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The Influence of War Photographs and Hoaxes Within Social Media on The Perception of Reality: The Creation Of 'Fake News'

Frank Bartscheck
frankebii@aucegypt.edu

THE INFLUENCE OF WAR PHOTOGRAPHS AND HOAXES WITHIN SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE PERCEPTION OF REALITY: THE CREATION OF 'FAKE NEWS'

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my ever-supportive partner and best friend, Dr. Chelsea Carroll Green. I would not have been able to complete this thesis without your love, friendship, support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

On September 1, 2017, the *BBC Brasil* published an article that exposed the Eduardo Martins hoax, which involved an online persona that purported to be a combat photojournalist. The hoaxer was able to deceive multiple stock image banks, as well as several online and mainstream news publications, including *The Wall Street Journal* and Getty Images. The hoax culminated with the publication of moderately manipulated images that ostensibly depicted conflict in Syria, Iraq and Gaza. With a large portion of the American news cycle dedicated to examining the phenomena of *fake news*, this hoax presented an opportunity for the news media to examine contemporary newsgathering procedures and image indexicality. Yet, beyond the initial disclosure by *BBC Brasil*, no American journalistic resources were dedicated to investigating this hoax. The lack of any follow-up investigation into an event that spoke directly to contemporary newsgathering procedures and photographic veracity exposes uncomfortable truths within contemporary news media. The revelation of a widespread image-based hoax deceiving mainstream and trusted news arbiters in America, and subsequent lack of journalistic attentiveness by the very news media that was deceived, speaks directly to Debord's conception of the Spectacle and its capacity to dismiss any narrative that may destabilize the capitalist hegemony in the United States news media.

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I. Introduction

The exposure of a fictitious combat photojournalist, which resulted in the publication of non-indexical images depicting combat, is a narrative that should have generated interest and potentially provoke examination of the media system and contemporary news production techniques. However, after the *BBC Brasil* exposed the Eduardo Martins hoax on September 1, 2017, which involved a contrived digital persona of a photojournalist, there was little additional examination, investigation or reporting. The manufactured Martins character stole indexical photographs depicting conflict and moderately altered these images in post-production (typically reversing the image horizontally in post-production) and uploaded these digital photographs to Instagram. Several of the stolen images were subsequently published for sale via stock image banks (e.g., Getty Images). A select number of these misappropriated images were consequently published in mainstream news publication, including, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vice, Le Monde and Deutsche Welle* (Cuthbert, 2017). Despite the multiple levels of deceit perpetuated throughout the hoax, there was a dearth of investigative follow-up after the *BBC Brasil* article exposed the hoax. As a result, the story completely vanished from the news cycle in less than two weeks and to date, there has been no academic examination of this specific hoax. This thesis endeavors to shed light on this hoax incident that marks a new turn in digital media culture.

The contrived Eduardo Martins persona claimed to be a conflict photojournalist who predominantly worked in Syria, Iraq and Gaza. The hoax was dependent on digital mediation throughout the duration of the hoax, as the fictitious Martins character never met anyone in person, and instead relied upon the WhatsApp smartphone application and Instagram messenger application to communicate with journalists, news media and photography agencies (Mezzofiore, 2017). Moreover, the hoaxer was predominantly reliant upon the text messaging capacity of

WhatsApp and Instagram messaging, instead of utilizing the voice or video chat options. The few times a voice exchange occurred, rather than a text communication, the contrived Martins persona refused to speak directly on the phone and instead sent audio files that were pre-recorded via the aforementioned applications (Sanches, Ribeiro & Barrucho, 2017). Despite the mediated impersonal communication methods, the fictitious Martins persona was able to gain the trust of individuals in the news media, which culminated in multiple articles lauding the fake combat photojournalist. This included a retracted long profile that was published by the *BBC Brasil*, which was withdrawn once the hoax was exposed by the same news organization (Mezzofiore, 2017). Further, a myriad of online news outlets also celebrated the alleged combat photojournalist prior to the hoax being uncovered (Keller, 2015; Karr, 2016; Netto, 2017; Impakter, 2017). Within these news profiles, the fictitious digital persona claimed to be a 32-year-old Brazilian who experienced a difficult childhood that included abuse and a long bout with leukemia. Too weak to live a normal life, the fictitious Martins persona allegedly spent seven-years bedridden while battling cancer, which necessitated a choice of chemotherapy over college (Netto, 2017). After overcoming cancer, these difficult life experiences supposedly changed the worldview of the manufactured Martins persona and fueled a desire to become involved in humanitarian work, which supposedly included volunteering at the United Nations Refugee Agency (ibid.). While purportedly working with the United Nations, the manufactured Martins character decided to visually document these events and subsequently elected to become a freelance photojournalist, despite a lack of professional training (ibid.).

While this staged narrative circulated throughout the network and subsequently gained attention as a result of the aforementioned news profiles, the contrived Martins persona accumulated over 120,000 followers on Instagram, a photo-centric social media platform

(Mezzofiore, 2017). Moreover, the hoaxer was able to gain the trust of professional photojournalists, who unwittingly perpetuated the hoax. For example, Brazilian photojournalist Marco Vitale recommended the fictitious Martins persona to editors at several national publications (Sanches, Ribeiro & Barrucho, 2017). Moreover, professional photojournalist Diana Zeyneb Alhindawi—who has published images in the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, *CNN*, *Le Monde*, *Al Jazeera America, National Geographic Traveler*, *Vice Magazine*, *Newsweek*, etc.—was frequently in contact with, and deceived by, the contrived Martins persona (ibid.). These news media interactions, and laudatory articles profiling the fictitious Martins persona, culminated in the publication of stolen and non-indexical images depicting conflict by mainstream news publications. Thus, this hoax served to destabilize image indexicality in news production and digital culture.

The multiple levels of duplicitousness that were utilized to execute this hoax were reliant on two significant facts. The first is the continuous proliferation of digital technology, which has drastically shaped contemporary communication systems and news production techniques; this is examined in chapter two. The second significant aspect is the widespread confidence in image indexicality, especially within news production and conflict photojournalism. In chapter one, the examination of the historical foundations of photojournalism exposes a long history of non-indexical photographs that purportedly depict significant and supposedly real historical events during combat. The selected conflicts addressed in this thesis exemplify the perpetual expansion of hegemonic forces undergirded by capitalism and its influence upon the establishment of Western news production, with an emphasis on photojournalism. The content in this chapter will examine the relationship between indexicality and images depicting conflict during photojournalism's earliest iterations.

The entirety of the Eduardo Martins hoax was digitally contrived and mediated. Thus, the digital underpinnings of contemporary photojournalism are examined in chapter two. This includes the rapid and widespread adoption of digital technology throughout the news gathering processes. Digital proliferation throughout the newsroom has engendered the algorithmic turn in photojournalism, which has destabilized notions of image indexicality. Moreover, the digitization of culture has established networked communication (e.g., the Internet, social media, etc.), which has tremendously reshaped the way information is transmitted. This cultural transformation has abetted the consolidation of conglomerate empires that own and maintain the Internet. Newly established digital foundations of photojournalism, news production and digital culture have served to challenge the documentary nature of the photograph.

The third chapter explores digital culture and the contemporary phenomena of user generated content [UGC]. Newsrooms have become increasingly reliant upon UGC as a means to provide immediate visual content to support a chosen news narrative. This content is produced by amateurs who are untrained and often not vetted. Moreover, the images are frequently not authenticated, which weakens the evidentiary status of visuals in news productions. These digital incidents are examined through the framework of Guy Debord's Spectacle, which has undergone multiple iterations. The contemporary Spectacle referred to by McKenzie Wark as disintegrated (Wark, 2013b) or by Emiliana Armano as Spectacle 2.0 (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). Spectacle 2.0 is unique, as opposed to former Spectacles, because there is a guise of interaction, which facilitates the digital capacity for spectators to produce UGC.

The final chapter examines the contemporary interconnections in capitalist enterprise that have destabilized journalistic ethics and image indexicality within the realm of photojournalism. The Eduardo Martins hoax illuminated the lack of authentication methods in contemporary

newsrooms and stock image banks (e.g., Getty Images, Noor Images, Corbis, Zuma Press). Moreover, the revelation of a widespread hoax that deceived the mainstream and trusted arbiters of news in the United States the documentary status of images in news production. This event could have highlighted many of the aforementioned issues, had the news media properly examined and investigated this event. However, a narrative that could destabilize Spectacle 2.0's hegemony in news production was ineffectually investigated and quickly eliminated from the news cycle.

This thesis examines the aforementioned aspects of the Eduardo Martins hoax as it relates to photographic veracity. With a focus on combat photojournalism, the chosen profession of the fictitious Martins persona, this thesis will investigate the relationship of contemporary image indexicality in digital culture to contemporary news production. This thesis will utilize Guy Debord's conception of the Spectacle and specifically focus upon the contemporary incarnation of his concept, which is amplified by digital technology and referred to by Emiliana Armano as Spectacle 2.0 (ibid.).

II. Statement of Problem

The researcher's interest is the exploration and examination of hoaxes of combat photography—both historical and contemporary—in pursuit of answers to the following research questions:

- What does a broad examination of the historical foundations of hoaxing of combat photojournalism reveal regarding the claims of implicit truth within war photography?
- What contemporary realities involving digital image culture—especially pertaining to the Spectacle 2.0—can be uncovered when examining images depicting combat?
- Via the examination of contemporary digital image culture, in conjunction with one-on-one in-depth interviews, what novel understandings can be gleaned regarding the intersection between indexicality, the Internet and contemporary news production?
- What is revealed regarding the profession of combat photojournalism in the digital age?

Although research has previously examined the implicit truth undergirding photographs, the advent and proliferation of digital culture requires continued examination of image indexicality, in particular, in news production depicting combat. The proliferation of consumer technologies to manipulate photographs and produce realistic images has rendered it exceedingly difficult, even for professionals, to discern the difference between indexical and non-indexical images. The evolution of the Internet endows users with the capacity to easily circulate digitally manipulated images. The focus of this thesis is the Eduard Martins hoax, which involves a purported combat photojournalist whose stolen and non-indexical photographs were published by numerous mainstream new sources. The fictitious Martins persona rose to prominence by leveraging the Internet, specifically social media, to cultivate followers whose labor was exploited to amplify the hoax. Subsequently, the faux Martins façade was embraced and lauded by the journalistic community, which culminated in publication of manipulated and non-indexical photographs from stock images banks and mainstream news publications. The affected organizations that will be discussed in this thesis include *The Wall Street Journal* and Getty

Images (Sanches, Ribeiro & Barrucho, 2017). The *BBC Brasil* initially exposed the hoax in an article published on September 1, 2017, which revealed that the published images were stolen from professional photojournalist Daniel Britt and only moderately manipulated to escape detection (Sanches, Ribeiro & Barrucho, 2017). This hoax bespeaks a need to examine the implications of this hoax as it relates to the intersection of indexicality with combat photojournalism, digital culture, and the Internet.

This thesis will examine select foundational examples of combat photography, as well as relevant aspects of digital culture that relate to modern combat photojournalism, including contemporary news gathering methods involving UGC and digital technology, as well as the influence of the Internet upon news media. This thesis uses Guy Debord's conception of the Spectacle to examine this hoax. Additionally, one-on-one interviews with visual-image professionals serve to ascertain the potential implications of the Eduardo Martins hoax for the discipline of photojournalism.

III. Literature Review

Academic Research into the Concept of the Hoax

The Eduardo Martins hoax has not been examined in academic literature. This lack of academic examination is possibly a result of the minimal amount of news coverage dedicated to exposing this hoax. Apart from the initial article that uncovered the hoax, there was almost no unique investigative journalism dedicated to investigating the hoax. However, there are two minor exceptions within the academic literature. The Eduardo Martins hoax was briefly mentioned in two articles identified by the researcher. One, titled "Where We are Now", is an interview with documentary photographer Rita Lesiter, and the other appears in a series of short essays titled "Reality Machines: An Art Exhibition on Post-Truth," which explores themes relating to an art installation. The introduction to the series mentions Portuguese artist Ângelo Ferreira de Sousa's *Constructions* (2016-2018), an art project utilizing a collection of indexical and non-indexical photographs depicting combat that "explores the role of the real in war and politics and the extent to which war photography has often been ascribed a more authentic or trustworthy status" (Polgovsky, 2018, p. 17). There is a footnote within this short passage that briefly describes the Eduardo Martins hoax; however, the art project does not include any images allegedly captured by the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona and there is no further examination of the hoax throughout the collection of essays. In the in-depth interview with Leister, she responds to an inquiry about how to defend oneself against "the rise of fake news," by referring to the framework of the Eduardo Martins hoax (Kouwenhoven, 2017). However, she offers no in-depth academic examination of the hoax. Furthermore, her discourse tends to conflate the popular conception of *fake news* with the phenomenon of the *hoax*, rehearsing a reoccurring error within the popular news media (Polgovsky, 2018).

When the *BBC Brasil* initially exposed the Eduardo Martins hoax in 2017 (Sanches, Ribeiro & Barrucho, 2017), the phenomenon of the hoax was (as it continues to be) a recurrent topic within the American news cycle. The concept of the hoax, however, was predominantly represented in the mainstream media by the phrase, fake news. The comingling of these two distinct concepts, fake news and hoax, has served to oversimplify and dissimulate pertinent facts that otherwise might be unpacked through a more rigorous understanding of hoaxes.

The problem is evident in a *Washington Post* article that examines the influence of fake news on social media, within the context of the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. The headline states, "Mark Zuckerberg denies that fake news on Facebook influenced the elections," but within the body of the article it is clear that the phrase, fake news, is utilized interchangeably with the term, hoax (Ohlheiser, 2017). Furthermore, whereas the headline indicates that the article will examine an instance of fake news, the word hoax appears as well, devoid of context, just prior to the phrase, fake news: "Zuckerberg is being asked to answer for Facebook's long-standing difficulties in dealing with hoaxes and fake news that spread freely through its massive user network" (ibid.).

An additional example of the problem is visible on Facebook's Newsroom website. Adam Mosseri—*Facebook*'s Vice President of News Feed—wrote an article in 2016 detailing how that social media platform undertook actions to reduce the proliferation of fake news (Mosseri, 2016). The article, "Addressing Hoaxes and Fake News," again seems to conflate "hoax" with "fake news." And with the *Washington Post* article, a clear definition is noticeably absent from the corporate screed.

The ambiguous and decontextualized confusion of the term, hoax, with the phrase, fake news—a recurrent practice within news media—obscures the respective meanings of these phenomena and the issues or events to which they refer. Perhaps this explains why these frequently employed concepts have become the subject of a substantial amount of academic research since 2015. However, an examination of the scholarship reveals issues similar to those identified in the news media. Multiple examples exist of academic research that utilizes these two distinct concepts interchangeably. There is also a lack of research that focuses on contemporary image hoaxing as it affects combat photojournalism. Shafi & Ravikumar (2018) employ an online quantitative survey to investigate the dissemination of fake news within social media in India. The article's second keyword (even before the listing of the term, "social media") is hoax, yet it appears only once in the article, absent any definition or anchoring context. Furthermore, while Shafi and Ravikumar's research examines social media, it focuses on text-based hoaxes, with no attention lent to images or photographs. Gorbach (2018) investigates the history of fake news in a way that also interrelates fake news and hoax, but without clear definition. Gorbach's research is also limited to early American journalism, with little discussion of how fake news relies on images to perpetuate its dissemination. In addition, his discussion does not broach the realm of photojournalism, or combat photojournalism, and predominantly focuses on a particular Chicago journalist who reported on gangsters. McNair (2018) also examines fake news in news media. However, identical issues arise, as the term hoax is never defined. Instead, reference is made to an earlier, 2009 article by McNair, which neither utilizes the word hoax, nor provides a definition of it. Furthermore, both McNair (2009 & 2018) articles limit the scope of examination to text-based hoaxes.

Nechushtai (2017) explores the "relationship between the news industry and digital platforms," specifically Facebook and Google. While apparently open to a relational analysis of the sort that would recognize the difference between fake news and the hoax, it does not in fact examine actual hoaxes or image-based hoaxes. Its aim instead is to determine whether social media might overtake news media. Bode & Vraga (2015) utilize the words misinformation and hoax interchangeably, but do not provide a definition of the latter. Their research explores the correction of misinformation on social media but it does not serve the critique of the function, meaning and significance of hoaxes, image-based or otherwise. Additionally, a myriad of articles exists which provide cursory examination of particular hoaxes, including those exploring digital activism in Hungary (Wilkin, Dencik & Bognár, 2015), the portrayal of China in Western European online media (Nimmegeers, 2015), a crime in Australia (Powell, Overington & Hamilton, 2017), populism in British tabloids (Cross, 2014), a qualitative examination of training journalism students in virtual foreign correspondence (Hahn, Stalph & Steller, 2017), a comparative analysis of global and European trust in news media (Hanitzsch, Dalen & Steindl, 2017), a quantitative analysis involving news stories depicting North Korea (Seo, 2018), Bassem Youssef's satirical broadcast television show in Egypt (Ibrahim & Eltantawy, 2017), the American Society of Newspaper Editors commitment to transparency (Mellinger, 2015), Internet memes related to Chris Crocker and LGBT equality (Scott, 2014), violent media research relating to sensationalized findings (Markey, Males, French & Markey, 2015), and the examination of an individual Chicago crime reporter who also partook in some text-based hoaxes in the early 20th century (Gorbach, 2015). None of these subjects delve into images or photographs in any substantive manner. Hahn, Stalph & Steller, (2017) briefly discuss the potential use of amateur photography in virtual foreign correspondence journalism but provide a

mixed message by at once describing UGC as "highly credible" and discrediting it as possibly "tampered or staged" (p. 11). This could be due to the fact that UGC can be credible, although authenticating images is time consuming, expensive and imperfect, which explains why its was "regarded as particularly valuable for soft news," but less useful for hard news stories (ibid., p. 11).

The only extant article that mentions manipulated photographs focuses on North Korea's usage of Photoshop to alter an image of a missile launch (Seo, 2018). However, that article discusses the manipulated image in the context of a quantitative analysis and does not examine the pertinent issues of indexicality and hoaxing. Swimelar (2017) examines combat images in relation to narratives disseminated by the U.S. government during foreign conflicts. She analyzes the use of photographs by government agencies to propagate particular narratives about those conflicts. The article does not discuss hoaxes or manipulated photographs.

The concept of the hoax is in fact examined in relation to activist groups like the Yes Men (e.g., Boyd, 2005; Kenny, 2009; Reilly, 2013; Day, 2018). This body of research provides useful material concerning the potential effects of hoaxes as well as offers some theorization of the ideas, which frame and motivate hoaxing. The research also provides cursory exploration of the manipulation of image indexicality for the purposes of perpetuating hoaxes.

Photojournalism, Indexicality and the Image Hoax

A limited number of articles focus on image-based hoaxes. Magilow (2017) examines German tabloids in the 1920s, referred to as *Illustrierten*, that participated in the annual April 1st *Bildscherz* (translated as "image joke"). Those images did not, however, involve depictions of combat—and *Bildscherz* was a popular annual stunt that spread throughout Weimar Germany, whereupon readers were aware of the image-manipulation, thus potentially muting its function as hoax. *Bildscherz* and its offshoots also occurred at a time during which the analog camera, pictorial magazines, and printed glossy photographs formed the nodal point of innovations in communication technology. Similar issues arise with Knoch (2006) and Hardt (1996), each of which examines the proliferation of photojournalism in Germany during the early 20th century. (These articles only briefly examine *Bildscherz*.) This thesis, by contrast, focuses on depictions of combat that were hoaxes through the use of digitally manipulated photographs.

There is a large amount of research pertaining to the indexicality of photographs in journalism that refers to the historical foundations of combat photography. Frassanito (1975), Rowe (1983), Klingsporn (2000), Peterson (2010) and Harris (2013) examine photography that documents the Civil War in the United States. Similarity, Secunda & Moran (2007) and Berner (2014) examine historical combat photography during the Spanish-American war. Neander & Marlin (2010) examine photographs depicting World War I. These examples are useful for understanding the historical relationship of image indexicality to images depicting conflict (e.g., Frassanito, 1975; Wheeler, 2002; Secunda & Moran, 2007; Peterson, 2010; Pinney, 2012; Harris, 2013). However, none of that research concerns image hoaxing.

Taft's (1964) research on early 20th century American photography, on the other hand, does contain some passages that provide context for explaining the relationship of image

indexicality to journalism. Accordingly, the misuse and outright manipulation of photographs in journalism was so prevalent during that period that "photographs in picture newspapers and magazines [were seen to] have in a measure defeated their own object, presumably that of disseminating news" (Taft, 1964, Pg. 448-449). However, the bulk of Taft's (1964) research does not focus on combat photojournalism. Dickerman (2000) and Pickford (2012) examine Soviet manipulations of images, which provides interesting insights into these early examples of image alteration but does not concern the concept of the hoax. Faber (2009) examines the mystery and uncertainty surrounding Robert Capa's famous photograph, "The Falling Soldier," which depicts the death of a Republican soldier, during the Spanish Civil War. While Capa's image is widely perceived by art critics and historians as important, the fact that its authenticity has not yet been determined undermines its positioning as a hoax.

The term indexicality signifies the relationship between the object (captured by a photograph) and the subsequent depiction of the object. Thus, a photograph is considered an indexical representation insofar as the object is depicted authentically, "creating a visual likeness with a degree of accuracy and 'truthfulness'" (Sadowski, 2011). Contemporary research does not investigate the continuing destabilization of image indexicality within combat photojournalism. The contemporary research on combat photojournalism's relationship to indexical truth is primarily limited to investigating and/or establishing ethical codes for photojournalists (e.g., Lowrey, 2003; Perlmutter, 2004; Schwalbe, 2005; Keith, Schwalbe & Silcock, 2006 & Carlson, 2009), dispelling notions of journalistic objectivity and image indexicality (e.g., Share, 2003; Zelizer, 2005), or examining the effects of digitally altered news photographs on viewers (e.g., Huang, 2001; Domke, Perlmutter, & Spratt, 2002). This body of research does not explore the premeditated embezzlement of images involved in the perpetuation of a hoax. The theft and

subsequent publication of photographs by the contrived Eduardo Martins persona represents a novel incarnation that has not been addressed sufficiently or at all, not the least in terms of how it represents a challenge to understanding the history of photojournalism.

The lack of a clearly defined and contextual examination of hoaxes, and the dearth of research focusing specifically on image-based hoaxes within contemporary digital culture, have forestalled a thorough comprehension of image-based hoaxes in digital culture. Thus, for the needs of this thesis, a definitive theoretical framework is clearly necessary for investigating and explaining the phenomenon of the Eduardo Martins hoax. What follows is a theorization of hoaxing, drawing from extant scholarly literature for historical and intellectual context. This will enable the thesis to explain contemporary image-based hoaxing.

IV. Theoretical Framework

The Intersection of Authenticity and Digital Technology

This section explicates the integrated aspects of contemporary image-based hoaxes as a triangulation of combat photojournalism, digital culture and the Spectacle 2.0 (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). This thesis is inspired by the Eduardo Martins hoax, which occurred throughout 2015-2017. The exploration of these interconnected issues will help determine what the Eduardo Martins hoax signifies for contemporary combat photojournalism. The fictitious Martins character gained widespread acclaim by uploading images to social media, specifically *Instagram* that purported to depict areas of conflict (predominantly Syria and Iraq). The contrived façade cultivated the appearance of combat photojournalism in order to amplify its invisibility. However, everything connected to the Martins persona was an elaborate hoax. The images, which were in turn published by recognized mainstream media publications, had been stolen (as well as misappropriated) and were only moderately manipulated in order to avoid detection. This lack of indexical truth has roots deeply embedded in the historical foundations of combat photojournalism (Frassanito, 1975; Wheeler, 2002; Peterson, 2010 & Harris, 2013). The Eduardo Martins hoax is in fact enabled by widespread belief in the indexical quality of photographs, which allowed the manipulated images to escape scrutiny prior to their publication in mainstream media outlets.

The easy pilfering and manipulation of photographs has become feasible due to the contemporary prevalence of digital technology. Particularly, the digital algorithmic underpinning of images (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013; Rubinstein, 2018) enabled the faux Martins character to moderately alter images and manufacture this hoax. The digitization of photography has been

examined (ibid.) and provides pertinent information concerning the destabilization of image indexicality in digital culture. In addition, the dissemination and widespread circulation of embezzled images has been achieved by an increasing reliance on networked communications. Since the 1990s, the ongoing proliferation of the Internet has produced a global culture that is increasingly reliant upon networked technology. The proliferation of digital technology into all aspects of existence (e.g., computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.) has generated a social life world that is almost entirely meditated by networked circuits (Della Ratta, 2018). This digital mediation has become effected by top-down international corporate entities that build and maintain the Internet, which has increasingly come under the oligopolistic control of exclusive conglomerates (Smyrnaios, 2018). The content of the Internet is in turn shaped and amplified from the bottom-up, by individuals who freely produce and share content even though in doing so they are allowing themselves to be exploited and the fruits of their labor commodified (Della Ratta, 2018). The intersection of communication technology and user generated content (specifically images for the needs of this thesis) has produced a networked information economy that "constitute[s] one powerful productive and reproductive factor of current capitalism" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 16). This reality is exemplified by the global diffusion of "social networks [that] have become ubiquitous, necessary and addictive" (McChesney, 2014, p. 134). The Internet needs users to produce and circulate content, which consists of relational and connective networks that produce value within the confines of the information economy (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). This ever-expanding cycle of image production within contemporary networked global culture is persistently molded to contain transgressive meaning and maintain the status quo (Della Ratta, 2018). Henceforth, in this thesis these intertwined aspects of a contemporary networked culture that subsidizes the increasingly oligopolistic

information economy will be referred to as the network. Understanding of the proliferation of the network throughout global culture, specifically as it cultivates user-generated content and its subsequent commodification (Wark, 2013a; Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018), is essential for the investigation of this particular hoax. The fictitious Eduardo Martins persona was initially reliant for its dissemination on the network, which enabled the sale and subsequent publication of stolen (and moderately altered) digital images in mainstream news publications.

