Khalil, explained how he devised a system of recruitment based on social media: he follows trending hashtags, in Arabic, in the countries he is tasked with covering. When he finds a tweet that catches his eye, usually an eyewitness statement, picture or video, he monitors that account. He looks for mutual followers and mutual accounts followed. Often, he says,

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[104] Pers. communication, Sept. 2016.
[105] See Chapter Two, "Rethinking Eyewitnessing."

there is someone he knows personally (or who knows someone who knows someone personally, or whom Khalil has known for a long enough time virtually – journalism is very far from scientific) to whom he can reach out and inquire about the account-holder. "You would be shocked how many times someone actually knows the person," Khalil said. "I mean, it's the Middle East, it's very small despite all the action [laughs]." That is how he recruited a key stringer in a major battle in Yemen, the most intense since the outbreak of the current conflict:

> First we tested him a few times, like, asking 'what is happening, can you describe around you.' And we would check with other people we know in Yemen, or in the military or whatever. Then he started giving us great details, like 'well, my kids have been home since Monday. All schools are closed. The grocery store is closed, me and my wife, we went today to try to get bread and water. People are standing in line to get gas,' and he takes a picture of the line, like, of the people standing in front with their big empty metal containers. 'I can hear bombing.' And he records himself saying that [holds up phone in front of mouth], 'Yes, hello, it is Tuesday, November whatever, 11 PM, bombing has just started, it seems it's coming from *masalan* [for example] the east.' And you can hear the bombing behind him.[106]

They gave him a pseudonym, cross-checked reports with U.N. and other sources, datelined the story out of the flashpoint city – often with a joint byline alongside Khalil or another staff reporter -- and managed to get coverage out of an area under siege and intermittent media blackout.[107] On whether this boosted his standing in the company, Khalil said it was his job to "make sure we have the best coverage possible."

Photojournalist Vincent follows a similar process. A European photographer friend of his in Syria had begun to repost and retweet pictures taken by a young man on

[106] Pers. communication, June 2019.

[107] I asked Khalil if and how the stringer was paid. She was paid, via another Yemeni stringer the organization worked with in a nearby city that was not under complete blockade. They wired the money to him via Western Union, and he sent the cash in a bag with a local photographer friend of his who was going to the frontline. She received the money weeks later.

the frontlines. Vincent asked his friend about the pictures. The European said the young man had bought a camera off a family fleeing the city and asked if he could accompany him to learn from him. After a test period, Vincent hired that stringer – Rami, who went on win multiple awards (and eventually raise employer suspicions of links to ISIS; again, journalism in general and war in particular are far from scientific).

The contact-building done online, and specifically via social media platforms, is a crucial part of the newsmaking process in conflict zones where foreign correspondents are not themselves present. From a different vantage point than that espoused by existing scholarship, then, digitization and specifically social media have *facilitated* certain facets of the work of journalism even as they *complicate* that same work. This is not to endorse techno-optimism (I have, at the time of writing, tweeted exactly 0 times). It is to document a use of social media that journalists themselves may not often admit or even recognize. The visibility of Yemeni and Syrian journalists on Twitter and Facebook introduces added dynamics – one which increases their vulnerability, the other which boosts their visibility (and thus may increase their physical vulnerability at home as it helps engender recognition of their work).

This chapter opened with the story of Tanya, the journalist whose contact feared she had been compromised when a well-known foreign correspondent reached out to her. Tanya and her contact surmised that he must have pieced together who the contact was after Tanya let a detail of her location slip during the conversation. "Imagine, he went through every single one of my followers and contacts on probably every social media to see who had pinned their location," Tanya said:

> I never would have, like, done that. It's unprofessional, it's just f*cking stupid. I will never talk to him again. And it's not like he got anything either.

> She didn't even reply to him. What did he think, he would be like 'hey, *ana sa7afe ajnabe* [I'm a foreign journalist] and she would, *baaah* [imitates mouth gaping] 'oh okay'.
>
> (…)
>
> These f*cking famous journalists, they're so obsessed with their social media brand they don't even realize you keep doing this you will have no career here soon. No one will f*cking talk to you anymore.

Tanya's contact was upset with her for some time, she said. The relationship has never returned to what it was.

While this is not a study of social media, every single interviewee raised the role of social media platforms. They especially cannot be ignored when they plays a central role in both recruitment, as illustrated above, but also recognition. Foreign correspondents can no longer "hide their work" when some of those doing the work – taking the pictures, providing the content and context and contacts – have tens of thousands of followers themselves online. Tanya, Khalil and Vincent were among a dozen journalists who highlighted the centrality of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in their recruitment of and work with stringers. It would be difficult for them to deny it, as some stringers gain massive followings themselves on social media. Nour has nearly 33,000 followers on Twitter. Her former boss, who has a verified account on Twitter, has 15,000 followers -- less than half. Stringer Taym has 12,000 followers on another social media app, where he now identifies himself as a "freelancer" rather than a stringer. "I was a stringer in my country," Taym said. He explained:

> I wasn't focused on social media. It was war, survival, where is my family, I need to file these photos. Now, here, there's time. A lot of time. I realize it's my tool, it's how I can make my work be known. Here [where he has resettled as a refugee] I am a photographer like everyone else (…) Actually not like everyone else. They [staff photographers] take some pictures and

> go home when the sun sets. I take my camera to the metro, to the street, anywhere I can find something to shoot.[108][109]

With stringers turning to the same platforms from which some of them were recruited to show the fruits of that recruitment – namely, pictures and videos -- news organizations have had to be transparent. The byline in particular is easily separated from the dateline: a story on Syria, for example, can be datelined Beirut; a story on Yemen datelined Cairo; etc.

Journalism's relationship to time has long been central to its functioning. Journalism's engagement with the world embodies what Michael Schudson calls an "ongoing present" (1986). The temporality introduced by social media, the immediacy afforded by and effected through social media platforms (Usher, 2014), complicates traditional control of the flow of information (and mis- and dis-information). Transparency becomes *driven by* journalism's contemporary temporality; the immediacy imperative, so to speak, is seized upon by stringers to claim their work externally, on their social media platforms, if not immediately within the news organization. Temporality forces transparency: Editors voiced disapproval when stringers posted their pictures to their personal social media accounts instead of or before filing to their organizations, or posted the same picture without crediting the organization, even if the organization published the picture under the stringer's name. Embedded in the very visibility which made stringers discernible to news organizations in need of eyes and ears on the ground is just that: a visibility that forces transparency. Garnering tens of

[108] Pers. communication, Nov. 2018.
[109] This notion – of roaming the streets looking through a camera lens – is central to another part of the work of these journalists, addressed in Chapter 4.

thousands of followers on social media, who look for the person credited in the image, in turn serves as a guarantee of visibility.

This has created a headache for some editors. Tarek is a graduate of what Vincent called the "war generation." He is a national of an Arab state and does not carry a second nationality (many staff reporters are dual nationals). He is an artist by training and began taking pictures as war seeped across his country. After more than a decade as a stringer for a major news organization, starting when war erupted in his hometown, he was made staff and now covers events around the world, from war to sports to the arts. Getting his editors to send him to cover a story outside his country of residence is, he says, "a war." His editor, meanwhile, appears to view getting Tarek to slow down on social media a constant source of conflict. "Maybe it's faster to post to Instagram or maybe it's a spur-of-the-moment impulsive thing, but we constantly had to remind him to file first, post later" when Tarek became interested in the platform a few years ago, his editor Carl said.

Carl cited two examples in which he noticed Tarek had posted a good photo to Instagram before it landed at the agency. When he confronted him, he said, Tarek replied he was about to file even better pictures. Were they better? "Definitely weren't worse," Carl replied. "But you were dispatched to cover a story and you work for us." Tarek had a clear response to his boss' dissatisfaction with his social media activity (which he has had to use on more than one occasion at work, according to both Carl and Tarek). Publicity was good for his employer, as "everyone knows I'm a [news organization] photographer and I put it in my profile"; "what does it matter, anyway, it's barely a few minutes difference and it takes them too long to publish"; and finally, in true journalist fashion, "I work for them but they don't own me."

But garnering tens of thousands of followers on social media, which stringers such as Taym and Nour have succeeded to do, depends on individuals within an organization who make the unilateral decision to credit them, recalibrating the balance of asymmetry to the benefit of the institution. Nour said: "Who said this is for my protection? How can you make this decision about my work without even asking me?"

It is important to note that even if the resource relationship is largely unilateral, with institutions controlling compensation and credit, stringers also make unilateral decisions to tap into institutional resources, subverting their position in the margins and taking advantage of minimal visibility. One anecdote is the legendary story among Middle East correspondents of a stringer who got his hands on a company Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) and used it to download porn, which he proceeded to turn into a lucrative CD/DVD business in the middle of the Iraq war -- until the company traced who was racking up exorbitant BGAN bills.

Phillip Knightley quotes journalist Tim Page as coining the term "mercenary journalism" ([1975]2004, p. 460). The phrase refers to "non-professionals … thrill-seekers … anyone calling himself a freelance journalist" (Knightley, [1975]2004, pp. 460-461). While the side business of porn distribution can be viewed as a mercenary act, the root cause is flipped: rather than being pulled to the thrill of war, the Iraqi stringer found himself reporting on a war he did not travel to and channeled the amenities made available to him into a reportedly lucrative side hustle. And above all, for every porn distributor story or case in which stringers took advantage of company resources (suspending what it means to take advantage, by whom and to whom) are dozens of local

journalists killed during the wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, the unintended consequences of precarious, exploited labor and life.

For every story of a stringer's side hustle are five stories of injustice. When a Syrian stringer was killed reporting out of Homs in 2012, the high-profile international news organization he worked for had a problem. Not only did they not know how to compensate him, or how much; they still owed him money. And they couldn't get it to him in time. Charles, the regional editor at the time, recalled, "There are no banks, no Western Union, nothing. We owed him around $2500, or the equivalent in Syrian currency … We had the money, we just could not actually get it to him, his mother."[110] The money was eventually taken to Homs physically in cash. Years later, a senior correspondent at another organization recounted a request by her bureau chief:

> We had a stringer seriously injured and like it looked like he was going to be in the hospital for a really long time. So instead of putting him on retainer and f*cking paying him for the time he couldn't work, [the bureau chief] freaking asks us to donate to his family. Like he even suggested the amount. And get this. He was nice enough to offer that HR can take it straight out of our paychecks. I swear to god I wanted to ask him why he didn't just donate it all himself, because god knows they can f*cking afford it with those salaries. Like, this has nothing to do with whether I want to help [the stringer] or not. Of course I want to help, but that's not the f*cking point.[111]

The correspondent said she was not sure whether this was in lieu of or in addition to compensation by the company. Editors and bureau chiefs across the board said their companies could not afford to bring on all stringers on as staff reporters. Photo editor Vincent was more transparent: "It's not just that they can't afford it. This makes it easier to forget about them when the war is over. There is no legal anything, no paperwork, no buyouts, no end of service. So whatever they give them, it is charity."

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[110] Personal interview, August 27, 2015.
[111] Personal interview, April 19, 2019.

The opacity of transparency[112]

On a warm spring day in Beirut, over coffees and croissants almost too cliché to be real, foreign correspondent Nicole had just caught wind of the appointment of another northern-western woman to head a competing newspaper's bureau in the city, tasked with overseeing coverage of Lebanon and Syria. The post had been empty for months. Except, as Nicole noted, the post had in fact not been empty for months;

> To look at how they're treating it, it's like you'd think they had, like, *zero* coverage of anything when [former foreign correspondent] left. Omar had literally been doing everything singlehandedly, for literal months. (…) And like, we all know that the stringer does everything for [former foreign correspondent] anyway. It's not like their coverage dropped or stopped over the past months. I mean he has all the contacts, all the information, he fucking has to babysit them. And like now he has this new girl, from bumf*ck middle of nowhere [northern-western country] that he has to help.

Omar, a Syrian stringer, is a friend of Nicole's. When the last bureau chief left, and no foreigner had been appointed to the post, Omar said he had a moment of hope that he would be made staff. He posted stories he was covering, and links to his bylined stories, all over his social media platforms. He was not hired. The hiring of a Syrian in Lebanon is a complicated process, with no guarantee of a work permit. He continued to look for a full-time job with a news organization. He was recently hired as a staff reporter by a major competitor of that paper – a highly-regarded publication in the English-

[112] I borrow this phrase from Glissant's (1997) *Poetics of Relation.* While Glissant was writing on transparency and opacity from a different angle – the right to opacity, and the impossibility of true transparency without some form of domination – his pairing of the two seemingly juxtaposed words is useful.

speaking world. His Twitter bio still notes his former affiliation to the initial paper which hired him to string.

What follows are 10 cases drawn from my interviews and the press, selected among hundreds, which highlight a broader pattern of institutional opacity enabled by transparency. All are either drawn from my interviews or from public talks and publications. All of these happened in the era of transparency as journalism's defining norm. Drawing on interviews and a close reading of published and broadcast stories reveals a discourse that does the work of upholding a master narrative that replicates tropes from other media, including literature, as it delivers them via newer media. This work is critical to the maintenance of professionalized journalism as an exclusive, exclusionary authority. It is now however readily recognized as such – work – under the definition of journalistic transparency. While I draw on individual cases and articles, this is not an attack on individual reporters, who face pressures and restrictions comprehensible only to those who have had to work under those same conditions. The interpretation I offer is not the fault of any one reporter, although it is every reporter's responsibility (fault, or blame, and responsibility being two very different things).

Over time, journalists construct themselves as authorities over the stories that they tell in near-real time (Zelizer, 1992). In telling those stories, they use interpretive frames that draw on ideology unmarked in its normalcy (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1981; Goffman, 1974; Hackett & Zhao, 1994; Schudson, 1978). In the context of the Middle East, the most evident historical and ideological beliefs that shape the news harken to traditional colonial Orientalism, conjuring the objectification, exoticization and feminization of the

"Orient" (Said, 1978).[113] The misrecognition of the subject, i.e., the exclusion of that subject as party to its own representation or treatment (Fraser, 2000), surfaces in both news stories and interactions among journalists.

This is further complicated by a pervasive sense of empathy and social justice within the journalism, an institution where conversation is generally held by its representatives and elites. Incidentally, this is an institution which at the same time represents "the uppermost echelons of the culture industries, where woke liberalism is de rigueur and departures from it are stigmatized" (Salam, 2018). While it is not a phrase that yields a solid hit on GoogleScholar, "woke liberalism" may be worth considering as a contemporary iteration of Gans' (1979) set of enduring values not recognized as values, or paraideology.[114] Jay Rosen (2017) conceptualizes this slant as "the story that generates all stories," or journalism's "master narrative." The master narrative, as it applies to journalism:

> [T]oo easily eludes attention: the big story, sometimes the back story, often a fragment of a narrative, that generates all the other stories, which are smaller pieces… There is no reliable index to replicating patterns in news coverage.
>
> (…)
>
> Because journalists do "live" within their narratives, they often don't see them… This ghostly matter – of a master narrative instructing the news machine – is not debated in newsrooms the way the day's top stories are. It is not examined at conferences… Officially, it is not in the job description of the American press.

[113] Said's work has been critiqued from a number of vantage points. Sadik Jalal al-'Azm's (1981) *Al-Istishraq wal-Istishraq al-Mu'akes* ("Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse") notes Said's neglect of the materialist conditions of orientalism in favor of orientalism as an idea. Where Said holds orientalism and orientalists at the service of the ideologies of western powers, al-'Azm points to western government's quest for territorial control and power. Al-'Azm also critiques the use of western standards and concepts, such as democracy and feminism in their academic definitions, to evaluate emancipation from orientalist views internalized by those for whom they speak. While these critiques cannot be ignored, Said's basic premise remains a useful articulation of the forces at play.

[114] For an analysis of liberalism as social responsibility in journalism, see Ward (2009).

The master narrative, as it relates to journalism, is not discussed in newsrooms and is fully embodied by the professional journalist. It guides the unconscious, or at least unspoken, assumptions and beliefs that structure the informal networking and interactions central to newsmaking, and the study of the latter. Extrapolating that definition to the study of journalism, the master narrative is not accessible through only interviews or newsroom observations, and may be left uninterrogated if it that same narrative is embodied by the researcher. On the surface, the master narrative appears to be empathy for the victims.[115] As TV producer Tom said, "there's something wrong with you as a human being" if you do not empathize with the victims of the wars you cover. Openness about viewpoint, or potential bias, is an articulation of transparency. Admitting that the reporter could not report on the story, as in the case of the *Times'* story on the Douma massacre, is likewise an articulation of transparency. These clear examples of what in theory would be journalistic shortcomings today boost legitimacy by virtue of their openness (Singer, 2007). Being upfront about the immediate, real-time complications in reporting is undeniably transparent; that transparency may in fact cut across both journalism's immediate telling of the news, or what Zelizer (1993) calls its local mode,

[115] Empathy is a central talking point in journalism today. If conceptualized as the basic ability to take the perspective of the other (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), journalism presents an ideal vehicle for the practice of empathy in telling the stories of others around the world. The *New York Times,* VICE News and the *Guardian,* among others, have introduced virtual reality reporting in a bid to foster audience empathy. See, for example, the *Times*' "Bear Traps and Empathy Engines" *(*Hiltner, 2016) and "Chris Milk, Spike Jonze and VICE News Bring the First-Ever Virtual Reality Newscast to Sundance" (2015). The problems with empathy as a moral drive have been explored from various angles. Empathy is biased. We are more likely to feel empathy for persons deemed attractive by conventional standards (Bloom, 2016). We tend to empathize with those who look like us (ibid). We tend to empathize only through what neuroscientists call mirror neurons: empathy is only possible if you have previously experienced something similar (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). The debate around empathy and its merits and discontents notwithstanding, empathy is a popular talking point among the journalists interviewed here, many of whom say they do the job because they care.

and its durational mode, through which it constitutes itself as an authority over time or in retrospect (Zelizer, 1993). That transparency translates horizontally, across time, obfuscates its hierarchical reductionism: that it upholds a systemic discrimination cutting across the institution vertically, seeping into both informal interactions and what the news tells as a story.

Transparency thus becomes a means to opacity or obfuscation not through the individual actors involved, but the conditions which enable claims to transparency and visibility.[116] Upholding any master narrative requires discursive work, institutional work, interpersonal work and intrapsychic[117] work. As there is no "reliable index" (Rosen, 2017) to extracting and codifying news patterns, including both patterns visible in the news and patterns structuring interactions behind the news, I draw on news stories, interviews and interactions as reported to me by my interviewees in an attempt to show the "the implicit and usually invisible ideologies, systems and assumptions which operate globally in a society to order knowledge and experience" (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 3). Work goes into upholding that master narrative, whether in the form of the invisible ideology of misrecognition (Fraser, 2000), Orientalism (Said, 1978) or colonial discourse (Spurr, 1993). That work is not only not recognized as work, it is made even more invisible by journalism's claims to transparency. Foregrounding what journalism does not always acknowledge it is saying allows for the examination of not only what the news itself contains, but the stories, informal interactions and guiding assumptions as derivatives of one and the same system. Looking at the basics of "good" journalism – at

[116] Deleuze's idea of luminosity, in which certain conditions, or light, make certain things visible and others invisible here comes to mind.
[117] While everything involves the psyche, including interpersonal interactions and writing, the psychology of the master narrative is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

how journalists interact with contacts, how they contextualize with color, how they employ literary metaphor – complicates how we understand what transparency means. Visibility, even as a historic recourse, can obfuscate invisibility. The binary of the marked and unmarked, going back to the linguistics of Jakobson and Trubetskoy (Trubetskoy, 1975), points to the trouble with visibility.

Jakobson expanded the idea of markedness beyond semantics and into a "global structural principle" (Battistella, 1996, p. 124) that guides the entirety of our worldviews. Persons, things, behaviors or perspectives taken as aberrant are marked; those taken for granted, reflective of the dominant structure, go unmarked. The act of categorizing, of labeling through words, constructs a meaning imbued into the category that draws on the broader structural principle of what is unmarked and why. Journalism ethnographies reflect this categorization, even if they may not name it as such. Gans conceptualizes them as unwritten rules, which may also refer to no rules at all. For example, while news organizations were reluctant to hire black reporters to cover the civil rights movement, "the inability of white reporters to enter the ghetto slums during the disturbances of the 1960s thus created instantaneous jobs for black reporters" (Gans, 1979, p. 121). Expanding on Gans, Pamela Newkirk documents black journalists' experiences at the *Los Angeles Times.* The reporters said they had been sent to cover the riots of the 1990s, but their stories were written by white staff in the office; journalists at the Daily News reported not one black journalist had been sent to the West coast to cover the O.J. Simpson trial (Newkirk, 2000). The same calculations did not appear to be made for U.S. coverage of stories involving white perpetrators, such as the Sandy Hook shootings, the Oklahoma City bombing or the run-up to and invasion of Iraq in 2003. On the one hand,

then, the mark of unmarkedness is not only that it is not an aberration, but that it is not a point of view. On the other hand, for the marked/unmarked binary to become a global structure, it must be internalized. Markedness is internalized by the marked (see, for example, Fanon, 1967). This further complicates news consumption by those whom the news renders visible on questionable grounds and in questionable ways.

Every journalist will likely make a mistake at some point, or many points. Dealing with stories that one tries to make facts of leaves one liable. The problem arises when credibility is automatically loaned to certain journalists and not others, and on bases that appear to have little to do with the actual production of work. It becomes more pronounced when facts are planted in broader context, structural and systemic. As Edouard Glissant writes, "If we become conscious of this and give up trying to reduce such behaviors to the obviousness of a transparency, this will, perhaps, contribute to lightening their load, as every individual begins not grasping his own motivations, taking himself apart in this manner" (1997, p. 193).

Transparency from another angle: A selection of scenes

1. Syria: 'Better than Google Translate.'

An Arab-American journalist who has covered Syria receives an email from a freelancer who has never covered, or been to, Syria:

> [Emailer's name] here; we met a couple of times through [mutual friend]. I'm working on a piece about Syria... Apologies if this is an imposition, but I just thought I'd ask:
>
> [Mutual friend] told me you've done some work covering Syria, and was hoping that if you had a spare second this weekend, you might be able to help me out. I have a few documents… that I'd love for you to look at –

> they're in Arabic, and Google Translate just isn't cutting it. Any help untangling them would be greatly appreciated – they're crucial to the piece. Let me know if you're up for it![118]

2. Syria: Perpetual citizen (in exile)

Nour, a trained Syrian journalist, is paid to film footage out of a city under siege for a European news channel. She is identified as a "citizen journalist" in her own story by the channel that paid her to film said story. She has since quit working for or with the news channel, as a stringer or fixer.[119]

3. Syria: 'Would you do this? For free?'

That same journalist is at a meeting with a producer for a major TV channel. The producer requests the correspondent put her in touch with her contacts in Syria – in fact, give her her contacts – and then vouch for her team with those contacts. The producer does not have the budget to pay for that service, and the story will of course be credited to the TV reporter.

"I said to her: would you accept to do this? For free?" Nour recalls. The producer hesitated, she says, and replied: "Honestly? No."

4. Syria: 'Did you tell him who I was?'

[118] Pers. communication, Jan. 2014.
[119] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019

Tanya's contact in a Hezbollah-controlled area had been contacted by a foreign correspondent. She immediately suspected Tanya had compromised her identity.[120]

5. Syria: 'Very pleasant mountain folk' fight for 'horrible piece of real estate'

On April 4, 2014, as war wreaked havoc on millions of civilians across Syria, Vice runs a story by a correspondent who spent 80 minutes in Qamlishi and Ras al-Ain, Kurdish regions in northern Syria. The author identifies Qamishli as "a big dusty city smooshed right against the Turkish border, like a Syrian Tijuana"[121] and the Kurds as "a group of very pleasant mountain folk who live in the overlap between Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran and want this horrible piece of real estate to be its own country called Kurdistan" (*I spent an hour,* 2014). The story continues:

> The first step I took as I started running for cover behind them was also the last time I thought anything remotely positive about war, which was something to the effect of "Ha, dodging sniper fire, classic war stuff." By the second step my brain had turned into a schizophrenic choir of black-metal vocalists screeching, RUNFASTERWHATTHEFUCKAREYOUDOINGTHISISWHEREYOUDIEAREYOUAFUCKINGMORONYOUWILLGETSHOTINTHENECKANDDIESUPIRTINGBLOODWHYTHEFUCKDIDYOUCOMEHEREBLOOOOOOOD [sic]!" (ibid)
>
> The video version of the story aired that night on Vice's 11:00 PM HBO slot.

6. Syria: 'Unruly' hair and online shopping

[120] I did not reach out to the foreign correspondent to check as that would reveal the identity of my interviewee, who would rather not be named. (Also, I have enough experience in the world of journalists and their contact-building to recognizing readily-available potential deniability in issues of she-said-he-said.)

[121] One cannot but be reminded of Donald Trump's comment on letting "someone else fight over this long blood-stained sand" (Nissenbaum, Coles & Youssef, 2019) when announcing he was pulling US troops allied with the Kurds against ISIS in northern Syria.

On February 16, 2016, *The New York Times* runs a story out of Beirut entitled "How a Reporter's Quest for Online Bargains Led to a Network of Syrian Contacts." The story is a tribute to "news assistant" Hwaida Saad's work for the *Times*. Saad has worked with the *Times* in Beirut for a decade. The text notes that Saad was "an inveterate internet shopper," "the daughter of a cafeteria worker", "not trained as a journalist", has a lot of "unruly" curly hair and does her eyeliner like Amy Winehouse.

7. Yemen: 'Can we identify you as a dissident?'

Award-winning journalist Safa al-Ahmad, one of the few journalists to gain access into Yemen independently, is asked by the BBC if they can identify her as a "Saudi dissident" for the documentary film she has just produced for them, and which they commissioned her to produce.

Her response: "I'm the f*cking filmmaker."[122]

8. Yemen: 'Mountain guys in sandals'

Jana is an Arab national working as a regional correspondent for a major European news organization. She is trilingual. Her social media regularly features her views on race relations within the press, which has caused tension with her editors and other foreign correspondents within her organization.

Jana recounted a story suggested by a top editor in the midst of the 2018 Hodeida battles. The editor requested a story on the Houthi rebels, the northern Yemenis locked in a fight with the Saudi-led coalition for control of the country. "The email said, literally,

[122] Public talk, University of Pennsylvania, Oct. 22, 2019.

they wanted an explainer on the 'these mountain guys in sandals' -- like the email said, 'how did these guys in sandals in the sand manage to fight the strongest power in the Gulf' or something"[123].

9. Yemen: 'Translate this.'

A correspondent whose region of coverage includes Yemen, is waiting at a press conference to be held by the president of a major European country. Next to her, her bureau chief is chatting with the correspondent of a northern-western TV channel about a news story. The story, published in Arabic, was the first interview given by the European leader, whose country sells weapons to Saudi Arabia which in turn leads a coalition fighting in Yemen. Neither the bureau chief nor the TV reporter, friends from their home country, speaks Arabic. The bureau chief hands the newspaper to correspondent, who does speak Arabic, and says, "Translate this for her," pointing to the foreign TV reporter, in theory a competitor.

She declines. She is not, she says, "a certified translator." She later tells her bureau chief she will not provide free services around the clock.[124]

10. Context

To put this in current context: another example is unfolding as I write, one which is so dominant in the foreign press that it is hard to ignore. The protests in Lebanon (a country that receives disproportionate, if still somewhat distorted, coverage compared to Yemen

[123] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019.
[124] This is a personal story. Nov. 2017.

and even Syria)[125] are now entering their third week. The October 2019 protests in Lebanon saw a deluge of critiques of coverage by the English-language press, from the BBC to *The New Yorker,* not only by protestors but Arab journalists and some foreign correspondents. *The New York Times* ran an op-ed by Roger Cohen declaring "Lebanon Battles to Be Born at Last." Underneath the headline was the subheading: "The Middle East could use a decent country" (Cohen, 2019).[126] *The Independent's* longtime Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk declared: "The only way to create a modern state is to deconfessionalise it. But then Lebanon, whose very identity is sectarianism, would cease to exist*"* (Fisk, 2019).

More broadly, the story was framed as protests driven by a planned tax on WhatsApp by *The New York Times,* BBC and other leading northern-western news organizations. Indeed, arguably the most elite of US publications – *The New Yorker* – tasked a foreign correspondent in Lebanon to cover the protests, a lengthy first-person account that does in fact stand as one of the few to pay attention to the history and context of the story. It also takes the time to make note of the "pale-yellow eye glitter and orange blush"[127] of Rheem, one of the protestors whom the writer shadows (Sullivan, 2019a). Comments to her tweet on her article, "The Making of Lebanon's October Revolution*,*" were understandably overwhelmingly western, including a personal thanks by Australia's ambassador to Lebanon. The piece reads:

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[125] I could find no data or studies to support this observation. The only comparative study I could find was Guidero & Hallward (2019), who used Google's GDelt and found that 90 percent of the press studied across 196 countries between 2010 and 2017 reported significantly more stories on Syria than Yemen. A cursory search of "Lebanon" and "Syria" in November 2019, for example, yields more results, including images, of the former over the past month.

[126] In the interest of transparency, the subheading continues: "One million Lebanese protestors are demanding one. Hezbollah has other ideas."

[127] I elaborate on the foreign media's focus on Arab women's hair and makeup later in this chapter.

> Hours after the government announced the tax, it reversed the decision. But it was too late. The Lebanese civil-society organization Li Haqqi had already sent out a message via — what else? — WhatsApp calling on people to block roads in protest. "Let us take action against the unfair taxes! To Riad al-Solh Square today (17 October) at 6 p.m., to foil the government's efforts to pass unfair taxes on telecom, gas and others," it read. That night, protesters burned tires in the streets and clashed with police. Two Syrian workers died when the building they were sleeping in was set ablaze. The hashtag that emerged that night was "Lebanon is burning."

On October 30, 2019, two weeks into the uprising and hours after the Lebanese prime minister submitted his resignation and groups of armed men demolished protestors' tents in Beirut and the southern city of Tyre, a feature on hyenas in Lebanon appeared in *The New York Times* under the same writer's byline.[128] The article, entitled "In Lebanon, the Hyena's Main Fear is Fear Itself," notes that the striped hyena, the country's national animal, has "a prominent black and white mane that, when raised in alarm, gives it the appearance of having been electrocuted while trying to transform into a zebra" (Sullivan, 2019b). On November 9, the *Times* ran the hyena story on its front page.

The above vignettes clearly do not fall in the same category or genre. Interviews, public talks, op-eds, straight news coverage, New Journalism, Gonzo journalism, first person New Yorker think-y pieces, on and from different countries, are not comparative case studies. That is precisely why they have been put together. The consistencies that cut across them reveal a deep, systemic, institutional consistency, which I will draw out in the discussion that follows. In that connectedness, they reveal the boundaries of

[128] The correspondent's Twitter bio says she is studying climate change at SOAS.

transparency, boundaries that are tacitly consensual which obfuscate.[129] They show the work that is done daily, in interactions and in writing, which not considered work.

What, then, do we mean when we talk about transparency? The definitions and operationalization of transparency offered by journalism scholars, summarized earlier in this chapter, reflect institutional discourses. They uphold the boundaries of transparency deemed sufficient, foregrounding the need for and willingness of institutions, via their members, to disclose once-obscure information to increase accountability and thus legitimacy. These definitions still assume – rightly so – a centralized authority over the story, one which is no longer limited to solely the newsmakers. Feminist scholars, critical race theorists, post-colonialists and literary critics have demystified the means through which narratives – specifically, the master narrative – maintain the status quo. That same interrogation has not been central to journalism studies, even as it begins to turn its attention to traditionally invisible newsmakers. And the very norms of journalism – transparency, for example -- lend themselves well to such interrogation. "Show your work" (Rosen, 2019) requires re-examine what qualifies as work, and what showing it means.

[129] It is important to note that the above examples are stories recounted to me by the persons who lived them, cross-checked with those the stories involved as often as possible. As Gaye Tuchman notes of any story: "some alleged facts must be simply accepted as 'true.' Viewing everything as questionable leads to such absurdities as the following: 'Robert Jones and his alleged wife, Fay Smith Jones, yesterday held what they described as a cocktail party at their supposed home, 187 Grant Street, City, purportedly in honor of a woman claiming to be Mrs. John Smith, commonly thought to be the aunt of the self-described hostess'" (Tuchman, 1972, p. 664). I have also observed enough similar cases over a decade in Middle East newsrooms, and longer as a Middle Easterner, to recognize patterns.

In her posthumous biography of Marie Colvin, whose death triggered the institutional concern that would culminate in declining to send staff reporters into Syria after the Foley and Sotloff beheadings, British journalist Lindsey Hilsum worries that she may have committed the "cardinal sin" of journalism – making the journalist the story (Hilsum, 2018). In an attempt to redress the historic invisibility of stringers, they have become the story – *been made* the story -- in both the press and scholarship, in different ways and with different repercussions. Here, transparency is journalistically operationalized by making them the story – by narrativizing their work, and identities, in a way that is at once highly visible and denies their own place within the ranks of journalism. In scholarship, talking about traditionally invisible newsmakers inevitably reproduces the frameworks that rendered them invisible to begin with.

It can be argued, and has been argued, that *The New York Times* sets the standard of journalism in the United States (not all interviewees said they necessarily agreed with this; just that it holds). As award-winning Indian investigative journalist Neha Dixit noted, after being approached by a foreign correspondent looking for help "finding sources and guiding us" around Delhi: "It seems like there won't be any acknowledgement that the term 'fixer' is discriminatory until *The New York Times* says so" (quoted in Borpujari, 2019). Like other news organizations, the *Times* has depended heavily (and at times exclusively) on stringers to cover Syria, currently the bread and butter of war reporters. And in 2016, they decided to come clean about their dependence on locals by paying tribute to the "reporter" -- a former fixer, hired in 2008 as an "interpreter and news assistant" for the *Times* – whose "extensive network of hundreds of

contacts across the spectrum, from Syrian government officials and soldiers to members of the Islamic State, plus doctors, businesspeople, teachers and community leaders in government-controlled and insurgent-held areas" (MacFarquhar & Barnard, 2016).

This story highlights the difficulty of breaking the systems in which even the most well-intentioned journalists are trapped, wittingly or unwittingly. While the story dubs Saad a reporter, she identifies herself as a "Beirut-based reporter and news assistant at the *New York Times"* (Saad, 2019). Her biography does not say "Beirut-based reporter *for* the *Times"* but "news assistant *at* the *Times"* (italics mine). This is a play on openness; minutia matter when identity is subject to, and the subject of, a game of words.

The story is, in a sense, an embodiment of transparency par excellence. It openly discloses that Saad built the *Times'* Syria network, and how, a part of coverage of Syria central to the "asymmetric" coverage of the crisis, as editor Andrew called it.[130] The authors (both foreign correspondents and former Beirut bureau chiefs for the *Times)* narrate Saad's work:

> She is also an inveterate Internet shopper, which proved serendipitous as the Syrian uprising took hold. Ms. Saad had, for years, spent late nights scrolling through style websites. Suddenly, rebels who fought during the day would see her online after hours and reach out on Skype. These days, she gets hundreds of notifications daily, and conversations often continue until 2 or 3 a.m.
>
> "It is this big wave that engulfs me," Ms. Saad said. "I go online every day and every night. When you are away from it, you feel deprived."
>
> Combatants confide in her both because they hope to get their story out and because she is the rare woman on the network. They want to hear a motherly voice, and some even flirt. They detail their worries, talk about their wives or girlfriends, wax nostalgic about the food they miss.
>
> "You talk to them in a sweet way, and they are not used to it," she said.

[130] I expand on the idea of asymmetric journalism in Chapter 5.

> The first two questions young fighters invariably ask are her age and marital status. In the beginning, Ms. Saad allowed to one that she was 30. (Not quite true.) (MacFarquhar & Barnard, 2016).

How did this Arab woman journalist, whose story is being told by higher-ranking (white) foreign journalists, come to build that extensive network upon which the *Times* relies for its coverage of Syria? Not through her skill. Through a serendipitous offshoot of her addiction to online shopping. The negative connotation of the word "inveterate" can neither be neutralized by the merit of the work Saad does, or is credited with doing by the authors, nor can it be read as innocuous. (The stereotype of Arab women, and Lebanese women in particular, as shopping addicts terrified of ageing, involves an element of frivolity that introduces a new element to orientalist tropes, which I will return to shortly.) "Real" journalists, on the other hand, actively cultivate sources. That is the journalist's currency: access and contacts, and the former depends on the latter. This is illustrated by Tanya's anger at a reputable foreign correspondent going after her contact after she requested he not reach out to her for her own safety and Nour's refusal to share her contacts for free after years of doing so. Palmer (2019) finds that "parachute journalists might try to 'buy' fixers' local contacts, showing little regard for the years of emotional labor … to build trust" (p. 15). But the issue runs even deeper than that. Even *having* the contacts necessary for the access to do the reporting these news organizations needs becomes grounds for discrimination.[131] And the belief in the right to those local contacts is not limited to the foreign correspondent paying the fixer to facilitate his or her work; as the experiences of Tanya, Nour and others show, it is a belief often held in dealing with any journalist seen as "local" – even a peer.

[131] For an analysis of the complication of access and contact-building, see Chapter Two on eyewitnessing.

Two foreign correspondents for the *Times* wrote a story on "the daughter of a cafeteria worker" who was "not trained as a journalist" and "resembles the singer Amy Winehouse, but with more unruly black curls and no tattoos" (MacFarquhar & Barnard, 2016). Saad is perceived and constructed as stumbling fortuitously on a network of contacts which would be any "real" journalists' capital; in her case, she is stripping her of journalistic authority and excluded from the ranks of journalists through the deskilling of that same labor and the focus on her personal history -- even as the story's headline refers to her as a "reporter". The deskilling of Saad's journalistic work need not be intentional for it to be clear. The ultimate form of transparency – dedicating an entire feature story to spotlighting your local "assistant" – provides the perfect cloak of opacity. The *Times* would not need to write about those who write the *Times* if that work were acknowledged as such. To return to the idea of transparency as horizontal, the *Times'* accountability here appears to be to its audience, the act of "showing" them the local whose work forms and informs their daily coverage of Syria, under a bylined story with her as its topic. Turning transparency inwards, thinking about what kind of work is being done, and shown, in stories such as the above, reflects the ubiquity of a master narrative that journalism, as an "ethical" practice, purports to redress. This is rendered even more opaque by the inclusion of direct quotes by Saad.[132]

[132] Those written upon often accept as true both the structure behind the writing and the content of the writing. David Mindich's (1998) study of the origins of objectivity in the United States provides a compelling illustration of this. Looking at the *New York Times*' coverage of lynching in the 1809s, found that editor Ida B. Wells herself had "accepted as true that the lawlessness of blacks contributed to lynching, specifically that black men were lynched because they raped white women"(Mindich, 1998, p. 120). On March 9, 1892, the Times ran an article on the shooting of three black men, including Thomas Moss, a friend of Wells' (who was misidentified in the article as "Theodore Moss"). Wells turned her attention to lynching and its coverage. She found that most cases did not include the word "rape" prior to the lynching. Wells penned an editorial stating: "Nobody in this section believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men assault white women" (quoted in Mindich, 1998, p. 120). Few journalists would have the nerve, or ability, to critique their organization as harshly on the organization's own pages.

But, as with the ability to fulfil the other key journalistic norm of eyewitnessing, it is only a career for those not from the place. As staff reporter Adam said on being "from" the region one is reporting on: "You're assumed politicized. There's no way you are not politicized. But at the same time you can't actually know what you're talking about," although the grounds of suspicions of politicization are rooted in the identity that would make one familiar with context (and pitted against the seeming non-politicization of the positions and narratives of the foreign correspondent).[133] As Tanya, a now-former editor in Beirut, said:

> The foreign press' refusal to hire non-westerners, or non-white people, is just insulting. They'll hire a student with *ma'ash habbousa* [a hefty salary] who does climate change before they can believe or before they admit that there are local journalists who can actually explain the history and the context of this story.[134]

An interesting point of comparison: the following year, in 2017, the *Times* wrote an article on its stringers inside the United States. The article defines as stringer as "a journalist who is not on staff at a news publication but works on an as-needed basis, often doing the legwork at the scene of a breaking news story and providing "string," or content, for stories" (Delkic, 2017). The headline of the story: "What Makes a Good Editor?" To build on the words of Neha Dixit, the Indian journalist, the authority on U.S. journalism will not likely recognize discrimination so long as its new norm –

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[133] The massively popular "Serial" podcast, on the 1999 murder of Hae Min Lee in Baltimore, sparked a backlash against its portrayal of both Asian-Americans and Muslims. It also sparked a backlash against the backlash in defense of journalism. An *Atlantic* article on the debate around "Serial" noted: "Journalism requires its practitioners to delve into unfamiliar subjects, communities, and subcultures. Mistakes happen often and can be difficult for the reporter or audience to discern…. 'you fell into stereotypes when writing about that ethnic community' should never be dismissed… As often as not, there is at least *something* to be learned from the critic" (Friedersdorf, 2014, p. 104; emphasis in original). While I cannot speak to the merit or lack of merit of Serial, the emphasis on "at least *something*" to be learned from critiques by the very community represented points to the very unquestionability of the master narrative of journalism: that de facto the journalist is right, but must keep an open mind when hearing "locals" talk back.

[134] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019.

transparency – remains self-referential. As Palestinian journalist Asmaa al-Ghoul has said of her work covering war at home, “I want to be a writer. I don’t want to be the topic” (cited in Di Cintio, 2018).

Color(s)

Color, that central element of vivid reporting, can however be as monochromatic as it is colorful. The *New York Times’* story on Hwaida Saad, the local reporter’s aide who built a network of Syrian contacts, highlights her “unruly” curls and Amy Winehouse-esque visage. The headline pivots on Saad’s “quest for online bargains” (MacFarquhar & Barnard, 2016). The *New Yorker’s* only story, at the time of writing, on the 2019 protests in Lebanon follows Rheem Dahdali, of the “pale-yellow glitter eyeshadow and orange blush” and her best friend Dana Hammoud, of a “red-tinged black bob and huge, deep-set brown eyes” (Sullivan, 2019a). Those identifying markers are made in the first lines of the stories. Todd Gitlin’s (1980) analysis of the trivialization of 1960s student-led protests comes to mind. In the context of protests against the Gulf War, Hackett & Zhao (1994) coined the phrase “Marginal Oddity frame” to likewise capture the “trivializing [of] the movement’s composition, dress, motives and behavior” (p. 518). Here, the added complication of gender is a central component. Two-thirds through the *New Yorker* story on the Lebanon protests, the writer mentions that Dana Hammoud is protesting because, in addition to the economic hardships she and her best friend face, Hammoud does not have Lebanese citizenship. She was born and raised in Lebanon to a Lebanese mother and Palestinian father. Under Lebanon’s interpretation of its constitution, Dana is thus

stateless. Women do not have the right to pass on citizenship. Yet this is relegated to the bottom of the story, where the background information goes.

What drives, and guides, these stories? Journalism, which holds itself above TV and advertising, employs the same frameworks of the broader culture from which it stems and to which it speaks. The local site or person – whether protestor or reporter -- becomes a 2019 modality of a (tired) trope. The most common trope in Said's orient, for example, is the Middle Eastern or North African woman as submissive, silent, veiled. That same essence is belied by the colorful depiction of the Arab women in "new" media coverage. The focus not only on women's makeup, but on makeup carrying the insinuation of over-the-top or gaudy – Hwaida's "unruly" hair, Rheem's glitter shadow and orange blush – reinforces the classist elitism inherent to these tropes. That is further reinforced by their presence in publications considered "high-brow." Women protesting for the right to nationality, the right to a passport, to have a "legitimate" child, to own property are introduced as and reduced to caricatures. Not regular eyes or even big eyes, but "huge, deep-set, brown" eyes, coupled with a manga-like reddish black bob.

What journalism calls "color" is as telling as it is troubling. Michael Schudson (2015) traces the rise of contextual reporting in the U.S. press from the 1960s to the 1990s, concomitant with a broader cultural and political shift towards openness as a virtue. Schudson notes that "mood pieces… had been acceptable even decades earlier for foreign correspondents" (2015, p. 157). Contextual stories often take the form of what Schudson calls "social empathy stories," which "may answer the question 'what does it feel like to be this person or a member of this category of people?'" (2015, p. 162). This hits right at the heart of an incontrovertible complication of foreign correspondence: that

to represent the feeling of another person is largely dictated by the broader ideologies, or paraideologies, of the reporter in question. On the other hand, failing to describe the scene and characters is a shortcoming that looks like "bad" journalism. The very name of the practice of describing the site so that the audience back home (i.e, not "from there") implies that simply reporting on protestors' demands, without describing what they look like, is monochromatic. Many a reporter has gotten the call from an editor shortly after filing: "Dry. Give me color." But color translates too often to caricature and subs too often for the angle. Ironically, the most colorful of stories betrays its homophony, to play on Bakhtin (1984). Polyphony, best exemplified by the work of Dostoevsky according to Bakhtin, is characterized by a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (1984, p. 6). Voices that are plural, unmerged and fully valid theoretically speak to one of journalism's core ethics, that of respect for the subject. And yet, as the assemblage of stories here shows, a multiplicity of colorful characters in a story can be deceptively polyphonic. Ultimately, they all merge and feed back into that one master narrative

Men are not exempt from this, as writers or subjects. Jana's editor requested a story on "mountain men" running around "in sandals," in reference to one of two main armed players in a war that has helped push Yemen to the brink of official famine. Vice ran a story in which Kurds are described as "downright quaint," with "ice cream stands and regular electricity and little kids running around it" that "doesn't just feel like they didn't have a war there – it barely feels like they had a Syria" (Morton, 2014). The clear assumption here is that it is not the war that destroyed whatever soft serve dispensers might have been available in Syria, but that Syria never had ice cream and electricity to

begin with. The Kurds are at the same time deceptively "regular"; their bloodthirsty nature surfaces in that "Syrian Tijuana," as they fought an unnamed enemy but remained "eerily calm." Ultimately, this foreign correspondent finds, "you could be battling literal Nazis in defense of my mother's house. I'd still tell you, 'I'm out'."[135] This being a "Vice thing," as one correspondent said, neither justifies nor excuses it. Syrians do not have the option to tap out. They are dying, to this day, in their thousands. The Holocaust is not and will never be funny. To have the ability, the privilege, to unreflexively drop such references in copy is not only a "Vice thing," but a demographic thing that reveals what transparency conceal: the question of whether it is the work or the person which qualifies the reporter.

Vice dispatched a man who either had no experience covering war or pretended he didn't know what to expect. The *New Yorker* hired someone clearly unfamiliar with Lebanon's current and past politics to write their sole story on the biggest protests in the country's history. As journalist Tanya said, "There are literally journalists in Beirut right now who graduated from [Columbia] J-school, and we all know who they are." Safa al-Ahmad, who won the 2015 International Press Freedom Award for a documentary out of eastern Saudi Arabia, is one of the few journalists and documentarians to make her way into and across Yemen. The BBC still considered her a "Saudi dissident" and not a documentarian. Syrian Nour noted she was identified as a "citizen journalist" in news stories she reported, on commission, for news organizations which had been presented or bylined by foreigner correspondents' names. She has since decided to "name and shame" organizations, and specific reporters, whom she says "take your work and don't give you

[135] The author, Thomas Morton, is still an active journalist with more than 18,800 Twitter followers at the time of writing. His twitter handle is @babyballs69.

credit." Other stringers, as well as local staff reporters, said they were reluctant to do so. As stringer Zahra said, "What for? For glory?"

There is no clearer statement of positionality, no more transparent form of transparency, than covering the local subject, making the writer the topic, to play on Asmaa al-Ghoul's statement. The *Times'* story on Hwaida Saad appears to portray Saad's cafeteria worker father and her lack of formal journalism education as a positive:

> As a favor for a friend, she spent several days translating and arranging appointments for The Boston Globe, and she discovered a knack for the work.
>
> Correspondents loved her doggedness, her enthusiasm, her never-fading humor and her special genius for learning about people's lives. (ibid)

As opposed to "real," trained journalists, for whom journalism is a vocation, Saad discovered she had a knack for it accidentally, as she was doing a favor for foreign correspondents. In her study of fixers, Lindsay Palmer (2019) borrows Mary Louise Pratt's notion of an "imperial contact zone" marked by "ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" ([1992], 2008, p. 8).[136] While this is an important framework, Fanon's (1961) idea of internalized subordination, through repeated imprinting of the values, norms, culture and self-perception of a dominant group, may lend a more accurate frame here. Pratt's frame implies resistance leading to conflict. The seeming flattery the story on Saad aims for, and Saad's own involvement in the reporting of the story on the reporter reporting Syria, hints more at acceptance of the maintenance of a specific social order, to go back to Hall

[136] Overall, Palmer's main arguments are that fixers are cultural mediators (2019). Murrell (2019) conceptualizes fixers as entrepreneurs. While both of these hold merit, they also replicate systems of expected, often exploited service to the foreigner that far exceeds the work paid for and the idea that the local is a hustler rather than a journalist, respectively.

(1986). Saad's skill is de-skilled by the fact that it is made a story, and in the way in which it is conceptualized from the perspective of these foreign correspondents. Her place in journalism was solidified by their "love" of a specific set of skills. The invisible ideology of the story-driving-the-story is the basis of journalists' failure to recognize that the forms transparency take are also a means of concealment. As this story appears to present the purest form of transparency, it reproduces and solidifies the exclusivity of the professional press, the superiority of the foreign correspondent and the amateur, secondary nature of the work of the local. Bylined foreign correspondents speak for Saad, identified as a reporter with the *Times,* in the *Times*. As Reich (2010) noted in a study of the *Times,* the rise of the byline in the 20th century shifted power in the press from the news organizations to the people whose names appear in the pages of those organizations. In the Saad story, the authors choose when to show her work, how to show her work and how to frame that work.[137]

Critical to that work is acceptance of one's position within the narrative or framework – for example, as a "bridge" at the service of cultural pedestrians – within the broader system. In his early study of foreign correspondents and local reporters in Jerusalem, Ulf Hannerz (1998) found that foreigners often relied on locals not only for professional work, including "cultural mediation" (Palmer, 2019), but also for a social network. The work expected of stringers and even Arab correspondents – both reporters

[137] In a 2018 piece for the Columbia Journalism Review, Jelani Cobb looks at the *New York Times'* coverage of mainly black and Latinx neighborhoods in New York. A "tsk-tsk" article on petty theft in one neighborhood "represented not simply a case of a journalist missing a story," Cobb (2018) writes. "The story, to me, spoke to the problem of what happens when the demographics of the *Times* – and American newspapers in general – look nothing like the demographics of the communities they cover. The people who are most likely to appear in these kinds of stories are the least likely to have a say in how those stories are told" (Cobb, 2018).

paid to report – includes free off-hours translations for other reporters and other services and at times placing their personal lives at the service of foreign correspondents. A white, European man asking regional correspondent Gaia to translate for her white, European competitor is complex enough in the implicit power dynamics it involves, dynamics with heavy colonial overtones. An email suggesting an Arab journalist covering Syria would do a better job than Google Translate if she was "up for it!" as a favor to an American man, a producer expecting Nour to share her contacts for free – all of these hint at the position of stringers and other locals as bridges, although not in the way conceptualized by current literature.

The hyena

If A is like B, the relationship between the two is metaphoric. Then there is the question of who has the authority to draw the relationship, or to say that the relationship has been drawn.

As Lebanon came to a crippling halt under the biggest protests in its modern history -- and protestors came under attack, brief though it may be, by armed plainclothes men – *The New York Times* ran a full-length feature on hyenas in Lebanon, written by the same *New Yorker* journalist (Sullivan, 2019a, 2019b). On November 9, as reports surfaced that some 300 Iraqis had been shot dead rallying for their rights (*More than 300 dead,* 2019) and that Syrian civilians were allegedly being abused by Turkish-backed forces (*Filled with hatred,* 2019), among other events in the Middle East, the *Times* reposted the story to the front page of its international edition.

I received individual WhatsApp messages from both Tanya and Nicole, forwarding me the same link to a Tweet. Tanya's message read: "And why is this on the front page of the NYT?!?!?!". Nicole's message read: "Dead Iraqis, all of Leb in the streets… But hyenas." The Tweet, by the author, Helen Sullivan, read: "I'm still not quite sure how this is possible, but my @NYTScience story about Lebanon's striped hyenas is on the front !! page !! of today's international New York Times" (Sullivan, 2019c). The headline had been changed. The tweet received praise from many. The praise did not include journalists and activists across the political spectrum in Lebanon:


WhatsApp
23:00
82%
Thread
Helen Sullivan
@helenrsullivan
I'm still not quite sure how this is possible, but my @NYTScience story about Lebanon's striped hyenas is on the front !! page !! of today's International New York Times!
The New York Times
The promise and the peril of Aramco
Russia muscles in on Libya's civil war
Tweet your reply


Habib Battah @habib_b · 1d
All the news that's fit to print! But I do love hyenas
1
samara @Skazzi · 1d
Replying to @helenrsullivan and @NYTScience
We have a revolution going on and a story of that makes it today vs the protestors out in very city- how is that possible ?
Tweet your reply

This is far from the first article to spark a reaction by those in the country from which it is reported. The question of news judgement – the prioritizing of hyenas in Lebanon, for example, over abused civilians in northern Syria – is an ongoing struggle within the press. Sometimes, "fluff" stories (as they are called in the wires) are a welcome reprieve for the stringers pitching them or asked to report on them. Yemeni stringer Samer looks forward to covering art day in Sanaa. Syrian stringer Rami's favorite story is still about a local zoo that struggled to stay functional for the children of his city as war descended. But fluff is another one of those seemingly innocuous parts of journalism. What does it mean – what does it *do* – when a story is written by a specific journalist at a specific time? Is there a need to show the work that goes into that, and what it does? (I would argue there is.)