The contemporary aestheticization of combat photography (Alper, 2014 & Carrabine, 2018) and the commodification of images (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018) are in part responsible for the effectiveness of the contrived Martins' hoax. Images that artfully depicted regions of conflict, predominantly Syria and Iraq, were utilized to augment the reputation of the fabricated Martins character. This cycle is evidenced by the large following the Martins' *Instagram* account garnered, which culminated in mainstream news publications selecting artfully rendered photographs (that were stolen) for publication: these include *The Wall Street Journal*, *Getty Images*, *Vice, Le Monde*, etc. (Phillips, 2017). This networked commodification of images (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018) made it possible for the contrived Martins persona to sell stolen and misappropriated images to news media. This is exemplified by the contrived Martins personality uploading stolen images to international conglomerate image banks, like *Getty Images* (Phillips, 2017). The phenomenon of advertising stolen and moderately manipulated images via networked image banks, which are widely used by news media, reveals potential fissures within newsgathering procedures and is attributable to the perpetual consolidation of corporate news media empires (McChesney, 2004; Schechter, 2005; Bagdikian, 2007; McChesney, 2014 & Smyrnaios, 2018). The consolidation of corporate news media will be discussed in the subsequent section. The blurring of traditional distinctions

between amateur and professional photographers is in this context further destabilizing image indexicality (Allan, 2013). This contemporary news gathering process is amplified while depicting regions of conflict (Johnston, 2016; Blaagaard, Mortensen, & Neumayer, 2017; Murrell, 2017), which is clearly evident throughout the reportage of the Syrian conflict (Cardell & Maguire, 2015; Seo & Ebrahim, 2016; Della Ratta, 2018). This news production method also represents a circuit of digital labor exploitation (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017; Della Ratta 2018 & Smyrnaios, 2018), which perpetuates all of the aforementioned cycles.

The accelerating proliferation of a global networked culture has engendered a daily existence that is progressively mediated by images. This is exemplified by the contemporary circulation of images within digital culture, which constitutes a large portion of the daily routine for billions of individuals (Meeker, 2014 & Meeker, 2016). Guy Debord skeptically observed the omnipresent circulation of images, which inspired his analysis of the Spectacle. According to Debord, authentic social life was usurped by representation (Debord, 1992), which was compelled by commodity culture (Eagles, 2012). The resultant actuality cultivated a "social relation between people that is mediated by images" (Debord, 1992, Thesis 4). This concept was influenced by Debord's involvement with *The Situationists* throughout the 1960s (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). Wark (2013a) states *The Situationists* attempted to move beyond the falsified needs manufactured by capitalism, which was achieved by forging new and authentic desires. *The Situationists* practiced *Détournement* (translated as rerouting or hijacking) and instigated 'counter Spectacles', which were attempting to resist the totalizing Spectacle (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). *The Situationists* disbanded in 1972 and since this dissolution the totalizing Spectacle has amplified its influence on the media space / culture through several incarnations.

Debord's initial conception of the Spectacle, conceived of two separate iterations, one encompassing the Western capital-diffused Spectacle, and one authoritarian, the Stalinist Soviet-style concentrated Spectacle (ibid.). Both were understood to render viewers passive recipients of the Spectacle's broadcast. With the fall of the Soviet system, these two modalities amalgamated to form the integrated Spectacle, which also encouraged passivity among viewers via commodity culture or "the language of the commodity" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 8). This passivity was additionally reinforced via the unidirectional broadcasting of the Spectacle. Moreover, the absence of any discernable alternative to capitalism augmented the Spectacle. The advent and proliferation of the network in the 1990s transformed the Spectacle and produced the third and current iteration, which is referred to as the disintegrated Spectacle (Wark, 2013b) or the Spectacle 2.0 (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). Spectacle 2.0 operates under the guise of user interaction with spectacular content, rather than strictly remaining a passive viewer. This digitization has amplified Debord's original Spectacle, which ultimately provided the globalized digital platform the faux Eduardo Martins character was able to exploit.

The Eduardo Martins hoax was generated by, and amplified at, this intersection of digital culture. The proliferating immersion of the network into global culture has fundamentally altered Debord's Spectacle (ibid.). These intertwined digital actualities provided a network podium for the fabricated Eduardo Martins persona to perpetrate a large-scale hoax.

Bearing Witness: The Intersection of Ethics and Aesthetics

According to numerous scholars, America has significant problems rooted at the foundations of its privately held and corporate controlled news media, which affects all aspects of culture (McChesney, 2014). These issues are embedded within the perpetual consolidation of news media, which is profoundly imbricated in the historical establishment of journalistic ethics. While such issues may seem implicitly contemporary, this process did not occur suddenly. The press in early America was the envy of the world (ibid.), which was largely the result of government subsidies that fostered a wide array of opinions (McChesney, 2004). After the turn of the century, American journalism fundamentally shifted toward an advertising subsidized press system (ibid.). Perceptive and shrewd publishers recognized the need for journalism to appear impartial and unbiased in order to maintain profitability (ibid.). Newspapers became engines of massive profits for advertisers, which rendered government subsidies ineffectual against the growing tide of capitalism (McChesney, 2014). Those news outlets that refused to conform to commercial interests buckled under financial pressure throughout the early twentieth century (McChesney, 2004). The sustained expansion of the American capitalist system under these conditions instigated global competition, including for media, which is evident within contemporary publically funded media entities. More specifically, as it relates to this thesis, although the *BBC* is principally financed by public funds, it still is increasingly subject to capitalist forces, which is especially true concerning *BBC Brasil*. In 2015, the *BBC* transformed "its in-house production arm, *BBC Studios*, into a wholly owned commercial subsidiary" (National Audit Office, 2017, p. 12). It was reported that *BBC Studios* produced a profit during its initial year as a commercial entity (BBC, 2018). Moreover, *BBC*'s global news website,

including *BBC Brasil*, have received funding from advertisers since 2007 (BBC News, 2007). Thus, the expansion of the American capitalist system established a predominantly capitalistic playing field that is often (although not always) influenced by Western interests:

> But once capitalism became established, it followed a distinct logic that locked it in place and created powerful pressure for other countries to modernize or suffer being economically and militarily dominated by the few industrialized countries (McChesney, 2014, p. 26).

The merging of capitalism with news media precipitated the manifestation of the ostensibly neutral and unbiased journalist, "the concept of journalism as politically neutral, nonpartisan, professional, even 'objective,' did not emerge until the twentieth century" (McChesney, 2004, p. 57). The newly founded ethical principles of journalism, purportedly guided by unbiased neutrality, surreptitiously entrenched the status quo economic position of owners (ibid.), which would provide a foundation for the contemporary consolidation of news media (McChesney, 2014). The new direction in American journalism transpired concurrent to the development of the halftone printing method in 1897 by F.E. Ives, which allowed newspapers to print photographs; this process is still utilized today (Lester, 2016). Simultaneous to the establishment of journalistic ethics, "photojournalism was born" (Secunda & Moran, 2007, p. 14). The establishment of photojournalism as a profession inaugurated an "incorporation of pictures into the narrativization process" (Griffin, 1999, p. 149).

America exhibited a desire to view printed images throughout the early and mid-twentieth century (Carlebach, 1992). This is exemplified by the integration of photography into the production of news delivery, which at this time was already a capitalist enterprise that sought to attract and retain readership, as an "increasingly significant element in daily and weekly journalism" (Carlebach, 1997). Perceiving a potential to increase readership, many publications quickly moved to hire on-staff photographers (ibid.). Newspapers began using images as

advertisements to cultivate viewership: "[American] newspapers throughout the early 20th century are rife with 'world's first photo of…' images" (Bersak, 2006, p. 16). The transition away from illustrations and toward printed images in newspapers was (in part) instigated by the perception that photography was factual, impartial, as well as mimetic (Carlebach, 1997).

> Photographers and some publishers argued that the process engraving, the halftone, is far better suited to journalistic illustration because it is machine-made and therefore more accurate than any hand-drawn picture (ibid., p. 28).

This conviction was predicated, and sold, upon the implicit belief that newspapers were in the business of informing the public (ibid.). Publications that intended to remain competitive were obligated to enlist the camera's allegedly mimetic capabilities because they "could no longer afford to publish illustrations based more upon fertile imagination than fact" (ibid., p. 129). The competitive aspect was compounded by the camera's expediency versus engraving (ibid.). Formerly, an engraving could take days to complete, whereas a photograph could be captured and printed within hours (ibid.). Thus, the migration toward printed photographs represented a potential decrease in production expenditures, which increased a publication's bottom line. Although newspapers did not immediately adopt the halftone technology, after the turn of the century a rapid proliferation was underway (ibid.; Bersak, 2003; Kobre, 2013). This represents an important shift within newsgathering as the mechanical reproduction (of images opposed to hand-drawn art) served to exaggerate indexical confidence regarding "access, independence, lack of constraints, and artless realism" (Griffin, 1999, p. 125). The profusion of images that circulate in the digital era has lent itself to this comprehension "for many of us who came of age in the mediated era, seeing is believing" (Zelizer, 2005, p. 167). Combat photojournalism is particularly afflicted by this widespread indexical belief, as it "has come to represent the height of photographic realism" (Griffin, 1999, p. 130).

The widespread confidence in the camera's mimetic capabilities, and by extension photojournalism, was prevalent throughout the transitory period for news media (Carlebach, 1997). This confidence is embodied by a quote from Sammy Schulman, who was employed by *Hearst International News Service*: "When you pull the trigger on a news picture you are recording the unadorned truth" (ibid., p. 31). The novel ability to print supposedly indexical images alongside written news accounts served to reinforce senses of authenticity and authority. A similar confidence still exists in contemporary culture, Lester (2016) stated, "Photojournalism has a long and cherished tradition of truthfulness. The impact of the visual image on a viewer comes directly from the belief that the 'camera never lies'" (p. 90). Carlson (2009) agrees, arguing that journalism and photojournalism, especially in America, "has been hesitant to move away from the objectivity claims on which it bases its cultural authority" (ibid., p. 132). This widespread conviction that a photograph must necessarily index the actual was traded upon by the fictitious Martins persona. Absent this misplaced confidence, the images stolen by the contrived Martins character would not have escaped scrutiny for so long (or have been selected for publication by highly esteemed news outlets).

The widespread faith in the camera's mimetic capabilities, along with the purportedly objective photojournalist, was misplaced for a variety of reasons. The alteration of images was recurrent throughout the establishment of printed photographs in newspapers, which "were often altered […] to enhance their effect" (Carlebach, 1997, p. 32). Furthermore, staging mise-en-scène and post-production alteration are persistent themes throughout the establishment of combat photojournalism (Frassanito, 1975; Wheeler, 2002; Peterson, 2010 & Harris, 2013). Such examples illustrate the advancement of aesthetics above adherence to image indexicality. Similarly, these issues have continued into the digital era (Zelizer, 2005; Carlson, 2009). The

alterations are often done to adhere to a desired narrative or aesthetic stereotype (Carlebach, 1997, Zelizer, 2004; Carlson, 2009). Despite the often-espoused ethical newsgathering practices, these issues persist. This is compounded by ethical guidelines that are often opaque and diverse (Wheeler, 2002; Bersak 2006 & Lester, 2016). The ethical ambiguity was initially due to the informal development of a photojournalist's role in newsgathering, which was "a methodology based on the pictorical needs of their employers as on their own skill and stamina" (Carlebach, 1997, p. 31). Kobre (2013) states that in contemporary newsgathering there is still no singular or conclusive set of ethical guidelines for photojournalism because the determination of what constitutes an ethical image is arcane. The emphasis of ethical journalism is on whether a photograph faithfully represents or misleads a viewer (Bersak, 2006; Kobre, 2013). However, these tenets are difficult to define because of the myriad of variables and subjective choices involved in capturing images, which include (but are not limited to): the angle of the camera, the framing of the image (what is left out of the image), the instance of exposure (when the photograph is captured) (Carlson, 2009). In an article published on the *Center for Media Literacy* website, UCLA Professor Jeff Share concisely explicated this particular comprehension of the photojournalist:

> A photograph is *always* a decontextualized representation of reality recorded by a human being who makes conscious and even unconscious choices based on his or her cultural upbringing, experiences and biases (Share, 2003).

In spite of this paradigm, many photojournalists consider themselves "objective recorders of reality" and depend on the audiences' faith in this conception (ibid.). In the field of combat photojournalism (the chosen field the fictitious Eduardo Martins exploited), this lack of a definitive set of guidelines is exacerbated by the fact that the photographer operates in an environment of unrelenting danger, in which much pressure is placed upon her / him to

efficiently capture compelling images (Carlson, 2009). Despite and because of an atmosphere of conflict and violence that not only inhibits fixed routines, but produces additional ethical quandaries. Explicitly macabre images often go unpublished (or are at least sanitized) by either institutional or government edict (Sontag, 2013), so photojournalists consider the mitigation of visually depicting excessive violence (in the face of mortal danger), while still attempting to capture compelling photographs by "making quick decisions under fraught circumstances" (Zelizer, 2004, p. 130).

The perpetual introduction of new technology further compounds the difficulties surrounding the contemporary ethics of photojournalism, which results in constant instability (Kobre, 2013). Despite these issues, photojournalism has achieved a distinctive status in the eye of the public, "a confidence that a photo can reflect reality in a uniquely compelling and credible way" (Wheeler, 2002. p. 3). It is the indexicality of a photograph, "the way that the camera produced a record of a given configuration of light in a given place at a given time," that endows a news image with documentary authority, which journalism exploits (Gelderloos, 2014, p. 561). Meanwhile, the widespread confidence accorded to the institutional news's "sanctioned photojournalism is still quite powerful" (Boal & Stallabrass, 2018, p. 156), even with the "lack of standardized usage [of images depicting combat] in the news" (Zelizer, 2004, p. 130). These interrelated effects often obfuscate the ethical process, which may consistently endure until publication. Combat photojournalism thus provided an ideal guise for the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona to perpetuate a hoax involving combat images, which mainstream news outlets subsequently purchased and published.

Despite the problematic indexical capabilities of combat photojournalism, it rose to become "the premier visual genre in news media framing of international affairs" in the

twentieth century (Kennedy & Patrick, 2014, p. 19). The modern evolution of photojournalism in Western culture has since the mid-nineteenth century been inextricably linked with the visualization of war (Sontag, 2013; Kennedy & Patrick, 2014). Yet, suspicion still surrounds the use of photographs that depict violence and suffering. Sontag (2013) indicates that photography depicting violence and suffering is often criticized if it is aesthetic or "too much like art" (p. 76). However, this statement seems to have been surpassed by the digital era. The contemporary "competitive aesthetic pressures" have increasingly guided photojournalists while capturing images that depict violence and suffering (Carlson, 2009, p. 126). Aestheticization tones down macabre visual depictions of violence and suffering and "privileges the dramatic image to communicate conflict (ibid., p. 125). The aestheticization of such images is institutionalized in contemporary photojournalism by local, national and international awards that judge images "based on compositional and formal factors" (ibid., p. 132). Zelizer (2004) pointed directly to professional judgment as an overt influence on photojournalists:

> War images are typically bigger, bolder, more colorful […] prettier, shocking, and more aesthetically pleasing […this impulse] has long been part of photography's practice in journalism and exemplified by images that typically win prizes and generate professional acclaim (ibid., p. 121).

The aforementioned professional awards are conferred to photojournalistic images that are aesthetically composed in an intrinsically artistic manner (Carlson, 2009). Consequently, the lauding of aesthetic images in contemporary photojournalism refers to images that are artistically rendered (Zelizer, 2004; Carlson, 2009) to be visually pleasing or dramatic (Elliot and Lester, 2003; Zelizer, 2004). This has precipitated photojournalists to internalize "aesthetic importance, […which contribute] to notions of career success and satisfaction" (Carlson, 2009, p. 132). Griffin (1999) summed up these seeming paradoxical concepts (ethical vis-à-vis artistic photographs) while examining celebrated historical and contemporary war photographs:

> This seeming contradiction, that the most elegantly composed, most purposefully mediated, and in some cases the most transparently staged photographs have become the most celebrated images, is a recurrent characteristic of war photography (ibid., p. 151).

Thus, photojournalists operate under a bifurcated set of principles that advocate for a direct recording of real events, while considering visual appeal and artistic composition (Carlson, 2009). Moreover, the repetition of similar aesthetic visual tropes within contemporary conflict photojournalism indicate the "market reveals that the stylistic trends and subject matter of news photography seem to be confirming rather than changing, perpetuating the centrality of violence in Western visual convention" (Scheerlinck, 2009, p. 1). This harkens to Debord's conception of the Spectacle, specifically the logic of capitalism operating within the Spectacle dictating the commodification of images.

The artful rendering of photojournalistic images for the viewers' indulgence is exemplified by David Shields (2015) examination of photographs published on the front page of the *New York Times*, which depicted the concurrent wars in Iraq (from 2001-2013) and Afghanistan (from 2003-2013). The images were arranged thematically, which accentuates their functioning to "reproduce and reinforce certain visual tropes that glamourize war" (Carrabine, 2018, p. 635). Shields (2015) determined the published photographs had composed "an unrelenting parade of beautiful images" (p. 7). During an interview with *TIME Magazine*, Shields indicated that images were so attractively and artistically rendered as to: "it seems like an institutional policy to choose pictures that you could hang on your living room wall" (Butet-Roch, 2015). Photojournalism is reliant upon images of combat and violence, which is a vital component of news reporting, "often formally striking or beautifully rendered: everyday one may come across exquisite images of other people's suffering" (Reinhardt, Edwards, & Duganne, 2007, p. 7). Brian Walski, the former *Los Angeles Times* photographer, implicated the

news industry's increasing influence upon photojournalists to "go to that line where news becomes art" (Johnston, 2003). This incident lent itself to the Eduardo Martins hoax, which was illuminated by the artfully composed images the fictitious Martins character stole from professional photojournalists. These images were uploaded to both *Instagram* and *Getty Images*. The artistically rendered images were integral to achieving popularity on a predominantly photo-centric social media platform, which culminated in select images being chosen for publication in mainstream news publications.

The intertwined phenomenon of image indexicality and aestheticization were significant factors that contributed to the success of the Eduardo Martins hoax. The contemporary proliferation of the network and digital culture has amplified these phenomena, which is often exacerbated during combat. The complex situation is exemplified by contemporary photojournalist's relying upon digital cameras for their work, as well as the increasing utilization of user-generated content (UGC) by news organizations, which will both be examined in the following section.

Digital Foundations: Algorithmic Turn in Indexicality and User-Generated Images

The 2015 international survey of photojournalists, which was conducted by the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* and *World Press Photo*, found that 98 percent of photojournalists utilize a digital camera "as a matter of course" (Hadland, Campbell & Lambert, 2015, p. 37). The digitization of images, or "algorithmic turn" in photography, has facilitated the consummate destabilization of image indexicality (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013, p. 25). Digital cameras are reliant upon algorithmic processes that reconfigure raw data, which is amassed by digitized light sensors (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013). "The same data could be just as easily output as a text file, a sound, a string of numbers or remain unprocessed" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013, p. 27). The modern digitized algorithm that underwrites contemporary photography does not involve any attachment to an actual event, as the algorithm can be easily reconfigured (Rubinstein, 2018) or produced as a "computer-generated image" (Åker, 2012, p. 327). This is exemplified by Artificial Intelligence, which can manufacture unique facial images of non-existent individuals (Metz, 2019). The modern digital image is not merely non-indexical and malleable, but founded upon a computational algorithm that is wholly programmable (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013).

Notwithstanding these developments, news media has chosen to make vast use of digitized visuals to buttress adopted narratives. The production and re-production of digital images is necessary, if a contemporary conflict is to gain visibility in the broader news cycle (Blaagaard, Mortensen, & Neumayer, 2017). As mentioned above, these images are user-generated rather than captured by professional photojournalists. Professional photojournalists are by the same token themselves reliant upon digital cameras, which means that the predominant majority of contemporary news visuals (either amateur or professional) are captured using digital technology. Meanwhile, the algorithmic turn in photographic technology has coalesced with

networked culture to produce an environment in which user-generated images play a significant role in shaping the narrative of modern conflicts; this is especially true of Syria (Seo & Ebrahim, 2016). The practice of news organizations relying upon user-generated images in order to provide an ostensibly indexical anchor to support a narrative, has become pervasive (Allan, 2013). For example, a large portion of the visuals originating from Syria "came in the form of camera-phone images" (Cardell & Maguire, 2015, p. 209). The BBC regularly utilized UGC for breaking stories and news coverage of the Syrian conflict (Johnston, 2016). These practices have progressively blurred the boundaries between amateur and professional as "citizen witnessing is rewriting the unspoken rules" (Allan, 2013, p. 197) of photojournalism, which includes the destabilizing of supposed "strictures of objectivity" (ibid., p. 192). Throughout the Syrian conflict, numerous multinational news agencies (AFP, Reuters, AP, etc.) sourced citizen content from social media websites and provided this content to clients (Murrell, 2017). A global news agency's decision to broadcast (or not broadcast) UGC will shape the international news narrative by broadcasting "directly into the media ecology of mainstream and then alternative media" (ibid., p. 289). A recent study found that user-generated visual content from Syria and Libya contained "strongly engaging characteristics, especially in terms of its authenticity" (Ahva & Hellman, 2015, p. 668). Although the effects were not universal, the results nonetheless indicate a strong potential for affective influence (Ahva & Hellman, 2015). The reliance on user-generated images (rather than those captured professional photojournalist) exploits the purported indexical qualities of photographs. Throughout the conflict in Syria, user-generated images have flooded the digital domain and has thus affected the perceived narrative of this particular conflict (Della Ratta, 2018).

Prior to the introduction of the network in Syria, Bashar al-Assad deployed an ideological campaign "through mass education and edifying media products" (ibid., p. 10), which was intended to suppress dissent and circumvent sectarian rifts by channeling desires and promoting national unity (Kraidy, 2018). However, this ideology collapsed under the strain of networked communications, which enabled citizens to produce content aimed at "self-expression and civic empowerment against authoritarian powers" (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 83). During the early street demonstrations, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the al-Assad regime widely disseminated image-based advertisements aimed at maintaining national integrity (ibid.). The user-generated response employed satire to invert the intended denotative message of the campaign (ibid.). The viral user-generated content revealed that "massive user-generated re-manipulations" held potential to directly challenge and undermine authoritarian power (ibid., p. 81). Such online protests were one of several factors that produced the civil unrest throughout the initial phases of the Syrian uprising, which involved citizens peacefully protesting the al-Assad regime. However, these nonviolent protests ultimately devolved into protracted violence.

After the outbreak of hostilities, Syrian resistance groups relied on broadcasting UGC via the network to undermine al-Assad's authority (Della Ratta, 2018; Seo & Ebrahim, 2016). As the Syrian uprising deteriorated into conflict, user-generated images circulating on the network were drawn into the circuitry of commodification (Della Ratta, 2018).

> With the degradation of the once non-violent struggle, it slowly abandons its faith in the evidence-image, its representational function and its moral claims (ibid., p. 180).

This dissolution of evidence-images was instigated by the processes of commodification, which established the exchange value within the network's "capitalistic system of circulating goods" (ibid., p. 180). These user-generated images lost evidentiary and moral value once uploaded to the network and absorbed into the capitalist framework. Thus, these images failed

"to articulate their intention (that is, subvert hegemonic power) because of the nature of new technologies" (Matar, 2017, p. 104). These novel technologies (embodied by the network) are founded upon and perpetuated by capitalism, which reduces users (especially the content they produce) into commodities "that serves to extract exchange value for the sake of communicative capitalism, leaving users commodified to death" (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 182).

State actors similarly exploit this cycle of networked capitalism. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) consistently leverages network culture to circulate pseudo user-generated images that habituate Israeli viewers to "violence, normalizing it through the veneer of the social media everyday" (Kuntsman & Stein, 2015, p. 88). Individual soldiers, instead of an overt state actor, capture a prevalent amount of the images circulated by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) on social media (ibid.). These images primarily involve two recurrent visual tropes. The initial trope frames individual IDF soldiers, and their activities, as heroic, patriotic, brave, hip and sexy (Kuntsman and Stein, 2015). The second trope visually depicts Palestinian's as "the other" and "as anonymous prey" (Kohn, 2016, p. 211). This often involves dehumanizing Palestinians by portraying them as terrorists or security threats, which is exemplified by IDF Sniper Mor Ostrovski's image of a young "Palestinian boy in the crosshairs" of his rifle's scope (Kuntsman and Stein, 2015, p. 77). Another example involves the Israeli government officially endorsing a conspiracy concerning broadcast footage depicting the IDF murder of a 12-year-old Palestinian named Mohammed al-Dura. The Israeli Army indicated this footage was fabricated and it represented "a modern-day blood libel against the State of Israel" (ibid., p. 60). These collective visual depictions, and the response by Israeli authorities, have interpellated an Israeli society that routinely distrusts images portraying Palestinian's as anything other than aggressive and violent, not the least as victims (Kuntsman & Stein, 2015).

> In many such narratives, the figure of the "lying Arab" quickly became metonymy for Palestinian nation itself: "Of course the picture is fake, everything they have is fake, they are fake People (ibid., p. 67).

Despite evidentiary photographs captured by Palestinian activists that depict Israeli aggression and "shed light on the human rights violations in Gaza (or in Syria), patriotic Israeli (and Syrian pro-regime) data-activists will still believe them to be fake, or photoshopped, or adapted from another context" (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 120). The cynicism within Zionist culture regarding images depicting Palestinian suffering is enhanced by digital photography's malleable algorithmic foundations, which reconstitutes images into infinite forms throughout the network. Israeli distrust is further inflamed by the government's strident response to such images, which repeatedly asserts that visual depictions of Palestinian suffering are fabricated (Kuntsman & Stein, 2015). This belief is reinforced by the Israeli media (especially among the political right wing), while social media sleuths and "viral suspicion campaigns" are glorified as patriotic (ibid., p. 65). Suspicion is specifically focused upon images depicting Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli soldiers, which many Israelis believe are fabricated (ibid.). This widespread conviction is exemplified by "the sardonic language" of an Israeli state official that refers to Palestinians in these images as being "not quite as dead" (ibid., p. 67). Thus, the IDF circulation of images via the network is effective at working in opposite directions, instilling belief in Israeli valor and discrediting depictions of Palestinian anguish. The Israeli government's tacit endorsement of distrusting images of Palestinian suffering combined with the media-sphere's suspicion of such images is analogous to hoaxing.