The first publication of the article was headlined "The hyena's main fear is fear itself," a nod to FDR's inaugural speech (also worth thinking through, as an editorial decision on a story out of the Middle East). Early in the article, we come to learn that the latter – the fear which the hyena fears – is the fear of hyenas which marks the Lebanese, who shoot them out of their fear, in turn, of the animals. So it's an overall environment marked mainly by fear and violence, Beirut and its environs, with the key journalistic trope of the one hero (in this case, a local veterinarian). With the usual disclaimer – this is not at all to condone Lebanon's treatment of animals – the deep systemic issues which leave Lebanon's animals at risk are the same which leave Syrian refugees in the streets, children of unwed women without papers and women raped in marriages with no legal

recourse (see, for example, Yazbeck, 2012). The animal activist striving to save the hyenas is an American man.

The entire article can be read as a metaphor. The hyenas have "a prominent black and white mane that, when raised in alarm, gives it the appearance of having been electrocuted while trying to transform into a zebra" (Sullivan, 2019b). This article appears in the same paper, at the same time, as Roger Cohen's piece declares Lebanon is struggling to give birth to itself – "Lebanon struggles to be born at last" (Cohen, 2019). Transformation, metamorphosis, is linked to violence – being electrocuted while trying to transform – and gestation, struggling to be born. Those are two key pillars of racist tropes: violence and feminization (Massad, 2007; Said, 1978).

The makeup-focused *New Yorker* piece and the *Times'* article on hyenas were written by the same reporter, a graduate student focusing on climate change as per her Twitter bio. There is nothing formally wrong with focusing on climate and the impact of climate change as a beat. A Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Chilean or Indian interested in climate change would not likely be tapped to cover protests in her or his country. A Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Chilean or Indian interested in journalism would likely not be tapped to cover protests in her or his country for either of the above publications. The assumption appears to be that, in addition to the reluctance to "drop the voice of god, [and] ditch the view from nowhere" (Rosen, 2017), reporting as per the guidelines of transparency is beyond one's capacity by virtue of one's identity, ethnicity and/or race. A close reading of the wording of stories and choice to story topics also calls attention to what exactly the "voice of god" sounds like. Perhaps like discourse void of any reflexivity of orientalism (or racism).

That lack of reflexivity – a lack of transparency around the motives which journalists should disclose (Lasica, 2004; Levy, 1981) – enables journalists to adapt news to underlying culturally- and politically-situated narrative structures which constitute and continually reinforce their authority (Zelizer, 1990, 1992). It is a privilege embedded in the master narrative, the invisible ideology which drives journalism in all its facets. Transparency lends itself to upholding that privilege. To go back to the Vice story on Kurds in the midst of the Syrian war: the journalist reports, in the lede, that he doesn't "care if … you could be battling literal Nazis in defense of my mother's house. I'd still tell you, 'I'm out'" (Morton, 2014) is a reflection of that privilege, a privilege that is both journalistic and personal. The ability to do the "I was there" reporting as in Vice and *New Yorker* stories show are the exclusive property of the foreign correspondent, and rewarded by front-page appearances. The local has to prove distance. The ability to tap out of war is also exclusive to the parachutist, no matter how dedicated. The Syrian, the Yemeni, cannot leave – and if and when they do leave, they are indebted to the institution and a specific individual therein. The consistency of the same dominant assumptions, tropes or "ideological effects" (Hall, 1986) across outlets and within interactions, this does not seem to be rooted in genre.

The question of whether A is meant to reflect B – of whether there is a metaphoric assumption being drawn among stories, between animals and persons -- is not only answerable by those writing the stories. It is answerable by those being written upon.

Conclusion: What we talk about when we talk about transparency

Calls for transparency are still on the rise. In 2014, the Society for Professional Journalists, the largest journalist association in the United States, introduced the twin notions of accountability and transparency into their code of ethics (*SPJ Code,* 2014). The code calls on journalists to "explain ethical decisions and processes to audiences" and "expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations" (ibid). In 2019, the Knight Commission's top recommendation for journalism was to "practice radical transparency."

What I have tried to render transparent in this chapter has been touched upon by other conceptual approaches addressing invisible power dynamics at play in journalistic discourse. Gans (1979) offers the idea of paraideology, a set of eight guiding beliefs that structure the news and in so doing reproduce themselves. These include, for example, "responsible" capitalism and "altruistic" democracy, which do not merit examination even as they are disclosed. Zelizer (1990; 1992) details the mechanisms through which journalists construct themselves as authorities over the story. Looking at coverage of the Kennedy assassination, Zelizer notes that "journalists have used narrative practice as a means of collectively representing shared codes of knowledge, which they then feed back into the community to set themselves up as cultural authorities" (1992, p. 10). In *The World is Watching,* Todd Gitlin points to framing and hegemony:

> Journalists' ideals are fluid enough to protect them from seeing that their autonomy is bounded: that by going about their business in a professional way, they systematically frame the news to be compatible with the main institutional arrangements of the society. Journalists thus sustain the dominant frames through the banal, everyday momentum of their routines. Their autonomy keeps within the boundaries of the hegemonic system (1980, p. 269).

Transparency, in its journalistic iteration, aims to articulate the limitations of that autonomy – the motives, decisions and shortcomings of the story. Yet the professional imperative to articulate the limitations of that autonomy reveals the boundaries of what constitutes transparency, including the work that journalism *is* and the work that journalism *does*. Journalism's accountability is not just to its audience, an audience that too often hails from and reflects the demography, positionality and belief system of the bylined correspondent and news organization in question. The "institutionalization of openness" (Ananny & Crawford, 2016, p. 4) allows for opacity effected specifically through claims to transparency. Since we are transparent, we are not not-transparent. Since you can now see stringers – in bylines and photo credits, as the subjects of stories and in studies of journalism – they are no longer invisible.

Transparency does not entail accountability to those parts and persons who are left out of the horizontal definition of the term, its duties and limitations. Like objectivity before it, transparency can be read as normalized to fit a broader set of strategic guiding beliefs and assumptions. While this chapter draws on individual stories, written by individual people, the individuals are not themselves at fault. Maintenance of a system requires collective work of and between individuals, who may or may not themselves recognize the kind of work they are doing. And in the spirit of reflexivity: I have written, unwritten and rewritten all of the above multiple times. In a bid to not sound like an angry Arab, to not discredit oneself by sounding too personal – or, by refusing to accept the order of things and provide free labor – one self-censors, justifying it by lack of Empirical Evidence. Such conversations have long been relegated to whispers among non-foreign reporters, to WhatsApp chats late into the night, to Tweets shared and

commented on in private via DM. I began to realize there was an overarching, hidden ideology that not only drove journalism, but informed the way the study of the very processes of reporting, including transparency, were interrogated and interpreted. I was personally privy to the private debates over the asymmetry of the division of work, credit, compensation and credibility, long before beginning this dissertation. As journalist Tanya said:

> Well, they get away with it because we allow them. We -- other journalists, us. Their rhetoric is racist. Now you can say their stuff is racist. Social media, honestly I can't stress how important that is. I know we blame Twitter especially for a lot of our [journalism's] problems, and of course anyone can say anything anytime. But at the same time [laughs] because anyone can say anything, we can say this is racist.

Transparency requires going beyond the sterile, formal boundaries of what is considered newswork in journalism scholarship. Horizontal transparency makes public the how and why of a *story* and holds journalists accountable to the public which they address. This chapter hopes to reveal the boundaries of that paradigm and the ideological effects of those boundaries, looking at the how and why of *transparency.* Applying the idea of "showing the work" to the frames and narratives employed unchecked in journalism today, and to the requests made of and comments made to journalists on the basis of their institutional positionality, shows the need to apply transparency vertically, within the work. Transparency remains a necessary journalistic corrective. At the same time, it affords a new means of opacity dangerous in its very subtlety. Journalism scholarship has, to some degree, grappled with that issue: how to translate transparency from an ideal into concrete practices. Kovach & Rosenstiel offer:

> How do you know what you know? Who are your sources? How direct is their knowledge? What biases might they have? Are there conflicting accounts? What don't we know? ([2001]2014, p. 114)

But this cycles back to the opacity of transparency. One does not know what one does not know. Discussions of transparency stop short of addressing recognition, a crucial precursor of transparency. Individual journalistic recognition draws from and replicates the institutional culture from which the journalist hails (Gans, 1979).

Recent recognition of stringers, fixers, translators and others in war zones is a welcome, overdue step. Yet the form that recognition takes, and the limitations of work recognized as such, presents a new set of problems. Recognition has been forced, in part, by the presence and activity of stringers on social media, which serves as a field of recruitment in addition as a means of publicizing their work. It has also been articulated in a hypervisible format that reinforces the invisibility of the local: making the stringer a story. While this is motivated by the desire for transparency around the importance of the work stringers do, it reinforces the internal, racialized hierarchy of the press. The stringer not only does not have authority over her own story. Her story becomes the property of the foreign correspondents, whose bylines literally, visually hover over a narrativized tale that claims journalistic authority for the authors and subject-ifies the stringer.

At play in that dynamic, as in the interactions in which stringers and correspondents who look, sound or are Arab (in the cases studied here), is the neglected master narrative within which journalists live but which they do not recognize as part of their "job description" (Rosen, 2019) – i.e., their work. Attributes of "good" journalism (to this day confounded with literary skill) include providing audiences back home color from the field. Vivid descriptions of hair and heavy makeup, characteristics taken as

“orientally” feminine, including undisciplinable, fall under the rubric of journalistic skill. Prioritizing those descriptions in the lede of a political story, and leaving relevant information such as the identity status of the woman to the background at the bottom, are choices that show the work of journalism, and journalism at work. Pitting those stories against stories about animals, rife with metaphors, as people are killed daily is also a choice that shows journalism at work. In scholarship, the metaphors used to frame local newsmakers – bridges or entrepreneurs – also uphold a narrative which excludes them from the ranks of “real” journalists.

Even in the most reflexive of studies on locals, the very structure of journalism as generally, and war reporting among international news groups specifically, renders transparency far from transparent. Visibility becomes dangerous by virtue of what it renders invisible precisely under its own guise. The new transparency in which stringers are being “written about” (the politics of which are also problematic) and belatedly granted war insurance is a welcome, necessary step.

Journalism has been slow to examine its invisible guiding ideologies. In a 2015 interview with Hilton Als, Toni Morrison noted the master narrative at play in coverage of *The New York Times*: “It hasn’t changed a great deal. It used to be sheer absence. Now it’s manipulative.” (Morrison, 2015). *That* things or persons are covered or studied does not preclude the pressing need to examine *how* things or persons are covered or studied. As bell hooks writes:

> [A] critical break with the notion of "authority" as "mastery over" must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter. (hooks, 1990)

Transparency may be harder to physically trace and document than eyewitnessing specifically because of its elusiveness as a disembodied practice, i.e., a practice that does not require a human body performing a physical task, such as filming an attack. Looking at the use of transparency in public relations (journalism's evil alter-ego), Vujnovic and Kruckeberg coin the phrase pseudo-transparency, "a set of strategic actions, typically involving marketing and *discursive strategies,* through which organizations attempt to *appear* transparent by creating a sense of transparency, rather than by being truly transparent to their *diverse publics*" (2018, p. 122; emphasis added). Without a close, careful examination of those same strategies within practices of journalism, transparency can make the invisible even more invisible specifically through claims to openness. Under the guise of participation (Usher, 2014) by publics that are not diverse and social empathy to contexts abroad (Schudson, 2015), story becomes soliloquy.

Four decades ago, and despite the book's documented flaws and shortcomings, Edward Said (1978) opened *Orientialism* with an epigraph that speaks straight to journalism. The epigraph first quotes Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:* "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (Said, 1978, p.). The second is pulled from Benjamin Disraeli's *Tancred:* "The East is a career" (ibid).[138] Transparency complicates both of those dynamics, always already at play in journalism: representations and careers built on and sustained by those representations. Transparency, and related notions of accountability and legitimacy, is less immediately questionable because of its seemingly ethical impulse: honesty.

[138] Granted, Marx was writing within a very different context; Disraeli perhaps less so.

Chapter 3: Trauma

"In this task of making trauma strange, its embeddedness in everyday life and language, so important for providing an initial intuitive understanding, now presents itself as a challenge to be overcome" (Alexander, 2004, p. 2).

Kinan, a former journalist, does not believe he has PTSD.

The northern-western producer of Kinan's documentary on Syria did not hide her awe of the one-time journalist. The editing team, based in Europe, had to comb through dozens of hours of footage for the documentary. They were hit so deeply by the footage that producers called in a psychotherapist to work with the team. Members of the team were having trouble sleeping. Some were often in tears. They were rattled to the bone. Kinan "couldn't believe their reaction," the producer recalled. She said he voiced surprise over the team's reaction to her in private, then sat down with the team and addressed them calmly. He sat in on the therapy sessions with them to show support. He went on with his work.

Kinan confirmed he was on an anti-depressant and said he sometimes takes something to help him sleep "with the jetlag." The jetlag is induced by almost non-stop flights to screen his films – now feature-length -- give talks, testify in an international criminal court. Kinan denied he had *odtirab ma ba'ad al-sadma* [post-traumatic stress disorder]. I asked him to describe how he feels. Within the context of a lengthier conversation, one statement stood out: "*Modtoreb, w aḥyanan mumken ouseeb bi sadmaten ma min ba'd el 'oumour, wel akid mekte'eb naw'an ma, bas ma bi hal tariqa* ['I am troubled, and at times I may be shocked by certain things, and what is certain is

that I am somewhat depressed, but not in that way']." Not in the way of *sadma* [lit., shock], the most common word for trauma in Arabic.

I asked how his life was in the European city where he has now resettled. "Me and my box made of white walls," he said. There was no mention of a team, or the benefit of group therapy, or safe spaces.[139][140] Months later, Kinan posted a link to a TV interview with him. In the interview, Kinan spoke of what he called "traumatic experiences," in English, on TV. I was taken aback.

It later occurred to me we had been conversing in Arabic. I never asked about "traumatic experience," in English. The next time I had an interview with a bilingual reporter, Lina, I asked her if she felt traumatized. She said she did. Then I asked her if she would give the same answer to a similar question in Arabic. She confirmed what I had begun to suspect: *sadma* is not the same as trauma.[141]

Introduction: Trauma, translations and temporalities

Arabic is rich in polysemy. The multiple meanings of the one word are not only related; they are often complementary, mutually contextualizing, intricately nuanced. But for all the words that take on multiple nuanced meanings in Arabic, trauma eludes nuance as it is used – translated – in contemporary psychiatry and popular psychology. In Arabic,

[139] Pers. communication, Nov. 2019.
[140] As I was beginning this chapter, a Facebook notification popped up in my email. A friend had marked herself "safe" during a tornado in Texas. The tornado had its own safety check page, "The Tornado in Dallas, Texas," which has since expired. Reactions to marking the self as safe primarily included heart and heart-derived emojis: the red heart, the broken red heart, the heart-eyes smiley face, the praying hands (which either indicate supplication or gratitude). The ability to know, and claim, and have a digital space dedicated to your, safety.
[141] Pers. communication, Nov. 2019.

trauma is most commonly translated as *sadma* or *sadma nafsiyya*[142] [lit. psychological shock] both in psychoanalysis (Ramzi, 1966; Tarabichi, 2015) [143] and translations of PTSD, both in the press and in professional settings. But among the journalists who were generous enough to share some of their inner lives, there was little connection to the word *sadma.* As journalist Lina said, "I do feel traumatized *bas ma 'amle sadmeh* [I'm not in/I don't have 'shock']. *"* Lina does feel traumatized, in English, but she does not feel *sadma*-tized, in Arabic. Trauma, in English-language scholarship, has come to refer to the traumatic event, the impact of that event, and/or the experience of having survived (Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Herman, 1992; Leys, 2000; Zelizer, 1998). Denial of *sadma,* denial of being traumatized, can of course be a symptom of trauma. And while it is critical to pay attention to the repression of trauma, it is equally critical to interrogate what exactly is being denied. Refuting trauma may not be a denial of trauma, as Kinan's story hints. It may point to the need to re-examine the discourse, temporalities and causalities of trauma across contexts, languages and histories.

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[142] The polysemousness of Arabic complicate this phrase much more than I have indicated here. *Al-nafs* refers to the self, the soul, the spirit. *Sadma nafsiyya,* here in the adjective form, thus can mean a soul/spiritual shock as well.

[143] Ishaq Ramzi was a leader in the development of child psychoanalysis, one of a handful of psychoanalysts without medical training tapped to join the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. Ramzi was a student, and later colleague, of Anna Freud. Ramzi was a founding member of the International Association of Child Psychoanalysis, and later the association's president. Ramzi remains the foundational translator of Freud's work into Arabic. Tarabichi was a prolific writer, critic and editor. He is one of the most recognizable names in Arabic translations of canonical Western writers, including Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Tarabichi's literary criticism was deeply marked by Freudian psychoanalysis. I first came across his work looking for academic reviews or critiques of the work of Egyptian feminist psychiatrist Nawal al-Saadawi. Tarabichi's Woman Against Her Sex: A critique of Nawal al-Saadawi (2001), which includes a reply by Saadawi. Tarabichi argued that Saadawi's work was classist; Saadawi argued that Tarabichi's focus on and brand of nationalism was patriarchal. Indeed, the interplay between class, patriarchy and power forms a nexus of the work of Omnia El Shakry, who looks at the translation and interpretation of Freud in the Arabic language (El Shakry, 2014; El Shakry, 2017). I want to pay tribute to their work.

This chapter thus examines the absence of language and the domination of silence, or the active absenting of language. It seeks a language through which to claim experience (Caruth, 1991), through a tongue that is not foreign. The absence of an Arabic lexicon that speaks, and speaks to, lived experience, coupled with protective practices of silence, risk effacing both the present and past. This chapter aims to intervene in the search for that language, in the breaking of institutional, collective and personal silence and in articulating the seeming irreconcilability of time. As Shoshana Felman writes, the "radical, exacting working through of language and of memory" (1992, p. 28) go hand-in-hand. For all the richness of Arabic, we have yet to truly find the words to claim experience that, in the absence of language, are not only unclaimed, but unclaimable. [144]

Chapter Summary

I first propose a fundamental reconsideration of the very language of trauma which has been commonly and academically used for decades in Arabic. *Sadma* [shock] does not capture the depth and breadth, or temporality, of trauma. Instead, I suggest *jurḥ* [lit., wound] might be a better analytic lens for trauma, at least among the journalist interviewed here. *Sadma* implies an *external* shock, rather than an *intrusive* wound. It implies having witnessed something removed from the self, in the capacity of a spectator, which the self could not accommodate. *Jurḥ*, on the other hand, may better accommodate the physical and psychic experience of individual and collective rupture as well as the complexities of time, memory and meaning. It allows for a sense of moral injury,

[144] I borrow here from Caruth's (1991; 2007) idea of unclaimed experience.

transmissibility and "unhealability." Furthermore, *jurḥ* may pull the discourse of trauma away from "flattening the landscape of the human psyche" (Watters, 2010, p. 1), away from the universal, totalizing discourse of Euro-American discourse, and shift it closer to its source: those living it.

In addition to the absence of *language* within which to articulate experience, practices of *silence* complicate the ability to claim experience. For the journalists interviewed here, silence is a tripartite practice that is protective as it is tyrannical: it is an *inherited* mechanism of physical and moral survival, a form of *institutional* protection and an expression of respect for others and individual *respectability*, with all the political implications inherent to respectability politics. Practices of silence are inherited under the Assad regime, for example, from generation to generation. Nour recounted an experience in childhood in which her mother silenced her, using physical force, from saying anything critical of Hafez al-Assad. Silence can also be employed as an institutional protective practice within journalism. Faced with job precarity, some journalists interviewed have opted to adapt to, rather than address, what they identify as trauma inflicted by the organization. Finally, silence can be used to communicate respect and respectability. Faced with the suffering of the communities these journalists are covering – which here are often their communities – space and voice is reserved for the experiences of those suffering more. Resilience becomes both a claim to life and a form of self-effacement. That self-effacement, through silence, is paradoxically a demonstration of respectability politics (Higgenbotham, 1993) and a demonstration of moral worth.

If silence provides sanctuary in unfathomable circumstances, it is still "a place of bondage" (Laub 1992, p. 58). But being caught between the two poles of that binary of silence can be morally depleting. As Lina explained, "There's a door that opens, and once it opens, you can never get it to shut. It's always open, and then there's no one on the other side. And you're always just there, in the door, and it's always open." The metaphor of being caught in a doorway calls attention to the tension of temporality, which cuts across both language and silence. The temporality of trauma is relatively straightforward in understandings of PTSD, in which even temporal complications such as flashbacks and delayed expression can be pinned down to concrete reference points. Psychoanalytic-literary conceptualizations of temporality offer much more complex models of causality and chronology, or understandings of time across space, from Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* to the duality of "timelessness and ubiquity" (Laub, 1992, p. 69). Building on the latter, I suggest trauma – the search for meaning and memory and the ability to claim them – is dialectic in origin and experience. It is simultaneously *bound by* and *re/generative of* a centripetal force that traps us as it holds us together. The circularity of its reinforcement is rooted in the spaces which these journalists simultaneously occupy. Temporally, while the journalist may be physically separated from the war at home, the war is nonetheless ongoing at home. Spatially, while the country of resettlement is technically a "safe space," it also carries the precarity of refugee and asylum status and the trauma that can accompany experiences of immigration and exile. Professionally, the institution can be a source of betrayal, one which many are hesitant to speak of, which becomes another site of silence.

If trauma is dialectic in its form, silence is chronic, both continuing and recurrent, and chronological, arranged in the order of events over time. The chronology of silence can only be ruptured by thinking to a temporality that transcends that which is known. Trauma and journalism engage in two main temporalities, both dialogically but each in its own way. Both of these temporalities – the present and the retroactive past -- represent that which is known, even if, in the case of trauma, it is unknown until it can be claimed. Trauma, as the inability to experience the event, becomes the experience of the event through bearing witness to or speaking a past once unspeakable, even belatedly or repetitively. This engages two main points of reference, the past and the present. Journalism likewise engages in what Zelizer (1993) calls double time: the first temporality is that of telling the news; the second is that of retroactively claiming authority as the interpreter of an event in the past. Chronological silence, silence which extends over time and is oriented protectively towards *not* claiming or speaking to events, blurs time indefinitely.

This becomes even more dangerous with the seeming rupture of that silence by voice, and not language. The visibility of journalists with tens of thousands of followers on Twitter and their testimonies in courtrooms redresses what would otherwise be a void in telling the story of what is happening in Syria, for example. The question of the durability of those voices hangs in the air. In 2019, Twitter announced it would be removing inactive users, sparking outcry that the move would erase the record – the voice – of killed or imprisoned journalists, activists and others in Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and around the world. This makes clear that voice, crucial though it may be, is not record. It is not a language through which history, in the Hegelian sense of both events and their

narration, can be claimed. If "then" and "now" are indistinguishable, unified by silence, the claiming of past experience in the present may happen in and from a third temporality: an imagined imaginary future perfect. Silence's indefinite blurring of time, which can be conceptualized as belatedness-in-perpetuity, can only be broken by reaching out beyond what is known. Propelling ourselves into a future that may not exist may enable us to reach back in time because it breaks with time, to re/claim history by reaching forward to pull ourselves out of melted time. In the absence of history, the amnesia of colonial pasts and present, and amid the domination of history by one authoritarian voice, thinking into the future-as-past both *allows for* and *calls for the need to* bear witness beyond the immediate. To find a language, words and discourse and record, through which we will always already have spoken.

Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, this chapter draws only on interviews with journalists who showed no reservation in discussing their experience. Unlike previous chapters, which drew primarily on interviews with stringers, this chapter draws on journalists who were staff for news organizations in the countries they themselves hail from. It also includes many journalists who have left journalism. Despite differences in their contracts and passports, what unites the interviewees is that they are all "from there." This is reflected in the heavy code-switching throughout the chapter. Where the interviewee spoke entirely in Arabic, I have translated the interview. Where the interviewee spoke in English but switched to Arabic at certain points, I have transliterated the Arabic. Some are or have been on SSRIs or other antidepressants and/or medication. One has undergone EMDR for PTSD. All journalists interviewed for this chapter have

resettled outside of Syria (and, in one case, Yemen). Many have also left Lebanon, where they are from and/or where they were based.

Finally, it is critical to define two key words that feature prominently in this chapter: language and trauma. The language within which the interviews were conducted, and the language which this chapter tries to find, is one that is inhabited by those speaking it. Arabic is a unique experience. Classical Arabic found in dictionaries, taught in schools and used in the news (still, at the time of writing) – the means through which information is circulated -- is not the language that is spoken. Trauma is communicated through written texts that do not use the same language as those the texts aim to aid. The Arabic of the classroom and dictionary, what Saussure would call *langue,* is quite far removed from the spoken dialects. *Parole,* the individual use of the language or speech, is too individual to capture the common spoken language. The word "language," in this chapter, refers to something that is more grounded than *langue* but more common than *parole.* Language is taken to mean the widely shared system of signs that is not formally coded. Language thus understood cuts across many of the dialects, enabling for a shared understanding of experience.

This chapter questions whether trauma undermines the experiences of those from there, forcing them into the mold of what journalists covering war have, do and should experience. It takes a critical stance against the globalization of psychiatric definitions and diagnoses of trauma and PTSD but does not pull entirely away from trauma in its iterations in psychoanalysis, literary studies and cultural studies. Within the latter fields, trauma is impossible to define definitively and concretely (Caruth, 2007; Leys, 2000). That impossibility translates to a relative malleability. While trauma implies ruptures in

time and meaning, for example, it does not narrowly delineate what forms those ruptures take. The word itself can individual experiences of physical, sexual or moral assault, collective experiences of loss and exile, survival of any of those experiences and/or the narratives crafted around those experiences. Thus, I take my cue from Shoshana Felman's idea of contemporary trauma as a "crisis of truth" (1991, p. 18). That crisis extends both beyond legal testimony (Felman, 1999) and beyond the issue of individual healing. It "asks how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis of truth to which there is no simple access" (Caruth, 1995, p. 4). Thinking of trauma as a crisis of *truth* – as not only collective loss of meaning or individual moral injury but the search for what happened, what it means, and who has the right to say and speak -- opens the concept to interrogations not only of the experiences of those interviewed, but of how they are positioned temporally, i.e. against history, and institutionally, i.e., within journalism and psychiatry more broadly. This is not a "hard" definition. But trauma is not a hard concept.

Unclaimed Experience: Looking for language

Trauma, its study and its treatment have never been stable, consistent notions. As Cathy Caruth argues, there is "no firm definition for trauma, which has been given various descriptions at various times and under different names" (1991, p. 181). Before even breaching the question of the very translatability of trauma, and specifically PTSD, within one language -- English, the language of the DSM, the most dominant language of psychiatry today (Watters, 2010) -- trauma is notoriously difficult to define. It can refer to

either the event or blow that caused psychic injury, the injury itself or the state of being psychically injured, or any combination of the three. It can refer to an individual experience of being personally violated or a collective experience of genocide, or both. It can refer to a complex, ongoing systemic betrayal or an event witnessed vicariously. Add to that the complications of translation, and the troubling globalization of a specific iteration of PTSD (Luckhurst, 2008; Summerfield, 1999) and trauma truly becomes the "exemplary conceptual knot" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 14).

Further complicating the elusiveness of trauma is its dual identity as a psychiatric and psychoanalytic or cultural object of study. Trauma, as it intersects with the work and lives of those covering war, falls on a spectrum, oscillating between conceptual abstraction (e.g., Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992); and medicalization (e.g., DSM-V, 2013; van Etten & Talor, 2009).[145] On one end of the spectrum, trauma is the site of ongoing discussions of memory, witnessing, narrativization; on the other, trauma is firmly classified on an itemized DSM checklist, most recently updated in 2013 (and thankfully no longer uterine-related). That "no genre or discipline 'owns' trauma as a problem or can provide definitive boundaries for it" (2001, p. 96) within one language complicates the ability to translate the very idea across cultures and context.

The malleability of trauma obfuscates its domination as a global psychiatric, psychoanalytic and pop cultural concept. Scholars have long called for the decolonization

[145] There are of course exceptions to this binary. Among the scholars engaging with both are Judith Herman (1992; 2015), Ruth Leys (2000) and Bessel Van der Kolk (2015) among others. Within the context of journalism, the work of Anthony Feinstein (2006; 2028) stands out. Within the context of the Arab world, Omnia El Shakry's fascinating *The Arabic Freud* (2017) challenges the perceived divide between Freud, psychoanalysis and Islam, shedding light on psychoanalysis produced within the Arab world, and not translated to the Arab world. *The Arabic Freud* does not cover trauma, the central preoccupation of this text.

of trauma studies (e.g., Craps & Buelens, 2008; Mbembe, 2010; Rothberg, 2008). Amid the call to move away from "Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks" (Rothberg, 2008, p. 225), Euro-American (and now British) journalism seems to have embraced them more closely. The irony is that the embrace of a problematic, colonial understanding marks a watershed moment of progress and inclusivity in journalism's history: the shift from the expectation of journalist's to remain stoic in the face of the very demise of humanity to an understanding that journalists, too, are people. Diagnoses of "PTSD," "major depressive disorder," and others are meant as measures of inclusivity within news organizations, regardless of the relevance or accuracy of the diagnosis to the journalist's experience and socio-cultural framework. And so many a journalist repeats, recalls, in English, in therapy, in writing, on TV, those traumatic experiences. Even if they do not translate.

Trauma has been translated to the Arabic as *sadma* [shock] in both the psychoanalytic context (e.g., translations of Freud by Ramzi, 1966 and Tarabichi, 2015) and, more relevant to the case at hand, within the framework of treating PTSD among the victims of war, including refugees (see Table 1). The very etymology of the word highlights the questionability of its Arabic translation. The English word, "trauma," stems from the Greek work for a "surgical wound … resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism" (Leys, 2000, p. 19). With the advent of the 18th century, as medicine emerged as a scientific field, the idea of trauma-induced stress on the entirety of the human body began to take root. Surgeons' main challenge was to control or contain trauma -- physical injury – before it could spread to infection and eventually cause death (Moore, Feliciano & Mattox, 2007). Psychic trauma is thus "rooted in the concept of

surgical shock" (Leys, 2000, p. 19) -- shock to the entire system. A surgical wound, however, implies that skin, the first layer of protection of the human body, has been broken, torn or ruptured. While trauma can also imply an injury that is not an open wound, such as head trauma, its original, Freudian meaning – the meaning with which literary and cultural critiques still grapple is linked to an open wound, a wound with the ability to cry out (Caruth, 2007).

Despite its etymological root, it was not until the 20th century that medicine, psychology and later literature and the arts began to tackle questions of trauma. Originally called "shell shock" by French physician Charles Myers, early records of trauma described soldiers from World War I as suffering sleeplessness, reduced visual fields and an inability to reintegrate into society. World War II was the critical juncture for the recognition of trauma as diagnosable by psychiatry, with victims and survivors of the Holocaust, images of the Holocaust and soldiers bringing to attention what would, decades later, be recognized as PTSD. The Vietnam War and the rise of women's movements in the second half of the 20th century were also factors in the eventual public and medical recognition of trauma (Herman 1992; Leys, 2000; van der Kolk, 2015). U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War provided the first, and foundational, data set for the creation of post-traumatic stress disorder as an operative psychiatric concept. In 1980, a group of veterans led by two New York-based psychoanalysts lobbied the American Psychiatric association to create a new diagnosis based on their shared symptoms (van der Kolk, 2015). The DSM-III introduced PTSD into its category of anxiety disorders that year. Attention to PTSD fluctuated but did not wane. In 2013, the DSM-V created a separate category for "Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders" as an independent category,

differentiated from depressive disorders and anxiety disorders. PTSD is included in this new group. Another major change was implemented in the previous edition, the DSM-IV: Criterion A2, responses of "fear, helplessness, or horror," was dropped (Karam et al, 2010). It is also omitted from the DSM-V. The un-coupling of trauma and anxiety points to increased attention to trauma in psychiatry. This comes against a broader conversation around destigmatizing PTSD, with calls to drop the D, or disorder, entirely (e.g., Smith & Whooley, 2015).

News organizations also are moving to destigmatize PTSD (and not questioning whether it is the most accurate model to work with). It is also worth noting the link between news organizations and the military. This link is most apparent in embedded journalism obviously. But it also plays into the *training* and *diagnosis* of journalists. Hostile environment and first aid training (HEFAT) is provided by either military or security forces or a private company, which can be staffed by ex-military personnel. The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma found that among the top three gaps journalists identified in their training were components on gender, regional specificities and, across the board, "psychological trauma" (Slaughter et al, 2017).[146] In my HEFAT training, the last half of the last day was with a military psychologist. We did receive training on what to expect should we be taken hostage or trapped somewhere, specifically how the mind or body might react and basic ways of dealing with it. The *New York Times* provides its correspondents with a session with psychiatrist Anthony Feinstein before they are dispatched to the field.[147]

[146] The report also identified digital security and online harassment as areas overlooked in training. Lina, Nour and Tanya all said that they would like more knowledge of digital security. Interestingly, all three were women.
[147] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

I spoke with three psychiatrists and three psychologists who work with journalists. Two of the psychiatrists, Anthony Feinstein and AFP's Olivia Hicks, were happy to be quoted on record. The third requested the interview be on background only. In the interest of transparency, I have met both doctors in person before. I have never been treated by either. At AFP, I had no interaction with Dr. Hicks other than a group meeting between correspondents covering conflict and AFP administration in Paris in May 2018. The therapists cited have been given pseudonyms.

While Feinstein raised questions around whether PTSD was the most effective means of understanding the experiences of journalists, PTSD still dominates the institutional and even interpersonal discourse on the inner lives, the mental health and at times the ability to work. All three psychiatrists identified a marked increase among news organization managements' awareness of PTSD specifically. Hicks said:

> We have definitely started talking about it more, but it's a delicate question for the people who are directors because at the moment we sort of talk a lot about it, then we started talking less about it. We can't talk about it all the time, otherwise everyone's going to be PTSD, every seminar. I don't think they're right about that. I think we should talk about it more. It's still taboo. It's not completely stopped being taboo. *[Q: Why not?]* Well … in our modern society if you say "I have a problem" then you're not going to work anymore. Especially if they are stringers. If they're *statut siege*,[148] maybe, but even they have difficulties.

Hicks continued:

> I do think things have changed… People come and see me or phone me and ask for help. What has really changed is that we provide three free counseling sessions, and up to 10 pending approval. This of course means there have to be proper psychiatrists where the journalist is living. But I

[148] *Statut siege,* or "headquarter status," is a type of contract given to any AFP journalist posted to Paris, regardless of where they are from. Both *statut local,* or "local status" (which I had throughout the course of my time at AFP) and *statut siege* may be granted permanent or tenured positions at AFP, what the French call *CDI.* I had one such contract. But the hierarchy of headquarter and local status refers to both one's security at the company and concrete benefits, including pension and annual leave.

> would say the biggest change is the possibility to have counseling. The other one is more people are talking about PTSD.

A glitch in the system of organizational support for counseling, however, is the ability to find a counsellor who speaks the language. Among bilingual reporters, there was also a hesitation to consult a counselor unfamiliar with the world they reside in. As Lina explained, you don't want to have to explain "everything from zero."

While some journalists felt PTSD captured their experience, many did not. Feinstein referred to this as the psychiatrist's "transcultural trap."[149] "We have to be very careful about assessing non-western trauma from a western position," Feinstein said. "The kind of construct that you bring from a DSM angle doesn't hold up in large parts of the world."

Sadma: Trauma as shock

The problems of translation are much broader than transcend the individual translator or text and stem from the structural, as Walter Benjamin (1997) argues, and the cultural, as more recent scholars of translation, anthropology and other fields have argued (e.g., Blommaert, 2005; Silverstein, 2003). By structural Benjamin refers to not only the structures of language and between languages, but the very *mode* of translation itself. Benjamin (1997) conceptualizes translation not as a technical, scientific process but as a mode fraught with a tension, ultimately productive, between fidelity to the original and

[149] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

freedom to recreate rather than reproduce the text or concept in the language of translation. I can only hope that this tension is ultimately productive.

Translation, for Benjamin, "ultimately has as its purpose the expression of the most intimate relationships among languages" (1997, p. 154). While translation cannot *reveal* the relationship between English and Arabic, for example, it can *represent* this relationship, insofar as it realizes it seminally or intensively" (ibid; emphasis added). All relationships involve power dynamics. As Shoshana Felman notes, translation is "necessarily a *critical* activity, a mode of *deconstruction,* that is, the undoing of an illusory historical perception or understanding by bearing witness to what the 'perception' or the 'understanding' precisely fails to see or fails to witness" (Felman, 1992, p. 160; emphasis in original). Translation is much more – involves much more and creates much more – than an accurate rendering of words. This becomes especially critical when dealing with notions of trauma and witnessing. It is likewise critical, but less examined in literature, when dealing with the spaces and narratives which inform, if not define, perceptions of the self, suffering and well-being. Those perceptions are integral to adaptation to life in exile. They are integral to the ability to find and keep employment.

There is arguably no exact word for trauma in the Arabic language. In fact, there is no exact translation for trauma even within Freudian writings. The word used most commonly for trauma is *sadma,* shock. The first reference to the idea of trauma I could find in Arabic were early translations of Freud (Ramzi, 1920), which used the same expression. Trauma as in "traumatic neurosis" is translated to *'isab al-sadma* in the Arabic edition of The Ego and the Id (Najati, 1981). In a speech critiquing what he calls

Arab intellectual's pathological obsession with the west, Jalal Al-Amin translates *traumatisme* as *sadma* (cited in Tarabichi, 2000, p. 124). [150] Four therapists I consulted also agreed that the word for trauma would be *sadma nafsiyya,* lit. "psychological shock."

The most immediate manifestation of the complications of translating trauma conceptually, and therapeutically, across cultures is in the literal translation of post-traumatic stress disorder, a phrase that is central in the discourse of news organizations turning their attention to the mental health of their reporters. There is no unified, agreed-upon phrase in Arabic for what the English-language DSM-V calls post-traumatic stress disorder. Studies of PTSD among Arabic-speaking communities often utilize translations of the DSM's post-traumatic diagnostic scale (PDS) in surveying participants (Norris & Aroian, 2008). Therapists in Beirut, a hub for journalists covering Syria, and the Arabic-language press most commonly refer to PTSD as *idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma* [lit., disorder/disturbance following trauma/shock]. [151] The United Nations and Britain's Royal College of Psychiatrists similarly refer to PTSD as *idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma* in their official Arabic guidelines online. Médecins Sans Frontières, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the World Health Organization and the Cleveland Clinic all use some variation of the phrase, centered on *sadma* [shock] for trauma. The Mayo Clinic, oddly enough, is the outlier.

Articles tackling trauma and PTSD have become more frequent in recent years. The phrase used almost universally is *idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma* [disorder/disturbance following trauma/shock]. For example, the BBC Arabic ran an article headlined: *"Idtirab*

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[150]This has the element of the meta: Amin is talking about the encounter between the West and the Arabs, in that direction

[151] All psychologists I spoke with were educated in Europe, Britain or the United States in English or French.

ma ba'd al-sadma 'zahara munzu 'am 1300 qabl al-milad" ['Post-traumatic stress disorder evident in 1300BC']" (*Idtirab ma ba'd,* 2015). Al-Jazeera ran an extensive factbox on *idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma* [PTSD] (*Idtirab ma ba'd,* 2017). The Al-Jazeera article is also tagged *idtirab al-ijhad al-laḥiq li-l-sadma* [stress disorder subsequent to trauma/shock]. Clicking the link leads to a results page with only the factbox listed, headlined using the word *sadma* [trauma/shock]. On November 3, 2019, *Asharq al-Awsat* ran the headline: *"Tada'iyat al-ḥarb… Muwajahat idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma: layalin malee'a bi-l-'araq wa 'ilaj nafsi li-l-'awda ila al-ḥayat al-madaniyya* ['Ramifications of war… Confronting PTSD: sweat-filled nights and psychotherapy to return to civilian life']" (*Tada'iyat al-ḥarb,* 2019). The idea of "return to civilian life" jumps out. The article is a first-person account written by Melissa Thomas, who identifies as a US army vet and the widow of a fellow vet who died in an avalanche in Colorado. At the end of the article, a footnote in fine print reads, in Arabic, "courtesy of *The New York Times."*[152] And on August 2, 2019, Al-Akhbar ran a feature story on post-traumatic stress among Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The headline read: "*Atfal souriya wa 'idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma: al-ḥarb mustamirra* ['The children of Syria and 'post-traumatic stress disorder': the war is ongoing']". The opening paragraph throws shade at the idea of post-traumatic stress and its origins:

> The Syrians are discovering day after day that the war will not end in their country once the guns fall silent. As death continues to hover over children in the flashpoints (Idlib, Aleppo, the countryside of Hama and Latakia), children in the areas vacated by the war machine experience various forms of disturbances, due to the accumulation of shocks [*sadamat*] they have witnessed, only to re-emerge later in a number of forms which doctors have

[152] On Jan. 25, 2019, the *Times'* "At War" online forum published a story by Thomas headlined "The Day They Came to Tell Me My Husband Died." Thomas and her husband Chris are photographed in their combat fatigues. Thomas notes in the article that he showed symptoms which were not in line with the classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder" (*The Day They Came,* 2019).

> described, in the language of medicine, as "post-traumatic stress disorder" [*idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma*]. (*Atfal Souriya,* 2019; translation mine)

The selection of coverage above shows the popularity of the phrase across the political spectrum, from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, etc. But as popularity does not equate to accuracy, it is worth looking closely at the terminology utilized by organizations dealing directly with journalists, refugees and others, as well as clinics with Arabic resources or branches in the Arab world (for example, the Cleveland Clinic operates a satellite facility in Abu Dhabi). All of these phrases are publicly accessible and were taken from the Arabic version of their websites. So as not to assume that the Arabic phrases are translations from the English, I reached out to contacts at MSF and CPJ. Both said the source material they were working with was primarily English. See Table 1 (below).

Table 1

Organization	Trauma (Arabic)	English translation from Arabic	PTSD (Arabic)	English translation from Arabic
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	*sadma*	shock/trauma	*Idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma*	Post-traumatic disorder
World Health Organization (WHO)	*Sadma*	shock/trauma	*Idtirab ijhad ma ba'd al-sadma*	Post-traumatic stress disorder
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)	*Sadma*	shock/trauma	*Idtirabat tawattur ma ba'd al-sadma*	Post-traumatic anxiety disorders
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)	*Sadma*	shock/trauma	*al-ijhad el-laḥiq li-l-sadma*	Post-traumatic stress (lit., stress that follows trauma)
Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi	*Sadma*	shock/trauma	*al-ijhad al-nafsi ba'd al-sadma*	Post-traumatic psychological stress
Mayo Clinic	*raḍḥ*	trauma (as used medically, e.g., 'brain trauma'	*Idtirab al-karb al-tali li-l-raḍḥ*	Post-Grief/sorrow disorder

All of the clinics and organizations use the word that reflects the trauma as an external shock. The Mayo Clinic, the organization with the least ties if any at all to the case studied here, digresses furthest from the more common translations. Perhaps because of its lack of presence in the world of PTSD among journalists, psychologists, psychiatrists and news organizations in the Middle East, it has come up with a separate translation. It was the only organization which did not use the word *sadma.* Instead, it uses *raḍḥ,* a medical term for "trauma" not used in Levantine dialects. *Karb,* also a word not commonly used in the uncoded language of dialects, is polysemous and can mean "anguish, agony, suffering, heartache, grief, sorrow, distress, trouble [or] woe" (Baalbaki, 1995, p. 890). *Idtirab al-karb al-tali li-l- raḍḥ* thus translates to "The stress/disturbance of grief/anguish[153] following trauma." While at first blush this seems like a more accurate translation, I have never actually heard anyone use the word *raḍḥ.* I asked Tanya and Khalil, who have written in Arabic for the press, about the word. Tanya was unfamiliar with the term and Khalil said it "probably is in the dictionary." Baalbaki's *Al-Mawrid* dictionary goes straight from "*raḍda:* bruise, confusion traumat(ism)" to "*raḍakha:* to yield, to submit, to give in" (1995, p. 587). The Hans Wehr Arabic-English dictionary likewise skips over *raḍḥ* and goes from *raḍda* to *ruḍab,* spittle (1993, p. 398). They both skip *raḍḥ.*

[153] In line with the polysemic nuance of the Arabic word, the Hans Wehr dictionary lists the English translations of *karb* in three groups: "worry, sorry, care, grief;" "apprehension, concern, anxiety, fear;" and "distress, trouble, pain, torment, torture, agony" (Wehr, 1993, p. 959).

Sadma is the very word that the majority of journalists interviewed here – Arabs or dual Arab nationals – bristled against. It is a word that I feel little connection to as well. None of the journalists interviewed for this chapter agreed with the idea of *sadma* to describe their state.[154] In English, some did agree that they felt traumatized in some form. Lina, an Arab-American journalist who has covered Iraq and Syria, among other conflict zones, was particularly reflexive on the difference between the concepts. "Do I feel traumatized? Maybe, yes, inside," Tanya explained. "*Bas masdoumeh? Aw inno 'idtirab ma ba'd al-sadma? Abadan* ['Do I feel shocked? Or that I have PTSD? Not at all']." Tanya said certain concrete events had shocked her (*"insadamet* [I was shocked by that]*"*) but that the impact was not lingering. Lina likewise said she felt "traumatized," but *sadma* did not resonate the same way. Rashad and Kinan both categorized themselves as having different types of depression. In Kinan's words, "existential depression." In Rashad's "dialectic depression." Rashad identifies his depression as tripartite: "psychological, political, and existential." I asked Rashad, who is well-versed in Freud, to suggest an equivalent for *sadma.* After a long pause, he suggested "*raḍḍ nafsi* [an emotional bruise; emotional bruising'." Syrian journalist Nour had another phrase. Thinking about the loss of her home, she described as "*jurḥ ma byokhtom* [a wound that does not heal]." Perhaps the denial of trauma, of *sadma,* is not necessarily a symptom of PTSD. Perhaps it is a problem of language, in the shared but uncoded sense described in the introduction: that space between *langue* and *parole* where signs are understood within and across dialects.

In his expanded definition of trauma, Freud writes: "Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale," adding that the trauma has

"broken in" (1920, p. 301). [155] Trauma is a psychic "wounding intrusion from outside" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 9). As Nour intimated, trauma is closer to a "crying wound" (Caruth, 2007), a wound that is open. There is a fundamental difference between a wound that does not heal, or even a bruise, and a shock, or *sadma*. *Sadma* does not imply a wounding intrusion. In its common use, it means a shock. It is an external event which has "shocked" the person into disbelief. All interviewees denied feeling shocked, as a sustained state. A wound, on the other hand, is internally-accommodated. It implies the protective barrier of the skin has been broken. A wound cannot be controlled; its literal or figurative pain that may or may not heal. A wound, unlike a shock, leaves a mark on the body and the psyche. That is closer to the idea of *jurḥ,* an unhealed, open wound. The idea of *jurḥ* extends temporally both to the past and future. It implies lingering hurt, history, the memory of pain. It implies that healing has yet to happen, if at all. *Jurḥ* can be personal or collective. Most of all, *jurḥ* is intrusive. It bleeds from within even if it is caused from without. By pain, I do not mean individual pain, but "acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity … a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from and where they want to go" (Alexander et al, 2004, p. 10).

The tension between injury and shock is playing out in studies of foreign correspondents as well. Nearly 20 years after the first English-language study of trauma among journalists (Feinstein, Owen & Blair, 2002), there is a move to reconsider trauma-

[155] As psychiatrists treating soldiers returning from battlefields during World War I began to document symptoms stemming from war and not psychosexual neuroses, Freud expanded his definition beyond his initial focus on psychosexual obsession, which may stem from within the individual, to include external trauma.

as-shock.[156] The latest report by the Reuters Institute found that "moral injury… rather than PTSD or depression, emerged as the biggest psychological challenge for journalists covering the refugee crisis (Feinstein & Storm, 2018). The study does not claim to represent journalists who have actively covered conflict. Some of the journalists featured in the study, however, have also covered the conflict inside Syria, such as Reuters' Yannis Behrakis (who sadly passed away earlier this year). Feinstein explained:

> It's not really a shift. It's just that I've been looking at the refugee crisis in Europe. We looked at PTSD and depression and the usual psychiatric conditions that we see in stressful situations. We never actually saw a whole lot of PTSD. We did find moral injury.
>
> I find moral injury more or less overlooked in journalism … in journalism research, there's no discussion at all about this… Of course, we used imperfect means to do it, but even with rudimentary tools it was clear that moral injury was a concern for journalists.[157]

Unlike PTSD, moral injury is not included in the DSM-V as a disorder. It is not clinically pathologized, so to speak, and therefore may be more accommodating. Moral injury is at once more malleable, and more concrete, than trauma. It is defined as "the injury done to a person's conscience or moral compass by perpetrating, witnessing, or failing to prevent acts that transgress personal moral and ethical values or codes of content" (Feinstein & Storm, 2018, p. 4). Moral injury, combined with the shattering of

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[156] It is worth a smaller, earlier study of the psychological impact of journalism I came across. In 1992, 18 journalists were invited to witness the first execution in California in 16 years at the San Quentin Prison gas chamber. A team of Stanford psychiatrists studied 15 of those journalists and found that the experience of being an eyewitness to an execution resulted in a "high prevalence" of dissociative symptoms with "the defensive purpose of reducing the emotional impact of traumatic events" (Freinkel, Koopman & Spiegel, 1994, p. 1338). The study concluded that "it seems likely that such dissociation is a nonpathological and expectable response to witnessing unusual or extreme physical trauma or violence" (Freinkel, Koopman & Spiegel, 1994, p. 1338). The study did not follow the journalists longitudinally, but the idea of a nonpathological response to trauma or violence seems to have appeared in the earliest studies of trauma and journalism. It has since disappeared.

[157] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

meaning and loss of ties of collective trauma (Alexander et al, 2004; Erikson, 1991; Zelizer, 2003), the inherited trauma of colonialism (Mbembe, 2010; Lloyd, 2000) the pain and disorientation of exile (Caruth, 2007; Leys, 2000), the precarity of safe spaces, the continuity of war, etc – this perhaps comes closest to the *jurḥ* experienced by the journalist from there.

Dialectic trauma

In addition to the language of trauma, a complication arises from *temporality,* a core element of trauma as a psychoanalytic and psychiatric concept. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, "belatedness" or "afterwardsness" (Caruth, 2007) or "deferred action" (Leys, 2000), places trauma within the framework of a dialectic between two points in time: a first trauma, in its definition as an external *event*, unintegrated or repressed, followed by another trauma which recalls the first. Trauma can also refer to the *experience* of having lived or survived shock or injury to the individual psyche (Herman, 1992). Trauma scholarship, which includes psychoanalytic/literary and psychiatric/cultural approaches, converges broadly on a three-stage process: (1) a traumatic occurrence, however temporary; (2) the act of bearing witness; and (3) the collective moving towards recovery (Caruth, 1991; Herman, 1992, Felman & Laub, 1992; Zelizer, 2011). But that process, already complex unto itself, is further complicated by a prerequisite: the literal, physical move from the site of trauma to the "post-traumatic space" (Zelizer, 2003, p. 56).

While PTSD streamlines the complex temporalities of trauma, it culls from psychoanalysis. The idea of a latency period is central to delayed-onset PTSD, now termed "delayed expression."[158] No matter the timing of the expression of trauma, time and space move in tandem. Van der Kolk writes: "For real change to take place, the body needs to learn that *the danger has passed* and to live in *the reality of the present*" (van der Kolk, 2015; emphasis added). While van der Kolk is referring to the body, the embedded assumption here is that in the reality of the present, where the individual may be receiving psychological counseling, the danger has passed. The Cartesian plane connecting time and physical space is fairly straightforward.[159] Rashad refers to this as *chronologiyat al-ajnabi* [the chronology of the foreigner].[160] While *chronologiya* is used in Arabic, the word is taken from the Greek root and phonetically is a clear transliteration of a non-Arabic root made to fit the noun form typical to Arabic. Chronology, in Arabic, is technically *al-taslasul al-zamani,* which means the same thing. The Arabic phrase translates roughly to something like "temporal sequence," drawing on two separate words: *zaman* [time] and *tasalsul,* which can best be defined as "an uninterrupted sequence" (Al-Mawrid, 1995, p. 317).

Chronologiyat al-ajnabi carries another embedded meaning: that of the importation of a word that sequentially structures events across time from another world

[158]The DSM-V defines delayed expression as cases in which "the full diagnostic criteria are not met until at least six months after the event (although the onset and expression of some symptoms may be immediate" (2013, p. 272)

[159]Tuchman refers to a similar this spatialized time, the "social ordering of time and space [that] stands at the heart of organized human activity" (1978, pp. 39-40). Journalists conceive of time, and space, in the same way as the societies they come from (Tuchman, 1978).

[160] This can be linked to notions of collective trauma as defined by Erikson (1991), Herman (1992), Alexander (2004) and others. The loss of social meaning is reinforced by the imposition of a chronology not only foreign to the individual, but foreign to the way trauma is experienced by Rashad, Nour and others.

(the country of origin of foreign correspondents) and their language (in this case, English). Rather than chronological in time and source, trauma here is dialectic. I expand on the temporality of trauma in the final section of this chapter. It is not only time that is dialectic; it is the very *cause* of trauma. Interestingly, it allows for the articulation of a wound even as the wound is continually reopened.