As discussed, mainstream newsgathering is progressively reliant upon the perpetually increasing quantity of UGC that circulates on the network (Allan, 2013). This paradigm shift within traditional newsgathering provided an entry point for the fictitious Eduardo Martins to

exploit. The novel newsgathering procedure of obtaining user-generated images from the network serves to commodify images, which in turn perpetuate this cycle; this is especially true as conflict zones are unreachable and perilous for photographers/photojournalists, like Syria (Della Ratta, 2018). The user-generated visual depictions that serve to reinforce mainstream news narratives are predominantly captured on digital cameras, which are governed by unseen and inaccessible algorithmic code. This digitization of images enabled the faux Martins character to moderately alter stolen images to escape detection. The expansion of increasingly dynamic photography technology has substantially increased the quality of images captured by amateur photographs, which abetted the perpetuation of this hoax. This expansion of proficient consumer image technology has led to a blurring of "traditional definitional boundaries demarcating the amateur from the professional news photographer," which renders it increasingly difficult to discern between images captured by either amateurs or photojournalists (Allan, 201, p. 183). This intersection in digital culture serves to augment reality, and the network establishes the potential to exploit these capacities, to perpetuate an image-based hoax on an expansive scale.

The Liberationism of Hoaxes

The intersection of user-generated images and the network have engendered a subversive paradigm of resistance against the Spectacle. Despite the aforementioned negative examples (Syria and Israel), image-based hoaxes may potentially disrupt previously static protocols (Cardell & Maguire, 2015). Similar to satire, a hoax can stimulate novel ways of perception by distorting a habituated existence (Reilly, 2013). A hoax reconfigures ingrained convictions by repositioning one's default consciousness via a momentary break from ingrained automated thought. By destabilizing and denaturalizing dominant forces, a hoax may reroute "ideas and images to subvert the Spectacle" (Boyd, 2005, p. 37). The temporary suspension of the normal-ordinary can reinvigorate considerations that are "numbed through repetition, and by entrenched positions on either side of a stale debate" (Kenny, 2009, p. 230). Thus it may permit one to entertain a radical deviation in their perception of what is possible. This type of hoaxing is exemplified by a group of activists called the Yes Men who purposefully contrive satirical hoaxes to "significantly reframe political discourse on subjects of grave importance" (Reilly, 2013, p. 1243). This activist hoaxing is in the spirit of *détournement*, as the Yes Men credited *The Situationists* (among other groups) as an inspiration (Yes Men, n.d.).

As a founding member of the Situationist International [SI] in 1957, long before he published his concepts outlining the Spectacle, Debord and his commrades were aware of the encroachment of capitalist influence throughout Western culture. More than a decade prior to publishing *The Society of the Spectacle* and a year prior to the establishment of SI, Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman—a French artist and also a founding member of SI—published *A User's Guide to Détournement* in the Belgian surrealist periodical *Les Lèvres Nues* in May 1956. The article outlines their perception of a future in which "all known means of expression are going to

converge in a general movement of propaganda that must encompass all the perpetually interacting aspects of social reality" (Debord, 2006, p. 14). The article lays the groundwork for Debord's conception of the Spectacle. According to Debord and Wolman, the objective of *détournement* (rerouting or hijacking in French) is to resist the expansion of capitalism throughout the cultural sphere. Debord foresaw the rapid assimilation of capitalism within everyday culture forming a hegemonic Spectacle. In the *Society of the Spectacle*:

> When the real world is transformed into mere images, mere images become real beings — dynamic figments that provide the direct motivations for a hypnotic behavior (Debord, 1992, Thesis 18).

In *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, where the integrated Spectacle is identified, capitalist hegemony is understood as having colonized everything, so "there remains nothing, in culture or in nature, which has not been transformed; and polluted, according to the means and interests of modern industry" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 4). The central idea of *détournement*, or "extremist innovation" (Debord, 2006, p. 14), is to challenge and resist the Spectacle by "turning expressions of the capitalist system against itself, reclaiming individual autonomy and creativity from the passive 'spectacle' that the system produces" (Holt & Cameron, 2010, p. 252).

The current Spectacle 2.0 diverges from its forerunners by establishing a guise of interaction among users, which is cultivated via users producing the content that circulates throughout the network; this is opposed to former Spectacles that engendered passivity in viewers as a result of unidirectional spectacular broadcasting. Consequently, the Spectacle's appearance of interaction is predicated upon the proliferation of the network, which provided the capacity for the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona to circulate stolen and manipulated images throughout the network and subsequently commodify these non-indexical depictions of combat by publishing these photographs in mainstream news publications. The hoax leveraged

conditions that exist within Spectacle 2.0 at the intersection of news production, UGC and combat photojournalism.

For Debord and Wolman, *détournement* was a means potentially to break the spell, if temporarily, which the Spectacle had cast upon users and create a momentary disjuncture in the Spectacle's influence. These momentary lapses could lead to reconfiguring rote patterns of thought, which were introduced and consistently reinforced by the Spectacle. Thus, *détournement* was a means of resisting the Spectacle and its influence, which was achieved by coopting elements produced by the Spectacle, and distorting or reconfiguring them. "Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations" (Debord, 2006, p. 15). According to Debord and Wolman, there are four rules of *détournement*. First, it is not the utilized elements that will shape the reaction and subsequent impression of *détournement*, but instead the "most distant *détourned* element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression" (ibid., pp. 16-17). Thus, effective *détournement* will juxtapose radically dissimilar and distinctive elements to provoke the viewer. The second rule states that "distortions introduced in the *détourned* elements must be as simplified as possible" so the viewer can recollect and relate the initial unaltered context of the juxtaposed elements (ibid., p. 17). The recollection and comprehension of pre-*détourned* elements enables the viewer to comprehend the proactive messaging. The third rule lays out methods of resistance that are "less effective the more it approaches a rational reply," which is to say that *détournement* should shock the logic system of the viewer, and absent this provoked disruption the *détournement* may be rendered ineffectual (ibid., 17). The more rational a reaction to a *détourned* element is, the closer this reaction comes to "the ordinary spirit of repartee," which exemplifies a typical uninterrupted thought process (ibid., p. 17). It is the inflicted agitation that can disrupt ingrained thinking long

enough to yield potential to redirect rote thoughts. Finally, the straightforward reversal of a message is "is always the most direct and the least effective" (ibid., p. 17). A direct inversion via *détournement* relies on the same framework as the original element being *détourned*, which converses with and potentially legitimizes the original element. This mode of *détournement* may contain a potentially progressive trait, but often simply legitimizes the original element that an individual attempted to *détourn* (ibid.).

To perform their hoaxes, which are forms of *détournement*, the Yes Men highjack the media production cycle to bridge the divide "between consciousness-raising and political/civic participation" (Reilly, 2013, p. 1246). The hoaxes are unique because they are not localized or designed for the audience in attendance, which are often irrelevant to the execution of hoax (Boyd, 2005 & Kenny, 2009). Instead, the group aims for wider circulation by appropriating the dominant influence of the network, "local settings are overlooked in favor of the wider media of television, newspaper and Internet" (Kenny, 2009, p. 231). Unlike pre-networked predecessors, the Yes Men are reliant on the network, "media coverage became integral and inseparable from the work" (Boyd, 2005, p. 41). The pseudo-events instigate critical commentary that would not otherwise occur, which provides media outlets and journalists with an opportunity to reflect on issues they would not previously cover (Boyd, 2005; Kenny, 2009 & Reilly, 2013). This concept is fundamental to the Yes Men hoaxes. Initially, the actual hoax circulates throughout news media (both televisual and print) then reverberates further via their DVD movie, which documents the hoax and subsequent effects (Kenny, 2009). Finally, it culminates in the film advocating for viewers to visit their website and get involved (ibid.). Essentially, these hoaxes momentarily disrupt the subtle hypnotic effects of the digital communication networks and invite original modes of comprehension, which is a form of resistance to the Spectacle.

At the height of the Iraq War in 2008, the Yes Men distributed 1.2 million fake *New York Times* newspapers with the headline "Iraq War Ends" (Reilly, 2013). This hoax provided an opportunity to realistically and actively contemplate utopian concepts:

> For citizens accustomed to reading about war, famine, civil unrest, environmental disaster, political corruption, and global economic crises—ever-present problems often presented without solutions—the (Yes Men) fake (*New York Times*) newspaper (hoax) strikes a sincere, if absurdist, note, reporting stories in a register rarely deployed in journalistic coverage (ibid., pp. 1253-1254).

Far from simply a critique of contemporary global capitalism, this hoax challenged ingrained notions by subverting the media-sphere in order to sabotage the logic of the Spectacle. The Yes Men acted bold to challenge and expose media unethicality by posing as mainstream communication networks expert professionals. The DowEthics.com website was created by the Yes Men to meticulously simulate, replete with comparable corporate images, the presentation of "the official Dow (Chemical) website" (Boyd, 2005, p. 32). Unlike other websites that overtly and directly attack negligent practices of the multinational corporation, the DowEthics.com hoax was sophisticated in its execution (ibid.). The website adopted corporate images, aesthetics and nomenclature "to confuse the viewer into consideration of information he or she might have otherwise overlooked" (ibid., p. 44). The hoax was augmented when the fictitious website received email requests for interviews. The Yes Men agreed to a live television interview with the BBC, which augmented the hoax and ultimately forced Dow to publically address a previously unacknowledged chemical spill it was reluctant to take responsibility for in Bhopal, India (Boyd, 2005).

The Eduardo Martins hoax alludes to a potential for hoaxes within digital communication networks may well serve to destabilize the totalizing affect of the contemporary Spectacle 2.0, which will be explored further in the following section.

The Network Consolidation and Spectacle 2.0

Guy Debord and *The Situationists* devised circumstances aimed to resituate individuals in their daily milieu "therefore repositioning them outside the Spectacle" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 20). According to Debord, the Spectacle was omnipresent, which emanated capitalistic values that represented "symbolic manifestations of a bourgeois vision of the world" (ibid., p. 20). This process occurred as a result of commodification, the creation of fabricated desires and "ubiquitous advertising," which rendered an actuality that was replaced by deceptive and alluring images (ibid., p. 20). The seductiveness of the Spectacle is anchored by its capacity to fabricate needs, which is propelled by advertising (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). The mechanism undergirding this capitalist existence was compelled by an "over-developed commodity economy" that exaggerated exchange value at the expense use value, which established the necessary foundation for a "counterfeit life" (Debord, 1992, Thesis 48). This proliferation of capitalism alienated individuals from their own social qualities, as capitalism dispossess individuals of their capacity for sociability by colonizing social spheres and replacing social aptitude with constructed patterns of behavior.

> Instrumental thinking and productive logic that tends to colonize social life by destroying the social fabric, the organic value of popular culture and to replace dialogic human communication with pre-defined models of behavior (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p 21).

This counterfeit life was mediated by capitalism in the guise of the Spectacle and superimposed upon existence via a set of images (Debord, 1992). Debord defined the Spectacle as a totalizing structure of alienation via operative mediation among individuals, between both the individual and their psyche, as well as between the individual and object (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). This anomaly is constantly reintegrating itself with the individual and society

via the "mediating and articulating power of the Spectacle," which establishes its hegemonic power (ibid., p. 26).

At the end of the 1980's, Debord re-examined his conceptions as the Cold War began to subside and determined the supremacy of the diffused Spectacle had "succeeded in raising a whole generation molded to its laws" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 3). According to Debord, the amplification of the diffused Spectacle had achieved in attaining an imperious role over everyday life (Debord, 1990). The proliferation of the diffused Spectacle drove mediation to previously unparalleled levels via the societal habituation of commodification culture, "conspicuous consumption of commodities, fashions, fads, behavioral models, and images of subjective satisfaction" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 31). This diffusion made it difficult to recognize the Spectacle, yet it pervaded all aspects of life, "to spread to the furthest limits on all sides, while increasing its density in the centre" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 2). However, during his re-reading, Debord identified the establishment of a third Spectacle, which he referred to as the integrated Spectacle (ibid.). The new Spectacle was a "fruitful union of the two [former Spectacles that] has learnt to employ both these qualities on a grander scale," which imposed itself throughout the globe to saturate all aspects of social relations (ibid., Thesis 4). The foundation of the integrated Spectacle relied upon the universal cooptation of all centers of influence within society, which comprises deep and powerful interconnections between the government and economy and results in constricting the locus of power (ibid.). The totalizing influence of capitalism, especially after the collapse of the USSR, amplified the Spectacle. This is evident in the sustained consolidation of media conglomerate empires, which has shaped contemporary news production.

Debord's integrated Spectacle was identified concurrent to the initial stages of the conglomerate consolidation of media. The modern constriction of the American media-scape was initiated in earnest throughout the 1980s. Initially, Bagdikian (1992) identified less than 50 corporate firms dominating the media in 1983. By its fourth edition, this number shrank to two-dozen (Bagdikian, 1992). Shortly thereafter, McChesney (1997) identified only "fewer than ten colossal vertically integrated media conglomerates now dominate U.S, media" (p. 195). By this time, the American media system was creeping toward an "integrated oligopoly" (ibid., p. 183). A decade later, the number slimmed to five conglomerate corporations (Bagdikian, 2007). The continued aggregation of media empires, into the coffers of conglomerate portfolios stretching the globe, has established the contemporary era of international "giant monopolistic corporations" (McChesney, 2014, p. 40). This rapid aggregation of concentrated media dominance was instigated by governmental institutions as a result of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, "arguably one of the most important pieces of U.S. legislation" (McChesney, 2004, p 53). The law diminished governmental oversight by ceding the preponderance of remaining regulatory controls to private interests (McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 2004 & Bagdikian, 2007). The passage of the law was advertised as a means to inspire competition in the media marketplace and rationalized with neoliberal rhetoric and deregulatory ideology (McChesney, 2004 & Bagdikian, 2007). However, instead of motivating competition, the "asseveration […] or fallacious" reasoning was ultimately "sophistic speech" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 15), which prevailed in passing the law against widespread popular (and diminutive bureaucratic) opposition (McChesney, 2004). The domination of the integrated Spectacle "is such a profound social transformation that it has radically altered the art of government" such that it openly demonstrates the complete alienation of popular expression within its purported democratic

processes (Debord, 1990, Thesis 32). The passage of this law instigated a rash of corporate media mergers, which has continued into the contemporary digital era (McChesney, 2014 & Smyrnaios, 2018). This process of consolidation has provided media conglomerates with deep interconnections into a wide array of commercial and governmental enterprises, while enjoying interlocking directorates throughout their mega-corporate structures (Bagdikian, 2007).

The constriction and concentration of overlapping media conglomerates is emblematic of the integrated Spectacle, which expands its dominance (Debord, 1992). Humans are powerless to extricate themselves "because they can never lastingly free themselves from the crushing presence of media" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 7). The omnipotent manifestation progressively separates individuals from an authentic life, as replacement of "the real with the artificial is ubiquitous" (ibid., Thesis 17). However, the networked era has instigated a more malignant variant of the Spectacle, referred to as the disintegrated spectacle (Wark, 2013a), which is engendered via the digitization and networking of the Spectacle's "fundamental nature: industrial capitalism" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 17). The contemporary networked incarnation has migrated away from the Spectacle entertaining individuals, toward individuals entertaining each other, "as the vulture industries collect the rent" (Wark, 2013a, p. 6). This was more recently dubbed "Spectacle 2.0" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 26).

Spectacle 2.0 was incarnated via the advent and expansion of networked communications, which engendered contemporary digital culture. The inauguration of Spectacle 2.0 was primarily initiated behind closed doors. On April 30, 1995, the U.S. government subsidized NSFNet was deactivated and the network infrastructure that had become the modern Internet was turned over to corporate entities (Smyrnaios, 2018). This unilateral privatization of the Internet, and turn toward finance capital, has elevated conglomerate media consolidation to

previously unrecognized levels. McChesney (2014) states, “as a rule the digital era has seen a continued, arguably accelerating, rate of monopoly” (p. 37). The network has come to be dominated by only five conglomerate corporations in a little more than two decades. Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft, which maintain interconnections with media and government institutions, control the majority of the digital domain (Smyrnaios, 2018). Although these corporations are based in the United States, “the consequences of these developments belong to the world” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 24). This swift and (predominantly) unregulated consolidation of massive international media conglomerates has produced a myriad of abuses that reverberate throughout digital culture (McChesney, 2014).

Spectacle 2.0 is highly deceptive and seductive, as the network promulgates as a mode of liberation from traditional media, and touted as a means to emancipate media production, via the ostensibly democratic systems of new media (Wark, 2013a). Yet, the reproduction of Spectacle 2.0 is more dependent upon the commodification of images, alienation of social beings and exploitation of the spectators’ labor (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017).

> For networked images have to be looked at in their social mode of being. The networked image is social and performative, it acquires ‘meaning’ (understood here as value) through its surrounding environment, produced not only by ‘human interactions but also by the technical infrastructure supporting this very interaction – the interface, the database, the algorithm’ (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 197).

The spectacular content is not produced by the digital platforms, but is instead created by the platform’s users, which constitutes a more prevalent form of representation (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). The resultant Spectacle 2.0 is “diffused, decentralized and fragmented; sophisticated and pervasive, it is difficult to identify and eradicate” (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 182). This is exemplified by the widespread acceptance of connectedness purportedly engendered by networks, which in actuality breeds disjuncture between social beings (Della Ratta, 2018).

Moreover, it is the spectators within Spectacle 2.0 (rather than the Spectacle) who are "obliged to make images and stories for each other that do not unite those spectators in anything other than their separateness" (Wark, 2013a, p. 6).

These circumstances have intensified the commodification of images, "in the context of informational capitalism, knowledge workers produce, consume and reproduce value" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 16). This is often amplified during times of conflict, which is demonstrable in Syria (Della Ratta, 2018). The visual depictions of the Syrian conflict have mainly diffused throughout global culture via the network (ibid.). It is premised upon this comprehension that Syria is widely considered the most "socially mediated [conflict] in history" (O'Callaghan, et al., 2014, p. 1) and the first "networked battleground" (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 4). The onset of violence in Syria has transmogrified social beings into "fully image-defined and image-determined" individuals (ibid., p. 7). The user-generated images (value) are disseminated on the network with the aspirations of attaining global awareness, yet digital labor is a requirement for entrée into the network, which represents the mechanisms of subjectification (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). Often this digital labor is not compensated, is underpaid and perceived as voluntary (Della Ratta, 2018). This exploitation of digital labor reproduces the ubiquitous commodification of images that superfluously swim about the network for users' entertainment (Wark, 2013a; Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & ibid.). UGC is additionally commodified by news media to provide visual substantiation for selected narratives (Cardell & Maguire, 2015; Seo & Ebrahim, 2016; Murrell, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018). This process exploits digital labor to amplify the commodification and dissemination of images, which augments the Spectacle's hegemony.

The blatant exploitation of user-generated images is exemplified via the 2013 lawsuit against AFP and Getty Images, which resulted in a 1.2 million dollar award for "unauthorized use of a photographer's images, taken off of Twitter" (Murrell, 2017, p. 303). The Eduardo Martins hoax was amplified its promotion of pilfered and manipulated photographs depicting combat by *Getty Images*, which advertised these images to news organizations (Phillips, 2017). Subsequently, some of these images were purchased and published by mainstream news organizations, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Getty Images*, *Vice*, etc. (ibid.). However, the everyday commodification of information, including user-generated images, is frequently subtler via the transmutation of users into "shareable commodities" (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 182).

The commodification of images via surveillance capitalism provided a digital platform for the fictitious Martins persona to advertise, and subsequently sell, stolen photographs to mainstream and respected news organizations. Modern surveillance capitalism feeds upon the aforementioned commodification of users, which is predicated upon the accumulation of consumer data by dispossession (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018). Debord (1990) foresaw this condition, "the state's security services intend to use all the advantages they find in the realm of the Spectacle" (p. 25). The CIA-funded venture capital firm, In-Q-Tel, holds deep interconnections with Google (Zuboff, 2019), while Amazon has numerous contracts with the CIA for cloud computing services (Gregg, 2017) and is negotiating to host the entirety of the CIA's digitized content (Deptula, 2019). Further, Amazon is lobbying individual local police departments to deploy its facial recognition software for implementation in local municipalities (ACLU, 2018). However, this malignant outgrowth of commodity culture is more insidious than Debord's conception because it "lays its claims to the stuff of human nature for a new commodity invention" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 94). Contemporary commodity culture is founded upon

the commodifying and re-categorizing of network users as "raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales" (ibid., p. 2). The exploitative measures of surveillance capitalism "is the core of the Internet actors' economic and technological strategies" (Smyrnaios, 2018, p. 10). The financial foundation for the majority of the digital economy is dependent upon the exploitation of personal "data for commercial purposes" (ibid., p. 130). Perspective Internet users are presented with a conundrum:

> Either they accept surveillance of their online activity for commercial purposes, or they deprive themselves of the use of popular services thus cutting off a whole section of their online sociability and the associated social and professional costs (ibid., p. 130).

If an individual engages with the Internet, then there is little escape from surveillance technology (ibid.). At present, there are no proposed regulations to curb the commodification of information and existing avoidance detection software often receives the bulk of its financial backing from advertising sectors (ibid.). Yet, it is nearly impossible to subsist within the capitalist paradigm without engaging the Internet. This form of capitalistic production has tremendously amplified concentrations of information, wealth and power (Zuboff, 2019) and lays the bedrock for the unrelenting consolidation of international conglomerate media empires, which is conversely dependent upon the accelerating exploitation of digital labor. These digital actualities perpetually intensify Spectacle 2.0, which is evident via the network mechanisms that eradicate everything else to augment the network (Smyrnaios, 2018). The commodification of the image is a result of these enmeshed and intertwined digital cultures, which concurrently serves to hasten the acceleration and amplification of the Spectacle 2.0. Simultaneously, the network proliferated dissemination of spectacular mediated content has established a potential for "counter-hegemonic social struggles to find their condition of possibility" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 16), which may be emblematic of the Eduardo Martins hoax.

V. Methodological Framework

Qualitative Research

This thesis will examine the implied veracity that underwrites hoaxed photographs depicting combat, which were published by mainstream news outlets and allegedly captured by the fabricated Eduardo Martins persona. This thesis undertakes a qualitative approach in an attempt to reveal the unseen operations that undergird the hoaxing of combat photojournalism and contemporary digital photographic technologies within digital culture. The thesis will employ semi-structured one-on-one interviews with visual image professionals from practical and academic backgrounds as a means to gain insight into the research questions this thesis endeavors to answer. Finally, this thesis will employ a thematic coding approach to determine commonalities and dissimilarities among answers provided by the visual image professionals within the one-on-one interviews.

The Analog Foundations of Combat Photojournalism

This thesis situates the Eduardo Martins hoax as an inevitable outcome of the Spectacle 2.0 as a result of historical developments in news media and commodity culture, specifically as it relates to visual culture and images portraying conflict. While the Eduardo Martins hoax appears to ostensibly present itself as a form of Debordian détournement, a more thorough consideration of this event reveals this reading to be a precipitous conclusion. Closer inspection uncovers the true nature of this event as merely a stunt, rather than an actual intervention, which is problematic for a variety of reasons. This stunt served to perpetuate and reinforce pre-existing ideological notions regarding the particular region that the contrived Eduardo Martins persona allegedly covered as a photojournalist. More specifically, the selected image published by *The Wall Street*

Journal that depicting the Syrian conflict presented Syrian men who risked their lives in the pursuit of freedom and callously positioned them as ISIS terrorists, which is a recurrent clichéd trope that is reproduced by Western powers and operationalized throughout culture by the capitalist hegemony. Moreover, this Eduardo Martins hoax / stunt solidified an increasing cynicism aimed at the news media by spectators, which on the surface appears to be a healthy modality. However, this too may be misleading for several reasons because this particular event was situated within a period of time that proliferated the notion of fake news, which is essentially the mass distribution of false information. The overwhelming quantity and expanse of unimportant, false or misleading news and information that progressively circulates throughout the network serves to engender not just a healthy skepticism, but a more malignant variation of cynicism predicated upon apathy, which is established as a result of a destabilized grounding of spectators. This type of apathy prompted by Eduardo Martins type hoaxes / stunts can result in spectators disengaging from acts of resistance. Furthermore, the pseudo-celebrity of Eduardo Martins perpetuated by numerous laudatory news publications that highlighted this individual(s) prior to the hoax being uncovered, as well as the commodification this hoax, can inspire similar reproductions of this particular type of hoax / stunt, which further emboldens apathetic cynicism and a move toward hard-right ideologies that attempt to rationalize the increasingly chaotic nature of digital culture.

This thesis endeavors to unpack the Eduardo Martins hoax by selecting and investigating common themes within contemporary digital culture, as well as interrelated historical events, which provide necessary context for understanding the Martins hoax. The thesis examines themes involving conflict photojournalism because the Eduardo Martins incident relied upon images depicting conflict to perpetrate the hoax. The selection of these themes, and how they

relate to each other and the hoax, will be explicated in this methodological framework. The themes were arranged chronologically to provide the necessary framework to examine selected events involved in the establishment of photojournalism and digital culture, which are the foundation of this particular hoax.

The thesis frequently returns to the theme of indexicality as it relates to images portraying conflict. Image indexicality is an integral concept to this thesis, which concerns the truth-value of photographs, specifically as it relates to images depicting conflict. The truth-value of images has been undermined throughout the development of combat photojournalism and the interconnecting themes that perpetuated this destabilization will be examined throughout this thesis. The perpetual disassociation of an image's evidentiary nature established the groundwork for the contrived Eduardo Martins persona to pass off manipulated images portraying conflict as authentic, which is what the hoax is founded upon.

The initial chapter unpacks and investigates select historical events at the locus of combat photojournalism's establishment, beginning with the initial attempt to merge the camera with combat. Roger Fenton's dispatch to the Crimean war represents the original endeavor to visually capture conflict through the lens of the camera. The early stage of camera technology was perpetuated by a burgeoning commodity culture that increasingly desired to own photographs and novel modes of technology (e.g., camera). The development of these cultural desires would eventually culminate with the establishment of contemporary visual culture and the vast circulation of images, which were fundamental to perpetuating the Eduardo Martins hoax. Moreover, Fenton's Crimean war expedition, and the subsequent images there were produced, was promoted and sanctioned by Western powers during the early advancement of the modern incarnation of the capitalist hegemony. Thus, Fenton's images that allegedly portray this conflict

are solely constructed upon the British government's desire to present a glorified and misleading narrative of this conflict, which solidified its hegemony by swaying the public's increasingly unfavorable disposition toward this particular conflict. Yet, these particular images did not authentically represent the privations and horrific conditions that existed throughout this conflict, which alludes to the capacity of the camera to reproduce non-referential images and present them as authentic. Thus, the primary foundational event that merged the camera with combat was underwritten by the burgeoning intersection of governmental and economic forces, which advanced the early capitalist hegemony that was founded upon speculative capitalism. These intersecting historical truths represent the roots of visual culture, specifically as it relates to visual depictions of conflict, which provide the underpinning that culminated in the contemporary iteration of combat photojournalism. This historical development established much of the groundwork that the fictitious Eduardo Martins utilized to establish a hoax.