Rashad, a teenage fighter-turned-adult journalist, covered Syria until 2015.[161] Rashad's knowledge of psychiatry and psychoanalysis predates his work as a journalist. He is familiar with Freud in English and Arabic. He is well-versed in the language of modern psychiatry, particularly as concerns journalism's current focus on PTSD, of which Rashad is highly critical. He has been on medication to treat depression on-and-off since a young age, long before he became a journalist, and made it a point to clarify that.

Rashad does not believe he is traumatized. He is certain PTSD does not apply. He justified this by drawing on the temporality and spatiality inherent to the chronology of PTSD. "I am not traumatized in the sense that I came [to Syria] for two months and then went back to my country and had trauma or PTSD," he explained. He described himself as having "*ikti'ab dialektiki*." [162] Dialectic depression, which over the course of our conversation I came to understand he treated with a combination of medication, European women with no ties to Syria, and a social media network with deep ties to Syria.

[161] The idea of a fighter-turned-journalist goes against the basic pillars of traditional professional journalism. But it is also what happened, and what happens, on the ground in war. We must also recognize journalism as it is, and not only as it should be. The assumption that having been involved in the war precludes the ability to do the work of journalism at a later time must also be interrogated. I explore this in more depth in the section on access in Chapter 2, on eyewitnessing. A useful way to contextualize this is coverage of the 2003 war on Iraq and the role of the U.S. press in making a case to go to war and the patriotism that marked coverage of the war. See Zelizer & Allan, 2011.
[162] Pers. communication, Nov. 2019.

Rashad's identification and rejection of the foreign/er's chronology was a common, although not universal, theme among interviewees. The linear temporality which assumes that the danger has at least physically passed does not necessarily hold. The country of resettlement, meant to be a new home,[163] can be a source of renewed trauma, of a new *jurḥ*. The employer – indeed, the very institution of journalism – is also a potential source of trauma. Rather than chronological, trauma can be a dialectic experience for the journalists interviewed here.

The move to a post-traumatic space is crucial for what psychologists call healing (van der Kolk, 2015; Feinstein, 2006) even if it is not a guarantee of that healing. The move to a post-traumatic space is also crucial for the ability to claim the experience of trauma, bear witness and assume responsibility (Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Leys, 2000). And yet, what a post-traumatic space is, exactly, is up for debate. For journalists who are also refugees or on political asylum, leaving the home country, which is also the war zone, and resettling in a country not at war is a move to relative physical safety. But they still face a physical precarity which foreign correspondents returning to the home country do not.

Nour and Taym are on refugee papers. Rashad has been granted political asylum. Tanya has filed for political asylum. All of them, and others interviewed here, have received death threats serious enough for their employers to intervene. Rashad said he had found relief in the mundaneness of life in a quiet northern-western village. Kinan had mixed feelings about it, describing his day-to-day existence as contained within "white

[163] Another bilingual language trap: the word home in Arabic. *Manzel* or *beit* are closer to the sense of one's house of residence. When asked "what is home, in Arabic?" the answer was general *al-watan* – the homeland and the nation. In this paradigm, can there really be a home outside the *watan?*

walls." But even for Rashad, the precarity of their legal status weighed heavily on them. As Nour said, "for me there is no such thing really as a safe space. I live in fear that I will be deported, to where I don't know, that my mother will be deported, that my family in Syria are dead." While she acknowledged that she no longer lived in fear of being detained or targeted ("bombed," in her words), the new space is still not without its precarity, risk and stress. Not all Syrian journalists said they feared deportation. But they all described the stress of getting and maintaining paperwork. And the ultimate complication of space and time, as Nour said, is that when the war is over, whatever that means, "there will be no Syria to go back to." And as always, there is the immigrant experience of racism and xenophobia, sporadic though it may be.[164] Perhaps the chronology here is one of disjuncture. In Rashad's words, *chronologiyat al-ajnabi,* the chronology of the foreigner, does not apply.

'Institutional betrayal'

Some of the experiences interviewees were least willing to talk about, or requested to be off-record, involved the institution for which they worked and interactions with higher-ranking editors or managers. Organizational neglect is a source of serious stress for journalists generally (Hedges, 2006), freelancers particularly (Borri, 2013) and stringers perhaps even more particularly. While stringers often do not have those same protections

[164]Studies on Syrian refugees have explored resettlement as a traumatic experience. There are no studies on stringers or local journalists. I hesitate to clump the two communities together, even though there is a shared identity. Stringers often have the support of the organization for which they work. Photographers may have a transferrable skill. More importantly, stringers are journalists and must be considered as such, in addition to self-identification as a refugee. On refugee resettlement and trauma, see Lindencrona, Ekblad & Hauff, 2007 and Kazour et al, 2017.

in writing, most of the organizations studied here have been crucial in helping them secure refugee status or asylum. But the institution has also been the source of trauma, as both shock and injury, for many of the journalists interviewed here. In addition to institutional inaction, the institution can be an active source of trauma – of shock, moral injury, and/or disbelief – for these journalists. More than stringers, local staff reported incidents with management had impacted their ability to do the work. These incidents cannot be taken as the sole traumatic triggers, of course; they come after or even amid the stress of covering war.

Vincent, who is nearing retirement and no longer a journalist, was open about the role the institution played in his breakdown in 2014. Without going into detail, he said getting promoted was the worst thing that had happened to him mentally. "All those years of go, go, go crashed down on me at that desk," he said. He went on:

> It was awful. For the first time, for the first time ever really, I had the time to really think. All this… I don't know what to call it, anger, trauma, I mean it is trauma, it all boom, came up… But what really triggered my breakdown was management. We clashed on everything. I mean everything. Budget, pictures, staff. In the field, I had to deal with management of course, but it was in a way easier to fight with them. It was just me. There was no one else involved. When they put me in charge of Syria, suddenly they were making all these demands without providing anything. They have no clue what it is like to be in the field. And of course, when you fight with them, over things that are crucial, I mean, flak jackets and basic things, there is the perception that you are the damaged combat photographer and there is no talking with you.[165]

Vincent decided to go back to the field. As he was packing his gear, he literally collapsed. He took time off, went on medication and underwent intensive therapy, including EMDR. While it was not the cause of what he called his breakdown, Vincent

[165] Pers. communication, March 2019.

identified the institution as its trigger: "it was like the last drop in the bucket, and the most poisoned drop."

Like Vincent, photographer Jad has a storied career in covering war for two decades and has sought counseling.[166] He continued to cover conflict, until an incident involving a decision made by an editor left him unwilling, and unable, to "give my life to this," in his words. Jad requested the details of the incident not be included, even without identifying him or his organization. As Jad recounted it, a top editor had made a call on a story which featured Jad's photographs. Jad said he wasn't entirely on board but didn't contest. The story became so popular it prompted other journalists to cover the same. They came back with a slightly different story. The editor said Jad had failed to adequately document the story visually. Headquarters got involved. Jad filed all the photographs he had taken that day to show he had in fact done his job, and the decision to amputate a critical part of the story had not been his. The senior editor was not happy with that.

Jad took the fall for a truly disturbing editorial decision. The backlash on social media was incessant. Headquarters sent him two separate notes which left him seeing red. Jad took a leave of absence, went on medication, went back to therapy and has since dialed back his dedication to what evaluated as the bear minimum. "It was, it was not a knife to my heart, it was worse. All my life I was dedicated to this job and this company, and we are like a family, and I prioritized it over my own family," Jad said. "If I had

[166] A side note: Vincent is no longer on medication. In 2014, after decades of covering war, he was stationed on the editing desk in Europe. He got into massive disagreements with management, attempted to pack his bags to go to Gaza, and had a breakdown. He no longer covers war, or takes SSRIs. After years of medication and therapy, including EMDR, he has a shaman and a solid open marriage. He is an equally firm believer in the institution as a source of trauma.

died, who would have looked after my children? And for what? For this? For them to throw me under the bus? … Now I go to the office only if absolutely necessary. If they don't know who I am, how I work, after all these years, there is nothing more to say."[167] He spends his time meditating and hanging out with his children. Rashad also said quitting his newspaper over managerial and political disagreements had led to a bout of depression linked to his deep disappointment and "collapse of identity." Since leaving conflict zones and getting married, Khalil has also turned down offers to cover conflict.

Psychology researchers Smith & Freyd (2013) coin the term "institutional betrayal" to capture shared experiences of stress or moral injury across institutions, regardless of the individual's personal identity and how that identity intersects with the institution. Institutional betrayal is defined as "a description of individual experiences of violations of trust and dependency perpetrated against any member of an institution in a way that does not necessarily arise from an individual's less-privileged identity" (Smith & Freyd, 2014, p.). Journalists of all walks of life have begun to tell their stories of such violations. This has had the effect of raising institutional and public awareness around the emotional toll of this job. At the heart of journalism, or at least journalistic pride is a psycho-emotional paradox: that we are at once sensitive to the suffering of people invisible to much of the world, and that we are insensitive to those very things we pride ourselves in being sensitized to. In other words, we feel with the victims we are covering, but we do not feel during covering, or after. To feel post-hoc is to flag oneself as unwell. This cannot be generalized to all reporters, of course. News organizations have become increasingly aware of this, providing mental health care to their reporters and leaves of

[167] Pers. communication, May 2019.

absence at times. But it is still a serious, serious issue for everyone, but especially for photographers. If writers can make do via stringers in the field (see chapter on eyewitnessing), photographers cannot. As psychiatrist Hicks told me:

> I had two people this year who were declared inept to work in AFP. They were in Paris, so we are not even talking about seeing of the horrors of Syria every day. But they're seeing enough horrors … In Paris, if you're on the text desk [a writer] you can transfer, edit for another service. But photo has nowhere else to go (...) And stringers, in particular, their employment situation is difficult. [168]

The chronology of trauma and the idea of a post-traumatic space may be limited to journalists covering wars far from their own homes. But institutional betrayal is one commonality that joins all journalists. Carol Guzy is – was – a conflict photographer for the *Washington Post* for 25 years. She has four Pulitzer Prizes to her name.[169] Guzy said it was not the war which had pushed her into a dark place, but family stress – coupled with a letter from the *Post* saying her position had been terminated. Her identity, she said, collapsed: "At that time I was as broken as I had ever been. Everybody is around for the Pulitzer parties, but then you enter that darkness and find out who really loves you" (cited in Feinstein, 2018). In the foreword to Feinstein' *Journalists Under Fire* (2006), former *New York Times* journalist Chris Hedges (later embroiled in a plagiarism dispute with *Harper's* and *The New Republic*)[170] writes:

> When it is all over, when the emotional and physical exhaustion have left war journalists depleted and broken, their personal lives often in shambles, their sleep plagued by images of carnage and death, and their careers at times in tatters, they come home to their news organizations, or, in the slang of the profession, to the beast… The beast moves on, swallowing new news,

[168] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.
[169] This is not to condone award culture. But it is still a measure by which "good" journalism is assessed within the institution and indeed broader culture.
[170] In 2014, *The New Republic* and *Harpers* released a list of work they said Hedges' had plagiarized from other journalists as well as Ernest Hemingway. Hedges publicly refuted the allegations point-by-point. See Hedges, 2014.

> consuming different lives and passions. This is the nature of beasts. But those who were in the war cannot forget. (Hedges, 2006, p. ix)

While this dissertation aims to intervene in the universalizing discourse of what it means to do journalism, and who journalists are, certain commonalities of experience must also be acknowledged and incorporated.[171] The experience of the institution as the source of injury or shock, articulated by my interviewees, stands out as the most widely shared commonality in feelings of injury.

Unclaimable Experience: Effacing words

The first section of this chapter grappled with the *absence* of an accurate linguistic sign for the lived experience of journalists from there. The next section turns to the *absenting* or erasure of existing language, to the muting of pain. Strategies of silence can be part of the processing and claiming of trauma (Laub, 1992). An unspoken condition for silence as testimony, rather than self-effacement, is that a way to claim experience – in words, and in time – actually exists. That it can be spoken, and that there is someone to hear it. That it can be spoken depends on the existence of a language within which to speak it. In addition to the need to find a language for trauma, there needs to be a space within which to speak it, where it will be heard without dangerous repercussion. Journalists who are from there must navigate that terrain in two separate but connected spaces. The first is the

[171] Drawing on Hedges' story, Feinstein notes "the jarring dissonance of a divinity major hurdling the check-in counter to assault an airline attendant" (2006, p. 44). Granted, Feinstein's point of comparison is "some paparazzo with psychopathic tendencies" (ibid). But it is worth pausing at the notion of dissonance and sources of violence. While it is not meant as such, this points to an issue worth raisin. I am concerned that the dissonance between a divinity major and an act of violence implies that certain identities, predicated primarily but not solely on race, class and gender, are less prone to violence that others of different races, classes, etc.

home country. They must speak, but at times they cannot speak – out of respect for those suffering more, out of fear of losing their jobs, out of an inherited pattern of self-effacement that is paralytic as it is preservative.

As Olivia Hicks[172] and Anthony Feinstein[173] noted, institutional awareness of the mental health of reporters only took root in recent years. Despite that, journalists may still keep quiet out of fear for their jobs, Hicks said. After putting off therapy for years, Lina found a therapist with whom she said she connected. The therapist had a background in working with employees of international rescue and non-governmental organizations in conflict zones. Lina did not have to "explain basic things." Lina said the therapist had "seen it all. Nothing shocked her." Still, Lina did not fill out the paperwork for reimbursement from her work-provided insurance, so her employer does not know. She explained:

> There was this culture of like 'everything is fine' in the newsroom. I used to think I just needed time to decompress. I just needed to go to the gym before going home to decompress, or to go for some drinks to decompress. Then one weekend, [bureau chief] got a weekend off, for the first time in literally months. And when we were back in the office, on Monday, she was like, "I don't know what happened. I was sitting in bed with [husband] and I couldn't sleep so I tried to watch TV and then I just started crying and I couldn't stop." And she actually had no idea what was wrong, or even that this was not normal. I don't think what I needed was to decompress, at the gym or with whiskey. I think I needed to keep moving until I was wiped out and had to crash.
>
> (…)
>
> When I moved to Baghdad, that was when I had the time to think. There's a ton of work in Iraq but you can't actually move around the way you would in Beirut. So you're cooped up in the house slash hotel slash office, the compound, and it's just you and your thoughts. No decompression zone. The decompression zone is 40 steps from your bed to your desk. That was

[172] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

[173] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

> when I realized, with work and whiskey and my personal life, I was too close to the cliché of the war correspondent.
>
> (…)
>
> I got a few recommendations for a few therapists, but I wasn't really convinced by any of them. Then someone recommended [therapist name], and her profile seemed interesting. I don't have to explain things to her. I don't have to explain every word from the Arabic to the English, what it means. I don't have to explain about IS. It's so much easier. Sometimes I'll say something, like "this has been happening," or "I keep feeling like," and she'll say it happens in these situations, and give me an example from another country. I can't tell you how much that helps. Because there's a culture of, like, 'we don't talk about it' at [work]. And it's weird, because with the *ajeneb* [foreigners] it's almost like they wear it like a badge of honor, like, "I was in Baghdad and this happened," or that they're in therapy even. We just don't really talk about it. So now I have reading material about trauma, vicarious trauma, and it's really helped so much. Did you even know vicarious trauma was a thing?[174]

Lina added: "It's not a thing where we come from." This was evidenced later in the conversation, when discussing our parents, Lina said: "Like, sometimes I listen to my dad and his friends, just having what they think is a normal conversation, like reminiscing about the [Lebanese civil] war, and I'm like, this cannot be normal. You guys, like, you're not okay."

In order to reflect how deeply impacted Lina is by a man she never met, some context: I have known Lina for close to a decade, even before the Syrian crisis. In addition to our mutual colleagues and social circles in the Middle East press, we have mutual family friends. Despite our social and professional proximity, Lina was one of the interviewees whose inner life and views I was not privy to. As a journalist, she is highly visible on social media, with nearly 30,000 followers on Twitter. And yet her views on

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174 Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

Middle East politics, journalism and life are cautiously kept out of her social media presence. Lina has a reputation among friends as a fantastic reporter, but a guarded human. There are no stories of her making off-the-cuff or controversial comments, sober or drunk, a rarity in Baghdad particularly. She has not flown into fits of rage in the office or at the bar. A mutual friend once described her to me as, "lovely, but" and then made the motion of a wall before his face. Another colleague once described her as "smart." Our lives had intersected covering stories in the Middle East. She was always friendly but measured. I have never seen her speak in anger or under the influence of anything, which is moderately uncommon in the field.

I interviewed Lina in Philadelphia, a space neither of us has claim to but which we both love dearly, over coffee and, as day turned to evening, chamomile. It was our first time getting the chance to socialize alone, without the buzz and distraction of other reporters around us. It was our first time socializing in a foreign place, where neither of us is from or is covering. Lina had covered the rise of the Islamic State group, reporting from Raqa, Baghdad and Mosul at the height of IS' reign. She covered the 2019 Baghouz battle, the final push by Arab and Kurdish fighters back by US, French and British special forces that drove the Islamic State group out of eastern Syria. In a few informal chats when Lina was in Baghouz, via Instagram DM and Facebook Messenger, Lina was always coherent and responsive. The thing she complained most about was hygiene among the press (specifically, lack thereof). Lack of sleep, lack of food and random missile attacks she took in stride.

What haunts Lina most is the death of someone she had never even met:

> When I was getting ready to go into Raqqa, one of our stringers put me in touch with a man inside there. He was a medic. So we started, you know,

he'd send me a picture or a line about what was going on that day. I'd ask for a contact here or there, or just send him a voice note and see how things were going. This went on for like two months. Then one day, he just stopped answering me. I was so pissed. I was pissed for *weeks.* It was so rare to have someone inside who was consistent and seemed credible, and I was working on that relationship. Like, I could see the WhatsApp messages were delivered, and some of them were even read. He just stopped answering me.

Then there was the civilian evacuation deal, so I went up there with the idea of writing a story on ISIS' use of human shields. People were pouring out, I mean pouring. It was a scene. Women tearing off their black niqabs and throwing them in the air, children, people crying and screaming. So we found a midwife who was willing to talk. I thought, like, that's it, that's my story. A midwife under IS. I was like, yes, nailed it! But she didn't want to talk about any of that.

I tried to convince her. "Look, listen, here is why your story is important, your work is so important, women, women's rights, all those babies you delivered, all those women who were raped." Nothing. All she wanted to talk about was her son, Ahmad.

Apparently her son had been killed a few weeks before, and she still had the body. And they didn't let her bring the body with her during the evacuation. So all she wanted to talk about was Ahmad, and how great he was, and how he had helped so many people in there, and how she had left him behind. Abandoned him in Raqa, and he would be all alone in there. He had helped everyone in there, and they had all turned their backs on him and left him behind to rot.

I mean, this is a very moving story, and it's awful, but like I was still pissed that she didn't want to talk about being a midwife or human shields in Raqqa. Like, I almost didn't even want to hear it. I mean, I did of course, and it's a terrible story, but like it's not a [news] story.

The stringer, the photographer who was with me, was chatting with the rest of the family. He pulled me aside.

[The stringer] was like, you'll never believe it. You know who her son is? You remember that guy who I put you in touch with?

Lina paused. "I was bitching about the guy who wouldn't answer me. But I never knew his name. He never gave me his real name. All I had was his nom de guerre. It was him. It was Ahmad. His name was Ahmad. That was his mother. That was his body she

was talking about. And I was sitting there not even wanting to hear about it from his own mother."

Another pause. "He stopped answering me because they killed him. I never knew his name was Ahmad, *tkhayaleh* [imagine]."

Then she hung her head and cried.

We sat in silence.

Lina apologized for getting emotional. She said this was the first time she had ever told the story. It was not the field or the missiles or the dead bodies that haunted her. It was Ahmad, killed thrice. First, physically, violently. Then again when Lina did not want to listen to his mother tell her about his life and death. And a third time, when Lina neither reported the story of his death – not a newsworthy story, in Syria – nor spoke of the death of a man whose face she never knew.

Lina felt complicit in the killing of Ahmad, through refusing to hear his mother and then concealing the entire experience. To go back to the idea of moral injury, Lina's guilt stemmed from the perception not that she had been "perpetrating, witnessing, or failing to prevent acts," but that she had *refused* to witness. This is further complicated by the virtual nature of Ahmad's existence to Lina met with the very real physicality of his grieving mother on the outskirts of the collapsing caliphate in Raqa. Finally, all of this is a non-story, for journalism and for Lina's peers. *It* is not spoken about. *He* -- Ahmad -- is not spoken about. He is not storified – the journalist's way of bearing witness. He was never known, even though his death was made real to Lina through her being there, where he is from, confronted with his grieving mother.

How do you bear witness to the death of a ghost?

The notion that trauma is witness-less, that it is unspeakable, is central to the foundational model of cultural trauma studies (e.g., Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Hartman, 1995; Herman, 1994). To claim that experience, one must also recognize the voice calling out (Caruth, 2007). And then, one must find words to speak the unspeakable (Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Leys, 2000).[175]

Lina feels complicit in not only Ahmad's death, but the continued injustice and suffering after his death: that she continued to contact him and grow frustrated with him even as he was, unbeknownst to her, a corpse; that she refused to hear the wound cry out, in the stories his mother tried to tell her as she reported on Raqa; that his body was left behind and she never saw his face or heard his voice in person. And finally, that she felt she could not speak any of this to her colleagues. The story has all the hallmarks of literary tragedy. It evokes the traditional temporal complications of trauma, particularly the relationship between the wound and the voice, or the claiming of the experience. Caruth argues that it is through "the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished-for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound" (2007, p. 2). She bases the paradox of claiming the experience of trauma on Freud's analysis of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata.* Tasso's protagonist Tancred unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda, who is disguised in enemy armour during battle. After Clorinda's burial, Tancred slashes a tree in anger, and the tree bleeds. From the wounded tree comes

[175] It is worth of course noting that while it does not immediately involve verbiage, the *image* is not itself absolved of the complications of voice, language and speaking the unspeakable. While much of any collective memory relies on the image as a symbol of the atrocity, how those images survive and what meaning they take on is linked to – if not dependent on words (Zelizer, 1998), from the mouths of survivors to the pens of reporters, and perhaps those who embody both.

Clorinda's voice, calling out that Tancred has hurt her once again. Leys (2000) has noted that the real victim in this story is Clorinda, not Tancred. Lina would agree. The victim is the dead Ahmad, and she feels complicit.

Freud turned to literature to make sense of the repeated symptoms of soldiers returning from war. Like diagnoses of PTSD, Tancred's tale is perhaps more immediately, or literally, applicable to trauma both inflicted and experienced by, for example, soldiers or others who have fought in battle or carried arms. The tree metaphor, the idea of a wound that cries out for a witness, is far from limited to soldiers or fighters (e.g., Felman & Laub, 1992, Zelizer, 1998). Journalists covering war, natural disasters and humanitarian crises often experience some level of survivor's guilt (Feinstein & Storm, 2018). Primo Levi (1989) writes of the grey zone, where the lines between perpetrator and victim are blurred. In the field, when victims are crying out in pain – or later, when they cry out through their mothers' testimonies -- the lines between perpetrator and *witness* become blurred. Language, so familiar and comprehensible to the journalist witnessing war at home, disappears when the time comes to bear witness, to speak of the wound. And for the journalist who cannot bear witness, like Lina, the grey zone becomes too close for comfort.

Beyond the personal suffering it entails, trauma is also marked by the complexity of speaking the trauma, of bearing witness through narrativization (Caruth, 2007; Felman & Laub, 1992; LaCapra, 2000; Leys, 2000; Zelizer, 1998). Like the problem with translating trauma, the inability to bear witness is reflected in the absence of language as I defined it earlier in this chapter, i.e, a shared system of signs which has not been formally codified. Furthermore, to bear witness is not only to speak. It is also to be *heard,* by a

listener (Laub, 1992). The following section addresses silence. I suggested there is an absence of language which accurately portrays or captures the experience/s referred to as trauma in English. The following section explores silence as the erasure of existing language and silence as the self-censorship of those who traverse between worlds and wounds – the co-called bridges. The experience of trauma becomes not only unclaimed, but unclaimable.

A paradox of trauma lies in the inability to know that what was seen. Caruth writes: "Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violence event may occur as an absolute inability to know it" (2007, p. 92). Lina's story presents a new paradox: something that is literally not-seen – a man you never met – and you add to the wrong done unto a ghost, first by being mad at him, then by being mad at his mother who was trying to bear witness to him with you as the listener, and finally with your own silence around the whole story – both interpersonally and as a journalist.

To claim the experience, you must make the ghost real. Lina's grief over someone she never met is a recurrent theme in writing on Syria and Yemen. Every journalist interviewed had worked with at least one stringer whom they had never met in person, and with whom they spoke more than their own partners, parents or friends. Editor Nidal lived through Syrian stringer Rami's work as a photographer, then videographer, his imprisonment at the hands of one Syrian party, then his imprisonment at the hands of another, the bombing of his house, the death of his mother and his evacuation from a city under siege via WhatsApp. One night, during the evacuation, Rami messaged her to say he didn't think he was going to make it. "I put my child to sleep and I ran to the bathroom

and vomited my insides out," Nidal recounted. The first time Nidal and Rami met was when they jointly won an award for a story they had written on Syria – at the awards ceremony. "We cried and hugged and at the same time here was this stranger who was the person I was closest to in the world. Even closer than my own parents."[176]

Protective silence

Silence is not always a negation. It can be communicative (Lübbe, 1981). Self-censorship, the absolute absence of freedom, can also be a form of resistance. If you cannot speak, the regime cannot know what you think (Wedeen, 2015). In "Cartographies of Silence," Adrienne Rich illustrates that active use of silence:

> the blurring of terms
> silence not absence
>
> of words or music or even
> raw sounds
>
> Silence can be a plan
> rigorously executed
>
> the blueprint to a life
>
> It is a presence
> it has a history a form
>
> Do not confuse it
> with any kind of absence. (Rich, 1976)

Silence risks exoneration as a potent symbolic strategy when it is the byproduct of the actual *absence* of language as opposed to the strategic *absenting* of existing language,

[176] Pers. communication, June 2018.

or silence out of respect for the suffering of others. Earlier in this chapter, I examined the sufficiency of translation in creating a language for claiming experience in Arabic. But in addition to the absence of a language, there is a second dynamic at play. The non-existence of language is reinforced by the *erasure* of the limited existing language.[177] "Do not ever say that"[178] or "remember but do not repeat" expunge the very ability to claim experience by denying its existence, a denial that paradoxically reinforces the reality of thing to be denied.

Former journalist Nour remembers the first time she realized the violence of living under the Syrian regime:

> I was young, I came home from school one day after one of our civic education lessons. They taught us about how great the Baath is and Hafez the great leader and the usual things. I came home and I told my mom, 'I think I don't like Hafez al-Assad.' My mom slapped me across the face with all her strength. 'Don't you ever, ever say that. Did you say that at school? Do not ever let me hear you say that again.'[179]

Nour's mother instilled in her daughter what she perceived to be (and most likely was) a life-saving strategy of silence, a preservative silence, to play on Abraham & Torok (1990). Abraham & Torok differentiate preservative repression from dynamic, or

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[177] It is also worth noting that in some forms of journalism, particularly wire journalism, the apparent silence of the narrator is key to the authority of the narrator. The journalist is, of course, never silent, even when their voice is not immediately addressing the audience.

[178] In addition to Nour's mother silencing her daughter for her own protection, the idea of silencing, or not speaking, is culturally resonant. The dominant paradigm of *'ayb,* for example, is still widely in use. The word *'ayb* is used to indicate behavior that is disgraceful and invoke shame. Misbehaving children, for example, are reprimanded with "*'ayb."* It is also used to silence speech considered inappropriate or offensive. This includes words of gratitude, for example when a friend attempts to thank you for coming to their aid in any way, including financial. The giver responds "*'ayb"* when the receiver attempts to thank them to indicate that it would be shameful for the giver to expect or receive thanks. Whether this is directly linked to the regimes in place across the Middle East is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but worth exploring. It would also be interesting to explore the juxtaposition of widespread strategies of silence with a culture home to a rich literary history and tradition of oral history.

[179] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019.

constitutive, repression: dynamic repression follows the Freudian path and results in hysteria; preservative repression reflects a sort of stasis that is neither integrated nor disintegrated. The writers turn to a metaphor of death – the crypt – in preservation of the self. They refer to those processing trauma through preservative repression as cryptophores whose experiences are "equally incapable of rising or of disintegrating" (Abraham & Torok, 1990, p. 65). The crypt is preservative, and paralyzing: "Nothing can undo its having been consummated or effect its memory … This reality cannot quite die, nor can it hope to revive" (ibid).[180] Nour's mother stripped her daughter of words as an act of preservation. Forced silence houses a paradox: silencing a political statement means the statement has been heard. Silencing history involves a recognition of something that happened which must be denied. But silence becomes a presence, rather than an absence, only after the silence *itself* is attested to through language, after a discourse paying tribute to that silence has emerged, whether court testimony, academic treatise (e.g., Laub, 1992; Lübbe, 1981) or film (e.g., Lanzmann's *Shoah* or George Hashem's *Rsasa Taysheh*). Over the course of time, the silencing of experience without an identification of the role of silence results in a semiotic paralysis, a lack of adequate language. Over the course of time, even as communicative protection, silence becomes chronic, and chronological – a pattern that, rather than marking events across time, fails to mark them.

[180] Ferenczi's notion of self-effacement also comes to mind. Without equating an adult under the Assad regime with a child, the subject "becomes a psychiatrist, who treats the madman with understanding and tells him that he is right. (This way he will be less dangerous)" (Ferenczi, 1988, p. 172).

Silence as respect/ability

In addition to its role as "the very secret of survival" for those involved (Laub, 1992, p. 62), as in the case of Nour's mother forbidding her to speak, silence can pay tribute to the suffering of others (Felman & Laub, 1992; Rashkin, 1992). Journalists' silence of their experiences, such as Lina's silencing of how she felt over Ahmad, can also be interpreted as communicative of respect for the victims of the war they are covering.[181]

An intra-institutional silence is self-imposed by many of these journalists, reflecting a sense of self and place that runs counter to modern psychotherapy. Here, the intra-institutional includes the newsroom or the shared physical space, the organization or the shared professional/institutional space, and the social circle of other journalists, a shared moral space. This moral space is in some ways a shared cultural space – all journalists are journalists; it is also a culturally separate space – foreigners do not inhabit the same world as, in this case, Syrians or Yemenis.

Variations on the theme "it's not about me" were common among native Arabic-speaking correspondents working for northern western news organizations in particular. This is not, of course, to sanctify the journalist as selfless and self-effacing. The job is predicated on visibility – if not to the outside world, to one's editors and superiors (although increasingly to the outside world, i.e., the audience). Not speaking about the experience of covering war as a journalist, or of losing friends in the field, is linked to what many perceived as respect for the "real" victims. Three main justifications cut across all interviews: that others have been through worse; that "it's" not about me

[181] Lübbe coins the term "communicative silence" to refer to silence as a public demonstration of admission by German communities after the horrors of the Holocaust (Lübbe, 1981). While this is incomparable to the case at hand, this does echo Lübbe.

(where it appears to signify journalism and also the war proper); and that being unaffected – or the ability to silence or repress – is a protective measure that mitigates the risk of being ousted from the institution. That reasoning blends into a general culture of communicative silence among journalists referred to as "local." I draw here on Becker's (1984) notion that culture is generated by collective values and behaviors and Stuart Hall's idea of culture as shared meaning and meaning-making: "Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings –the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between members of a society or group" (Hall, 1997, p. 2). The common interpretation of their silence, as opposed to the verbosity or openness of other journalistic cultures regarding their individual experiences in the field, suggests perhaps that to be the local pillar of the international press is its own culture. There are still too few studies on the impact of covering war on the journalist. There are even fewer studies of those who cannot leave or will not leave. The few studies that include in-depth interviews and analysis look exclusively at foreign correspondents (e.g., Feinstein, 2006; Feinstein, 2012; Feinstein & Starr, 2015; Feinstein & Storm, 2018; Massé, 2011).

Memoirs of journalists who have covered war provide a crucial contribution this conversation. They are also dominated by foreign correspondents. Nour, for example, is still struggling to find a publisher for her memoirs covering northeast Syria. She does not want the first telling of her story to be in English. "I don't want to do it for western audience. I want this to be *our* story first, and then to share it," she said. Arabic publishers, however, have not been interested. "I have a full manuscript in Arabic and I have more than 10 rejections. I have English publishers already interested without even seeing a writing sample. Then the Arabic publishers say, 'this is good, publish it in

English and we can translate it'." And so, Nour, an award-winning journalist, remains silent in the written testimony to her own experience.

I have known Jad for close to a decade. Until recently, he covered war in the Middle East and Africa. While I interviewed him twice for this dissertation, this story was not part of the interviews. It predates this project by years. It was also the first time I realized the depth and meaning of our silence. Jad and I had once had a social conversation about therapy. One day, he called me and asked, point-blank: "*Layke? Kif ya'ane al-waḥad yrouḥ 'and* therapist?" This is difficult to translate, but the closest approximation might be: "Look? How/why does one go to a therapist?" *Kif ya'ane* is a colloquialism for "how does that happen" or "what does it mean." There was an indefatigable, larger-than-life star journalist, unsure whether he needed therapy, unsure who to ask and unsure whether it was even the right question. Years later, Jad went on medication for depression, triggered by an institutional incident, which will be explored in depth in the following section.

Lina commented on journalists' tendency to wear experience as, in her words, a "badge of honor." In response to a question on whether the badge of honor was for having survived, Lina said: "*Inno eh, bas kamen inno* [pause] *shwey inno ḥaram ana* [Well yes, but also [pause], it's also a bit 'poor me']. *"* In other words, Lina explained that the figurative badge of honor was for the experience of surviving trauma, not being affected by trauma or for being traumatized. The value of resilience is demonstrated by

silence, by *not* claiming experience.[182] (The number of Arab leaders who have declared *sawfa nasmod,* "we will be resilient/stand our ground," is too large to recount here.)

In its psychological use in northern-western contexts, resilience is "a construct connoting the maintenance of positive adaptation … despite experiences of significant adversity" (Luthar et al, 2000. P. 543). The idea and use of resilience is a central part of the move to decolonize trauma studies. Scholars have argued for "hegemonic trauma theory's aesthetics" to be "expanded in the intersection with postcolonial theory and reconceived to theorize *not only melancholia and stasis* but also *processes inducing resilience*" (Visser, 2011, p. 279; emphasis mine). These processes include societal traditions and religious belief systems. Resilience becomes a claim to life in the face of violence (Achebe, 2009). The idea of resilience as a claim to life, as crucial for physical and moral survival, is vital both conceptually and in lived reality.

At the same time, for journalists covering conflict at home, resilience is in parallel a signifier for a hidden signified: self-effacement rather than a claim to life, an articulation of respectability that extends far deeper than the *'ayb*. [183] Respectability politics, the phrase coined by Evelyn Higgenbotham (1993), is predicated on the other community, the community in power, recognizing behavioral and attitudinal

[182] Journalists cannot lay claim to the same experience as refugees. Even those who are themselves refugees recognize the relative privilege of being associated with a major organization. An interesting counterpoint to this is Omar Dewachi's study (2015) of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, who must publicly demonstrate the materiality of their experience. Dewachi offers the idea of a "wound economy in which victims were required to foreground their scars in order to be granted resettlement rights" (2015, pp. 67-68).

[183] It is important to qualify that I did not interview foreign correspondents as a counterpoint here. This story is about the people telling it.

demonstrations of morality, purity and class status.[184] The observation has resonated in contexts beyond the African-American community Higgenbotham first studied.[185] More recently, the notion has been expanded to refer to "a mode of life conforming to and embodying notions of moral worth" (Duneier, 1992, p. 65). Respectability thus relates to *'ayb.* Along with *respect for* the suffering of others, the question of *respectability of* the journalist comes into play.[186]

Silence brings to the surface another paradox of journalism: that the journalist is both tougher than the experience of war and sensitive enough to bear witness not only to the experiences of others, but to the very experience of the war itself, which is the war at home. The unwillingness to admit or vocalize how they themselves are feeling is rooted in many journalists' fear for their jobs. Here, it is also serves as a tribute. Respect for the suffering of others, and respectability as not only a person but a journalist, is demonstrated through a silence that is meant to be *communicative*, a presence, to and for others are not the Other.

Finally, silence is not solely a claim to morality: it provides institutional protection. Lina did not file an insurance claim for her ongoing, work-related therapy, despite a diagnostic sheet that confirms work-related PTSD, as she did not see the need to let her employers know she may have been struggling internally. "I feel like I'm already

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[184] The idea has been critiqued by scholars pointing to the internecine stratification it reinforces within the Black community, including the implicit framing of LGBTQ Black communities as inherently and inevitably shameful. See, for example, Ward, 2008.

[185] I cannot but help reference Anna Ascends, the 1919 play about the Americanization (a directionally-upwards process) of a Syrian immigrant waitress, Anna. George Orfalea quotes the playright, Henry Chapman Ford, as having been inspired by the family values and "clean" lifestyle of Syrian Anna, an exemplary story of melting into the melting pot. See Orfalea, 2006.

[186] Many of these communities claimed respectability not only by demonstrating the physical, behavioral and political characteristic traditionally attributed to White communities, but by aligning themselves with those communities against Black communities. See Orfalea, 2006 and Gualtieri, 2009.

enough of a cliché, a female correspondent who likes whiskey," she joked. Khalil, a senior Middle East correspondent for a newsgroup, has covered war in three countries, living in each of the war zones for years at a time. When he began to feel a tightness in his chest, after leaving Libya, he sought medical attention. The doctor diagnosed anxiety and prescribed a mild tranquilizer. Khalil did not file an insurance claim nor tell his colleagues he had been prescribed the medication, picked up the medication and temporarily taken the medication. Jad's employer does know that he sought counseling and medical treatment for trauma and depression. This was subsequent, however, to Jad's decision that the institution had failed him and his withdrawal from the competition of field reporting.

There should be in theory no fear of repercussion of seeking medical treatment for trauma-related stress within the institution. From *The New York Times* to AFP, news organizations have personnel and budgets in place to cover psychotherapy and psychiatry for their staff. Some organizations cover the same for non-staff, such as stringers. Anthony Feinstein has sessions with *Times* reporters before they are sent to cover conflict.[187] AFP covers up to 10 therapy sessions for their stringers, contingent on approval by company doctor Olivia Hicks, she told me.[188] Hicks also noted: "But this is complicated. It is complicated enough for staff, for example journalists who have covered traumatic events in Paris recently. These journalists can find work on other desks here in Paris, as copyeditors" or working other beats. Hicks said there seemed to be a higher rate of journalists in Europe coming forward to speak of trauma than in the Middle East,

[187] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019
[188] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

although the latter was changing as well. Another psychiatrist working with journalists, who requested full anonymity, noted that the major international newsgroups often prepped their foreign correspondents before dispatching them to conflict zones and checked in with them through debriefing or a psych evaluation upon their return, but did not display the same level of concern or effort with locals.[189]

But as many a journalist can attest, the best journalist is the journalist who keeps their head down, does their work and does not tire. The most obvious risk of speaking to stress, depression or other psychic suffering is fear of losing one's job. More common however, was the desire to move up in the organization – a desire bolstered by the project of a seemingly indestructible baseline of resilience. Jad and Vincent, both veteran conflict photographers,[190] have moved past that fear. But they both recalled a time in their careers when "just to shut up," as Jad said, or "*accepter de jouer le jeu* [accept to play the game]*,"* as Vincent said, was best practice. As the struggle of freelancers and stringers shows (e.g., Borri, 2013), and even as the experience of staffers indicates, the institution is unparalleled as a source of protection for journalists, from resources to de facto credibility. But power to protect is still power. It is not only institutional inaction, neglect, which is harmful.

[189] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.
[190] Hicks noted she found "high rates of PTSD in photo editors." Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

The future perfect: Trauma's third temporality

Silence has an intimate, inextricable, complex relationship with time. In connection with trauma, silence reflects of the "difficulty of narrating, from the context of the normality *now,* the nature of the abnormality *then*" (Langer, 1991, p. 22; emphasis in original). Trauma's two main timeframes, the present and the past, are in one way indivisible: the integration and validation of past experience in the present moment. At the same time, the division, and in fact the very *divisibility*, of "then" from "now" is also central to trauma in its multiple iterations. It is central to the "post" in PTSD. It is central to Freudian repression, the repression of what happened "then." It is likewise central to Freudian working through, to bearing witness (e.g., Hartman, 1995; Langer, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992) or to claiming experience (Caruth, 1991). Until the past can be re/claimed, it "has no place in, and therefore cannot be assimilated by or integrated into, any existing cultural frame of reference" (Felman, 1992, p. 104). Without already having claimed certain experiences at prior points in history, against which the present is differentiated even as it is an extension, "then" is still "now." The two main timeframes of trauma blur into one long chronology of silence, a chronology complicated by its own questionable rupture.

Journalism likewise draws on two main timeframes, what Zelizer (1993) calls "double time." Journalism's first temporality is predicated on "being there," on the firsthand coverage of events. In the widespread practice of stringer-based reporting, firsthand may perhaps become secondhand, but nonetheless remains grounds to claim presence.[191] The second, durational mode sees journalists "establish a second kind of cultural authority that allows them to compensate for not being there" (Zelizer, 1993, p. 225).[192] Not being there, the temporal or spatial separation from the event, generates the need for and the actual creation of authority over what that event means. I will return to this momentarily.

The chronology of silence seems to have now been broken by the voices and testimonies of Syrian, Yemen and other journalists covering war at home. They speak of their experiences on TV, on social media, and in courts of law. (Again, working journalists seem likely to speak up about journalism.) That testimonies against perpetrators of the war are being heard in courts of law is critical. But this is not a publicly-oriented record, in voice or content. More immediately worrisome is individual and institutional reliance on social media. In November 2019, Twitter announced it would remove inactive accounts to free up handles. The news was met with outcry among journalists and activists across the Middle East. For Syria, for example, this would have amounted to the erasure of first-hand testimonies from within. The same can be said

[191] For an in-depth interrogation of the journalistic principles of "being there" and eyewitnessing, see Chapter Two, "On Eyewitnessing."

[192] The current state of journalism in Syria and Yemen, and potentially other areas around the world, for the main international news organizations is one of being there but not being there: being there through the eyes of paid journalists who are not staff and who are denied the same legitimacy. In this context, "not being there" can be thought of both *temporally*, i.e., as a retroactive claiming, and *spatially*, i.e., within the present, journalism's first temporal mode, but physically removed. The latter also necessitates the active creation of authority.

of Bahrain, Yemen, Mexico, and elsewhere. As discussed in the chapter on eyewitnessing, news organizations rely heavily on VoIP and social media platforms for communication, recruitment and visibility. Conversely, journalists rely heavily on the same to claim their immediate experience. Whether this will play out as a record of what will become the past remains to be seen. Twitter's plans to remove accounts raises the question of how permanent that record is, and whether it serves as a way to claim experience. It raises the question of whether the visibility and popularity of journalists such as Lina, Nour, Vincent and others, who have tens of thousands of followers, truly marks a final rupture of silence.[193] If erasure from Twitter risks erasure from record, the erasure of testimony and existence, then the risk of falling back into silence lurks. Voice is not to be confounded with language, a shared system of meanings, discourses and even histories; the two are mutually dependent, but the former cannot come about without the latter.

The voice of the immediate, journalism's first temporal mode, is the very voice that many rely on to get news. Journalists interviewed here often retweet each other and are picked up by the social media accounts of major news organizations. Many of us now turn to Twitter for the news, from individual journalists or others we know in person or virtually. But despite the novelty of its platform, this remains only the first telling of history. It is still contained within the trauma, the war, which is unfolding in parallel and has not yet become the past. It is a testimony of the immediate, in the tradition of

[193] It is worth repeating that this is not a case of the rise of "ordinary voice in post-television news narratives" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 305). These are journalists paid by news organizations.

journalism, which may not survive time. Without language, memory cannot be claimed nor a history recorded (Felman, 1992).

Trauma and journalism both broadly involve dual temporalities. For trauma, belatedness, retro-temporality, or latency; for journalism, the immediate and the durational (Zelizer, 1993). This is, of course, an oversimplification. Trauma also involves cyclical time, repeatedness, the suspension of time, "stuckness," and more. But healing, in psychotherapeutic terms, or claiming experience, in literary/cultural terms, involves the concretization of what Langer (1991) framed as recalling an abnormal then in a (relatively) normal now. Claiming the past, breaking silence, is contingent on the division of time. Trauma that is always already ongoing, through the silence that melds war into colonialism into authoritarianism, escapes bicameral referentiality. There is thus perhaps need for a third temporality to break the silence, beyond the immediacy of witnessing, or journalism's first temporal mode, by reaching into an imagined imaginary future to pull ourselves out of melted time. In other words, by thinking in the future perfect to find a point in time that breaks from *both* an abnormal then and the abnormal now, ex-ante, to claim history in the Hegelian sense: "not less what happened than the narration of what happened" (1956, p. 60).

I take my cue for this from the rich body of literature on temporality, witnessing, language and history, much of which was written following the Holocaust. I also take it from the reality of the region this dissertation focuses on, a region marked by authoritarian narrativizations of history, utter silence around history and ongoing attempts to redress the two. No two tragedies can ever be compared. And in what follows, I do not aim to compare Syria to Lebanon, or the war in Syria with the war in Lebanon, nor to

neglect Yemen, Egypt, Bahrain or any of the other Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East with rich, complex histories of their own. Any text has boundaries which allow for articulation even as they prove to be major limitations and means of exclusion. While I have drawn boundaries which are deeply flawed, and turned to means which are far from perfect, these hopefully a first step in finding a more inclusive, more nuanced and more accurate language.

In line with education under authoritarian regimes, Syrian educational curricula were unified across the country under the Baath Party. A unified narrative of history was approved by the Baath-controlled Ministry of Education, in the form of ministry-edited and approved textbooks distributed to schools across the country. In an analysis of four Syrian textbooks, from the "ancient history of the Arabs" in the fifth grade to "the modern and contemporary history of the Arabs" in the 12th grade. While private schools are given some leeway in adding supplementary material, the government history curriculum is mandatory in the four years prior to graduation (Bolliger, 2011). This did not preclude acts of resistance, of course. While voices have broken through that silence, with journalists in and beyond Syria telling their own stories, there is as yet no alternative discourse to history. It is critical to underscore that, amid the volume, in quantity and intensity, of voices now speaking out and speaking back.

In neighboring Lebanon, the same but opposite: there is no history book. The absence of a witness to *war* is evident in the disconcerting euphemism, the events, that stems from the silencing of the very word, of a language to speak the trauma. It is evident in the absence of a written testimony to that war. Lebanese history ends with independence in 1943, the last agreed-upon "event." Educational curricula do not cover

the war. Attempts to craft a history book, or at least a formal account of what happened, have failed catastrophically. Despite the ubiquity of journalists during the war, it was in fact silence that came to define Lebanon. The trouble with language and time continues to date. The current rhetoric in the Lebanese protest movements is one of a "revolution 30 years in the making." Tracing the root to 1990 neglects, effaces, the 1975 war, French colonialism[194] before it, Ottoman colonialism before that, ad infinitum.

Because of the way the civil war[195] in Lebanon ended, or more precisely did not end, even claiming the very occurrence of a war is complicated. The civil was commonly, and still is to some extent, referred to as *al-aḥdath,* "the events." Mentioning "the events" is often followed by *tinzakar ma tina'ad,* "may they be mentioned/remembered not repeated. The two are uttered in one breath: "*al-aḥdath, tinzakar ma tina'ad."* The events, may they be mentioned/remembered, not repeated. Indeed, An-Nahar, one of Lebanon's last surviving leading newspapers, has a section in its archive entitled "1975: *tinzakar ma tina'ad"*[196] (An-Nahar, 2019). To go back to Abraham & Torok's (1990) notion of preservative repression, the phrase itself serves as preservative *silence*. *Tinzakar,* "may it be mentioned/remembered," is a colloquialism which has a root in formal or classical Arabic. The actual morphology of the word, however, does not exist in formal Arabic. It is grammatically nonsensical.[197] The root verb *zakara,* is polysemous,

[194] Technically, the post-World War I British and French rule over what became Lebanon and Syria was referred to as a mandate.
[195] I want to acknowledge the problematic politics of referring to any war as "civil."
[196] The number 1975, or just *el-khamsa wa saba'een* ("seventy-five") in Lebanese colloquial means "the war." It is the year the Lebanese civil war erupted. I would argue it is a metonym for the sectarian, geopolitical, class and interventionist tensions that underwrote the war.
[197] The single word in Arabic fulfils multiple grammatical functions. Subject, verb and object can be joined in one word.

meaning remembered, recalled, mentioned, and/or named.[198] Use of the word often involves both definitions – to remember, and to mention. *Yajib zikr anna,* commonly used for background in news stories, means "it must be said/recalled that." The word for "may it be remembered" is *touzkar,* literally "it is remembered." The colloquialism *tinzakar* does not mean *either* mentioned/said *or* remembered/recalled. It means both.

Bearing witness to trauma, claiming memory and creating language are inextricably connected (Caruth, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992; Leys, 2000). They are apparently connected in *tinzakar ma tina'ad* – may it be mentioned, remembered, not repeated. The phrase is deceptively commemorative in what it names, bears witness to, what it signifies. In the Saussurian sense, the "it" is a signifier for "the events." The collective noun events is not a war. Events are occurrences significant enough to be remembered. Events happen around you, sweeping you in their path as they unfold in their own time and space. You are not the perpetrator of events. Events do not actively target you. They occur, dislodged from testimony and responsibility. To argue it is a signifier for war, to bear witness and claim responsibility for *war,* is to enter that grey zone (Levi, 1989) where victim is perpetrator and perpetrator victim.

The experiences of the journalists here are not only trauma, nor can they be limited to the fight for the voice and space to claim a truth at home and in the institution. But it is part of their experience, by their own admission. Trauma cannot be claimed if it cannot be located temporally and articulated in and through language. Furthermore, it becomes "fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time"

[198] Interestingly, the root noun *zikr* means to name or to mention. It does not mean memory. The noun *zikra* means a memory or a commemoration.

(Caruth, 1991, p. 7). The post-traumatic time and space where the claiming happens -- Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* -- only applies when the trauma is not the present or in the present. Practices of silence are protracted over time and space, in public space, at home and at work, blurring past and present and paralyzing time and language. The absence of not only history but of memory, in the silence imposed after a war or under an authoritarian regime, language is forcibly suspended, frozen at the moment *before* the experience to be claimed. In the perpetuity of belatedness, of language to speak the unspeakable, memory finds no vehicle through which to be claimed. Repeated over the course of history, that belatedness creates a loop held together by the centripetal force of silence or lack of language. Without reaching the point of working through language and memory, of memory through language, belatedness runs in perpetuity: not a latency period before claiming experience, but a silence of permanence.

In the present, journalism's first time – the telling of the event – appears to break that silence. But the risk of being removed from Twitter after death, by Twitter itself, raised alarm around the ensuing loss of voice and testimony. The limitations of court cases may surface as politics supersede rights in wartime. These are only two of many indicators that silence may have been only temporarily suspended, a sort of journalistic carnivalesque of wartime. It is only in the re-telling, in the move from "then" to "now," that one can bear witness and construct a retro*active* discourse that accounts for the past from the present (Caruth, 2007; Hartman, 1995; Langer, 1991; Felman & Laub, 1992). To distinguish time when "now" and "then" are blurred, by the complexity of regional history and an accompanying silence, we must project ourselves into a third temporality, a future that may not even exist for the individual or the collective -- as evidenced by

Nour's statement that there may not be a Syria to go back to. This future is imagined, a possibility of human hope, and imaginary, in that it may be an illusion. Projection into that future *creates space* and points to the *need* for a discourse, a language, beyond the 140 characters that define the language of journalism's first telling that reaches back as a telling of history. From a moment that has yet to happen, from imaging the third temporality, language can begin to emerge, oriented towards communities and classrooms that do not yet exist even as they have always existed. The future perfect, beginning to tell the story of history by first creating a native language for it, is not only an act of witnessing in itself but a call for the need to witness beyond the immediate. Projecting into a future, precarious though it may be, enables us one reach back in time, to re/claim history as it enables us to pull ourselves out of a paralysis of narrative. It is a form of resilience to the attempted denial of dignity, and life itself, of violence, from war to colonialism. When it is over, so to speak, we will have already claimed it. From that future perfect, we will have spoken.

Conclusion: What we talk about when we talk about trauma

An inherent, potentially incontrovertible contradiction presents itself in this text. The idea of trauma did not resonate with Kinan in two long conversations we had in person. Hearing him later refer to his "traumatic experiences" in Syria, in English, on television, suggested a divide I have long suspected: that of the claimability of experience in English, which has a language for experiences incomprehensible to itself and therefore politically problematic. Arabic, the language which *should* claim the experience, remains

shut out, silenced and in turn, in its absence of an adequate lexicon, silencing. Speaking, claiming experience, is a way of being, of existing, of resisting (Caruth, 1991; Caruth 2007; Felman & Laub, 1992; Herman, 1995; Lorde, 1995). The forging of a self, of claimable experience, is differentiated across languages. The politics of differential claimability is not lost on those living it.

This chapter draws heavily on northern-western texts and concepts. This admittedly problematic decision was made for two reasons. First, Arabic-language popular and scholarly publications draw on the same historical and etymological history of trauma and PTSD as English-language publications. Second, these are the texts and concepts with which those interviewed here contend, in different ways. These are the schools of thought in which psychiatrists working with northern-western news organizations have been trained. The DSM-V, which is used far beyond the borders of the United States, is crafted by American psychologists. These are the frameworks which inform journalistic institutional policies and perceptions, which in turn impact the lives of journalists both foreign and local. It is the concept with which therapists and psychiatrists are working, and which in turn immediately impact the journalists interviewed via institutional policies, questionnaires and insurance coverage of therapy. Those same texts inform the broader cultural views which journalists engage with. I hope that the ideas explored in this chapter will contribute to the conversation on the need to decolonize psychiatric notions of trauma in particular.