Similarly, the second examined conflict involves the American Civil War, which is directly relates to Fenton's images of the Crimean War as a result of similar themes that undergirded this expedition to visually capture this pivotal conflict. American photographer Matthew Brady is largely credited for capturing the preponderance of photographs during the Civil War, although he employed many individuals who also captured this conflict. Brady and his cohorts were known for their capitalist inclinations and the motivations that prompted their attempt to visually capture this event were primarily governed by the burgeoning commodity culture that is part and parcel of post-industrial capitalism. Moreover, these men were directly connected to American celebrities and politicians, who were photographed at his studios prior to the Civil War, which situated them at the locus of the fledgling American capitalist hegemony. Furthermore, these Civil War images continue to exert influence upon the cultural conception of

this conflict, but the predominance of the most celebrated images are non-indexical, yet are reproduced and represented as authentic. These images served to reinforce the already existing groundwork laid by Roger Fenton and the British government, which began an amplification process that would aid in augmenting the Western-centric capitalist hegemony. Similar themes arise within the investigation of both World Wars involving the increasing capitalist hegemony as represented by Allied powers, which influenced the shaping of the visual depictions of these conflicts. Similar to both Fenton and Brady's images, many of these visual depictions were non-indexical and / or non-referential, but nonetheless continue to exert influence upon the comprehension of these events and were (and continue to be) widely commodified in a myriad of modalities. All of the selected historical examples in the initial chapter expose the groundwork that modern photojournalism is situated upon and reveal a recurrent manipulation of the confidence in the camera to accurately depict real events, while simultaneously commodifying these images to nurture the development of commodity culture. Thus, the examination of these selected seminal events in combat photojournalism yield several examples that are analogous to hoaxing spectators into believing inauthentic depictions of the conflict, while simultaneously encouraged confidence within the purported mimetic capabilities of the camera, as well as the ethics of news media. Furthermore, these in-authentic visual representations have been continually reproduced as accurate portrayals, which served to establish seeds of cynicism aimed directly at the news media and have flourished in contemporary digital culture.

The Digital Turn in Culture and Photojournalism

The second chapter builds upon the aforementioned themes as a result of the continued cooptation and exploitation of the evidentiary nature of images for the expansion of the capitalist hegemony throughout digital culture. The second chapter examines the progressive dislocation of the truth-value of images depicting conflict by exacerbating its diminishing indexical connections to real events via the culture's digital turn. The proliferation of digital technology was fabricated by the Spectacle's fixation with technological progress, which is founded upon the perpetually expanding commodity culture that is underwritten by the capitalist hegemony. Although the examination of the analog establishment of photojournalism reveals numerous instances of non-indexical and in-authentic depictions of combat that were circulated via the news media, the advent of digital technology has exponentially rendered the manipulation and dissemination of images more straightforward and yet the digital undergirding is less understood. Simultaneously, these digital tools were proliferated throughout culture to amateurs and professionals alike, which allows users to produce and circulate content for the benefit of the capitalist hegemony; this enabled the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona to straightforwardly coopt, alter and circulate images. The examination of the digitization of culture, and proliferation of digital technology, reveals the continuation of the analog era's initial disassociation of an image's evidentiary status and its apparent effect upon news production, which is often exploited by the capitalist hegemony for its own benefit.

Furthermore, this chapter examines digital mechanisms fashioned within the capitalist hegemony that commodify human behavior and surveillance of spectators throughout the network, often unbeknownst and rarely understood by users. This modern commodification mechanism, referred to as surveillance capitalism, has established a series of ongoing effects that

have directly influenced newsrooms, specifically image production. Throughout the digital turn, surveillance capitalism has prompted the progressive conglomeration of media corporations, which has decisively positioned the news media under the domain of the capitalist hegemony. Thus, news accounts and the corresponding images that substantiate selected narratives are directly influenced, and often governed, by the whims of the capitalist hegemony. Simultaneously, the capitalist hegemony increasingly appropriates the predominance of the value produced by the network, which has drastically reduced the financial wherewithal in newsrooms across the United States. As a result, newsrooms increasingly operate under the burdens of financial constrains and constricting time limitations. Thus, image authentication is often neglected for the sake of hasty production and dissemination of news content, which has expanded the digital image's dislocation as an evidentiary object.

Commodifying Human Behavior and Spectacle 2.0

Chapter three examines the proliferation of global digital culture, predicated upon networked communications, which established Spectacle 2.0. The concept of Spectacle 2.0 is relevant to this thesis because it embodies the contemporary iteration of commodity culture and the capitalist hegemony's means of value creation, which directly relates to news production and contemporary combat photojournalism as this chapter demonstrates. Spectacle 2.0 entices users to produce and circulate user-generated content (UGC), specifically images, while the capitalist hegemony exploits this labor and extracts the predominance of the value produced by digital technology. The exploitation of labor has created a commodification mechanism that has fabricated a network oligopoly, which was alluded to in chapter two while referencing the ongoing conglomeration of media corporations. The concentration of corporate wealth has

concurrently diminished the budgets allocated for news production, which has impelled newsrooms to increasingly rely upon the Internet to provide visual depictions of combat to substantiate selected news narratives, as opposed to the previous practice of employing a photojournalist to travel to the area of conflict to capture images. Thus, contemporary news production is increasingly reliant on non-journalists and amateurs to provide visual testimony for selected news narratives, even as the process of authentication is time consuming, expensive and imperfect, which problematizes this aspect of contemporary news production as it wields strong potential to perpetuate and augment the ongoing process of destabilizing the image's evidentiary status.

Thus, the capitalist hegemony's domain over news production has debilitated news media's capacity to authenticate images, while digital technology has amplified the straightforward capacity to manipulate images, which Spectacle 2.0 can commodify to the benefit of the capitalist hegemony irrespective of the image's authenticity. The examination of digital culture in chapters two and three, specifically as it relates to newsroom image production involving conflict, reveals an ongoing process of destabilizing the evidentiary status of images depicting conflict, which originated during the earliest incarnation of conflict photojournalism; select pertinent examples were examined in chapter one. The capitalist hegemony has been continually situated at the locus of this ongoing process, which is underwritten by the expansion of a commodity culture that subsequently established Spectacle 2.0. Moreover, the aforementioned novel newsgathering methods involving image production established a digital fissure, which the fabricated Eduardo Martins character exploited to circulate stolen images depicting combat. Thus, the first three chapters provide the foundational context for

understanding the intersecting contemporary truths in digital culture that established a foundation for the contrived Eduardo Martins to perpetuate a hoax.

The Eduardo Martins Hoax

The final chapter builds upon the comprehensions gleaned from the aforementioned examination of commodity culture, as it relates to image production, established in the first three chapters. This foundational context establishes the capability to explicitly examine the Eduardo Martins hoax and the implications underwriting this hoax as it relates to Spectacle 2.0. This thesis specifically examines *The Wall Street Journal*, which was selected because its owner and the content this newspaper produces both exemplify the individuals and institutions at the locus of the capitalist hegemony. These comprehensions are operationalized to examine the implications of the Eduardo Martins hoax as it relates to Spectacle 2.0.

One-on-One Interviews

This thesis also incorporates one-on-one interviews with a purposive sample of visual media experts who impart a practical and theoretical comprehension concerning visual communication and the evidentiary nature that purportedly underpins photographs. For more information please see Appendix 1.

1. Chapter One

1.1 The Roots of Destabilized Indexicality Originate in Crimea

The capacity of a photograph to influence a viewer's comprehension of the event it allegedly depicts has been revealed by recent research. This is evident in the capability of images to implant contrived false memories, "photographs are indeed powerful sources of influence on memory" (Garry & Gerrie, 2005, p. 321). Concerning newsworthy events, a recent study discovered that manipulated photographs can alter memories of public events that were widely covered by news media, such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest in China. This influence was stratified among all demographics, which upheld a hypothesis that "doctored photographs of past public events can influence memory, attitudes and behavioral intentions" (Sacchi, Agnoli & Loftus, 2007, p. 1005). Thus, there is clearly a relationship between the viewer and an image that indicates, "the photograph's relationship to the real persists" (Curran, 2019, p. 280). Photographic historian Elizabeth Edwards (1999) argues that within the association that images maintain with their referent, the truth-claim of the photograph will impose itself upon the memory of the viewer.

> In their relationship with their referent, their reality effect and their irreducible pastness, photographs impose themselves on memory. They become surrogate memory and their silences structure forgetting (Edwards, 1999, p. 22).

This chapter will examine the earliest foundational roots of combat photojournalism and the relationship to indexicality. The research will examine the initial groundwork of this photography genre and its tenuous relationship to indexicality, which is a recurrent theme throughout its establishment. Moreover, as mentioned in the Introduction, the selected examples were drawn from conflicts that exemplify the relationship between the development of capitalism and technologies of visual reproduction. The perpetual expansion of hegemonic forces

undergirded by capitalism have influenced American news production since its earliest incarnations, and the thesis will expose these forces continue to exert tremendous influence on contemporary news production.

The perception of photography's indexical capacity to accurately portray real events was embedded in this mode of visual communication during its initial propagation; this is especially relevant regarding combat photography. The examination of the camera's history on the battlefield reveals its usage to perpetuate the impression of conveying authenticity and mimetically capturing real events, even as it exposes numerous instances of covert alteration (both prior to capture and in post-production), which depletes indexicality. Yet, the historical comprehension of image manipulation has not mitigated a diffuse conception of combat photography's indexical capacity. Several celebrated images have achieved iconic status while persisting as indexical identifiers, which is evident in the images' capacity to influence historical comprehension of these conflicts. This is identifiable by their continued presence in history textbooks and throughout popular culture, which simultaneously reinforces the historical comprehensions that are continuously extracted from combat images and the conception that conflict photography indexically portrays historic real events. The enduring influence of these images directly alludes to the perception that photographs possess indexical capabilities to capture authentic realities of combat. The historical formation of combat photography established a mode of visual communication the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona was able to manipulate to perpetuate a hoax.

The foundations of photojournalism are deeply intertwined with combat photography (Sontag, 2013; Kennedy & Patrick, 2014). Although photojournalism was not established as a newsgathering medium until the 1900s, the relationship between photography and conflict

developed prior to the turn of the century. At the behest of the British government, photographer Roger Fenton was sent to Crimea in 1855. This historical event was the initial attempt to leverage the technological capabilities of the camera to capture images from the battlefield. Fenton's photographic expedition captured images in a "journalistic 'reportage' style," which would be initially advanced in North America and later "adopted in Europe in the 1880s" (Gervais, 2010, p. 372). Thus, Fenton is widely perceived as the initial practitioner of photoreportage, which produced images that were widely perceived as indexical representations of combat (ibid.). The necessity for Fenton's ostensible photographic evidence was instigated by William Russell, a London *Times* reporter, publishing influential news accounts that were highly critical of Britain's progress in the conflict (Price & Wells, 2011). Consequently, Prince Albert contracted the publisher *Thomas Agnew & Sons* to dispatch Fenton to capture a more positive visual impression of the war in Crimea, which had become increasingly unpopular as a result of Russell's written accounts. Thus, the expedition to Crimea was "defined from the outset as a commercial enterprise" (Houston, 2001, p. 363), which harkens to Debord's conclusion that the Spectacle is underwritten by capitalism, which superimposes itself upon existence via a set of images. Russell's narrative news accounts of the Crimean war described real events, which were undermined by the visual depictions captured by Fenton. According to Sontag (2013), Fenton was tasked with "counteract[ing] the alarming printed accounts of the unanticipated risks and privations endured by the British solders dispatched there the previous year" (p. 47). Thus, Fenton's motivations were dictated by his business arrangement, which were intended to destabilize Russell's rhetorical criticisms (Houston, 2001).

The British government was attempting to exploit the widely presumed indexical quality of photographs to mollify the public's negative disposition toward this conflict. This significant

historical event demonstrates the exploitation of indexical authority of photographs vis-à-vis written text to depict authentic combat realities, which continues to remain evident as "even today most people's understanding of the nature of wars comes from photographic images rather than literary accounts" (Price & Wells, 2011, p. 86). However, examination of this initial example of combat photography reveals the images captured by Fenton depict non-indexical actualities. The limitations imposed by the British government, as well as the constraints of early camera technology, hindered any capturing of authentic depictions of combat. The British government restricted Fenton from photographing any dead, wounded or ill soldiers (Sontag, 2013). Moreover, technological restraints prevented Fenton from depicting authentic depictions of the horrors of combat (Lister, 2007). During this era, photography was predominantly confined to static locations, which predominantly produced portraitures. Working in the field obligated Fenton to construct a mobile darkroom on a vintner's cart, which expedited a process that still took over an hour to render just two images (ibid.). The constraint imposed by the camera's exposure time further compounded technical limitations. The shutter had to remain open for a full ten to fifteen seconds to take a photograph, which prevented Fenton from capturing any motion (Zeller, 2009 & Sontag, 2013). This obligated individuals within the frame to remain motionless throughout the process of capturing an image.

Both the government and technological constraints prevented Fenton from visually capturing authentic realities of combat, "He was in no position to dart amongst the charge of the light brigade, to photograph in the heat of battle" (Lister, 2007, p. 257). Instead, Fenton captured images far from the front lines (away from actual combat), which visually cast the war as a "dignified all-male group outing," (Sontag, 2013, p. 49). Fenton's images depicting the Crimean conflict "did little to reveal the hardships or horrors of war" (Price & Wells, 2011, p. 87). The

photographs were primarily focused on portraying upper class officers, who were not present on the frontlines (Keller, 2010). These images were primarily intended to cultivate a sense of heroism, which was required by his publisher and by extension, the British government (ibid.). Nonetheless, these images purportedly depict authentic actualities of the conflict in Crimea. For example, Fenton captured, "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," on April 23, 1855, which has become one of the most well known photographs depicting combat (Getty Museum, 1999). The title of the photograph augmented the allegedly indexical qualities of the image, which takes its name from the Twenty-third Psalm of the Bible (ibid.). This specific area of conflict was given this designation by British soldiers who were "frequently raked by Russian cannon fire to prevent British troops from approaching a vulnerable Russian emplacement" (Baldwin, 1999, p. 20). Despite the title's actual derivation, the usage of a Biblical verse as the title would have connotatively established a religious undergirding that amplified the alleged indexicality of the image. During this era, Christianity maintained a dominant position within Western Culture, which prevented serious questioning of this faith. Thus, the invocation of religion would have likely engendered similar qualities. The image represents a desolate landscape that is barren of all human form. Instead, there is a well-worn path strewn with a plethora of cannonballs that are easily misperceived as rocks upon a viewer's initial glance.

Fenton's metonymic visual communication attempts to relay the horrors of conflict by substituting the portrayal of broken bodies, as a result of the British government's injunctions, with scores of spent munitions. The celebrated photograph achieved iconic status while indexically representing the horrors of war and death (Morris, 2011). However, a second image taken shortly after the original photograph was captured by Fenton, which depicts an identical landscape except the myriad of cannonballs that were formerly on the well-worn path are instead

situated in the ditch next to the pathway (Morris, 2011). Relying on deduction, the mise-en-scène in one (or possibly both) of these images must have been altered as evidenced by the shifting of cannonballs from their original location. Scholars disagree which image was wrought, as Sontag (2013) and Keller (2010) both pursue the belief that Fenton staged the more famous photograph "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," while Morris (2011) dedicated an entire book to debunking this theory. This debate is still ongoing. Yet, despite the opaque historical comprehension that precipitated the capture of either image, Fenton's photographs (along with other visual depictions captured in Crimea) were instrumental in superseding the negative written accounts and persuading the British public to more favorably view this war. This historical comprehension speaks directly to the perceived power of the indexical capabilities of photographs to represent combat. In actuality, the horrific circumstances of this war resulted in the deaths of over 600,000 individuals, which included 22,182 British soldiers (Clodfelter, 2017). The inhumane and ghastly battlefield conditions resulted in multitudes of casualties from privations and disease, in addition to combat (ibid.). Fenton never visually depicted these real events in any of his photographs. This is not unlike the Eduardo Martins hoax, which also relied on commodifying non-indexical visual depictions of combat to produce value.

The allegedly indexical and authentic images Fenton did capture were disseminated widely and "gave rise to several derivative compositions in press and salon painting" (Keller, 2010). Thus, these non-indexical images were commodified and generated value not only for Fenton and his associates, but others with the capitalistic inclination to exploit these images. These rendered depictions served to further solidify a comprehension of indexicality, which would not have been artistically imitated were Fenton's photographs perceived as non-indexical or inauthentic. The exploitation of a widely perceived indexical capacity of the camera (along

with artistic derivations of these images) served to successfully sway public sentiment, which suggests public comprehension was manipulated respective to the indexical capabilities of Fenton's photographs. The ontological claim of photography's indexical capability has been repeatedly destabilized subsequent to this initial example of the camera on the battlefield. Yet, it is the purportedly indexical capacity of photographs to mimetically represent combat that the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona exploited to hoax mainstream news publications, as well as stock image banks, into publishing pilfered photographs depicting combat. Keller (2010) states, "after shaky beginnings, photo reportage established itself not just as an eminently *believable* medium but as a *persuasive*, *prescriptive*, and *transformative* one as well" (p. 108). The continued formation of combat photojournalism would advance its formative organization as an indexical mode of communication throughout the American Civil War.

1.2 The American Civil War and the Illusion of Indexical Visual History

The privatization of the American press was multiple decades away, yet the business-oriented decisions undertaken by Matthew Brady reveal that capitalistic mechanisms were already churning in the United States. This is further evident in Brady being better known for his entrepreneurial ability, than for his photography skills, prior to the outbreak of the Civil War (Calo, 2018). He owned fashionable portraiture studios in New York City and Washington D.C., which photographed numerous Presidents, celebrities and other luminaries of the era (ibid.). The capitalist mindset of Brady is exemplified in his first application, for a photograph of the Buchanan administration, which "was only the fifteenth photograph" ever registered in the United States Patent Office (Zeller, 2005, p. 103). In 1858, Brady recognized Alexander Gardner's aptitude for business, which prompted Brady to position Gardner as the operator and manager of the Washington D.C. studio (Peterson, 2010). Prior to immigrating to the United States, Gardner honed his abilities as a journalist and business entrepreneur while owning and editing the *Glasgow Sentinel* in his native Scotland (ibid.). These duties would have put Gardner in contact with Fenton's Crimean photographs. Peterson (2010) states, Gardner "surely remembered vividly the attention the war drew and the appeal of pictures in the press, such as the *Illustrated London News*, *Athenaeum*, and the *Art-Journal*, and in photographs from the field that Roger Fenton displayed regionally" (p. 357). Thus it can be surmised that Fenton's images influenced Gardner in some capacity, although to what extent is indeterminable. Nonetheless, the capitalist predisposition of these two men would coalesce and provide the "foundational stones for the development of photojournalism" (Price & Wells, 2011, p. 87). The subsequent actions of Brady and Gardner would concurrently impel the inevitable commodification of images, even non-indexical images, while continuing to entrench the presumably indexical capabilities of

photographs, especially those portraying conflict. This continued coalescing of these very contemporary visual culture circumstances (e.g., commodification of images, even non-indexical) would later serve to amplify the Eduardo Martins hoax.

The advent of war in America was a financial impetus for both men, as they believed visually capturing the conflict was a potentially lucrative business opportunity (Peterson, 2010). This spurred the duo to train and dispatch a team of photographers that captured images throughout the conflict (Rosenheim, 2013). However, initial attempts at battlefield photography resulted in an embarrassing failure at the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861 (ibid.). Although many photographs were taken, not a single image survived the conflict (ibid.). This setback did not dissuade the business-minded Brady as he secured a glowing review of the non-existent images in *Humphrey's Journal*, which was a photography trade publication (ibid.). According to Rosenheim (2013), the text was likely written by Brady or someone from his staff, "the vainglorious text is pure business promotion and invention" (p. 63). Although journalistic ethics had not yet been established, the willingness to brazenly mislead readers speaks to Brady's overriding capitalistic disposition and desire to commodify photographs. The article ostensibly substantiated the mimetic capabilities of the camera to more accurately capture events vis-à-vis written accounts in journalistic publications (ibid.). Despite the initial setback, Brady was still compelled by the perception of financial windfall and thus continued to lean on friends and investors, exploit political connections, and leverage his life savings (ibid.). The financial leveraging and initial failure at Bull Run underscored a need to expediently capture photographs of combat. This provides insight regarding some of the iconic images these men captured, which relied on a myriad of manipulative techniques to cultivate a conception of indexicality (Rowe, 1983).

Through photo-forensics, Frassanito (1975) determined that photographs taken by Brady, et al. utilized a myriad of post-production methods to alter images, which includes: purposefully providing vague captions to deceive, moving dead bodies and staging the corpses with props, capturing images months after the battle concluded (yet maintaining the illusion of being captured during battle), artificially coloring images in post-production, and mislabeled locations of photographs. Numerous inconsistencies have been identified in the famous set of photographs taken at Gettysburg, many of these images are iconic, which calls into question the full canon of images captured by this group:

> The evidence of outright fakery, creative scene editing, and misleading titling in photographs of Gettysburg raises the question of whether photographic records of other Civil War campaigns contain similar dubious material (Rowe, 1983, pp. 737-738).

There are numerous examples of each technique of manipulation in the Gettysburg images. The corpse of a young Confederate solider depicted in the photo *Incidents of War: A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep* provides an example of staging the mise-en-scène. Gardner and Timothy O'Sullivan (a photographer trained and employed by Brady) moved the corpse approximately 40 yards and positioned it with a rifle to orchestrate the distinctively iconic photograph *Dead Confederate soldier in Devil's Den* (Frassanito, 1975). Gardner also relied on post-production compositing in a particular photograph "that purportedly picture Confederate and Union soldiers, but in fact picture one body in two poses" (Wheeler, 2002, p. 17). Gardner's portrayal of the aftermath of the Gettysburg battlefield, *The Harvest of Death*, is believed to be a composite of three different photographs (ibid.). Another photographer associated with Brady's studio—George N. Barnard—misled viewers by implying he captured his images directly after battle. According to Rowe (1983), a predominance of Barnard's photographs "contain internal evidence that suggests that they are probably postwar" (p. 753). However, Rowe (1983) believes

that Barnard was mostly guilty of "enhancing his photograph's esthetic appeal […] to increase the commercial value of his work" (ibid.). This contextualized understanding of the ethics governing Barnard's, and by extension Brady et al., non-indexical photographs directly allude to the coalescing of capitalistic and aesthetic inclinations at the foundation of American combat photojournalism. These influences are still evident and directly influence contemporary combat photojournalism, which is exemplified by the lack of authentication done by the news media throughout the Eduardo Martins hoax (until it was exposed by the *BBC Brasil*). The stolen and modestly manipulated images that perpetuated the hoax were initially commodified by the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona, via exploiting the labor of the Instagram account's followers, and subsequently commodified by the capitalist mechanisms as the misattributed photographs were published by stock photo banks and mainstream news publications. Moreover, examination of both Brady et al. and the faux Eduardo Martins persona reveal capitalist inclinations guided their exploitation of combat photography's allegedly indexical capabilities.

Brady et al. augmented the conception of visual indexicality via aesthetic compositions (Griffin, 1999). The captured photographs often relied upon "regularized compositional forms," which included a "pastoral aesthetic," which was a prevalent aesthetic during this era (ibid., p. 135). The usage of a popular aesthetic trope would have aided the integration of these photographs into the popular canon of contemporary images during this era, which abetted their escaping scrutiny regarding the alleged relationship to real events. This is exemplified by the photographs captured at Gettysburg, which were composed by "aestheticizing aspects" that lent compelling qualities and augmented a perception of indexicality (Rosenheim, 2013, p. 123). These images were purposefully "nuanced, complex and beautiful" compositions, which served to reinforce the veneer of factual authenticity (ibid., p. 123). The visual aesthetic and ostensibly

indexical qualities of Civil War photographs were also augmented by paint. Some of the photographs were manipulated in post-production by hand coloring "in an effort to make them look more shocking and realistic" (Kostine, n.d., p. 2). The photograph *Tending wounded Union soldiers at Savage's Station, Virginia, during the Peninsular Campaign*, which was captured by James Gibson (who was employed by Brady), is an exemplar of this post-production alteration technique (ibid.).

Although many of the photographs relied on manipulation to engender an indexical relationship to actuality, viewers at the time were wholly unaware and instead "were struck by the photographs' mimetic realism, their ability to reveal visual truths" (Richards, 2008, p. 152). The exploitation of the allegedly indexical capabilities of photographs during the Civil War era would reconfigure the collective conceptualization of history and combat in the American consciousness (Hebel, 2008). This would also establish a confidence in the mimetic capacity of cameras to capture indexical images depicting combat. Previously, literature and painting were the primary modalities that commemorated combat, but "Brady and his teams replaced to a large extent the previously classic formats and modes of memory of war" (ibid., p. 52). In reconfiguring the cultural memory of the Civil War, Brady et al.'s reliance on exploiting the perception of indexicality served to embed the comprehension of ostensible mimetic capabilities at the foundation of American combat photojournalism. The widespread acceptance that photographs of the Civil War possess an indexical relationship to battlefield actualities is apparent in historical perceptions and popular culture's portrayals of this war. The aforementioned illustrates these particular images continue to influence the collective consciousness and comprehension of the Civil War, which reinforces a tautology that serves to solidify the aforementioned confidence in the indexical capacity of Civil War photography

(ibid.). This is explicated by Rowe's (1983) identification of manipulated images depicting the Civil War that were utilized in High School textbooks to teach students about this era of American history. Moreover, another set of photographs formed "the basis for many of the sets of the motion picture 'Gone With the Wind,' which did so much to form present popular views of the War Between the States," (ibid., p. 738). The photographs captured by Brady, et al. have become indexical visual signifiers of America's deadliest war, which depict "the reality of that war—its irreducible and irrefutable history" (Klingsporn, 2000, p. 4). The forensic analysis of these images only began in the mid-1970s and continues into contemporary times, yet their influence remains steadfast.

> Their Civil War photographs ended up in public repositories such as the New York Public Library, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress, and subsequently have found their way into histories of the Civil War, photojournalism, and the United States (Harris, 2013, p. 93).

The aforementioned directly implicates the perception (within America) that photographs, particularly of the Civil War, can indexically depict combat and history. Even as the industry of photojournalism was founded in earnest over the subsequent decades, along with ostensibly ethical guidelines, it did not inhibit the continuation of deceitfully conveying insincere realities and exploitation the purported indexical capacity of photographs.

1.3 The Entrenching of Photojournalism in World War

The advent of two World Wars in the first half of the 20th century, in conjunction with the advancement and proliferation of photography and printing technology, would solidify the foundation of combat photojournalism as a visual modality to indexically convey combat. Concurrently, the increasing popularity of photo-centric magazines would instigate a diffusion of images, which has been perpetually propagating throughout contemporary digital culture. Both World Wars strengthened the allegedly indexical qualities of combat photojournalism, aestheticization of combat photography and commodification of images.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 was the first conflict that civilians could witness, via printed photographs, "more or less as it happened" (Carmichael, 1989b, p. 4). The technological improvements in photography and printing technology ensured images emanating from the battlefield were disseminated more expediently compared to previous conflicts (ibid.). Governments engaged in the initial World War had a vested interest in augmenting the perception of indexicality in photographs to ensure the effectiveness of visual propaganda. This included restrictions on photojournalists covering the war to establish favorable visual narratives, which often excluded capturing authentic real events from the trenches and frontlines (ibid.) Moreover, governments attempted to ban soldiers from carrying personal cameras (ibid.). The prohibitions on photography resulted in banal and compromised visual depictions. Subsequently, photojournalism during the initial World War was predominantly anodyne and, "rarely challenged official interpretations of the war" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 321). Yet, during this era of technological expansion and international conflict, images tended "to be accepted rather uncritically" (Carmichael, 1989a, p. 1). Governments and military personal exploited the

uncritical acceptance of visual depictions to circulate wartime propaganda, which concomitantly sustained an entrenching of a perception that photographs maintain indexical qualities. The amplification of confidence in the mimetic qualities of cameras to capture real events are directly correlated to a wartime effort that engendered a culture that unquestioningly accepted, and rarely challenged, official visual narratives of the conflict (Chouliaraki, 2013). Thus, the foundation for the widespread conception of image indexicality was reinforced throughout this conflict.

There are numerous examples from both World Wars that demonstrate the exploitation of combat photojournalism's perceived indexicality. The manipulations were reliant on similar methods that were utilized throughout the American Civil War. For example, in 1917, the Chief of British Army Intelligence at British Expeditionary Force's headquarters Brigadier General John V. Charteris, manufactured a completely fictitious story that the German military was boiling down the bodies of deceased soldiers to be reused as livestock feed, among other purposes (Neander & Marlin, 2010). Charteris relied on photographs to support the contrived narrative, which were misappropriated and "simply transposed the caption […] of the dead soldiers" (ibid., p. 70). The efforts of the Canadian War Records Office [CWRO]—specifically Sir Max Aitken—reveal similar methods of deceiving the public via visual communication (Cook, 2003). One of the primary methods employed by Aitken and the CWRO was to stage photographs (ibid.). The images often evolved a denotative reading that the enemy was just over the horizon, while the advancing Canadian soldiers were in the midst of a potentially fatal firefight. These images were presented as indexical representations of combat from the frontlines. The Canadian government's official endorsement of these images (along with other contrived images), in combination with the photographer's "quasi-combat experience,

legitimized the photographs and the 'reality' they captured" (Cook, 2003, p. 284). However, the visual depictions did not ally with actuality:

> These "official" images of war carried with them an implicit truth as representations of events, specific to time and to place […] Or so it seemed. But the images themselves were shaped, composed and constructed to tell a particular story (ibid., p. 284).

Aitken's corruption of the purported indexical qualities of combat photography is evident. Yet these images were disseminated throughout the West and influenced the collective perception and historical comprehension of this conflict, which concurrently amplified the confidence in the camera's mimetic qualities. Similar examples are evident throughout the war, which imbued the public to uncritically view images as indexical representations of real events.

During the initial World War a contrary example to this practice is identifiable, but this example alludes to the prevailing misappropriation of photographs that endured throughout the conflict and their widespread influence. Australian war correspondent C. E. W. Bean adamantly opposed utilizing photographs to misrepresent real events in a non-indexical capacity, which instigated an on-going argument with military photographer Capitan Frank Hurley who wanted to "combine several different negatives into a single battle tableau" (Jolly, 1999, p. 141). Bean professed the need for photographic verisimilitude by arguing that composite photographs were "dangerous fakes because they drained the indexical charge from the relic" (ibid., p. 147). However, the military Captain (a well-known cinematographer and showman prior to the outbreak of hostilities) perceived images as a "manipulable, spectacular showcase," which should be altered for the needs of aesthetic composition and compelling communication (ibid, p. 141). Hurley consequently published a multitude of non-indexical images throughout the conflict that were altered in post-production or relied on a contrived mise-en-scène (ibid.). Meanwhile, Bean continued to capture indexical images with an ethical aim of credibility. Subsequently,

Hurley's images were widely celebrated in exhibitions, newspapers and purchased by Australia's National Art Gallery (ibid.). Simultaneously, Bean's images were not as widely circulated because newspapers preferred to "publish the more lurid and fanciful accounts […] over his own official dispatches, which ended up being described as "colourless"" (ibid., p. 141). With the advantage of historical hindsight, it is evident that contrived, non-indexical and aestheticized images such as Hurley's, as opposed to those that maintained realism, solidified the allegedly "indexical photograph […as Western] culture's key historical and mnemonic artifact" (ibid., p. 148).

Similar examples occurred throughout the Second World War, which includes one of the most iconic war photographs ever captured (Hariman & Lucaites, 2002). Combat photojournalist Joe Rosenthal's *Old Glory Goes Up on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima*, depicts six American soldiers raising the American flag while seemingly in the midst of combat. This photograph has possessed the stigma of fabrication since its initial publication (Goldberg, 1991; Carlson, 2009). While this particular image is iconic in the consciousness of Americans, and indexically linked to the Battle of Iwo Jima, it was actually the second flag that was photographed. Moreover, although the depiction is often synonymized with combat, in actuality it was raised while there was a hiatus in conflict (Edwards & Winkler, 1997). Thus, while the image is not entirely contrived, it does connote a sense of ongoing conflict, which has been historically reinforced in a myriad of reproductions (Edwards & Winkler, 1997; Hariman & Lucaites, 2002; Lamothe, 2015). The many replications were inspired by the unquestionable resonance the image inspired immediately after its initial publication:

> Newspapers were inundated with requests for reprints as families began to hang it on their living room and dining room walls. The Times-Union of Rochester, New York,

> compared it with Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper (Hariman & Lucaites, 2002, p. 363).

The significance of the photograph is evident in the plethora of replications, which Rosenthal himself indicated had been reproduced:

> '…in oils, watercolors, pastels, chalk and match sticks. A float based on it won a prize in a Rose Bowl parades, and the flag-raising has been re-enacted by children, by gymnasts…and as part of the Orange Bowl pageant in Miami. It has been sculptured in ice and in hamburger' (It was also reenacted in the 1949 film *Sands of Iwo Jima*) (Goldberg, 1991, p. 143).

Additionally, the government exploited this image in a national campaign to sell war bonds that succeeded in raising 26 billion USD, which speaks to the commodification and exploitation of the image to produce value (Pulitzer, n.d.). Over three million posters "bearing an artist's rendition" of the image were produced for the bond drive (Hariman & Lucaites, 2002, p. 364). The image was re-commodified and exploited when it appeared on a 3-cent United States Postal Service stamp and later inspired the bronze statue at the Arlington National Cemetery just outside of Washington, D.C. (Winston, 2004).

Despite ambiguous indexicality, the reverberant influence of this image endures while it continues to shape the public's comprehension of this event. The iconicity of this photograph, and its rhetorical significance, is evident in the multitude of editorial cartoons that continually replicate this image as a vehicle for "visual ideographs" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p. 305). The *New York Times* bestselling book authored by James Bradley and Ron Powers, which was published in 2000, exemplifies the ongoing contemporary diffusion of this iconic image (McAdams, 2010). The bestselling book was subsequently adapted into the 2006 Hollywood blockbuster with the same title, *Flags of our Fathers* (Braudy, 2007). The multitude of reproductions of this singular image illustrates its continued exploitation and commodification; this is most clearly evident in the image's adaptation for advertising purposes (Goldberg, 1991).

Even with its persistent resonance, there are still unsettled questions regarding the image. This is apparent in who purportedly is depicted raising the flag, which involved five Marines and one Navy corpsman in some accounts (Hariman & Lucaites, 2002; Lamothe, 2015) while in other versions it was six Marines (Pulitzer, n.d.) or five Marines (Kim & Smith, 2005).

The arrival of two World Wars during the first half of the 20th century established the profession of combat photojournalism, while simultaneously embedding a widespread belief in the allegedly indexicality of images depicting conflict. The predominant majority of images emanating from these conflicts were often manipulated to perpetuate a conception of indexicality and subsequently shaped "the war imaginary of the West" (Chouliaraki 2013, p. 320). This process amplified the broad confidence in the mimetic qualities of cameras, while simultaneously commodifying combat photography, even as image fabrication remains ''a recurrent characteristic of war photography'' (Griffin, 1999, p. 135). The aforementioned comprehension indicates a collective perception that combat photography maintains indexical qualities.

The onset of the digital era and massive proliferation of information has not alleviated the aforementioned phenomenon. To the contrary, while the indexical truth bestowed upon photographs may have been a myth since the camera's analog foundations, the onset of digital culture has cultivated a tautology that cyclically increases the illusion of indexicality via the manifold dispersion of photographs, while conversely augmenting the effortless capacity to manipulate photographs.

2. Chapter Two

2.1 Photojournalism's Digital Turn

Contemporary newsgathering practices, especially combat photojournalism, have rapidly become dependent upon digital technology. The integration of digital technology into newsrooms represents a momentous shift in news production, which is evident in the ease and expediency of digitized news production and circulation. However, for all of the benefits involving the seemingly efficient streamlining of the news industry, there are a myriad of problematics engendered by the digital turn. The Eduardo Martins hoax was generated by, and amplified at, the intersection of these digital conditions. Specifically, the digitization of images depicting combat established the capacity to straightforwardly alter digital photographs while avoiding detection.

The advent of digital technology since the 1990s has introduced a host of innovative tools that allow effortless and less obtuse variants of photographic manipulation, which continues to destabilize image indexicality. The issues that threaten contemporary photojournalism are directly correlated to the lack of effective integration of digital technology into news production for authentication purposes, which could potentially augment the news media's ability to convey reliable information (Ritchin, 2013). Instead, the harnessing of digital technologies that would bolster news production authentication techniques has been "for the most part, ignored" (ibid., p. 12). Concurrently, the unquestioning reliance of digital technology by photojournalists in the field has burgeoned exponentially. Contemporary photojournalists predominantly rely upon digital technology, specifically the digital camera, for the needs of image production. The predominantly exclusive reliance on digital cameras has precipitated the algorithmic turn in professional photography, which has affected combat photojournalism in a multitude of ways.

Although the interviewed visual industry professionals still believe ethical practices are still widely adopted by photojournalists [100 percent of the sample], there is consternation regarding the distress inflicted upon the industry as a result of digital technology [100 percent of the sample]. However, to comprehend the developments of digitized combat photojournalism, it is necessary to examine these digital foundations.

The migration away from analog photographic processing, which involved chemical emulsion processes to develop film stock, has fundamentally altered the underpinning and modern manifestation of a photograph. The rapid embrace of digital technology has overtaken analog processing, which dissimulated the traditional photograph by transmuting its undergirding into digital information (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013). This conversion consequently renders a digital photograph as "malleable and non-indexical" as well as "computational and programmable" (ibid., p. 29). Thus, the unseen and rarely understood binary code produces modern photographs, via algorithmic processes, occurs internally within the digital camera. The binary code is inaccessible by design as a result of corporate proprietary technology, which governs the process of image capture (Rubinstein, 2018). Thus, if a photograph is captured by digital technology, "it opens up the possibility of indeterminacy, variation and multiplication that can pull the image away from an indexical connection"; this can be understood by considering that the modern photograph captured by a DSLR has not undergone the process of capturing light, but in actually is entirely formulated and sanctioned by binary code (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013). Digital images can also be manipulated or contrived without a camera and absent the typical constituents typically associated with photography (e.g., camera lenses, light, etc.), which "means that all the old rhetoric about photography being the trace of the real, or having an indexical connection to events in the past does not apply to the digital born image" (Rubinstein,

2018, p. 15). Consequently, the contemporary digital image—predominantly viewed via computer, tablet or smartphone screen—is simply a mimetic reproduction of an analog photograph that is governed by computation coding. While this does not necessarily eliminate referentiality, it does provide a novel and straightforward capacity for anyone with a desire to digitally manipulate or wholly contrive images that depict combat.

Although newsroom photo editors tolerate certain aspects of digital manipulation, for example balancing and toning, it is difficult to ascertain the variance that more severe digital manipulation occurs; this would include alteration that destabilizes indexicality or worse. The inability to determine how often the more severe variants of digital manipulation occurs is directly correlated to the digitization of images, which provides the capacity to digital manipulate images that is difficult to detect with perfect accuracy. Thus, the possibility of publishing digitally manipulated images without being detected is a distinct possibly, which the Eduardo Martins hoax exposed. The ability to alter algorithmically governed images is increasingly uncomplicated, yet the ability to detect manipulated images is becoming progressively difficult. Yet, studies have demonstrated that manipulated images possess the capacity to influence comprehension of historical events (Sacchi, Agnoli & Loftus, 2007) and personal memories (Wade, Garry, Read & Lindsay, 2002; Loftus, 2003).

Digital manipulation is already identifiable within contemporary photojournalism. According to an article by Mark Glaser (2003) at USC Annenberg's *Online Journalism Review*, digital manipulation has become ubiquitous throughout news media, "the reality is that photo manipulation happens". A recent survey acknowledged a multitude of troublesome responses regarding the transgression of ethical boundaries by professional journalists via digital image manipulation. The referenced responses below were isolated to only include replies from news-

centric photojournalists. The overwhelming majority—80 percent—believes manipulation of photographs is a "very serious problem" in news production (Hadland, Campbell & Lambert, 2015, p. 39). Only 36 percent of news photographers never stage a photograph, which implies most news photojournalists engage in this practice on occasion (ibid.). Although the staging of photographs contravenes journalism ethics, this response rate indicates a fairly severe disconnect between established ethical codes and what transpires in the field. Aside from staging, more than 75 percent indicated they never digitally manipulate or alter a photograph (ibid.). Conversely, approximately 22 percent "sometimes" engage in digital manipulation, while 1.5 percent partakes in this habit "about half the time". Moreover, 1.9 percent "mostly" digitally alters their images and 0.9 percent "always" digitally manipulates their photographs (ibid.). Consequently, there is little ambiguity that digital manipulation in news-based photojournalism is a serious problem (ibid.). The prior responses implicate that "the credibility of professional photography cannot be assumed" in the age of digital information (ibid., p. 66). The founder of the *Bronx Documentary Center* and photojournalist Michael Kamber—who curated the photography exhibit in 2015, *Altered Images: 150 Years of Posed and Manipulated Documentary Photography*—echoed similar beliefs regarding digital manipulation in the field of photojournalism:

> Freelancers who came up in the digital age are used to […] altering things. Then you have some professionals who feel that as standards are slipping [so] they can fake and lie and cheat (Teicher, 2015).

Kamber's quote references those photojournalists who grew up in the digital age potentially embodying an increased predilection to rely on digital technology (rather than ethics) to manufacture compelling news images. If Kamber is correct, then this will likely amplify as digital technology increasingly proliferates and younger generations become acclimatized to

digital culture. This alludes to a future potential where the aforementioned survey numbers will progressively skew toward photojournalists who rely on manipulating photographs in news production, as more individuals grow up while becoming habituated to dependency on digital technology. Currently, it is difficult to determine how often, or to what extent, digital manipulation occurs in combat photojournalism. However, the continuing proliferation of digital technology ensures that it constitutes an augmenting conundrum. In an *American Journalism Review* article, Pete Souza (former Chief Official White House Photographer for U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama) openly wondered just "how many photographers have done the same thing Brian Walski did and haven't been caught," (Johnston, 2003). In the same article, Kevin E. Schmidt (former photo editor for the *Freeport Journal-Standard* in Freeport, Illinois) stated that if a combat photojournalist as successful as Brian Walski was digitally altering photographs, "more than likely others are, too," (ibid.). The issues surrounding malleability of digital images perpetually continue to burgeon alongside the proliferation of new technologies, which can effortlessly produce images that appear to possess indexicality.

In addition to the digital destabilization of indexicality, the algorithmic turn in photography has augmented the capacity to aestheticize images depicting combat and violence. The *New York Times* photojournalist Damon Winter, who captured the combat portfolio entitled *A Grunt's Life*, personifies this phenomenon. The collection of photographs, depicting Winter's embedding with the United States Army in northern Afghanistan, placed third in the 2011 Pictures of the Year International. Winter captured photographs utilizing his iPhone camera combined with the publically available Hipstamatic photography application. The Hipstamatic smartphone application renders digital images to mimetically resemble those formerly produced by the analog Hipstamatic camera (Lavoie, 2012). The resultant digital images are depicted with

hyper-mediated blemishes, which are entirely the result of a computational algorithm. In a *New York Times* article, Winter admitted that using Hipstamatic removed the dominion that a photographer normally exerts, "the problem people have with an app, I believe, is that a computer program is imposing the parameters, not the photographer" (Winter, 2011). However, those who look upon photography apps with antipathy tend to overlook the conception that "top-of-the-line DSLRs use the same principles in recreating the look of 'professional' photographs" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013, p. 29). Nonetheless, the integration of supplementary digital mediation within a photojournalist's techniques does cultivate additional dilemmas.

Alper (2014) examined a multitude of photographs captured by different combat photojournalists who utilized the Hipstamatic application, which including *A Grunt's Life*. Alper determined that images rendered in with this particular digital technique had shielded viewers from genuine reality. Moreover, photojournalists utilizing this type of digital technology are potentially transcending ethical boundaries. Alper identified latent implications within the purposeful publication of amateurish looking photographs. The connotative impression potentially left with a viewer—as a result of 'amateuring' the photograph via digital augmentation—is that of a more realistic image, a more truthful photograph, because the soldier presumably captured the image, rather than a professional photojournalist (ibid.). This reinforces a connotative sense of indexicality, which unbeknownst to the viewer has been further destabilized as a result of additional mediation via the digital amateurizing Hipstamatic app. The increasing reliance on such practices has instigated a series of novel inquiries regarding the aestheticizing characteristics of such digital mediations in combat photojournalism (ibid.). Winter's purposeful de-professionalization of combat photography is commonly referred to as "retroengineering," which is one of a myriad of "artist-initiated ventures in technical reversion"

(Lavoie, 2012, p. 8). This movement within the artist community advocates for the resurrection of outmoded techniques, and the adoption of this modality by Winter serves to blur the boundaries between art and photojournalism, which additionally aestheticizes his images. Yet, Winter is not the only combat photojournalist who has published photographs utilizing similar methods that subsequently received widespread acclaim (Alper, 2014). Moreover, this technology is rapidly accelerating in its capacity to uncomplicatedly capture and beautify via digital meditation, which subsequently aestheticize images of combat. The propagation of digital technology is progressively engendering reliance within the photojournalism and news production industries.

2.2 The Algorithmic Influence Upon Indexicality

The digitizing of newsgathering methodologies—specifically photojournalism—has prompted the onset of a myriad of paradoxes that the industry does not seem inclined or equipped to address. This is due to the ever-increasing capability to digitally manipulate images outpacing the capacity to detect manipulation, which is compounded by decreasing newsroom budgets that cannot afford to financially keep up with these perpetually expanding technological capabilities. Regarding the computational foundation of modern photography, one is forced to consider that an image presented as a photograph—especially those that are often viewed on the screen of a smartphone, tablet or computer—is not what has been traditionally regarded as a photograph (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013; Rubinstein, 2018). The digital undergirding of the contemporary image has fundamentally changed the manner in which an image manifests, often unbeknownst to the viewer. The mediation of digital technology throughout the process of contemporary photography has thus altered the photograph's previously perceived role to document real events and transformed it into an "expression of code" (Ritchin, 2013, p. 10). The viewer often perceives the representational qualities of the algorithmically bound image as a photograph, despite the image's susceptibility to fluidity as the data can be manipulated in a variety of means, without ever piquing a viewer's awareness. This is evident in the multitude of emerging technologies that can manipulate, or wholly contrive, images and signify themselves to a viewer in the guise of a photograph. The proliferation of such technology is cultivating a perpetual series of challenges to image indexicality in the digital era, which contains potential to amplify the circulation of images on the network.

The perpetual evolution of Artificial Intelligence [AI] technologies reveals potential to continue the ongoing destabilization of image indexicality. Currently, there are a myriad of AI

technologies in currently development that can manufacture convincing images solely from text (Zhang, Xu & Li, 2017), from an individual's genetic information (Johnson, 2017), by overlaying an individual's face upon someone else's head in pre-existing videos (Reilly & Kovach, 2018) or digitally fabricating extremely realistic facial images of individuals who do not exist (Karras, et al., 2017). The engineers involved in the later research admitted that "convincing realism may now be within reach" (ibid., p. 9). This is exemplified by the website thispersondoesnotexist.com, which came online in 2019. The site utilizes AI technology to generate unique images of individuals who do not actually exist (Metz, 2019). The AI relies on images already circulating on the network and instantaneously reconfigures facial characteristics from this perpetually increasing body of images to digitally contrive a seemingly unique digital countenance of a non-existent person. Moreover, there are similar websites that can produce unique images of cats, vacation homes and anime characters (ibid.).

The AI's reliance on images circulating within the network illuminates two distinctively contemporary conundrums regarding digital photographs. First, the ability to reconfigure the algorithmic undergirding of digital images plainly reveals these contemporary variants of photographs are simply expressions of code (Ritchin, 2013). Moreover, although the aforementioned images generated by AI are seemingly unique, they nonetheless are reliant on photographs circulating on the network, which currently include a voluminous quantity of images that depict actual individuals. However, this will likely change as AI rapidly develops. Statistically speaking, the increasing number of AI contrived images that circulate on the network will subsequently be utilized by similar AI technologies to produce additional apparently unique images in the future. Thus, the destabilization of image indexicality will increasingly amplify throughout the network, which harkens to Debord's prediction:

> The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. *Fragmented* views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a *separate pseudoworld* that can only be looked at (Debord, 1992, Thesis 2).

The increasing influence and integration of the network (and the digital apparatuses that deliver this experience) are rapidly enveloping daily existence, which alludes to the future potential for AI technology to considerably influence daily existence within our proliferating networked culture. These seemingly innocuous applications of AI to create unique images conceal a future potential for the precipitous and irrevocable dissimulation of existence within the circulation of images on the network. The exponential expansion of AI capacity ensures this will likely continue to proliferate, which will affect image indexicality as an increasing number of digitally manipulated images circulate. The potential influence of this technology upon news production is already apparent.

Digital tools are advancing at a rate that seemingly outpaces the detection capabilities of professionals. This was illumined by recent research, which surveyed 20 professional photojournalists and photo editors by presenting them with a series of 37 photographs that were either computer-generated or actual photographs. The success rate for correctly identifying computer-generated images versus actual photographs was enormously varied [between 37.84 percent to 72.97 percent depending on the respondent]. Subsequently, the results were averaged; the mean percentage of the correct response rate was 55.49 percent, "which is near guessing rate" (Lehmuskallio, Häkkinen & Seppänen, 2019, p. 11). Farid & Bravo (2010) identified similar conclusions while determining how effectively viewers utilize visual cues to distinguish photographic manipulation. When the manipulations were obvious, for example when the shadows contradicted the light source, the detection of manipulation was nearly perfect. However, when the alteration was more discreet, the accurate detection of manipulated images

was only slightly better than chance. Consequently, the human "visual system is remarkably inept at detecting simple geometric inconsistencies in shadows, reflections, and perspective distortions" (ibid., p. 1). Utilizing digitally altered photographs of real-world scenes, Nightingale, Wade & Watson (2017) identified similar conclusions. They determined that individuals have an extremely limited capacity for detecting photographic forgeries, despite the rapidly accelerating "sophistication of photo-editing tools means that nearly anyone can make a convincing forgery" (ibid., p. 19). The aforementioned research indicates that digital tools can manipulate or contrive convincing photographs with increasingly straightforward technology, which establishes a potential that news organizations can be deceived into publishing images that are misappropriated. This comprehension alludes to the stolen and misappropriated photographs the contrived Eduardo Martins persona relied upon to perpetuate a hoax. Regarding the Martins hoax, the images in question were only moderately altered (often simply flipped without any further manipulation), which speaks directly to the lack of authentication within contemporary news collection processes, which will be examined in chapter four.

The significance of digitally manipulated, or wholly contrived, images is implicit within the nascent photo forensics industry. The ever-increasing capacity to convincingly forge or manipulate images has precipitated the development of software that attempts to identify digital photograph forgeries (Orozco, et al. 2016; Yan & Bourquard, 2017; Huh, et al., 2018; Tariq, et al., 2018 and Zhang, 2018). The aforementioned software trains artificial intelligence to examine images and detect indications of digital manipulation. However, all currently available options are fallible, time consuming and necessitate a fair amount of technical acumen. The technological underpinning of the modern camera has integrated quantifiable digital data, which is automatically embedded within each respective file of a captured photograph. The embedded

information is referred to as metadata, which is the most widely employed photo forensic tool utilized by researchers. However, metadata forensics is fairly complex, which is due to a lack of standardization across manufactures and image file types. In addition, there are a myriad of different associations that govern photographic metadata standards, each with its own respective set of guidelines and practices (e.g., Exif, DCMI, XMP, etc.). For the needs of this thesis, the researcher will only broadly describe metadata, which typically includes: the manufacture and model of the camera, image size, image exposure information (e.g., shutter speed, aperture, etc.), GPS location, and possibly keywords so the image is searchable when uploaded to the Internet. Consequently, metadata contains a voluminous amount of information that should directly correlate to the captured image. Conceptually, although not always in practice, any alterations to a digital photo via photo editing software (e.g., Photoshop, etc.) should result in digital traces embedded within the metadata by the corresponding software (Zhao, Sutardja & Ramadan, 2015). Thus, digital photo forensics utilizes technology to ascertain the authenticity of an image, which is predicated on the supposition that any alteration of the image will concurrently alter the metadata and pixel values contained therein (Farid, 2009). Although inconsistency within metadata may provide evidence of image forgery, it is not necessarily conclusive evidence (Farid, 2016). The absence of metadata inconsistency is not substantiating evidence to definitively determine authenticity (ibid.). During the forensic analysis of a digital photograph, "the ease with which metadata can be modified should be considered even when the metadata appears intact" (ibid., p. 191). The gravity of digital forgery has precipitated the development of software methods that are calibrated to detect image forgeries (Orozco, et al. 2016; Yan & Bourquard, 2017; Huh, et al., 2018; Tariq et al., 2018 and Zhang, 2018).