While this chapter thinks through the language, temporalities and causalities of contemporary understandings of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, it does not engage immediately with mental health, which is certainly a priority for news

organizations in dealing with stringers. I am not a trained mental health professional and therefore cannot comment on or interpret the experience of a stringer being detained by regime forces or losing all family members in one bombing. This is not meant to dismiss the importance of individual mental health, psychotherapy and psychiatry. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth examining the bind of healing and journalism. Vincent and Jad, who have both focused on healing their *nafs,* their self/soul, can no longer bear to cover conflict. The fragmented pieces of a self that so often make up the journalist, the ability to survive unhealed, and to not claim that experience, may be key to the ability to do the work and keep the job (two different but interrelated things).

How journalists survive, how they force themselves to survive, has repercussions beyond the self. Nour confided: "I think I got pregnant to force myself to leave Syria."[199] She gave birth to a child who has a western passport, who has never seen Syria and who is often singing Arabic songs on Instagram. Kinan and photographer Taym also took their children out of Syria and resettled in Europe. Rashad, who has not seen his daughter in over a year, said his relationship with her had improved since they were separated by paperwork that landed them in different countries. "She lived in constant fear of never seeing me," he explained. "Now we talk several times a day." Rashad said he had feared his daughter would "hate him" if he left the Middle East, where she still lives. Instead, he said, leaving proved to be the way back. "*Rji'tilla,"* he said. "I came back to her."

I end this chapter with children and time, because yet another generation is being brought up far from the *watan. Watan* is a tricky word to translate. It is homeland, nation and actual home, something like the French *patrie*. A nation-home. When I asked how

[199] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019.

interviewees would say "homesickness" in Arabic, Rashad suggested "*ḥanin li-l-watan* [nostalgia/yearning for the nation-home]" and Tanya "*ishtiyaq li-l-watan* [missing/yearning for the nation-home]." Yet another generation is being raised by a generation which was raised by a generation marked by fear of the transmissibility of trauma (Leys, 2000), of contagion of the *jurḥ,* which has a way of calling out despite the silence.

This chapter cannot truly do justice to the lived experiences of those interviewed here, many of whom have survived horrific danger. In trying to find a common language, I have inevitably generalized what cannot be generalizable and theorized what eludes linear narrative. I have tried to be conscious of that, and find the balance between thinking of trauma on collective lines and respecting the differences between countries and individuals. I cannot and do not equate the experience of Syrian journalists covering the war with that of Yemenis or Lebanese, or with any experience of trauma. I do, however, draw on all of those experiences in a bid to find a language that will serve us all. "The acquisition of semantic authority," as Felman (2001, p. 2) writes, occurs through speaking the unspeakable. For that, we need a language from within, one which unites across dialects and engages with other languages, whether English or psychiatric and psychoanalytic discourses of trauma.

Scholars have pointed to the problems of the globalization of Euro-American psychiatry (e.g., Summerfield, 1999; Watters, 2010) and the need to decolonize understandings of trauma (e.g., Craps & Buelens, 2008; Fanon, 1967; Nader, Dubrow & Stamm, 1999). That decolonization needs a language which enables us to claim our experience. That chapter does not provide that language, not least because it is in and of

English, but hopefully it marks the start of a conversation. The struggle to create an Arabic lexicon of psychology back at least to the 1940, when Egyptian psychologist Yusuf Murad took to the task of publicly engaging Freud within the existing "multivalent tradition" of psychology in the Arab world, a tradition that drew from Sufism, Islam, and later psychoanalysis (El Shakry, 2017). Nearly a century later, we are again – or maybe we are still -- looking for that lexicon.

Conclusion: Metonymies of Journalism

"All of us, readers and writers, are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes." (Morrison, 1992, p. 67)

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If this dissertation opened with the journalistic and academic literary trope of metaphor, it must close with that of metonymy. Metaphor and metonymy are key to the making of a good story. We paint pictures with words, offer imagery and color, so that our audiences are transported to places we have been and things we have seen. We draw on similarities to make the unfamiliar familiar to our audiences, metaphors that reproduce problematic, historical perspectives under the name of color. We source things to those who know, substituting attribution for fact, the often asymmetric metonymic part for the whole. Metaphor seems to broaden perspective, as argued in Chapter 1. The selective association between two disparate things, however, narrows the scope, at times strategically, concretizing a specific gaze that it purports to dismantle. Metonymy functions on predication, with a partiality associated with the signified substituting the latter. The partiality subsumes the totality, standing in for it or rendering other parts invisible. Like metaphor, metonymy is not solely a figure of speech. It is an organizing force of language, semantics and cultural products writ large (Jakobson, 1956). It is inherently unbalanced, an "asymmetric mapping" of one concept onto another (Barcelona, 2011), in a field that prides itself on balance.

Metaphor and metonymy have survived journalism's metamorphosis across time and media and remain standard in the practice of journalism. They are also standard in its study. The correlation between metaphor and metonym has a long history in studies of cultural expression. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) argue the metonym uses an entity to stand in entirely for another. Metaphor draws on association between conceptual categories that share, or are assumed to share, features. As argued in the introduction, the power or right to attribute an association between an image and a related concept is property of those close to the institutional center and, more often than not, furthest from the field. The markedness of the metaphor is prescribed by the unmarked (Trubetskoy, 1975). In *The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles,* Roman Jakobson (1956) outlines a bipartite model of power over semiotics – over what things mean, and what they "are" -- that holds true for journalism. For Jakobson, the literary model of metaphor and metonymy informs all thought and action. Metaphor draws on similarity and substitution; metonymy on contiguity and predication. Metaphor entails the syntagmatic, the literal; metonymy the paradigmatic, the structural.

This dissertation has offered a re-examination of core practices and principles that have survived journalism's transition to the digital, denaturalizing the naturalized associations which mask selective normalizations, structural inequities and a troubling legacy of racism in the press. It has argued that the privileging of certain frames or associations over others is not arbitrary. Those taken-for-granted "ways of working" have enabled metonymic discussions of journalism in which inquiry stops at the boundaries it aims to interrogate. Failure to specify exactly what is under interrogation in the study of journalism, and to look closely at how journalism functions on the ground today, has

enabled the survival of problematic, exploitative structures and systems that trap all those within. Claims of being there journalistically are complicated by being from there personally, at times setting up a double bind that precludes professional identity on the basis of belonging. Journalism's partially forced move to transparency, stemming largely from digitization, has fallen with the exclusionary boundaries that have long defined coverage of major stories by major news groups. Newsgroups' efforts to include stringers in mental health support have brought to the surface longstanding, and long-buried, political, conceptual and linguistic complications that ultimately result in the unclaimability of experience in the name of healing.

Chapter 1 explored the politics of what metaphor deems similar in not only journalism but its study. This chapter borrows from journalism and looks at the metonymic nature of journalism, or what exactly we talk about when we talk about "journalism." If metaphor transfers meaning, metonymy amputates it, using the part not only to represent the whole, but to sequester it, upholding boundaries that run counter to journalism's proclaimed impulse. In addition to the work of stringers, coverage of the presidency of Donald J. Trump has forced a denaturalization of journalism's complex reliance on metonymy. I will discuss this, and journalism's self-definition as asymmetric, later in this chapter.

This dissertation is oriented towards "not only the subjunctive dimensions of journalistic form, content, and practice — how journalism *should* look in its new environment — but indicative ones as well — how it *does* look" (Zelizer & Allen, 2011, p. 1; emphasis in original). It has explored how journalism looks from the vantage point of those doing frontline work in some of the most dangerous areas in the world, bringing

to light the double bind, and at times double standard, of covering war at home. It has pushed past the at times vulgar veneer of visibility granted to Syrian and Yemeni stringers via public lauding and social media to look into how their work is positioned, valued and at times appropriated. It has re-examined what that very work, the work of journalism, means beyond, or paradigmatically beneath, its current conceptualizations. It has taken "journalism" in war and its constituent parts – eyewitnessing, transparency, trauma – as metonymic, following practice all the way through to the field and re-reading journalistic authority from the ground up in order to more precisely define and delineate our field today. It has looked at what the central norms of covering war look like from the vantage point of those covering two of most horrific conflicts today: Syria and Yemen. In doing so, it has raised the need to articulate more clearly what the metonym that is "journalism" refers to. It not only follows the actors, to borrow from Bruno Latour (1987), but also looks closely at the cumulative acts underpinning journalistic authority, accountability and experience to the predicative metonyms of eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma.

This dissertation has thus interrogated what exactly we mean when we invoke the word "journalism" by departing from the field, where the majority of my interviewees were based. To borrow from journalism's own literary tropes, it has taken journalism as metonymic of concrete practices, policies or politics that have been glossed over through taken-for-granted, at times inaccurate attributions of meaning and roles. Given changing practices in the field, it has looked closely at some of the core features of both covering war and the study of journalism -- eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma – and attempted to account for the gap between theory and practice, and the errors of

interpretation that fosters. Eyewitnessing remains paradigmatic of the act of being there and seeing as immediate grounds for journalistic authority. Transparency invokes an ethic of opens, honesty, disclosure and accountability. And perhaps most complex, trauma functions as a catch-all that dismisses the complexity of experience. It delineates a specific temporality and causality of experience, language and memory that is generalized to journalism and does not necessarily speak to or reflect the experiences of those covering war at home, and forced to flee home.

Eyewitnessing as metonym

Consider eyewitnessing. The questions of whether the work of eyewitnessing war or the identity of the eyewitness was grounds for journalistic authority, explored in Chapter 2, cannot be ignored. They have not, however, been resolved. Instead, as the identities of those doing the work of journalism on the ground shifted, the authority long claimed by "being there" shifted to the ability to verify from a distance the work of those "from there." Thus, while journalism still claims authority via eyewitnessing, recent history indicates that not all eyes are created equal. Foreign correspondents and staff reporters were relocated to desks as finances dried up and the war in Syria escalated. Journalistic authority was transferred from the field to the desk, where verification of the paid reports of stringers are a crucial part of the newsmaking process. It is the mediating act of institutional witnessing of stringers' eyewitness reports, and not necessarily the immediate act of witnessing war, which claims the authority over news. Eyewitnessing is still, however, commonly used to refer to work that does not involve eyewitnessing nor

persons in the field. Its partiality invokes a hierarchical chain of journalistic work as it obfuscates the division of labor, throwing into question whether it is the practice or practitioner which holds the right to claim authority.

Eyewitnessing has now become a source of information to be verified by staff journalists. This is a valid means to accuracy. It also contradicts what we claim about journalism. Stringers themselves have little access to the places and persons who decide how their work is used and how they are credited. This is not to discount, of course, their input in the framing of news (see, for example, Palmer, 2019). But the traditional journalistic use of anonymity as source protection also runs the risk of exploitation of invisible work. In my talks with Syrian journalist Nour, for years a stringer for a major northern-western newsgroup, the complications around anonymity were a point of debate. To Nour, the issue was not the stringer's safety. It was the organization's decision that they knew best how to protect a journalist not only in the field, but with a lifetime of experience dealing with the Assad regime. "They didn't ask us, 'can we use your name, or you prefer to remain anonymous.' They decided they knew what is best, in a situation they knew nothing about without us on the ground."[200] Nour has been credited as a "citizen journalist" on stories she was paid to report on, and after she had worked for years at the biggest news organization in Britain. But sometimes organizations do ask. At a talk at Penn in October, Emmy-winning journalist Safa al-Ahmad was asked by the BBC if they could identify her as a "Saudi dissident" for the documentary film she had just produced for them, and which they commissioned her to produce. She told them to identify her as the "f*cking filmmaker" (*Risk and reward,* 2019).

[200] Pers. communication, Oct. 2019.

The metonymic use of "being there" is the most visible, but far from the only, indicator that is not necessarily the practice of gathering the news but the ability to compose it that is the grounds of authority. The difference in identity between those reporting from the field in Syria and Yemen, and those employed full-time and bylined by the institution, is not ahistorical. And the metonymic power of eyewitnessing, to this date journalism's main claim to authority in places and times of war (Rodger, 2012; Zelizer, 2007), is faulty.

Transparency as metonym

A similar dynamic occurs with transparency. Driven in part by changes in the media of journalism, and the subsequent change in journalists' relationship to their audience, transparency has become a journalistic tool for legitimacy with audiences (Allen, 2008; Karlsson, 2010; Singer, 2007; Weinberger, 2009). It has also afforded a new means of opacity within the institution. Chapter 3 explored if, how and way transparency has remained planar, limited in scope and aim, and detailed transparency's double duty: as transparency entails openness in specific ways and directions, it effects opacity and invisibility in others. Beneath understandings of transparency as disclosure, transparency's second function is to maintain and further entrench what it does not repair. Transparency has thus translated to controlled acknowledgement of fixers, and to a lesser degree stringers and other "news assistants." One form this acknowledgement has taken is in bylined under the names of staff reporters, making stringers hypervisible as subjects while invisible as journalists. Providing journalistic color via narrative, through

metaphors such as “the bridge” or metonyms such as “the protestor” or “the street”, are forms of transparency that lend themselves to the maintenance of racist tropes. And above all, stringers themselves have little access to how their work is used – and, more importantly, how they are credited. This is not to discount, of course, their input in the framing of news (see, for example, Palmer, 2019). Across all of these examples, transparency is metonymic not for what journalism is but for how it wants to see itself.

The ramifications of entrenching problematic metonymic cues about journalism are right before our eyes. Nour pointed out that organizations decided for her and her peers whether they had the right to be bylined. The battle over bylines, and the capital that a recognized byline brings, is all too familiar to any journalist. As Zvi Reich notes, the rise of the byline revealed the news as:

> [A]n imperfect, all too human account of reality, opening the way towards journalistic *stardom*, altering *power relations* within the news industry and shifting news organizations from a position behind the news to one behind the people who *gather* and *compose* it. (Reich, 2010, p. 707; emphasis added).

Looking at *The New York Times* and *The Times of London,* two of the most prominent English-language dailies, Reich (2010) found inconsistent attribution policies which saw a handful of select writers regularly credited, which in turn led papers to lose control over crediting as journalists battled for public acclaim. This creates real problems for stringers and contradicts aims and claims of being transparent. In her in-depth ethnography of *The New York Times,* Nikki Usher (2014) found that foreign correspondents in particular began to focus on the Web to promote their bylines and work, with some eventually becoming “brand names, moving beyond bylines to personalities in the media space” (p. 107). In Chapter 1, I raised the complication of

visibility and voice. The ability to move beyond a byline into becoming a media personality on Twitter implies the initial possibility to claim a byline. For stringers, the authority to claim their work as *professional* journalists is still controlled by those closer to the heart of the institution. Their visibility on social media, where some have tens of thousands of followers per platform, does not equate to the credibility of *Times* staffers popular on the same platforms.

Transparency has edged out the futile idea of the "view from nowhere" (Rosen, 2010) and ushered in the expectation of more journalistic disclosure (Karlsson, 2010). Disclosure is immediately dependent on recognition. Recognition, in turn, is both the prerequisite for and result of attribution. Disclosure, a core component of transparency (Karlsson, 2010), affords a new form of opacity that upholds certain boundaries of journalism as it effects increased accountability in other directions. In that sense, as I argue in Chapter 3, transparency does double duty. It conceals as it reveals. It reproduces as it protests. It upholds certain boundaries as it dismantles others.

That double duty, and the difficulty of recognizing its internal contradiction, revolves around what we take transparency to mean – what we attribute to and as transparency. When, for example, an editor of a major news organization calls his award-winning Syria operation "asymmetric journalism," the point of reference is that journalism had previously been symmetric. Symmetry, balanced and regular, has been disrupted by a lopsided model in which "locals" do not only the eyewitnessing, but often the historicization and contextualization of the story. As staff reporters use stringers as sources, they also use them as guides. And as the story of Neha Dixit, the award-winning journalist expected to fix for a professor in her native India, shows (see Chapter 1), the

double standard is not limited to Syrians, Yemenis, Kurds or the Middle East. The relegation – for journalism is structured on a "totem pole" (Seo, 2016) of authority – of certain journalists to perpetual fixers is rooted in their identity, their ethnicity and/or race. In the words of Indian journalist Priyanka Borjupari:

> The difference between a correspondent and a 'fixer' is not one of experience or qualification, but of geography ... The title "foreign correspondent" has long been synonymous with whiteness, maleness, and imperialism … a push for diversity has meant that more women are pursuing stories in what was once the domain of men … Overwhelmingly, foreign reportage still relies on a model of Western, and largely white, reporters hiring local journalists in subservient roles. (Borjupari, 2019)

Fixers are not, as I have argued, stringers. In fact, it is much more innocuous to be transparent about the work of fixers. Journalists have spoken widely about the merits and perils of their fixers (whether the fixer has the opportunity to respond is another matter). Scholars have begun to turn their attention to fixers. Fixers are subservient to correspondents, regardless of their own qualifications. Stringers are self-sufficient journalists, there where foreign correspondents cannot be or will not be. To be transparent around their role is to challenge the fundamental identity narrative of the professionalized press. And so to cover a stringer as a story – such as in the *Times'* article "What makes a good editor? A long list of stringers" (Delkic, 2018) or in the plethora of posts and stories on Syrian stringers, alive or dead (see Chapter 3) – is a rebuttal in the name of transparency. Being transparent about the importance of stringers by making them the story commits what Channel 4's Lindsey Hilsum (2018), in her biography of Marie Colvin, calls the cardinal sin of journalism. As Palestinian journalist Asmaa al-Ghoul says, "I don't want to be a story. I want to be the writer" (cited in Di Cintio, 2013). Ironically, in the name of transparency, sin becomes salvation.

Trauma as metonym

Finally, trauma draws on associations of experience with temporalities and causalities that do not, and in certain iterations cannot, account for the experiences of those covering war at home. We use the word trauma, or the diagnosis of PTSD, as associated with or substitutive of experiences of being there that do not factor in being from there, and being away from there. Chapter 4 seeks a language through which to speak one's own experiences, claim one's own experiences and identify causality. In contrast to both the linear temporality and spatiality of PTSD and the dual temporality of Freudian notions of trauma, as expanded by Caruth (1991, 1999), Leys (2000) and others, trauma for stringers is dialectic, rooted not only in the war, but in the experience of exile-as-safety, of silenced and silencing history and of institutional precarity. And if trauma is dialectic, the silence surrounding that trauma – the unclaimability of experience, to play on Caruth (1991) -- is chronic. The struggle to find the very words, the language, necessary to name and claim experience, is the ultimate reflection of the struggle to make our own attributions of cause, ones that speak to our own truth.

Stringers stand on multiple fault lines. At home, they are at least as vulnerable as their compatriots. The camera sometimes makes them an additional target. Armed forces, government or militia, have targeted them at work, such as in the case of Syrian Rami, who lost his cameras in the conflict. Whatever financial gain working as a stringer affords them can also make them a target, such as in the case of Yemeni Samer, who was able to afford a secondhand car which was subsequently blown up. And in addition to the

physical and economic fault lines, these stringers stand on deeply complex psychic fault lines. In addition to struggling to define and articulate their own experiences, they must contend with the well-intentioned power to diagnose that is the property of northern-western psychiatry.

Institutional awareness of the psychoemotional impact of covering war on journalists is fairly new. It was not until the 21st century that the first studies of PTSD among journalists covering war were conducted (Feinstein, 2002; Feinstein, 2006). Feinstein (2006) notes that, while every war journalist he interviewed for his study had at some point taken a break from reporting and returned "home," no such respite is possible for stringers, who are *of* the conflict zone. The study of 140 journalists covering war did not include "journalists trapped by war within their own society" (2006, p. 100). Feinstein told me in 2019 he had been as yet unable to attract serious funding for studies of Syrians covering the war.[201] News organizations have since put in place protocols for dealing with the stress of covering war, turning their attention to the human toll of covering war. For example, Anthony Feinstein told me *The New York Times* provides a mandatory preparatory session with the psychiatrist before dispatching them to the war zone. Many news organizations provide a number of sessions with a psychiatrist or psychotherapist for reporters covering or who have covered conflict.

But while there is a move towards destigmatizing the psychological impact of covering war, many of the Arab journalists interviewed had put off going to therapy for years – in some cases, decades – or had sought therapy outside of the clinicians provided by the organization. Lina, who has covered Syria and Iraq, explained that her reluctance

[201] Pers. communication, Dec. 2019.

to seek therapy was due to the difficulty of finding a therapist with whom she connected. Eventually, she found a Lebanese therapist who worked with aid workers in the region. Lina explained: "It was like she got it. I didn't have to explain everything from zero."[202] But Lina still described the feeling of being "trapped in a doorway." The stagnation of the in-betweenness in that phrase raises the question of what "trauma" means, specifically what it signifies or substitutes.

Lina, Kinan, Rashad, Tanya and at least a dozen other Syrian, Yemeni and Lebanese journalists interviewed struggled with the diagnosis of PTSD, particularly in its Arabic iteration.[203] Denial can be typical of trauma. And so, to deny the temporality, causality and very language of PTSD as reflective of one's own experience becomes a symptom. But I argue the struggle to define their experience, to claim its root cause, is in part linguistic, rooted in the absence of a system of metaphors and metonyms organic to experience. *Sadma* [shock] is the most common translation of trauma to Arabic, both in the Freudian use and that of PTSD. Drawing on my interviews, which explored trauma in English and *sadma* in Arabic, I suggest *jurḥ* [wound] may better capture the experiences of the stringers featured in this dissertation. *Sadma* implies the shock is external, and the individual unable to deal with the witnessing. My interviewees instead described an

[202] Pers. communication, Nov. 2019.

[203] Anthony Feinstein has moved away from the idea of trauma and is now looking at moral injury among journalists who cover war, he told me (pers. communication, Dec. 2019). Moral injury is not included in the DSM-V as a disorder, and unlike PTSD is not clinically pathologized. Moral injury looks at the impact on an individual's conscience or moral compass of witnessing or failing to intervene in acts of violence – hitting straight at the dilemma of the journalist, and the accusations that many a journalist, including the late Kevin Carter, have faced over their work. Moral injury, and the experience of witnessing something that goes against one's moral compass, are also property of those who do not belong to the war. In the case of stringers, there does not seem to be a sense of personal guilt while covering the war; rather, it is seen as a contribution to the war. The moral responsibility is placed on those involved in the war. See Chapter 4.

intrusive, unhealable wound that draws on individual and collective rupture over history. Furthermore, *jurḥ* may help mitigate the "flattening the landscape of the human psyche" (Watters, 2010, p. 1) rooted in the globalization of Euro-American psychiatric discourse, and in its totalizing power to attribute causality to experience.

Silence around suffering is not only a "cultural" value, as some editors and psychiatrists intimated. It is also, I argue, rooted in both the absence of language and protective practices of silence. For stringers, whose lives and livelihoods are marked by precarity, silence is a tripartite practice, both protective and oppressive. First, it is a mechanism of physical and moral survival inherited over decades. Second, it is a form of institutional protection rooted in fear of repercussion or loss of their jobs. And finally, it is an expression of respect for others who have suffered more, as well as a mark of individual respectability (see Higgenbotham, 1993). Resilience becomes both a claim to life and – through -- self-effacement.

The temporality of trauma for these stringers also eludes extant literature, which like journalism pivots on dialogic temporalities, or two main pillars. Trauma, as the inability to experience the event (Caruth, 1991; 1999; Felman & Laub, 1992), engages two points in time, blurred though they may be: the past and the present. Chronological silence is actively oriented protectively towards *not* claiming or speaking to events, blurring time indefinitely. The chronology of silence, I argue, can only be ruptured by embracing a temporality that transcends that which is known, one that transcends the temporalities captured by trauma literature. It requires an act of imagination, which goes against much of what journalism stands for.

For the stringers interviewed here, a present which is marked by ongoing war at home, the experience of being an Arab, and frequently Muslim, refugee and the marginalization within an institution which relies on you for its survival all create a centripetal experience of trauma, rooted in those three spaces and continuous across past and present. To claim experience, that loop must be broken. A language, words and discourse and record, is only possible by reaching out beyond what is known, by propelling ourselves into a future that may not exist so as to break with time. Journalism functions in double time, the immediate reporting of the news, achieved through "being there," and a second, durational mode which allows journalists to retroactively compensate for absence (Zelizer, 1993). While trauma's relationship to time is more complicated, involving Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* or belatedness and "inadvertent and unwished-for repetition" (Caruth, 2007, p. 2), it likewise hinges on two discrete times, blurred though they may be: then and/vs. now. But in the case of stringers, then and now are indistinguishable, unified by silence that extends across colonial and authoritarian pasts, and presents marred by war, exile and precariousness. Breaking what feels like an endless extension of silence may happen in and from a third temporality: an imagined imaginary future perfect. Reaching out beyond what is known, into a future that may not exist, and thinking into the future-as-past allows for and necessitates a language through which to bear witness beyond the immediate and in a way more permanent than the unenduring record of Twitter.

So when we say "trauma," or "war is traumatic," we are saying "this is what your experience means." As with the other elements of journalism studied here, the cognitive association of the word with what it represents clashes with the empathy that is so often

cited as the impulse for journalism, and for helping journalists heal. It reflects a sort of "parochial affection for those around us – the affection that is driven by empathetic feelings" (Bloom, 2016, p. 159) that reinforces discrimination. Taking the root of suffering as an external, spatially- and temporally-contained event cannot be empathetic if it assumes rather than listens, if it is predicative rather than inquisitive. The naturalization of journalism's metonymic components has been further blurred by the empathy inherent in the work of those who put themselves in harm's way to get the story out. But journalism may be taking measures to correct and clarify its own methods, from the attribution of information to sources to the use of metonymy, starting with the presidency.

How the 45th president of the United States helped denaturalize metonymy

The willingness to attribute reality to sources and call it a day has been undeniably mitigated by the Trump presidency. After decades of using a name to refer to an administration, the word "Trump" today appears to refer to the man. The power of metonymy thus seems to have hit its limit, which surfaced under extenuating circumstances in governance and the press. Swirling in the air is a renewed battle over how to use government sources in the United States that parallels, albeit in a different way, news organizations' struggle to use stringers as sources in Syria and Yemen (see Chapter 3), a clear breach of journalism's ethical mandate of not paying sources.

Gans notes that journalists in fact "harbor a pervasive distrust of sources" and keep a running tab on the veracity of information passed on by sources. The sources most

trusted by journalists, however are "cordial" and "socially proximate" to reporters, primarily upper-middle-class, politically moderate peers and friends (1979, p. 130). This brings us to stringers, President Donald J. Trump and the link between the two. They are equidistant, in opposite directions, from the journalists staffing newsrooms in the United States and elsewhere.[204] They have both brought to the surface longstanding flaws in what journalism does, how, and how and why it claims its work.

Perhaps the most common metonym in journalism is the use of a president's name to refer to the government of the country in question. I draw inspiration for this chapter in part from democratically-elected U.S. President Donald Trump, who has counterintuitively done a service to journalism. He has made visible the problem with metonymy in journalism, with using the most visible part to represent the whole. As I write, the media frenzy over the spread of COVID-19, or coronavirus, is on the rise. The efficacy of the prolonged wear of a surgical mask notwithstanding, images of celebrities jetsetting in masks are flooding the pages of newspapers and tabloids alike. Surgical masks have sold out across the country. On February 26, as the first cases of coronavirus not tied to travel surfaced in the United States, President Trump held a press conference. Trump declared only 15 people sick with coronavirus in the United States, adding that "the 15 within a couple of days is going to be down to close to zero – that's a pretty good job we've done" (cited in Abutaleb et al, 2020). The numbers did not check out.

[204] The most apparent link, of course, is Trump's so-called Muslim ban. The ban saw the A.P.'s Maad al-Zakri denied a visa to come accept the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in New York. Zakri, a Yemeni video journalist, was part of a three-person team, which included Egyptian Maggie Michael and Canadian-Egyptian Nariman al-Mofty, to land the award for their documentation of torture and starvation in the Yemen war for the American news agency. Michael and Mofty, who were granted visas, brought Zakri into the ceremony via video chat on a smartphone.

Nearly four years into his presidency, we are familiar with Trump's idiosyncratic relationship to fact. What is notable here is a journalistic shift in the use of source attribution as sufficient to claim a fact and, more specifically, the reliance on president-as-metonym for authority. When the press says Trump, they mean Trump. The *Post* ran an article headlined "Inside Trump's frantic attempts to minimize the coronavirus crisis" (2020) which both fact-checked the president and detailed his decisions and statements since the first reports of the virus in the U.S. came to light. Under the headline "Here comes the coronavirus pandemic," The *Times* editorial board wrote:

> On Tuesday, Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, warned that a global pandemic was all but inevitable and asked the American public to brace itself for impact. That same day, her boss's boss, President Trump, insisted that everything was well under control. (*Here comes,* 2020)

When the press covered Trump's so-called Muslim ban and his policy on immigration in ways that stand in stark contrast to their coverage of other policies, including those on war, they were referring to President Trump. This was not the case, for example, with the Bush administration in the run-up to the Iraq war.[205] It was not the case with the Obama administration during the launch of drone strikes on Yemen. This is not a commentary on either decision. It is merely to highlight that the liberal press, to borrow an Americanism, functioned fairly similarly across administrations prior to Trump.

Trump is a source in a position of power par excellence, once considered by journalists to be the most valuable of sources. That position of power is now cross-checked as closely as first-time sources with whom journalists have no prior relationship.

[205] The Knight-Ridder stands out as an exception.

This is not solely linked to the veracity of Trump's statements. It also falls in line with Gans' early observation of social proximity as a measure of trustworthiness of sources. With his unabashedly anti-liberal politics, seemingly anti-elitist rhetoric and penchant for box hair color, a secret let out by his daughter,[206] Trump did not and does not fall in line with the composedness and subsequent trustworthiness of presidential sources such as his predecessor. His persona complicates journalism, or forces journalism to contend with its own weaknesses, in ways other presidents in my lifetime have not. It also pulled the veil off of journalism's reliance on problematic practices as "professional" newsmaking.

Stringers have done the same. Stringers cannot technically be considered sources as per the rules of professionalized northern-western journalism. Information should not – cannot – be purchased. Paying sources is unethical; stringers are paid for their work. In addition to receiving a monthly salary or pay-per-piece/picture, they are often consulted on stories under staff reporters' bylines. Stringers are increasingly trained for their work, virtually or even in person. They have won awards reserved for journalists, from the Rory Peck Award to the Pulitzer (see Chapter 1). Their pictures flood the front pages of the most prestigious publications in the world. Their footage enables the writing of stories at desks nestled safely in cities far from war zones. And finally, information attributed to sources relieves the journalist of the need to further qualify the statement. But information sourced to a stringer, whether bylined under another name or not bylined, is often followed by a line to the effect of "this report could not be independently

[206] Michael Wolff, author of *Fire and Fury,* attributes Trump's signature look to Ivanka. He writes: "She often described the mechanics behind it to friends: an absolutely clean plate — a contained island after scalp-reduction •surgery — surrounded by a furry circle of hair around the sides and front, from which all ends are drawn up to meet in the center and then swept back and secured by a stiffening spray. The color, she would point out to comical effect, was from a product called Just for Men — the longer it was left on, the darker it got. Impatience resulted in Trump's orange-blond hair color" (Wolff, 2018).

confirmed." Like Trump, stringers in Syria and Yemen have close to no social proximity to staff reporters. Like Trump, but for very different reasons, stringers are not and cannot be sources.

On the face of things, Trump appears to have nothing in common with stringers in Syria and Yemen. In fact, Syrians and Yemenis are immediately impacted by his policies, such as the visa ban and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Syria. But traditional professional journalists, including foreign correspondents, are equidistant from Trump and Syrian and Yemeni stringers. What Trump and stringers do have in common is what they reveal about journalism, and specifically about what we mean when we talk about journalism. In different ways, they have revealed journalism's reliance on its own metonymy, which is not clearly reflected in extant literature. Eyewitnessing, transparency and trauma are only three of the many blurred notions on which journalism functions. This is complicated by their empathy for the latter and their tendency towards liberal politics.

What journalism "is" and "is not," what it references, is in the hands of the "official" journalist and subject to the varying needs for and means of their claiming of authority. In both stories, the bylined reporter was not in the country covered. The sourcing of information to stringers points to the use of attribution as a means of maintaining journalism's exclusionary boundaries. It involves a co-optation of the work of the "local" journalist, a reduction of reporting to sourcing coupled with an assumption of unreliability of the very work which forms the grounds for the claiming of authority. This is most apparent in the change in the use of eyewitnessing that has surfaced most clearly in Syria and Yemen. A main problem is not that stringers mislead news

organizations, which like any journalist they may do, but the assumption that they are incapable of doing the job specifically because of who they are. On the one hand, this denies the rich history of journalistic lies, faux pas and scandals that mark the professionalized press, listed throughout this dissertation. On the other hand, it is reflective of a broader issue that is not limited to journalism. In a study of the funding of journalism, Conrad (2018) found that coverage of refugee crises, and the difficulty of getting to facts other than those attributed to stories of horror recounted by the refugees, "isn't a problem of refugee honesty" but of "the way U.S. journalism covers the world" (Conrad, 2018, p. 267). Ironically, what Conrad defines as a longstanding "broken system" of foreign reporting is often framed by journalists and scholars as the sole functioning system of getting to the "facts." This dissertation documents the ways in which this system not only fails at its purported aim, but the ways in which the system is not what it purports to be.

Asymmetric Journalism

That the system is not what it purports to be has begun to surface as a talking point in the newsrooms studied here. What we mean by "journalism" now references what journalists call "the desk" – those sitting in an office, hundreds if not thousands of miles away from the conflict zone, doing the contact-building and verification which underwrites the byline. The desk, the part, stands in metonymically for the entirety of a multi-faceted process of making news. One editor dubbed that system "asymmetric journalism."

Andrew, head of the Middle East desk of a major international newswire, explained the system of how his organization covered Syria after the 2013/2014 decision not to send staff reporters and freelancers into the warzone, a system that was universal, to varying degrees at varying moments, among the news organizations studied here:

> It's changed over time. I think it's a combination of different things. I think one thing we all have to understand, not just on the Syria story but on the general news cycle everywhere, is that social media and the mobile phone has empowered people to communicate, to release content, be it words, images, whatever it may be.
>
> (…)
>
> While we don't like to prioritize this as part of the reporting we do, I have to go back to social media. What's developed is what the Beirut bureau [which covers Syria] calls "asymmetric reporting" – it's a whole verification process, a process of contact-building. That's become very different. There's a whole area of contact building and verification, mainly via social media or online tools. A lot of the bulk of the factual reporting gets done in that way.

While she did not use the same term, editor Sophia at a competing organization described a similar process:

> After Marie Colvin and Foley, yes, we stopped sending our correspondents [to Syria], except on certain very specific assignments. We did invest a lot in building a network on the ground, both of contacts and stringers.
>
> (…)
>
> In some cases we were able to bring the stringers out for training [in Turkey], which was very beneficial for them as well as for us. It's a risk to be putting so much trust in someone you have not met or trained.[207]

Literature on symmetry and asymmetry is scattered across biology, neuroscience, mathematics, art history, psychiatry, architecture, and of course music. The commonality

[207] Pers. communication, Sept 2016.

across those fields can be found in the basic dictionary definition. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, symmetry is the "mutual relation of the parts of something in respect of magnitude and position." Asymmetry, also according to the Oxford Dictionaries, is the "lack of equality or equivalence between parts or aspects of something; lack of symmetry." Symmetry or asymmetry refers then to a relationship, including a working relationship, in turn dependent on the involved parties' access to and participation in the structure and/or system within which the relationship happens (in Bourdieusian speak, "structured/structuring structures"). Symmetry carries a connotative stability; asymmetry a lopsidedness or precarity. The idea that reporting has *developed into* an asymmetric form over the course of the Syrian war implies a comparative, previously existing symmetry, which runs counter to – one in which the relation between the parts was journalist-to-story, where journalist is defined as being not "from there."

Reporting has long been asymmetric. Even before recognition of the work of stringers – which, as suggested earlier in this chapter, is as problematic as it is crucial – correspondents have been dependent on persons "from there" to understand, literally and contextually, what is happening (Hannerz, 1998). Journalists whose identities sit at the intersection of "there" and "not-there," namely the dual nationals increasingly hired by major news organizations in the Middle East, have become increasingly open about this. Syrian-American Sarah Dadouch, a former Saudi Arabia-based Reuters correspondent who now covers Syria and Lebanon for *The Washington Post*, has as her pinned Tweet: "Note to foreign journalists: learn the language." Beneath this is a screenshot of a story from *The Independent* which reads: "Not for nothing do Syrians shout Um al Arabiya Wahida ("mother of one Arab nation")." *Umma 'arabiya wahida,* the catchphrase of

Arab nationalists among others, translates to "one Arab nation," with no reference to mothers. (The translation of the faulty "Um al Arabiya Wahida" is also faulty as it appears in the story; technically it would translate to "the mother of Arabism is one," and not "mother of one Arab nation")

Reporting has always involved *relations* and *relationships* unequal in status and access – between correspondent and story, and correspondent and translator/fixer/driver/stringer/other "local," respectively. Pedelty's (1995) study of stringers in El Salvador and Seo's (2016) study of stringers in South Korea and Vietnam, both contexts in which local journalists were crucial to reporting but under-credited, are just two documentations of the asymmetry of reporting that long pre-dates the physical separation of correspondents in newsrooms and stringers in the field. The physical, linguistic and knowledge distance between the foreign correspondent has long been asymmetric. In his studies of foreign correspondence both before the Internet and amid digitization, Hannerz (1998; 2004) highlights the dependency of foreign correspondents on local staff – not only fixers, but also human resources managers – in surviving, and working. Again, unlike fixers, who work in conjunction with or support of journalists physically in the field, Syrian and Yemeni stringers are the sole reporters in the field.

Yet the perception of journalism as finally, formally turning asymmetric is firmly rooted in the recent dependence on stringers in Syria and Yemen within the rhetoric of my interviews. Andrew refers to the reporting itself as having become asymmetric after the 2013/2014 decision not to send reporters into Syria, implying a prior unmitigated, pure journalist:story relationship contradicted by close examinations of journalism, and particularly war reporting (e.g., Hannerz, 2004; Pedelty, 1995).

Conclusion

This dissertation has looked into the foundational elements of journalism, those norms which we take for granted as self-explanatory, from the vantage point of those who are not officially members of the institution. This exploration is limited in multiple ways[208] and complicated by factors too numerous to address in one study, from the economic to the postcolonial. It hopes to contribute to understanding more precisely what we talk about when we talk about journalism, and how our words – and silences – impact those doing the work of journalism.

We have looked long and hard, often in retrospect, at journalism's construction of its own authority, including its reliance on sources as metonyms for facts and its use of metaphor and color to engage audiences. We have not examined misleading representations that allow journalism to claim authority on grounds that do not necessarily hold. We give labels to journalistic practices that are not, upon closer inspection, actually the grounds of the authority they lay claim to, although they may be contiguous. Following the actors (Latour, 1987) reveals that it is potentially not the practice of journalism but specific practitioners who hold the key to claims of authority. This is complicated by the seeming openness of journalism's borders. Unlike medicine, anyone can be a journalist. Except that is not actually accurate. Journalism has long had its own gatekeepers.

[208] I address some of these factors in Appendix A (Methods).

Longstanding issues such as the selectivity of transparency and the confounding of eyewitnessing with journalistic authority have become more pronounced with digitization, its multifold impact on journalism and the changing nature of war. They have not been caused by these changes, even if they may have been further complicated by them. A critical body of work has looked into how journalism has contended with that change, particularly digitization and its impact on the financing of journalism and its relationship to its audiences (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Ryfe, 2012; Usher, 2014). A second, smaller body of work has looked at the work of fixers within that same timeframe (e.g., Bunce, 2011; Murrell, 2014; Palmer, 2019; Seo, 2016). What connects the two bodies of work is the unchanging framework within which the journalism studied, and the way in which it is studied, is crafted. While so much about journalism has changed, so much of that traditional paradigm has also survived, not so much slipping through the cracks as underwriting the focus on change. Architecture changes drastically. But it is still built on the same solid ground, no matter who populates it.

As the culture of journalism becomes more transparent, it finds new forms of opacity. As it appears to be more open and inclusive, in other ways it becomes more partial and tenuous. Some of the most illuminating studies of journalism, including but not only ethnographies, have looked at journalism as an institution in the traditional sociological sense, and through that lens have offered findings that speak to the work and belief system of journalists as a collective (e.g., Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1982; Tuchman, 1978; Zelizer, 1993). As that collective expands, it contracts to preserve itself. It is in the nature of institutions, to borrow from Berger & Luckmann (1966), to render invisible the

institution's own systematic structuring. To examine that ground – the journalistic ground that has survived change by contracting as it appears to expand – we must hold the most fundamental principles of journalism up to the light and see what they hold.

Appendix A: Methods

Journalism changes so quickly, and in so many ways does not change at all. This would not have been the same dissertation if I had not gone back to the field during its creation. And as the opportunity to go back to work after a few years away changed my dissertation in fundamental ways, coming back to journalism while engaged in a dissertation also changed my perspective on reporting in fundamental ways. I paid more attention. I expanded my interviewees to include Yemenis and journalists covering Yemen.

This dissertation uses imperfect means to shed light on areas difficult to access through more perfected, or empirically formalized, means. It builds on a combination of interviews, textual analysis and my own observations, which draw on ethnographic methods that could be considered semi-autho-ethnographic. With the exception of my years in the doctoral program, I have been a journalist in the Middle East all of my adult life, starting as a translator/fixer and ending as a senior regional correspondent. While I was born in the United States, I am Arab and lived in the Arab world from the age of 10. While the interviews conducted for this dissertation were done in a formal capacity, as a researcher working on a dissertation, no researcher can claim a true separation between their perspective, inextricable from experience in turn inextricable from identity, and the questions that they pose. The question of whether that is even desirable, or useful, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

This dissertation often employs the word "Arab" to reference journalists who self-identify as Arab. It bears repeating that one major gap in this dissertation is that it does not cover Kurdish journalists, the largest ethnic minority in Syria, nor other ethnic

minorities. All journalism, and all human experience, is joined by some commonalities. But the experience of covering Kurdish areas, and of being a Kurdish journalist in Syria and beyond today, deserves a study of its own by someone better qualified. It has been far too neglected to be included as a subsidiary of a broader study. Additionally, I have no experience in covering Kurdish areas and knowledge of Kurdish dialects. While Yemen contains some ethnic minorities and Afro-Arab communities, those interviewed here identified as Arab when asked. I did not control for religion, but interviewees come from different religious backgrounds.

The use of pronouns, and the identification of the gender of interviewees (see Appendix B) falls within the problematic traditional binary. That is the binary which interviewees, who were all gender-conforming, used. When speaking about a specific journalist, I use the pronoun they used in reference to themselves. When speaking generally about the journalist, as in any journalist, the pronoun they/them is used.

Interviews

This dissertation draws directly from 37 interviews (see Appendix B), and less directly from ten years of reporting for a newswire from the Middle East and the observations, conversations and experiences that can only be had from within the world of news. The interviewees include stringers, local staff reporters, foreign correspondents, editors, national and regional bureau chiefs, one global editor-in-chief, and psychiatrists and psychologists working with journalists in the region studied. Journalists interviewed include writers or text reporters, photojournalists, video journalists and those who cut

across all categories. All interviewees work or worked for major television, newspapers or newswires in the United States, Britain and France. Interviews cited are solely with persons who consented to be included in the dissertation under a pseudonym. Those who were willing to speak but did not want to be featured, and the rare interview whose quotes did not make the final cut, have not been included. Interviewees were selected from leading news organizations in the United States, Britain and France, based on the languages which I speak and read. Furthermore, the U.S. is home to some of the most-read and viewed news organizations in the Middle East. Interviewees were drawn from three main categories: 1. journalists I knew personally, often those I had overlapped on stories with; 2. journalists I followed and interacted with on social media who were or had been in Syria and Yemen; and 3. journalists covering the two countries to whom I had been personally referred by colleagues I know in their news organization. In one case, I emailed the regional chief of a news organization without a personal referral, who consented to a phone interview. Some interviewees have since left journalism and are now working in other fields. Two psychologists I interviewed requested they speak off-record and were not cited.

Interviews for this dissertation spanned the course of five years, largely conducted in two main rounds. The first round was conducted between 2014 and 2015, as I was writing my dissertation proposal and collecting initial interviews for my eventual dissertation. I disclosed fully to my employer that I was working on a dissertation that looked at coverage of Syria and, later, Yemen. Any interviews conducted with editors at AFP were on record and for the purpose of this dissertation. Interviews conducted with stringers and staff reporters at any news organization were conducted the same way:

identifying myself as a doctoral candidate at Annenberg, offering to send a written disclosure form and discussing the parameters of their identification within the dissertation. During my years in graduate school, I traveled back to the Middle East at least three times a year and remained in close contact with many of my former colleagues and peers. The second round of interviews, between 2018 and 2019, largely took place while I was working as a journalist and were more immediately informed by observations from the field in real-time. I am beyond thankful that I was able to interview two Yemeni journalists in person in Sweden, where we had been sent to cover the same story.

All interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix C) and conducted either in person in Beirut, Istanbul, Dubai, Paris, Stockholm, London, Washington, New York and Philadelphia, or over VoIP. Interviews were conducted in Arabic or English, and on rare occasion with some French. All translations are my own. Transliterations follow the IJEMS transliteration system. All interviews were recorded, with the promise that the recording would not be shared and would be permanently deleted after transcription. Most interviews spanned between 60 and 120 minutes. Some, however, took place over multiple sessions. Grounded Theory was used to corroborate the themes that surfaced in my interviews. Ideas were generated inductively from common categories across interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Charmaz & Bryant, 2007; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Coding was largely focused (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011) around the sub-themes that surfaced in my first round of interviews and my observations over the years.

This dissertation takes its cue from John Jackson's (2013) idea of thin description. Jackson offers a methodological approach that is crucial at a time when information and

exchanges circulate continuously between researcher and subjects. Unlike Geertzian thick description, the researcher cannot claim impartiality with thin description. At the same time, those studied have the awareness to construct themselves during the research. Jackson does not take thin to mean sparse or shaky; rather to refer to moving in and out of dialogues and spheres. My work as a journalist is thus central to my perspective, I did not, however, use those informal observations as data as in the dissertation without the permission of those involved. Some of this was via WhatsApp calls, as some interviewees, such as Khaled and Zahra, did not want email exchanges or paperwork involved. I have explicitly included some of my own experiences in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. I have clearly stated when that is the case.

Anonymity

Persons in positions of authority, whose livelihoods were not at stake and who were not themselves working on the ground, such as psychiatrist Anthony Feinstein and AFP Global Editor-in-Chief Phil Chetwynd, spoke to me on record. Parts of the interview which they requested be off-record were omitted from the initial transcripts. More complicated was deciding whether to give all interviewees pseudonyms, or only those who requested it. Some stringers were willing to talk on record. Others were not. One interviewee, a former journalist who has moved into documentary, requested she not be named for visa considerations. Another was willing to go on record except in talking about trauma, or the personal facet of reporting. A third had stories she wanted to share but did not want to be named or name the other journalists the stories included. But most of all, discussions of the personal – featured in the chapter on trauma – were made

infinitely easier by taking away the name. Ultimately, I made the decision not to name any stringers or staff reporters, including foreign correspondents, for one consideration: community. The community of Middle East reporters, particularly those based in Beirut and/or who are covering Syria or Yemen, is small and relatively tight-knit. Identifying certain stringers would allow for the potential identification of those who did not want to be named by mere process of elimination.

I did not impress on any of my interviewees the importance of speaking on record. Like all decisions, the decision to not name the persons and news organizations comes at a cost. On the one hand, having persons from major newsgroups on record boosts the prestige of this dissertation. It preemptively wards off critiques of seeking to focus on the negative, the accusations of what Sedgwick (2003) calls paranoid reading. As journalists or researchers, this is a trade-off we must continuously calibrate.

In studying the news, there is a very public product which provides rich contextual data. In addition to interviews, this dissertation also draws on a close reading of texts, both news and scholarly, including the written word, image and audio-visual material. Close attention is paid to the use of metaphor in news as well as what is commonly called "color." Attention is also paid to the use of metaphor in scholarship looking at local newsmakers, such as fixers.

Finally, the interview cannot be a method but part of a broader process of constructing a reading of data and a broader situation. Post-interview practices, from coding to textual analysis, mean that much of the information is corroborated after the fact (Odum and Katharine, 1929). Coding itself is descriptive of a social process which involves the researcher (Warren, 2012) and cannot be a pure reflection of data (itself a

construct). Coding, however, is also reflective of the researcher's own interests and perspectives (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). The researcher selects the themes which will form the frame of analysis, changing their order or shifting their contents to alter the nascent narrative. Given the nature of interviewing and generating qualitative data, which lacks the scientific guidelines of quantitative research, it is important to articulate that data is generated and then narrativized post-hoc. In other words, the interview generates narratives which we treat as data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). This data is then re-written -- or, to borrow from Geertz (1973), "fictionalized" -- into an interpretive narrative by the author. No matter how much we strive for collaboration in meaning-making and in the interview process, and no matter how well the researcher knows the field, the writer remains the penultimate authority over the final text. If the in-depth interview represents a social interaction to some degree, its narrativization, no matter how well-intended, may represent a literary/textual mono-action to some degree. The question of intention, of the writer and interviewee, is continuously under debate, not solely in terms of what is meant, but in how it can be assessed. Looking into intention requires looking into "the kind of data we seek: are we asking for the psychological conditions that were the cause of the work, or are we asking what the artist thought he was up to, or are we asking what the artist meant?" (Kuhns, 1960, p. 8). Openness about positionality is perhaps one means of addressing these questions.

Appendix B: Interviewees (does not include interviews not cited in dissertation)

Pseudonym	Job description	Country of coverage
1. Vincent	Editor/Photojournalist	Syria/Yemen
2. Sophia	Regional Editor	Syria/Yemen
3. Lara	Editor/Journalist	Syria/Yemen
4. Nicole	Editor/Journalist	Syria
5. Jim	Editor/VJ	Syria
6. Tom	Staff/Journalist	Syria
7. Jad	Editor/Photojournalist	Syria
8. Jonathan	Staff/Journalist	Syria
9. Tanya	Editor/Journalist	Syria
10. Kinan	Stringer/VJ	Syria
11. Rashad	Staff/Journalist	Syria
12. Nour	Stringer/Journalist	Syria
13. Lina	Staff/Journalist	Syria
14. Leah	Editor/Journalist	Syria
15. Taym	Stringer/Photojournalist	Syria
16. Rami	Stringer/Photojournalist/VJ	Syria
17. Omar	Stringer/Journalist	Syria
18. Nidal	Staff/Journalist	Syria
19. Jude	Staff/Journalist	Syria
20. Sami	Staff/Journalist	Syria
21. Khaled	Stringer/Journalist	Yemen
22. Ziad	Stringer/Journalist	Yemen
23. Tarek	Staff/Photojournalist	Yemen
24. Zahra	Stringer/Journalist	Yemen
25. Samer	Stringer/Photojournalist	Yemen
26. Carl	Editor/Photojournalist	Yemen
27. Gabriel	Editor/VJ	Yemen
28. Mark	Editor/Journalist	Yemen
29. Khalil	Staff/Journalist	Yemen
30. Ray	Staff/Journalist	Yemen
31. Adam	Staff/Journalist	Yemen
32. Hani	Editor/Journalist	Yemen
33. Jana	Staff/Journalist	Yemen
34. Mira	Psychologist	
35. Phil Chetwynd[209]	Global Editor	

[209] Interviewee's real name.

36. Anthony Feinstein[210]	Psychiatrist/Researcher on journalism and trauma
37. Olivia Hicks[211]	Psychiatrist/Researcher on journalism and trauma

[210] Interviewee's real name.
[211] Interviewee's real name

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

Walk me through a day at work (in newsroom or field).

What did you do before journalism?

For staff/foreign correspondents: How news is "made" at your organizations generally vs. the specificities of covering Syria? Who are the journalists covering Syria today? How has that changed since 2011? Since 2014? **For Yemen:** Has there been any increased interest in the Yemen conflict in recent years? Why? Has it lasted?

Who are your main sources? **For staff/foreign correspondents:** If you are not in Syria/Yemen yourself, who are your main sources? Are stringers sources? Do you need to verify their information? How do you verify that information? Have you ever met your stringers? Describe your relationship. **For stringers:** How do you get your information? Do you verify it? Are you asked to? How do you manage the differences of working in the field and editing in, or being edited by, regional offices?

What is the most difficult part of your job? Are there any tensions or conflicts among the different ranks? If so, what triggers them or how do they arise? How, if at all, are they managed?

What does each individual involved in the story contribute? What are some of the main issues of access? What are some of the main security concerns – including the security of both the individual and their job? How do you deal with burnout, both in terms of understaffing and the weight of the story?

Talk to me about transparency. Does the question of objectivity continue to surface in coverage of Syria? If so, who brings it up? And what does it mean within the context of the heinous nature of the war, on the one hand, and the challenges of securing information from the field, on the other?

Tensions often arise over credit in newsrooms on all beats. Do you feel you are credited for your work?How do you deal with these tensions? Who makes the final call? Are you financially compensated for your work? Is that compensation in the form of a fixed salary with contract? Are you paid by the day or story? Do you have insurance?

Let's talk about eyewitnessing in Syria/Yemen, where access is so restricted unless you're already in there. Does not being physically present to bear witness influence how you perceive your work? How management perceives your role in the organization? Can you describe the impact of witnessing the crimes on you -- as both a Syrian/Yemeni and a reporter? As a staff reporter watching from a distance?

Do you feel you are attached to or detached from the story? Should you be?

Is a stringer a journalist?

How do you feel?

What next – for you, and for journalism?

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