However, even as the technology progresses, the expertise and means of evasion concurrently develop, which is already the case. Although images editing programs (e.g., Photoshop) will typically indicate, within the EXIF metadata, if a photograph has been manipulated, this information is incomplete for a few reasons. First, the metadata does not specify what has been manipulated, as it could be a simple contrast alteration, toning or something as severe as a complete forgery. Second, EXIF data can be altered via numerous free online tools available to achieve this manipulation. Even with image forensic analysis, "metadata is unfortunately vulnerable to malicious modifications by third parties" (Orozco, et al., 2016, p. 1284). As a result, metadata analysis cannot be relied upon to determine authenticity, but needs to "be paired with other forensic analyses to verify the integrity of the image" (Farid, 2016, p. 191). It must be noted that merely uploading photographs to the Internet or social media, or simply converting the file format, can constitute a substantial forfeiture of metadata within an image file (Hart & de Vries, 2017). Moreover, a preponderance of online images contains no metadata due to software and on-line services ridding a considerable amount of metadata during the upload process (Farid, 2016). Thus, the comprehensive authentication of digital photographs is an elusive process that remains unreliable.

There are currently two main methods for authentication, which are typically coalesced when authentication is imperative. These techniques include an examination of visual coherence, usually completed by photo editors or visual experts, combined with the technological examination of metadata to ascertain the origin of the photograph and if any manipulation has been executed. However, this methodology is far from ideal because it is often inaccurate, although it is currently the best available option. This authentication process is progressively tenuous as technologies continue to proliferate and increase in capability to convincingly

digitally manipulate images. Furthermore, the progressive diffusion of digitally manipulated and contrived images that circulate on the network will compound the tenuousness of the authentication process. The continued proliferation of image manipulation technology combined with global culture's increasing reliance on the network will further amplify these potentials, which may render the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona a harbinger of the future. The proliferation of technological capacity could establish the capability to perpetuate a hoax on a larger scale. At a minimum, the aforementioned will serve to continue the ongoing destabilization of an image's relationship to its referent.

2.3 Surveillance Capitalism and a Networked Profusion of Images

The contemporary digital photograph is a "product of the duplications, variations, transformations and calculations which are part of the algorithmic and coded structure of the network" (Rubinstein, 2018, p. 9). Digital photographs and the network are inextricably linked. The circulation of contemporary images has been amplified immensely as a result of network propagation, which is evident in the perpetual increase of uploaded photographs each year. In 2014, there were a little over 1.8 billion digital images uploaded every day, which represents a dramatic increase from 300 million in 2012 (Meeker, 2014). This constitutes a staggering 657 billion images uploaded in 2014. In 2016, the number of photographs shared on merely five social media platforms—Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook—was 3.3 billion per day, which equates to over 1.2 trillion per year (Meeker, 2016). It is important to note this number does not reflect the entirety of the network. Thus, the actual quantity is higher and growing exponentially in conjunction with accelerating consumer technological prowess and availability. Consequently, capturing photographic images and sharing them on the network constitutes a large portion of the daily routine for billions of individuals. The predominant majority of this labor (capturing, uploading and circulating of photographs) is done without compensation. Yet, the corporations that manage and maintain the network depend on this digital labor as a means extracting abstract value (in the form of digital labor) and transforming it into objective real value. The purportedly free content that predominates the network is induced via the exploitation of labor and commodification of UGC (specifically images), which are two of the principal tenets of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2018; Smyrnaios, 2018; Della Ratta, 2018). Surveillance capitalism is a network mechanism that commodifies the network user experience via capturing and cataloging as much personalize user

data as possible. The surveillance of users, with the aim of capturing as much user data as possible, occurs throughout the network. This data is collated by artificial intelligence software and "fabricated into prediction products that will anticipate what you will do now, soon and later" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 7). However, to understand these concepts, it is imperative to initially explore the contemporary foundations of the network, which advances a progressive concentration of network power that directly influences news production in the United States (McChesney, 2013; Smyrnaios, 2018). The digitization of news production has put a tremendous strain on the conventional news production:

> Digitization is thus a major factor in disrupting traditional cultural and information industries [newspapers], which are historically based on the intrinsic association between information and its physical media, thus generating a rivalry between economic agents (Smyrnaios, 2018, p. 56).

Digital organizations are clearly dominating traditional news outlets. As the digitizing of news content intersected with the network, a rapid diffusion of free information caused drastic reductions of newsroom budgets across America. This is a result of the large overhead costs involved in traditional news production, which now directly competes against more nimble network news delivery organizations that operate while maintaining a significantly smaller bottom-line. Network delivered news undermines traditional news production in two distinct manners. Specifically, the printed newspaper is both costly and takes time to produce, as opposed to the low-cost and instantaneous delivery of news via the network. Thus, customers may choose to pay for a newspaper that often delivers stale headlines or instead rely on the network to source news instantaneously, and seemingly free of charge. Recent data illustrates a trend regarding the popularity of the later option, as American's increasingly prefer to source their news via the network, specifically social media, as opposed to newspapers (Mitchell, et al., 2016). This trend has continued throughout the previous year (Shearer, 2018). The subsequent

decrease in circulation has correspondingly impacted the financial viability of many traditional newsrooms across the United States.

Within the past decade, numerous time-honored newspapers have buckled under the weight of the less expensive and more expedient digital delivery of news. According to the *Columbia Journalism Review*, this trend continues to accelerate (Bucay, et al. 2017). These circumstances have obligated the traditional news industry to find creative methods to maintain viability, which often induce cost-cutting measures that involve the elimination of staff. The dramatic reduction in labor force precipitates the remaining employees to absorb additional responsibilities. During the researcher's one-on-one interviews *Associated Press* Photo Editor Tom Hartwell confirmed the challenging constraints that face newsrooms across America:

> I think unfortunately publications budgets have gone down. Having said that people need […] to vet material as best they can and in that case [referring to the Eduardo Martins hoax] it clearly wasn't done very well (T. Hartwell, personal communication, 2018).

Meanwhile, as newsrooms operate under increasing financial strains, the production of news is simultaneously accelerating. During his interview, Hartwell often referenced the dramatic changes he witnessed during his decades-long experience within the journalism industry, especially the increasingly instantaneous nature of news production and delivery, as a result of digital technology. The majority of interviewed visual industry professionals agreed the mounting pressure within newsrooms, as a result of the increasing speed of news production, is deleterious to authenticating images [71 percent of the sample]. The constriction of the time allotted to produce news intersecting with increased responsibilities, which are spread among a decreasing workforce, seems to establish an inevitable prescription that will result in errors and inaccuracies in produced news content. This is seemingly true concerning traditional newspapers, like the *Wall Street Journal*, which published the fictitious Eduardo Martins' stolen

and misappropriated photographs that allegedly depicted Syria (Phillips, 2017). Since 1999, Søren Pagter has been the head of the photojournalism department within the Danish School of Media and Journalism. During his interview with the researcher, Pagter alluded to a severe lack within the newsroom procedures that ensure the veracity of content prior to publication, especially regarding photographs, which is resultant from the aforementioned dilemmas that modern newsrooms progressively confront.

> First of all, I hope that the media industry learned from this [Martins] incident. The fact checking in the media is simply not good enough, especially when it comes to images (S. Pagter, personal communication, 2018).

The constriction of dominant power brokers at the center of surveillance capitalism has produced a predominance of the aforementioned effects within American newsrooms (Smyrnaios, 2018). The consolidated dominance in news delivered via the network is predominantly founded upon two conglomerates in the United States:

> Google and Facebook are the two largest providers of traffic for news sites totaling more than 75% of the average incoming traffic in the United States. They have thus become indispensable to the media, which are obliged to comply with their economic requirements and technical regulations (Smyrnaios, 2018, p. 98).

Although smartphones have somewhat altered this overwhelming dominance in news aggregation, Google and Facebook are still the dominant conglomerates, along with Apple, Twitter, and Snapchat (ibid.). However, Snapchat and Twitter, both smaller companies compared to the aforementioned mega-conglomerates, have recently faltered in their competition with Google, Facebook and Apple. Snapchat recently experienced its first decline in daily users in late 2018 (Helmore, 2018), which was expected to continue into 2019 (Frier, 2018). Twitter announced its monthly users had declined by 1 million in mid-2018, which continued into 2019 and precipitated Twitter management to cease sharing this data with the public (Kastrenakes, 2019). The deteriorating user base for both Snapchat and Twitter will inevitably result in a

weakening capacity to capture user data, which will subsequently reduce financial wherewithal and ability to compete. Thus, the ability of these smaller competitors to remain competitive in network news delivery is questionable, which could re-solidify the oligopoly of Google and Facebook, along with Apple.

The centralization of conglomerates at the locus of network news delivery has not only elicited tremendous effects upon news production in the United States, it has specifically affected photojournalism. Traditionally, American news organizations subsidized foreign desks where photojournalists would reside overseas in order to solely report on a particular region. However, transnational newsgathering is financially untenable in the predominance of American newsrooms, which has resulted in the elimination of foreign desks. Daniel Britt has been a professional combat photojournalist since 2005 and his images have appeared in *Time* magazine online, *The New York Times* online, *The Washington Post*, among others. He has worked multiple times in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations. Thus, his extensive experience provides an insight into the contemporary state of this profession in the digital era. Britt explicated on the decline of American news media, specifically referencing the continued elimination of local, and especially foreign staff. Although Britt still believes in the ethics that underpin the photojournalism industry, he specifically voiced concerns regarding digital technology and its continuing effects upon the destabilization of indexicality, "most definitely when you start dealing with stock agencies and social medial, social media savvy people" (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018). Britt specifically referenced stock photography as primary culprit in the contemporary destabilization of indexicality. The industry is often referred to as the "visual content industry," which, like conglomerates that control the network, has persistently consolidated in the past couple of decades while concurrently expanding its footprint in

photojournalism (Frosh, 2013, p. 141). The Martins hoax was efficacious as a result of reputable stock image banks, specifically *Getty Images*, distributing embezzled photographs. Moreover, multiple interviewees alluded to the profound (and mostly negative) influence the stock photo industry exerts upon photojournalism industry [29 percent of the sample].

The most recognizable name in the visual content industry is *Getty Images*, which has acquired many of its competitors to become "the largest corporation in the cultural industry known as 'stock photography'" (Frosh, 2013, p. 131). Its direct competitor was *Corbis Images* prior to its sale to *Visual China Group*, which then signed a deal to provide *Getty Images* access to their archives (Frater, 2016). The consolidation of the two largest corporate image banks was complete by November 2018, when the researcher's Google search for *Corbis Images* redirected to a *Getty Images* website. The encroachment of conglomerate image banks upon combat photojournalism is evident, which Britt referenced throughout the researcher's interview. The prohibitive costs that forced newsrooms to eliminate foreign-based photojournalists, often in favor of the more cost-effective method of relying on image banks to supply photographs depicting combat, has further undermined image indexicality. Often these images are available for sale with incomplete, scant or inaccurate descriptions, which can lead to unintentional misappropriation. Britt also directly implicated the capitalistic intentions that undergird the motivations of images banks vis-à-vis journalistic ethics as a primary causation for the deterioration in the relationship between the image and its referent:

> The images are just sold, the editors at the stock agency [like *Getty Images*] have zero input on how those photos are framed […] every once in a while I will see a photo of mine is posted without the caption and no one has told me […] they are not detail oriented journalists, they are guys who move visuals […] the way agencies push photos, they are just business people, they don't look at photojournalism as anything special (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

Thus, capitalist inclinations engendered by progressively rapid news production may supersede journalistic integrity and ethics, which influences the indexicality of combat photojournalism. Mitchell (2015) alluded to this exact issue while examining images depicting prisoners during the Iraq war, "It is not some much "adherence to the referent" that is endangered by digital imaging, then, as adherence to a "controlling intention" in the production of photographs" (pp. 55-56). The lack of controlling intention implicates the ability to alter the communicated signification of a digital image, based upon the needs of the individual or entity in possession of the image. Predicated upon increasing newsroom responsibilities spread among a constricting workforce, in addition to a precipitously accelerating news production timetable, this will likely instigate continued publication of manipulated photographs depicting combat. Thus, the ongoing destabilization of image indexicality occurs as a result of the malleable algorithmic undergirding of digital images coalescing with the instantaneous delivery mechanisms provided by the network, which will only amplify as digital technology proliferates in capability and availability. This is further exacerbated by an increasing reliance of amateur UGC, specifically images, as a cost-effective method for contemporary news media to cover foreign conflicts. This particular newsgathering practice is progressively collapsing the traditional boundary between author and reader, which in turn cultivates an actuality where images can be effortlessly appropriated, manipulated, altered and subsequently recontextualized with ease (Ritchin, 2013). Moreover, the collapsing delineations between professional and amateur photojournalists have precipitated an increasing exploitation of labor via the commodification of UGC, which simultaneously amplifies the network. This will be examined in the subsequent chapter utilizing the framework of the Spectacle 2.0.

3. Chapter Three

3.1 The Spectacle 2.0 – The Commodified User as Content Producer

As examined in chapter two, the global expansion of the network and news media has proliferated under the auspices of private enterprise. These processes of network privatization have dramatically shaped the user experience. Private enterprise has commodified the value generated on the network, which is mainly created by digital labor that does not receive compensation, are underpaid or perceive the labor as voluntary (Wark, 2013a; Briziarelli & Armano, 2017 & Della Ratta, 2018). More specifically, an increasing amount of commodified content circulating on the network is UGC, which represents a form of digital labor that is predominantly under paid or not remunerated (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017). This is entirely different from the previous incarnations of the Spectacle (diffused, authoritarian and integrated) relied upon content primarily produced by media corporations. The traditional production process has been subverted since the advent of the network in the 1990s, which established the contemporary Spectacle 2.0 (ibid.).

The global proliferation of the network has transformed the Spectacle into a "more sophisticated appearance" as a result of the network's capacity to permeate all daily activity with mediatization that is outwardly personalized and immediate (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 181). Moreover, the integration of the network has established a guise of interaction, rather than the one-way communication of previous Spectacles. This network interaction has transferred the predominance of Spectacle 2.0 content production and reproduction duties to spectators. Network users create and circulate a large portion of network content in a multitude of techniques. This includes, producing and uploading network content (e.g. photographs, articles, videos etc.), which can be amplified throughout the network by clicking a like button to raise the

profile of the content, commenting on the content to instigate exchange, or circulating the content by reproducing or sharing. This digital labor is directly responsible for much of the production and circulation of ostensibly free content that circulates throughout the network, which was examined in chapter two. Wikipedia, which is a digital encyclopedia that is created and edited by over 2.3 million contributors worldwide, exemplifies the processes that undergird this purportedly free network content (Statista, 2017). Unpaid contributors create and edit all of the content on Wikipedia, which includes millions of entries in hundreds of different languages (Wikipedia, 2019a). Wikipedia does not provide any direct remuneration to editors, and the editors must disclose any form payment from outside third-party sources or the content they curated will be removed, which is done explicitly to avoid any conflict of interest (Wikipedia, 2019b). The same processes are evident on all social media platforms, as well as content-based sharing sites (e.g., Buzzfeed, Huffington Post, etc.), which rely upon exploited labor to produce, reproduce and circulate spectacular content that is commodified by corporate interests, which concurrently augments the hegemony of the Spectacle 2.0. Thus, the production and circulation of spectacular content by users reveals that spectators are no longer simply passive receivers of corporate produced spectacular content, instead users:

> …are compelled to obey the peer-production and sharing imperatives of the web 2.0, becoming proactive makers of their own subjugation disguised as free choice and creative expression (Della Ratta, 2018, p. 181).

The interaction between the network and its users habituates network commodification mechanisms and establishes a new modality of capital production "in which media are not the host of representation of the Spectacle but (one of) the material terrain on which we live the Spectacle." (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 37). The expansion of the Spectacle throughout all

aspects of existence is directly related to the network mechanisms perpetuate that permeate mediatization throughout daily existence.

As networked corporations rely on exploiting and commodifying digital labor, they are consistently honing the capacity to capture and commodify a user's data and labor. The predominance of produced, uploaded, broadcast, reproduced and circulated UGC originates on social media platforms, which is also the digital origin of the Eduardo Martins hoax. The voluminous amount of UGC originating on social media platforms is evident by examining user statistics. Of the 4.2 billion network users, 3.397 billion are active social media users who spend an average of 116 minutes per day on social media (Smith, 2019). Moreover, on social media, visual content is by far the most popular, as it is 40 times more likely to circulate as opposed to any other type of content (Stevens, 2019). The Eduardo Martins hoax utilized this comprehension of social media, and the mediating power of the Spectacle 2.0, to circulate the stolen and manipulated UGC throughout the network, which subsequently resulted in publication of misappropriated and non-indexical images depicting combat within mainstream news publications. The hoax embodied a tremendous amount of digital labor, as evidence by the over 300 manipulated photographs uploaded to the network and over 120,000 followers attracted to the hoax Instagram account (Mezzofiore, 2017). Moreover, the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona gave interviews with numerous different online publications (Karr, 2016) as well as with established news media (Cuthbert, 2017), which raised the profile of the fictitious persona throughout the network and in news media. This labor was commodified throughout the network, by news organizations that utilized the manipulated photographs, within news articles lauding the fake combat photojournalist, stock image banks that sold the altered images, and by news media that published these stolen and non-indexical images. The increasing reliance on UGC that

originates on social media exposes a potential problematic concerning contemporary news production techniques, specifically concerning the publication of non-indexical images to support selected news narratives. However, it is necessary to briefly examine the proliferating phenomena of social media platforms to provide context for the findings.

Facebook is by far the largest social media platform globally, which has positioned this conglomerate as increasingly influential, as well as central, to the operation of the network (Statista, 2019a). As of 2019, only six social media platforms can boast over 1 billion active users, which is a cumulative total of approximately 7.75 billion active users (ibid.). Facebook owns four of these top six companies, which represents 6.07 billion active users or approximately 78 percent of all active users among the top six social media platforms (ibid.). This consolidation of network influence under the auspices of one conglomerate, Facebook, illustrates the oligopolistic tendencies of surveillance capitalism and the Spectacle 2.0, which was examined in chapter two. Facebook is continually attempting to augment this massive commodification network, and consequently capture user information and UGC under the aegis of surveillance capitalism. Instagram is the sixth largest social media platform, which is the photo-centric social media platform where the Eduardo Martins hoax was initially disseminated (Hutchinson, 2019). This particular social media platform boasts over 90 million photographs uploaded each day, 4.2 billion likes per day, and over 40 billion photographs shared since the platform's inception, which represents a enormous amount of labor that is predominantly unpaid (Smith, 2019). However, this content was commodified by the Facebook conglomerate, which extracted the preponderance of the value this exploited labor produced. Moreover, 90 percent of the platform's user demographic under the age of 35 years old and 24 percent of teens in the United States cite Instagram as their favorite social media platform, which illustrates the appeal

of this platform to a younger tech-savvy demographic that exemplify the capacity to effectively utilize this technology (ibid.). This not only represents an enormous potential labor base, but a source of labor that can effectively produce value, which will be commodified by the Facebook conglomerate to expand its domain and influence.

The ongoing diffusion of social media platforms, especially Facebook and its subsidiaries, has continued the oligopolistic mechanisms by extended throughout the network into off-platform spaces (Helmond, 2015). This expansion into external applications and websites is a constant pursuit to capture, and subsequently commodify, increasing amounts of user information and UGC (ibid.). Facebook (and its subsidiaries) has created digital extensions that formats on-platform data so it can easily be extended throughout the network, which concurrently re-directs and absorbs as much additional content back onto the platform (ibid.). These symbiotic diffusion and absorption mechanisms provide a "technological framework for others [external websites] to build on", which progressively and inextricably integrates Facebook (and its affiliates) throughout the network and subsequent influences the network user experience (ibid., p. 8). The expansive influence of social media, especially Facebook and its subsidiaries, established a powerful and influential digital platform that was utilized by the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona to perpetuate a hoax. This particular event embodies the contemporary self-spectacularization via digital technology (embodied by the network), which has reconfigured personal life into a form of "entertainment for others to consume and actively used as a basis for production of value" (Briziarelli & Armano, 2017, p. 37).

The contrived Eduardo Martins persona embodies the network's capacity to commodify, specifically Instagram's effectiveness at influencing users to commodify themselves for the benefit of the platform's owners (Facebook). This networked phenomenon assisted in

obfuscating the hoax, as it is commonplace for a freelance photojournalist to attempt to gain exposure (and reach potential clients) by circulating their images on Instagram. The photo-centric social media platform is the digital origin for the Martins hoax, which is owned and operated by Facebook and thus has a global profile that includes enormous influence and wherewithal. The selection of Instagram as the social media foundation for the Eduardo Martins hoax references the oligopolistic tendencies examined in chapter two. This social media platform is the sixth largest globally, which is owned by the largest global social media platform—Facebook. More specifically, Instagram has grown exponentially since its acquisition by Facebook (Protalinski, 2018). In January 2013, the photo-centric social media application had an active user base of 90 million users, which expanded to 1 billion users by June 2018 (Statista, 2019b). The selection of Instagram to establish the image-based hoax reveals the user-side of the network oligopoly. A larger audience would more readily view the hoaxer's stolen and manipulated images, because Instagram has a more sizeable active user base compared to other social media platforms. This would inhibit users attempting to promote their photographs, either for commodification or hoax purposes, from engaging photo-centric social media sites with a smaller user base; this engenders the oligopolistic network tendencies as examined in chapter two.

The fake Martins character rose to prominence on social media and subsequently published stolen photographs in mainstream news publications as a result of the aforementioned networked capacities. The examination of the hoax exposes, and potentially indicts, contemporary newsgathering practices, which are regularly reliant upon UGC to visually support selected news narratives. The previous chapter examined the network's reliance upon UGC to produce and circulate network content, which engenders a user perception of free content and

cultivates the dual mechanism of commodification and exploitation. While UGC produces a voluminous amount of network content, it also is often utilized to provide visual supporting evidence for a chosen news narrative. The progressively shrinking staff and budgets of American newsrooms, as examined in chapter two, has instigated an ongoing need to identify more cost-effective news production methods. Cost-cutting techniques often includes relying on UGC, specifically images, to provide the visual depiction of the selected narrative. This is especially true while covering conflict, as it is cost prohibitive to send a photojournalist to cover such newsworthy events, which are often difficult to access. Consequently, with decreasing budgets and the high cost of paying a photojournalist to travel to a foreign country, why would a newsroom editor provide compensation for content that is free to acquire? Hartwell specified this fact:

> Photo editors might even say 'why should I buy an image from a photographer who showed up a half an hour later, when I can get for free the phone image from a guy who is just going to give it to me?' (T. Hartwell, personal communication, 2018).

This process further illuminates the commodification of images via the network, which are subsequently exploited by the news production processes, often without remuneration. The UGC news production technique serves to reinforce and augment existing network commodification mechanisms by typically relying upon the number of followers a social media photojournalist has accrued to determine if the captured images are valuable, which often supersedes the authentication processes to determine indexicality. Britt explicitly delineated this point:

> Another Eduardo Martins hoax will happen again, and it will likely be on a larger scale […] it'll happen, he'll get paid, he'll do interviews, no one will know because his truthfulness [and] his experience is justified by the number of social media followers he has garnered (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

Britt's quote references a widely held consensus among the interviewed visual industry professionals, who believe that editors frequently rely on the magnitude of a photographer's social media following to ensure legitimacy of provided images [43 percent of the sample]. Thus, according to the interviewed visual industry professionals, image indexicality is often not a primary motive for selecting a visual component for a selected news narrative. This was reinforced by Brazilian photojournalist Flavio Forner who stated, "many editors rely on the number of followers of the photographer" to decide if a photograph is worth publishing (F. Forner, personal communication, 2018). Forner was among a group of Brazilian photojournalists who publically questioned the authenticity of the Martins character, prior to the *BBC Brasil* investigation that uncovered the hoax. According to many of the interviewed visual industry professionals, the magnitude of followers will determine the value and authenticity of an image posted by a photojournalist. Ironically, the same digital platforms that have aided the destabilization of traditional newsgathering methods are also the wellspring that many photo editors draw from to acquire photographs that substantiate a selected news narrative, which essentially is tantamount to the snake eating its tail.

The usage of UGC in news production establishes predicaments regarding this novel custom of newsgathering. The reliance on UGC to provide supporting visual content for a selected news narrative exemplifies the blurring of traditional delineations between amateur and professional photojournalists. Moreover, the capacity to authenticate the indexicality of images originating on social media is incredibly difficult, often expensive and time consuming (as examined in chapter two), which is not always possible in a newsroom that is progressively operating under the pressure of increasingly speedier production deadlines. Despite these truths, important national and international news events are increasingly brought to the public's

attention via crowd sourcing in the United States (Westlund & Lewis, 2017). The amateurizing of news photography was previously examined in chapter two, which focused on professional photojournalists increasingly relying on smartphone camera applications to produce a more amateur appearance of captured images depicting combat (Alper, 2014). This "retroengineering" is a purposeful de-professionalization of combat photography for aesthetic motivations, which blurs the distinctions between amateur and professional photojournalist while destabilizing indexicality (Lavoie, 2012, p. 8).

The adoption of UGC in the production of news is further collapsing the traditional delineations between amateur and professional photojournalism, which further deteriorates the relationship been an image and its referent. The amateur user's visual content is captured without any formal training or expertise, which renders massive vulnerabilities within this conduit of newsgathering, specifically regarding image indexicality. The anxieties involving the publication of UGC by news media is shared by many of the visual industry professionals that were interviewed for this research [57 percent]. More specifically, there is heightened potential for news organizations to publish non-indexical and non-referential images to prop up a selected news narrative.

Even while operating under the pressures of reduced staff and budgets, some news organizations have attempted to institute strategies to ensure veracity of UGC, but these methods offer, "no absolute guarantees where safeguarding against duplicity, let alone hoaxes" (Allan, 2013, p. 191). Yet, this knowledge has not inhibited news organizations from rapidly embracing and publically espousing this new technique of newsgathering (ibid.).

The Martins hoax exploited the contemporary news production technique of relying on UGC visuals provided by amateur and untrained photographers, which the fictitious Eduardo

Martins persona embodies as an allegedly freelance photojournalist who never attended college or had any formal photojournalistic training (Netto, 2017). Moreover, the fictitious Martins façade purposefully exploited this technique of news production by misleading news media via a secondary hoax. As previously mentioned, contemporary newsroom editors often trust the number of followers to authenticate a photojournalist's adherence to indexical veracity, which the fabricated Martins persona exploited by artificially manufacturing the guise of legitimacy. In an interview published by *ArabNews.com*, *BBC Brasil* editor Silvia Salek, who had published a laudatory profile of the contrived Martins character prior to the hoax being uncovered, indicated the extreme level of duplicity that was employed throughout the hoax.

> [Eduardo Martins] created a fake profile of a journalist from a respectable publication to praise him on Instagram [...] The case has flagged up the increasing sophistication of artificial sources and the challenges mainstream media outlets face in deciphering real news from false (Cuthbert, 2017).

The capacity to so straightforwardly deceive news editors into believing a hoax has exposed a digital fissure within contemporary newsgathering mechanisms. Moreover, the execution of this hoax demonstrated a certain level of expertise with digital technology. The capacity for the fictitious Martins character to so deftly exploit these capitalistic network mechanisms seems to indicate more than a passing familiarity with the intersection of social media and contemporary news production. Brazilian photojournalist Pablo Nunes, another Brazilian photojournalist that questioned the authenticity of the Martins character prior to the exposure of the hoax, indicating this belief during an interview with the researcher:

> The person behind this surely knows how the industry works, and managed to use its flaws to pull [off] an impressive stunt. He or she, managed to expose a lot of things that are wrong with this industry and with the world of information in the digital era.

While the Martins hoax exposed the aforementioned deficiencies in newsgathering, and the destabilizing effect on image indexicality in the news cycle, the hoax also serves to expose the potential for resistance to the Spectacle 2.0, which will be examined in the next chapter.

4. Chapter Four

4.1 The Hoax as a Counter Spectacle

The advent of Spectacle 2.0, fortified by the digital technology that sanctions surveillance capitalism as a means to commodify network users and user produced content, has perpetually encroached upon all aspects of existence, which includes news production. The profusion of images in Spectacle 2.0 ensures "that which appears is all there is; all there is, is that which appears" (Wark, 2013c, p. 122). The hegemonic force of Spectacle 2.0 is solidified and seemingly insurmountable due to the capitalist hegemony the network exerts throughout the globe.

After the Eduardo Martins hoax was exposed, the individual or individuals who perpetrated this hoax deactivated the Instagram account associated with the contrived Martins persona and allegedly fled to Australia (Phillips, 2017). The lack of clear elucidation concerning the motivations that precipitated this hoax speaks directly to contemporary capitalism and digital culture. The hoax presented itself in the guise of a potential Debordian intervention, à la détournement, but the hollow nature and culmination of this hoax denotes a lack of agency on behalf of the hoaxer. The sudden conclusion of the hoax, without any explanation from the contrived Martins persona, alludes to an absence of motivation. More specifically, the hoax was perpetrated simply because it could be, which is indicative of the hollowness of the contemporary capitalist enterprise. The elaborate Eduardo Martins hoax did indeed undermine the news media, journalistic production methods and even image indexicality, but it concurrently commodified violence to achieve the hoax. Images of actual human beings enduring conflict and strife were coopted, by stealing someone else's labor, and moderately manipulated simply to execute a vacuous hoax that provided some form of stimulation/entertainment for the individual

or individuals who perpetrated this hoax. The vacuous essence of this hoax further references the violence of capitalism, specifically the production of entertainment in Spectacle 2.0 that distracts users and masks the violence that is perpetrated to continually augment the contemporary capitalist hegemony.

The Eduardo Martins hoax was perpetuated via the publication of pilfered photographs in several mainstream news publications, while *The Wall Street Journal* was the only news outlet that was deceived on two separate occasions. Furthermore, *The Wall Street Journal* has celebrated the American capitalist enterprise since it was founded in 1889. Although some articles can be critical, the newspaper predominantly praises, and is entirely supportive of, the contemporary capitalist enterprise that operates throughout American society. Thus, *The Wall Street Journal* is also the longest running and most well known of the duped news publications, as it has published continuously for 129 years. Additionally, this aspect of the hoax speaks directly to image indexicality and ethical journalism because *The Wall Street Journal* continues to succeed, in spite of the American newspaper industry collapse, and maintains a robust daily circulation of 2.2 million (News Corporation, 2017). In *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Debord explicitly refers to the influence that capitalist societies have on newspaper production, as capital interests "may bribe newspapers in financial trouble to ensure" a particular slant or type of coverage of events (Debord, 1990, Thesis 30). Considering the difficult times American newsrooms currently face, as well as the consolidation of media into the hands of a select few, the aforementioned by Debord is certainly a potential. Regarding the ethics of *The Wall Street Journal*, its "Code of Conduct" section positions the newspaper as a neutral and ethical arbiter of authentic journalism.

> The central premise of this code is that Dow Jones' reputation for quality products and services, for business integrity, and for the independence and integrity of our publications, services, and products is the heart and soul of our enterprise. Put another way, it is an essential prerequisite for success in the news and information business that our customers believe us to be telling them the truth (The Wall Street Journal, 2018).

It is important to note that Dow Jones is the parent company for *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones publishes the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which is a stock market index, along with related market information since 1882. The company has a long reputation of lauding the American capitalist enterprise. Thus, this publication and its parent company are inextricably linked to American capitalist enterprise. The initial sentence in *The Wall Street Journal's* code of conduct specifically implicates a reliance on the parent company's reputation, rather than explicitly stating its own ethical standards concerning its journalistic practices. The final sentence does not explicitly indicate what, according to *The Wall Street Journal* or Dow Jones, composes ethical journalism and instead indicates the success of both businesses is governed by customers believing they are being told the truth. Thus, if the viewer believes a non-indexical image depicting conflict is true, then the business of Dow Jones and *The Wall Street Journal* remains successful. This is opposed to explicitly clarifying what values are utilized to compose the news; specifically the capital value of the news is dependent upon maintaining the veracity of the information provided. This comprehension of the newspaper's ethics references Debord's conception concerning the function of newspapers within the Spectacle, which is to "express the ideas and lifestyles of the epoch, not because of their personalities, but because they are ordered to" (Debord, 1990, Thesis 28).

The parent company of Dow Jones (the direct proprietor of *The Wall Street Journal*) is News Corp, which was founded and is predominantly owned and operated by media mogul Rupert Murdoch and his family (Dow Jones, n.d.). Murdoch is worth an estimated 19.2 billion

U.S. dollars (Forbes, 2018) and his empire has vast interconnections throughout cultural and social institutions. Two of the largest investors in News Corp are The Vanguard Group Inc. and Blackrock Inc. (NASDAQ, 2019a), which also hold dominant shareholder positions in the three largest military defense contractors in the United States. Thus, the deep financial interconnections between News Corp's commodification of *The Wall Street Journal* and its relationships to the economy of war in the United States are important to consider while examining content published by this newspaper; this is especially true while covering conflict. However, these potential conflicts of interest do not end here.

The stock image bank that advertised the fictitious Eduardo Martins' stolen and misappropriated photographs, Getty Images, has similar interconnections with massive conglomerates. Getty Investment Holdings is a private trust controlled by the Getty family that currently owns the controlling stake of Getty Images. Since this is a privately owned company, it does not publically share its ownership positions. However, Getty Investment Holdings did announce a partnership with RIT Capital Investment, which is owned by Lord Jacob Rothschild (Nisse, 1994). RIT Capital Investment holds several positions in the aforementioned Blackrock, Inc. investments (RIT Capital Partners, 2019). Moreover, one of the Non-Executive Directors of RIT, André Perold, is also a board member of the aforementioned Vanguard Group, Inc. (RIT Capital Partners, 2019).

All of these interconnections, which include trillions of USD at stake, can be traced directly into Syria via oil-drilling rights in the occupied Syrian / Golan Heights. This area of land was annexed by Israel in 1981 and is still considered illegally occupied by international governing bodies (United Nations, 2019). In 2010, the U.S.-based Genie Energy Corporation published a press release announcing, "Lord (Jacob) Rothschild and Rupert Murdoch have each

purchased equity stakes in Genie Oil and Gas" (Businesswire, 2010). Genie Energy secured the rights to plunder the oil reserves discovered in this region in 2015 (Cobban, 2019), which were granted by Israel in violation of the Geneva Convention international laws (Cunningham, 2019). Moreover, Murdoch and Rothschild also assumed positions on Genie Energy's Strategic Advisory Board (ibid.). Thus, News Corps' primary shareholder, Rupert Murdoch, has a vested interest in how the Syrian conflict unfolds, which is also indirectly true regarding Getty Images via Lord Rothschild's large stake in the company. Meanwhile, the aforementioned Vanguard Group, Inc. and Blackrock Inc. both maintain dominant shareholder positions in Genie Energy (NASDAQ, 2019b). Thus, Rupert Murdoch and *The Wall Street Journal*, along with Getty Images, are situated at the locus of hegemonic forces that maintain a status quo of rampant capitalist enterprise. Moreover, these interlinked parties have a direct vested interest in the Syrian conflict, which raises serious questions regarding the ethics of *The Wall Street Journal*. Many of the manipulated and non-indexical photographs circulated by the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona were purportedly depicting Syria: the particular image published by *The Wall Street Journal* and examined by this thesis is one of these photographs.

The capitalist interconnections that lay at the foundation of News Corp and Getty Images are situated at the controls of the contemporary Spectacle, which has broadcast the United States news media's persistent cheerleading concerning recent American military interventions globally. This is evidenced by President Trump's decision to strike Syria in 2017. Although the majority of news publications have thoroughly reviled Trump throughout his administration, his decision to launch a missile attack on Syria was met with resounding praise (Greenwald, 2017). Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges referred to it as "knee-jerk cheerleading" by the U.S. news media, as "this is what the war industry wants, this is what the makers of the

Tomahawk Cruise missiles want" (RT American, 2017). Raytheon, whose top two shareholders are the aforementioned Vanguard Group, Inc. and Blackrock, Inc. (NASDAQ, 2019c), manufactures the Tomahawk Cruise missile. While referencing images depicting the missiles launching from the deck of a navy vessel, news anchor Brian Williams may have inadvertently exposed a truth regarding the aforementioned conflict of interest between the American news media and the military industrial complex. While describing the missile launch, Williams employed the Leonard Cohen lyrics, "I am guided by the beauty of our weapons" (Hawkins, 2017). A well known broadcast journalist explicitly stating that he, and by extension the American news media, is guided by the beauty of military weaponry exposes a serious potential conflict of interest. The impending doom that awaits Syrian human beings makes it impossible to conceive of anyone who would consider these images beautiful. This alludes to a darker truth at the heart of American news production (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*) and its deep linkages with the military industrial complex.

The Wall Street Journal (as well as the broader American news media) is in some respect guided by military armaments via the deep interconnections they share with the military industrial complex. This is evident in a myriad of articles published by *The Wall Street Journal* that have overtly advocated for American military intervention in Syria as the ideal solution throughout the Syrian uprising. *The Wall Street Journal* was the only American mainstream news outlet that published a long form interview with the Syrian Opposition leader Burhan Ghalioun (Wall Street Journal, 2011). According to a Google search, no other American outlet published a long form interview with Ghalioun throughout 2011. The interview posed a series of leading questions that provoked answers portraying military intervention as the optimal choice (ibid.). The op-ed article authored by two perpetually hawkish congressmen explicitly states, "To

Defeat Islamic State, Remove Assad," which would consequently involve direct military involvement in Syria (McCain & Graham, 2014). *The Wall Street Journal* was the only news outlet to publish this piece. More directly, even as the American military is engaged in a multitude of perpetual conflicts and owns by far the largest military budget in the world, *The Wall Street Journal* called for direct military intervention in Syria combined with a dramatic increase in military spending in an article titled, "Yes, America Should Be the World's Policeman" (Stephens, 2014). There is no mention concerning the deep interconnections that could implicate a potential conflict of interest in all of the aforementioned articles.

The examination of the hoax perpetrated upon *The Wall Street Journal* via the Eduardo Martins hoax reveals the mechanizations of commodification and capitalist influence. The manipulated photograph was originally published on May 26, 2016 in an article titled, "Islamic State Seizes Territory Near the Turkish Border". The misattributed and altered photograph is located directly under the title and a caption, which states "Advances in Northern Aleppo province force evacuation of hospital in rebel-held town of Azaz" [Fig. 1]. Thus, the Syrian men depicted in the image are overtly framed as ISIS combatants by anyone who views this image. Conversely, Daniel Britt captured the original photograph on October 28, 2013 in the Hama Province, Syria. [Fig. 2] The caption to the original photograph states:

> About 100 armed rebel fighters gathered in a field in the outskirts of Hama province, Syria, on Monday, October 28, 2013. The group represented eight brigades who announced plans to unite to form a new force called "Liwaa Mujahideen Hama" or "Brigade of Fighters in Hama" (Britt, 2013).

There is a stark disparity between these two descriptions. The indexical image and its caption report these Syrian men as combatants who joined together to fight for their freedom in the Hama province. Meanwhile, the non-indexical image published by *The Wall Street Journal* depicts the same Syrian men, but recasts them as ISIS combatants, which are widely perceived as

terrorists within the Western news media and society. This massive shift in depictions potentially alludes to contemporary news production's lack of concern regarding the indexicality of images depicting combat. The business of news production is underwritten by a capitalist mechanism that has progressively shrunk the bottom line while constricting the resources allocated to newsrooms, while concurrently obligating speedier news production, which is a formula that is likely to instigate ineffectual news production. Yet, this remains unaddressed, as the aforementioned perpetually increases the pressure upon journalists and news producers. This renders images, especially those depicting combat because they are costlier and more difficult to capture, simply as visual reinforcement for a selected news narrative. If this is true, as the evidence suggests, then the indexicality of a published news image depicting combat may be secondary or less important than the chosen narrative. If this is the case, then authentication is irrelevant so long the image comports with the chosen narrative. More specifically, non-indexical images can just as effectively and easily prop up selected news narratives just as well as indexical images, while also being commodified in either manner. These circumstances could be additionally instigated by a potential conflict of interest. Britt alluded to this concerning *The Wall Street Journal*'s carelessness regarding the misattributed photograph, which is undergirded by the need to visually support a chosen narrative:

> The Journal disappointed me […] I thought this is such an irresponsible headline, not only did they publish a doctored photo […] but then they just slapped this headline on that is way too inflammatory for a group shot of a bunch of Syrian guys (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

The indexicality of this photograph was destabilized in two different manners. First, the modest manipulation (horizontally reversing in post-production) by the fictitious Eduardo Martins changed the visual depiction. Then, *The Wall Street Journal* reframed the photograph by mislabeling the location, date and event context, which further eroded the image's indexicality. It

is interesting that both images are simply reversed in post-production software, thus they are mirror images of each other. This is not unlike the two disparate captions, which indexically cast these Syrian men as freedom fighters, while the second non-indexical cast them as villains/terrorists. The extreme disparate nature of each depiction reveals the mechanisms of commodification and exploitation. More specifically, the lifecycle of the moderately manipulated image reveals underlying mechanisms of Spectacle 2.0, which relies on the circulation and consumption of images to publicize commodities. The moment these rebel fighters posed for this particular photograph, the image transformed them into commodities for the Spectacle 2.0 and their subsequent public depictions immediately ceased being in their control.

> Entering the spectacle as a model to be identified with, he renounces all autonomous qualities in order to identify himself with the general law of obedience to the succession of things (Debord, 1992, Thesis 61).

Within Spectacle 2.0, the indexicality or non-indexicality of this photograph was rendered irrelevant, since the image was commodified in either direction. Thus, the Spectacle 2.0 can produce value from either incarnation of the image, indexical or non-indexical, Moreover, the publication of a non-indexical photograph within a mainstream news publication reveals the processes of exploitation and commodification that function on the network. Britt explicated his frustration regarding this particular point and indicated that someone at *The Wall Street Journal* was likely, "…just ripping photos from online and not double checking in Google image search" (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018). Sometime after the *BBC Brasil* exposed the Eduardo Martins hoax, *The Wall Street Journal* removed the photograph from the original article and no replacement image was published. The original article is still available on *The Wall Street Journal* website—sans photograph—and any specific reference to the Eduardo Martins hoax is noticeably absent. The only rectification is not only vague, but it is brief and located at the

bottom of the article, which is only accessible beyond *The Wall Street Journal*'s website pay wall. Further, this brief rectification fails to mention the Eduardo Martins hoax and instead castigates Zuma Press, a smaller stock photo agency that supplied the stolen photographs to Getty Images:

> "Corrections & Amplifications: A photograph purported to be taken May 17, 2016, of Free Syrian Army fighters in Azaz, Syria, has been removed from this article because Zuma Press is unable to authenticate aspects of the photo. (Sept. 6, 2017)" (A.P., 2016).

The brief clarification highlights *The Wall Street Journal*'s institutional failure to recognize its culpability in amplifying the Martins hoax, while simultaneously minimizing its role by instead blaming a Zuma Press. Moreover, the rectification never alludes to the Martins hoax, nor the manipulation of the image, and instead downplays the incident by indicating that Zuma Press was "unable to authenticate" the photograph, which is misleading at best (A.P., 2016). Thus, the in-authentic altered image was redacted and no comprehensive explication was provided, while the original accurate referent was never published.

The fact that a newspaper like *The Wall Street Journal*, equipped with tremendous financial resources, connections and wherewithal, is so easily duped and unable to authenticate such a simply manipulated image is disconcerting. Yet, this lack of simple authentication speaks to the circumstance that all images are commodified—including those that are inauthentic, non-indexical and manipulated. These modalities of commodification don't necessarily have to be as grandiose as the Eduardo Martins hoax, they are integrated within the everyday practice of uploading images to the network, which are commodified by those increasingly select conglomerates that own and operate the network. Thus, the indexicality or truthfulness of images uploaded to the network is entirely unimportant because any image will be absorbed and can be commodified by the Spectacle 2.0. This capitalist mechanism has already affected

photojournalism via the Eduardo Martins hoax and will continue to as technological capacity advances and proliferates. Britt explicated this point as a result of the Eduardo Martins hoax:

> Now on the photojournalism side it is completely possible to have a total fake run amok, change captions, classify certain militant groups at 'others', it's a total muddling of the facts (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

The publishing of a manipulated image, and its additional depletion of indexical and referential qualities as a result of the image's direct association with the incorrect captioning and news article it was embedded within, were predicated upon decisions made within the offices of *The Wall Street Journal*. The actual framing and depiction of the Syrian men seemingly did not matter to the news production process, otherwise a straightforward and relatively quick authentication of the image would have occurred. This is evident in the fact the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona never changed the caption of the manipulated and non-indexical image, instead it was *The Wall Street Journal* that altered the depiction by reframing the image with a disparate title and caption. According to Britt:

> Eduardo Martins did not change the caption for that photo, it still said, 'Syrian militants in Hama', but the [*Wall Street Journal*] headline was 'ISIS takes over Western Syria' (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

This speaks to the fact that the image was simply a commodity. The captivating image was utilized for financial gain by selling more newspapers and attracting more viewers to *The Wall Street Journal's* website. The former aspect of network capitalism is evidence by *The Wall Street Journal's* website—wsj.com—ranking as the 149th most popular website in America and 654th globally according to Alexa.com (2018). This mechanism of commodification is clearly recognized by *The Wall Street Journal*, which has intentionally integrating the network, along with smartphone integration, into its business practices (Stelter, 2011).

The commodification of a stolen and non-indexical image not only speaks to all of the aforementioned facts that exist throughout the network (e.g., the algorithmic underpinning of digital images, mechanisms of exploitation and commodification, consolidation of news production, etc.), but it also exposes Spectacle 2.0's quest for expanding and consolidating power. While the indexical image depicts Syrians that are attempting to defend their lives and gain their freedom, the non-indexical image and its description entirely controverts this comprehension. Thus, the non-indexicality of the image was unimportant because it served to amplify a chosen news narrative that supports the hegemonic device of control and fear. Terrorism and potential threats establish a reason for the existence of the state, "they provide the state with a reason to exist, and can be usually be assured of its full attention" (Wark, 2013b, p. 112). The Spectacle's hegemonic capacity is able to utilize these ostensible enemies as "proprietors" in the Spectacle (ibid., p. 116). Moreover, the lack of indexicality speaks to the capacity of the Spectacle 2.0 to absorb and utilize any form of image—indexical or otherwise—for its own hegemonic ends (ibid.). The confluence of these circumstances led to the publication of a non-indexical image within a trusted mainstream news outlet. Thus, if Western society expects or desires a reasonable semblance of truthful and accurate information, then examining the publication of non-indexical photographs ostensibly depicting Western cultures gravest threats is necessary. Tellingly, hegemonic forces are uninterested in this examination, as it holds potential to disrupt the exploitation and commodification mechanisms that underwrite the Spectacle 2.0.

This is evident in the dearth of investigative reporting that should have covered this significant event, as well as the unwillingness of stock image banks to amend their business practices as a result of this hoax. Getty Images acknowledged they were deceived, but were

unwilling to change their business practices as a result of the hoax. Britt had extensive contact with a particular representative at Getty Images:

> Not only did she [the representative at Getty] shut that down [trying to determine the real identity of the fictitious Eduardo Martins], she said absolutely not. [Britt asked her if Getty Images was] going to change the way they contract with freelancers, and she said no, we were duped that was it (D. Britt, personal communication, 2018).

Possibly more revealingly, there was very little news coverage of the Eduardo Martins hoax after the *BBC Brasil* published the story exposing the hoax on September 1, 2017. Within 10 days the story had disappeared entirely from the news cycle. Further, the predominance of articles reporting this hoax relied on utilizing content extracted from the initial *BBC Brasil* article and repackaging for an ostensibly original narrative. Very little unique or novel information was exposed beyond the initial *BBC Brasil* publication revealing the hoax.

Thus, almost no unique reporting on the event or its implications was ever conducted. A Google search of the name "Eduardo Martins" and the word "photographer" exemplifies this fact. The initial search utilizing the date parameters of September 1, 2017 through September 10, 2017 yields only three pages of results. A subsequent search utilizing the same search terms, but adjusting the date parameters from September 11, 2017 through September 20, 2017, provided only four total stories. These stories predominantly relied on the initial *BBC Brasil* report and included no original reporting or investigation. The collective dearth of any resources dedicated to a hoax that directly affects the viewers trust in the news industry, and speaks directly to image indexicality and journalistic ethics, while fake news was purportedly a central topic in the news cycle is a bit paradoxical. Especially considering these two issues were often used interchangeably and conflated by the news media throughout 2017. Moreover, the lack of coverage of the Eduardo Martins hoax speaks to capacity of the Spectacle 2.0 to eliminate narratives that may destabilize the capitalist hegemony within news media.

In the aftermath of the Eduardo Martins hoax, the digital trace left behind by the fictitious Martins persona is still readily available. A reverse Google image search of the stolen and non-indexical photograph that was published by the fictitious Martins persona returned approximately 25,270,000,000 results according to Google. Some of the results were articles rehashing the original *BBC Brasil* article exposing the Eduardo Martins hoax, but many links also redirected to websites that reiterated the image as a factual document. There is a significant conclusion that can be drawn from these juxtaposed comprehensions. Spectacle 2.0 is uninterested in imparting authentic information, context or understanding regarding important issues, but instead the circulations of all images—including non-indexical images—is simply a commodification mechanism for the purposes of entertainment and perpetually captivating network users. Moreover, anything that may disturb, disrupt or inspire resistance to the Spectacle 2.0 will be ignored or eliminated, which alludes to Debord's belief that the "Spectacle reveals itself as concerned mostly with its own sovereignty" (Wark, 2013c, p. 115). The proliferation of surveillance capitalism only entrenches this comprehension, which is solidifying its hegemony via the increasing capacity of digital technology.

5. Conclusion

The examination of the increasingly interconnected relationships between conglomerate corporations that own communication networks and the media industry exposes the specific contingency of photojournalism within news production. The destabilization of image indexicality especially photojournalism due to the high costs and the difficulty of gaining access to areas afflicted by strife and conflict, which is compounded by the progressive decrease in newsroom budgets. Thus, digital technology accelerates the weakening evidential status of photographs as the collapsing number of newsrooms in the United States will continue to amplify the challenges to the documentary veracity of the photograph. These adverse circumstances have induced an increasing reliance on stock image banks and UGC to visually support a chosen news narrative depicting conflict. The usage of stock images and UGC further weakens the evidentiary status of visuals in news production covering conflict, which the Eduardo Martins hoax was able to exploit. The commodification of images and digital destabilization of image indexicality has engendered a media sphere where non-indexical images are easily disseminated.

There are few alternatives that seem to provide any measure of comfort regarding news production in the United States, which is increasingly governed by the capitalist hegemony. *The New Yorker* published an article titled, “Does Journalism Have a Future?”, which exemplifies the bleak situation that the American news media currently finds itself (Lepore, 2019). *The New Yorker* examines the massive upheaval in American news production, the radical alteration in the news media landscape and its effect on journalistic ethics. The article reveals that transformations in news production have been almost entirely provoked “by tech companies” (ibid.). Facebook exemplifies the authoritative influence between newsrooms and the network.

The establishment of Facebook News, has drastically altered the landscape of news media and perpetually exerts tremendous influence. Algorithmic changes directly influence the decisions regarding editorial news content, which demonstrates a shift away from human decision-making governed by journalistic ethics toward an algorithmic governing of newsroom decisions motivated by capitalist inclinations. The migration toward the algorithmic underpinning of news production is disconcerting as it harkens to the algorithmic turn in image production. More specifically, digital images that can easily be output as any other type of file, the reliance on an algorithm to govern newsroom decisions will likely render news and information ethics correspondingly malleable to this influence. Algorithmic technology exposes the capacity for already dominant forces to bend and shape news production to augment and amplify the capitalistic hegemony predicated upon algorithmic adjustments. This situation speaks to the deficiencies and ethical concerns in contemporary newsgathering methods. While this is a bleak assessment, the conception of news and information as compliant may provide a glimmer of optimism as this pliability could substantiate a potential for acts of intervention.

Yet, the perception of the Eduardo Martins hoax, which is the way the news media commonly referred to this event, is inaccurate because this event did not serve as an intervention in the modality of a Debordian détournement. Thus, the conception of this event as a hoax is a precipitously hasty and precarious conclusion. The positioning of the fictitious Eduardo Martins persona in the spirit of SI modes of intervention denigrates actual acts of resistance. More specifically, this particular hoax was a stunt that was devoid of the modalities associated with actual forms of resistance. Thus, positioning the Eduardo Martins incident as a form of resistance or subversive intervention would be misleading and detailed research exposes the hollowness of the stunt. The fallout of the Eduardo Martins stunt was contradictory and paradoxical as instead

of liberating spectators from ingrained and automated modes of conception, this stunt likely embedded these patterns of thought more profoundly. More specifically, this event seems opportunistic by taking advantage of the technologies and capitalist mechanisms that undergird digital culture to perpetuate a hoax. The Eduardo Martins stunt did not impart any novel or unique conceptions regarding the commodification of images and social relations. Rather, this stunt collaborated with the news media in perpetuating and bolstering pre-existing ideological perceptions concerning this particular region, specifically as it relates to Syria. The selected image published by *The Wall Street Journal* callously repositioned Syrian men fighting for their freedom simply as terrorists by completely reframing the depiction via the application of an erroneous and unsubstantiated caption. This recurrent and stereotypical perception the news media frequently relies upon while covering this region is perpetually repeated and operationalized by the capitalist hegemony for its own ends. Whether the image was authentic or in-authentic was irrelevant for the needs of the selected news narrative, which are increasingly governed by capitalistic inclinations and not journalistic ethics. Both the stunt and the publication of this image by *The Wall Street Journal* callously commodified the image of these men simply to perpetuate and augment the capitalist hegemony, which was broadcast via the Spectacle 2.0.

Alternatively, the Eduardo Martins stunt could be positioned and read as imbuing a healthy skepticism in spectators, which is evident in the collapse of American journalism (Friedman, 2018), as well as a recent survey that indicates trust in American news media is the lowest it has ever been, while some respondents indicating they expect this be permanent (Knight Foundation, 2018). However, the Eduardo Martins stunt likely imparted something more malignant and ominous. Although a skeptical disposition aimed at the news media is healthy in

light of the historical developments involving conflict photojournalism, in an era dominated by headlines decrying fake news, this stunt likely augmented cynical dispositions toward news media, digital culture and contemporary social media saturation of everyday life. Spectacle 2.0 has amplified the circulation of partial, incorrect, or misleading information and news, which has engendered cynicism and apathy. This can be comprehended via the abrogation of truth-value in photojournalism, which is consumed and dominated by exchange-value, as demonstrated by Spectacle 2.0's capacity to commodify and extract value from any form of image, be it authentic or manipulated. Thus, Spectacle 2.0's commodification of truth-value stifles spectators in the face of an overwhelming abundance of circulating images, which renders any alternative position as progressively remote. This likely augments passivity, which is subsequently preyed upon by Spectacle 2.0 to simultaneously inhibit potential acts of intervention and mediate human relations. This particular stunt served to perpetuate these contemporary capitalist mechanisms, which concurrently mitigates a potential for explicit intervention or comprehensive confrontation to Spectacle 2.0.

The increasing reliance and interdependence of news production upon the network speaks directly to the Eduardo Martins hoax. The contrived Martins persona was able to cultivate and establish relationships within the journalism community via virtual friendships. The capacity of digital culture to technologically mediate relationships with individuals who may never have actually interacted, or even exist, exposes the casual nature of these virtual relationships. Thus, it reveals the implicitly hollow social nature of contemporary capitalism and the contrived Eduardo Martins persona perceived and exploited these aforementioned postmodern conditions to execute, and potentially commodify, this stunt. This event is quite simply symptomatic of Spectacle 2.0 as a form of digital praxis and not a passive effect resulting from the perpetually

unstable and shifting ground that digital culture is situated upon. Thus, the Eduardo Martins stunt served as a collaborative, not subversive, event in conjunction with the Spectacle 2.0, as a logical consequence of historical and contemporary developments in capitalist realism and digital culture.

6. Limitations

The limitations of this thesis are derived from a few particular issues. First, the thesis is qualitative. Therefore, it is interruptive and ethnographic, which conversely limits its empirical capacity. Moreover, the Eduardo Martins hoax has not been examined in the academic literature, which limited the amount of academic research this thesis could draw upon. Further, the semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with eleven visual image professionals. The limited number of respondents does influence the findings. The employment of quantitative research has inhibited the ability to test if the findings are statistically significant, and thus cannot be generalized to the population. Additionally, the potential motivations for the Eduardo Martins hoax were not examined. The impetus for neglecting this avenue of research is due to a the lack of coherent data regarding who Eduardo Martins may be and why they may have perpetuated this hoax, thus it would be primarily derived from speculation. Lastly, the research was unable to gain approval from Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (commonly referred to as CAPMAS) as advised by The American University in Cairo. However, the researcher applied well in advance of submitting the thesis. The researcher gained IRB approval on April 5, 2018 and applied for CAPMAS in September 2018. Since applying for CAPMAS approval, the researcher has followed up with two different contacts at CAPMAS on bi-weekly basis. As of May 12, 2019, there has been no news involving the pending approval and the researcher has been told repeatedly to just continue waiting and not provided any further recourse (Appendix 2). Moreover, attempts to gain assistance through the department and the university were unsuccessful as the researcher was repeatedly told CAPMAS approval was necessary, without any satisfactory justification or support. The researcher did investigate further

and determined interviews are considered fieldwork, which are not subject to CAPMAS approval. This thesis does incorporate one-on-one interviews, but does not rely on these interviews as the primary research material. Instead, the interviews were incorporated as supporting content. However, the researcher removed the lone Egyptian national from the interview pool, thus, there was no research conducted in Egypt. Therefore, this thesis is not subject to CAPMAS approval.

Future research should consider employing a rigid triangulation method that relies upon both a quantitative and qualitative method. The combination of approaches would afford researchers the potential to determine influence of manipulated depictions of combat and confirm possible linkages to parties that disseminate visual propaganda. Recommendations for this research include the designation of a specific set of visual content emanating from a singular region of conflict. Additionally, a larger sample of one-on-one interviews could be conducted with those photojournalists directly involved in covering the selected area of focus. Moreover, a more thorough analysis of the interconnections of news media companies with conglomerate and government networks would be useful in attempting to comprehend motivations for particular news narratives.

7. Figures

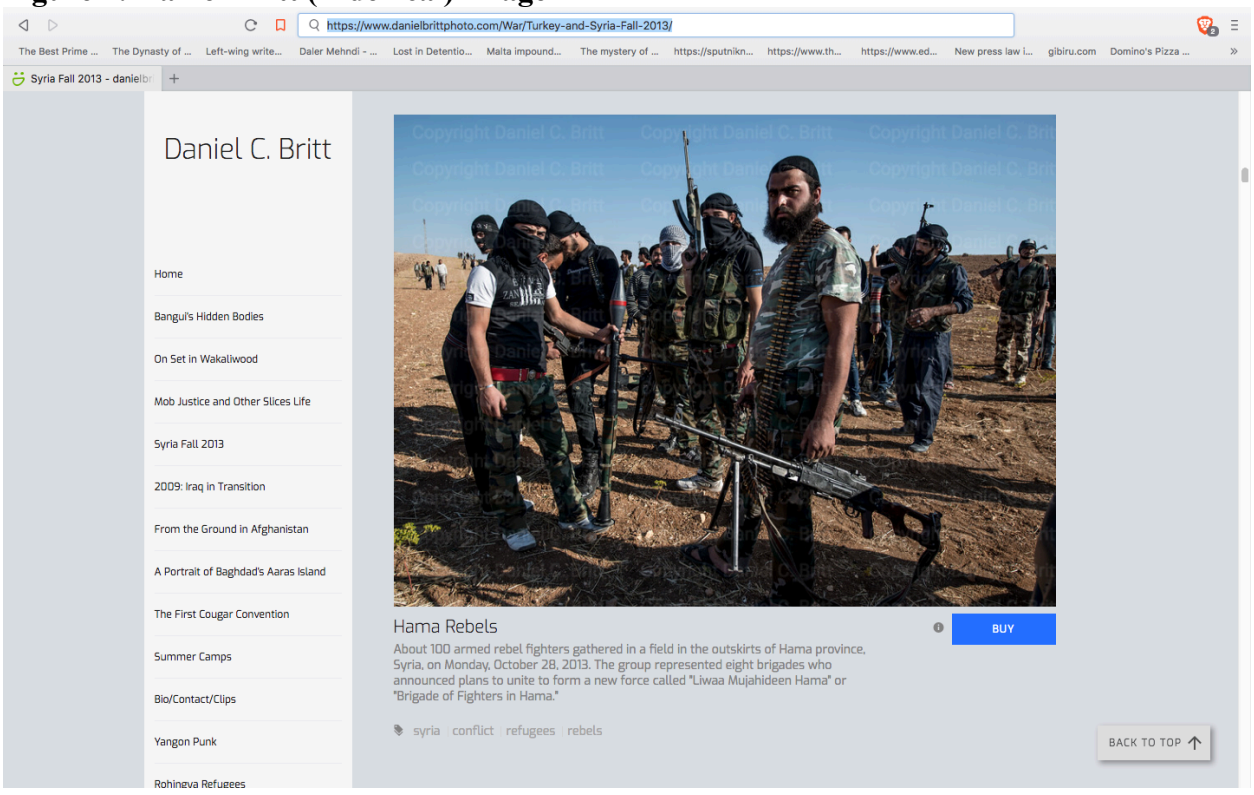
Figure 1: Wall Street Journal (Non-Indexical) Image

WORLD | MIDDLE EAST

Islamic State Seizes Territory Near Turkish Border

Advances in Northern Aleppo province force evacuation of hospital in rebel-held town of Azaz

Figure 2: Daniel Britt (Indexical) Image



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9. Appendix 1 – Interview Methodology

The Research Hypotheses

H1: The destabilization of the purported authenticity in photographs is an established process that has accelerated via the introduction of digital technology.

H2: The commodification of images, in conjunction with the digital destabilization of image indexicality, has engendered a situation in the media sphere where non-indexical images are easily disseminated via the network.

H3: The evidential nature of combat photography, as a result of the proliferation of technology and digital culture, has augmented Debord's Spectacle in the guise of the networked Spectacle 2.0.

H4: If contemporary digital culture is cultivating the capacity to effortlessly disseminate non-indexical depictions of combat photographs, then the broadcasting of these constructed images exposes potential deficiencies or ethical concerns for contemporary newsgathering.

The Independent and Dependent Variables

H1: The destabilization of the purported authenticity in photographs has been an established process that has accelerated via the introduction of digital technology into combat photojournalism.

The independent variable is the academically supported destabilization of the implicit truth in photographs. The dependent variable is the introduction and proliferation of digital technology throughout combat photojournalism.

The operational definition of the destabilization of the implicit truth in photographs is the eroded perception that photographs accurately depict a captured real event.

The independent variable is measure in the questioner as follows:

Q9: How has the introduction of digital imaging technology affected the photojournalism industry?

H2: The commodification of images, in conjunction with the digital destabilization of image indexicality, has engendered a situation in the media sphere where in-authentic images depicting combat are more easily disseminated via the network.

The independent variable is the augmented destabilization of the implicit truth in photographs subsequent to the proliferation of digital technology. The dependent variable is the dissemination of in-authentic images depicting combat.

The operational definition of augmented destabilization of the implicit truth in photographs subsequent to the proliferation of digital technology regards the adoption of digital technology within photojournalism as the means for the amplified erosion of implied veracity captured within a photograph.

The independent variable is measure in the questioner as follows:

Q10: How has the introduction of social media—like Instagram—affected the photojournalism industry?

H3: The evidential nature of combat photography, as a result of the proliferation of technology and digital culture, has augmented Debord's Spectacle.

The independent variable is the propagation of Debord's Spectacle. The dependent variable is contemporary digital culture cultivating a capacity to destabilize the alleged truth depicted in combat photography.

The operational definition of the Spectacle implies the circulation of images has displaced existence with an in-authentic depiction.

The independent variable is measure in the questioner as follows:

Q2: Based on your professional experience in photojournalism, do photographs depicting war or conflict that are published by mainstream media outlets, offer visual realism or unrealistic representations of war and combat?

H4: If contemporary digital culture is cultivating the capacity to effortless disseminate in-authentic depictions of combat realities, then the broadcasting of these contrived images allude to potential deficiencies within news gathering.

The independent variable is contemporary digital culture cultivating a capacity to effortless disseminate in-authentic depictions of combat realities. The dependent variable is potential deficiencies within newsgathering.

The operational definition to effortless disseminate visual propaganda is the ability by non-state [individual or collective] actors and state actors to simply and efficiently broadcast in-authentic depictions of combat realities and circulate them via digital culture.

The independent variable is measure in the questioner as follows:

Q11: How do you perceive the future of the news photograph as an evidential object in the fabricated fake news campaigns, such as the Eduardo Martins incident?

Level of Measurement

The level of measurement is nominal and the unit of analysis is combat photographs captured by photojournalists and published by mainstream news publications.

Purposive Sampling: Expert Experiential Knowledge

The one-on-one interviews within this thesis employ a purposive sample, which are the most commonly applied method of non-probabilistic sampling within qualitative research (Alsaawi, 2014). The rational for a purposive sample involves identifying specific professional visual media experts who can accurately provide a practical and theoretical understanding regarding visual communication and the implicit truth that purportedly underpins photographs. The purposive sample was carried out to ensure variation of interviewees from within the visual media community to include a selection of subjects from multiple cultural, geographic and professional experiential backgrounds. The selection of specific respondents also considered Flick's (2009) approach of identifying critical cases, which comprises those who have had a lengthy career within the profession of photojournalism and/or were directly or indirectly involved with uncovering the Eduardo Martins hoax. The level of measurement for a purposive

One-on-One Interviews

The purposive sample of interviewees was selected according to respective experiential knowledge as visual image professionals. Further, subjects who are visual image professionals and were instrumental in uncovering the Eduardo Martins hoax or were directly affected by the deception were identified and interviewed. The population consisted primarily of male (five) subjects and one female subject. The lack of female representation was principally due to four female visual image professionals—along with two potential male candidates—declining to be interviewed for this thesis. Subsequently, the interview subjects include:

1. Daniel Britt: professional combat photojournalist whose photographs from combat zones in Iraq and Syria comprise the predominant majority of images stolen by a contrived Eduardo Martins persona. These images were subsequently republished and misattributed by mainstream publications.

2. Søren Pagter: since 1998, head of the department of photojournalism at the world-famous Danish School of Media and Journalism in Denmark. Pagter is also involved in World Press Photo and participated in several national and international photojournalism juries, including Pictures of the Year International and the Freelens Award. Pagter has been a practicing photojournalist since 1988 and has organized numerous photojournalism workshops at major newspapers throughout Europe and Russia. Pagter is also the author of "The Essential Image" textbook, published in 2018.

3. Cris Veit: 20 years of experience with National Geographic Brazil as a photo editor before becoming a combat photojournalist in Iraq. Veit's experience and photographs from Iraq were instrumental in uncovering the hoax perpetrated by Martins.

4. Flavio Forner: Brazilian photojournalist with extensive experience shooting in the field and has been published in numerous international mainstream publications. Forner was also instrumental in identifying the image forgeries Martins attempted to pass off as his own.

5. Pablo Nunes Dos Santos: Dublin-based Brazilian photojournalist who has extensive experience in the field and is a regular contributor to the *New York Times*. Dos Santos was also an ancillary character involved in exposing Martins.

6. Thomas Hartwell: American photo editor who has decades of experience as both a professional photojournalist and photo editor.

Semi-Structured Interviews with Visual Image Professionals

According to Flick (2009) the qualitative method of research is of "specific relevance to the study of social relations" (p. 12). Social relations within contemporary society have hastened the onset of the pluralization of life-worlds or social differentiation, largely as a result of the proliferation of technological inclinations (Flick, 2009). Lievrouw (2001) asserted a hypothesis regarding the potential combination of new media and information computing technology [ICT] instigating social differentiation, which illustrates a demand for inductive approaches to examine contemporary issues. This contemporary experience renders the qualitative method an effective

tool to glean the necessary understanding from an investigatory scaffold aiming to address "concrete problems which do not arise generally but occur in specific types of situations" (Flick, 2009, p. 21). Instead of addressing universal questions, this form of qualitative methodology seeks examinations that explore and comprehend evidence in a more timely and localized fashion (Flick, 2009).

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews—also referred to as the semi-standardized interviews (Flick, 2009)—are an effective operative strategy to acquire a deeper understanding of a particular issue from experts within a specific profession. Alsaawi (2014) indicated that semi-structured interviews are commonly utilized within social sciences as it affords the interviewee the opportunity to elaborate and provide critical insight regarding specific matters via open-ended questions. Flick (2009) further asserted the semi-structured interviews are an efficient technique to examine an interviewees "complex stock of knowledge about the topic under study" (p. 156). Flick referred to this expert experiential knowledge as the "subjective theory" (ibid.). The qualitative methodological approach affords the researcher the capacity to employ "symbolic interactionism," which alludes to the necessity of observing world experience from the position of the subjects under study (Flick, 2009). Ostensibly, semi-structured interviews are utilized to employ a more content rich environment in contrast to the less malleable structured interviews, which "may hinder the depth and richness of responses" (Alsaawi, 2014, p. 151). It is imperative that the researcher records interviews to capture responses, which permits the researcher to later review the in-depth and longer form answers garnered from interviewees (Alsaawi, 2014). Prior to the conducting any interview, all participants must initially agree to be recorded for the interview (Alsaawi, 2014). The interview should be structured in a "theory-driven" approach, which incorporates "hypothesis-directed

questions" (Flick, 2009, p. 153). Further, while interviewing experts it is essential the researcher remains committed to a "much stronger directive function with regard to excluding unproductive topics" (Flick, 2009, p. 167).

The research for this thesis has employed semi-structured one-on-one interviews with selected visual image professional, which includes those with practical and academic credentials. The interview predominantly relied on the structured portion of the interview, which included eleven pre-determined questions. Meanwhile, the unstructured portion of the interview included utilizing follow-up/probing questions when necessary.

Pre-Test Questioner

The Pre-Test questioner was conducted in April 2018 between two AUC Professors including: Dr. Ronnie Close and Dr. Terri Ginsberg who provided critical feedback regarding the questions, which was instrumental in shaping the final questioner.

Interview Questioner

The interview subjects were provided the questioner in advance, which included a link to the BBC story exposing the Eduardo Martins Hoax: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-41174069. Further, interview subjects were provided the option of interviewing via Skype or via Email. The majority of interviews were conducted via Skype, which afforded the opportunity for follow-up probing questions based upon responses provided by the interview subject. The interviews were conducted in 2018, with four interviews conducted via Skype and three

interviews via Email. The questioner included 11 questions, which does not account for follow-up probing questions.

1. As a professional in the field of photojournalism, do you consider published photographs to be accurate depictions of real events?

2. Based on your professional experience in photojournalism, do photographs depicting war or conflict that are published by mainstream media outlets, offer visual realism or unrealistic representations of war and combat.

3. How much control do war photojournalists have regarding the selection of their photographs that are published by mainstream media outlets?

4. How are combat photographs chosen for publication? Specifically, what are the typical criteria used to decide what photograph depicting war or combat will be published?

5. Are war photojournalists afforded the opportunity to have input regarding the editing or re-touching of their photographs that are published by media outlets?

6. Have you ever personally experienced the editing or publishing of a photograph in a purposefully unrealistic manner, whether or not it was against your wishes?

7. If you yourself have not had a first-hand experience, do you know of anyone who has endured or experienced the editing or publishing of their photograph in a purposefully unrealistic or propagandistic manner?

8. How often do you think photographs from war zones are manipulated or inaccurate representations?

9. How has the introduction of digital imaging technology affected the photojournalism industry?

10. How has the introduction of social media—like Instagram—affected the photojournalism industry?

11. How do you perceive the future of the news photograph as an evidential object in light of the fabricated fake news campaigns, such as the Eduardo Martins incident, please see link below for details.

    http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-41174069

Thematic Coding Analysis

According to Given (2008), the advantage of employing a semi-structured interview rests in the ability to comprehend the "fundamentals of a community from the insider's perspective" (p. 290). This form of descriptive research attempts to garner an insider's perspective from within the professional photojournalist's community. This form of interview allows the researcher to "identify variation as well as common patterns" (ibid., p. 524). Wimmer & Dominik (2011) similarly echoed the aforementioned contentions. The focus on identification of both variation and commonality within responses is attained via thematic coding approach. Boyatzis (1998) set forth that thematic coding is a method to encode qualitative data. Given (2009) describes thematic coding as a "data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set" (p. 867). Prior to conducting interviews, coding categories can be designated, but these categories are more "heuristic than analytic" (ibid., p. 867). These categories can vary completely or simply transform during throughout the conduct of research. Further, this type of coding is a methodology that will increase a researcher's "accuracy or sensitivity in understanding or interrupting observations" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5). During the coding process, data collected from one-on-one interviews will be separated from their original discursive framework and marked in a manner that collates all similar data, which results in thematic categories of data. Thus, the researcher may select any given marker or theme so parallel data can be retrieved and reviewed in its entirety (Given, 2009). During this process data is "decontextualized from their original interview and recontextualized into a theme" (ibid., p. 867). Similar to the initial categories, themes are rarely fixed throughout the research. Instead,

themes are malleable as new concepts are garnered while reviewing the data, which in turn provides new insight and corresponding conceptualization of themes (ibid.). As a result of the fluid nature of thematic coding, it is difficult to ascertain exactly when during the research process "thematic coding becomes thematic analysis" (ibid., p. 868). Throughout the research and analysis processes, the researcher should remain cognizant of the relevance of each theme, as well as any developing theme. Essentially, the researcher must remain conceptually flexible and cognizant throughout the process, which Boyatzis (1998) refers to as "pattern recognition" (p. 7).

The researcher's flexibility and awareness allows for the data to "retain their connection to their sources and thus can lead to the ideographic…generalizations" (Given, 2009, p. 868). In order to cultivate valuable generalities from the coding process, "themes must be synthesized" (Given, p. 868). Within the ideal thematic analysis, patterns of commonality are identified and examined throughout all cases. Meanwhile, the circumstantial characteristics of the occurrences of disparity between all cases are also identified and examined, which allows the researcher to account for these disparities (Given, 2009).

Coding Methodology

The coding methodology intends to distinguish prevalent commonalities within interview responses, which may be indicative of a theme. Potential categories were identified prior to conducting interviews, but specific themes were selected after interviews were conducted and all responses were transcribed, reviewed and categorized. The justification for selecting themes after all data was evaluated and interpreted is based upon Boyatzis (1998) and Given (2008) recognizing this practice within thematic coding analysis. The themes were determined based upon the relevance to the thesis content. The responses were coded for the following topics and

conclusions were predicated upon how many visual image professionals within the sample referenced these circumstances. The below questions were not directly asked by the researcher so the coded responses were extracted from questioner replies provided by visual image professionals.

1. Are ethical practices still applied within the photojournalism industry?
2. Has digital technology distressed the photojournalism industry?
3. Does the image bank industry influence the photojournalism industry?
4. Does the contemporary news industry operate under the obligation to satiate instant gratification for news?
5. Do editors rely on the size of a photographer's social media following to determine the legitimacy of said photographer?
6. Has crowd sourcing amateurized the photojournalism industry?

10. Appendix 2 - CAPMAS

1. The last week of September 2018, the researcher traveled to CAPMAS to meet with Mr. Mostafa Saad Badawi (Under Secretary for CAPMAS President Office) who verbally indicated the researcher did not need CAPMAS approval as it involved interviews.
2. Consequently, the researcher contacted the Journalism and Mass Communication (JRMC) Department and Internal Review Board (IRB) at The American University in Cairo (AUC), both JRMC and IRB indicated the researcher did need CAPMAS approval without providing explicit reasoning to substantiate the necessity of CAPMAS. Furthermore, no assistance was provided to the researcher other than re-stating CAPMAS approval was necessary.
3. As a result of the lack of clarification from JRMC and IRB, the researcher emailed Mr. Mostafa at CAPMAS to request an email regarding our discussion to specifically indicate the researcher did not need CAPMAS approval. Mr. Mostafa replied to this request by indicating that he could not send this email.
4. As a result, in October the researcher returned to CAPMAS to submit the necessary paperwork for CAPMAS approval and was advised it would take no more than 2-3 months to complete the process.
5. Since submitting for approval, the researcher has been in touch with two different office administrators (Hoda and Sondos) via WhatsApp on a bi-weekly basis to follow up on the approval process. There has been no news, except that the submission has been with state security.
6. As a result of the process dragging on for almost seven months, the researcher emailed Dr. Rasha Abdullah in JRMC at AUC on March 18, 2019. Dr. Rasha directed the researcher to inquire with AUC IRB.
7. The researcher emailed Dr. Atta Gebril at AUC IRB on March 19, 2019 to confirm if fieldwork (specifically interviews) is subject to CAPMAS approval. Dr. Atta confirmed that interviews are indeed a tool in fieldwork, but could not confirm if they are subject to CAPMAS approval and referred the researcher to AUC's Office of the University Counselor.
8. The researcher emailed Ashraf Hatem at AUC's Office of the University Counselor on March 19, 2019 to inquire if fieldwork (specifically interviews) is subject to CAPMAS approval.
9. The researcher received an email reply from Ghada Fawzy (Executive Assistant to the University Counselor) at AUC's Office of the University Counselor on March 19, 2019. The researcher's question concerning CAPMAS approval was not answered. Instead the email reply from Ghada Fawzy was simply a boilerplate email providing the steps for CAPMAS approval.
10. The researcher replied to boilerplate email on March 20, 2019 and again posed the question regarding CAPMAS approval, which prompted a protracted email exchanged that culminated with Ghada Fawzy asked the researcher to call her directly.
11. The researcher spoke with Ghada Fawzy over the phone (01200052111) on March 24, 2019. Fawzy indicated that interviews were not subject to CAPMAS approval and was quite certain this was the case, especially if all of the interviewees were not Egyptian. Prior to concluding the phone call, the researcher asked Ghada Fawzy to email a summary of the phone conversation, specifically focusing on interviews not being subject to CAPMAS approval. Fawzy agreed and indicated the email would be sent the following day.

12. After receiving no email, the researcher followed up with Ghada Fawzy via email on March 27, 2019 asking her to send the summary email that was agreed upon prior to concluding the phone conversation on March 24, 2019. Ghada Fawzy replied to this request with a one-line email: “Thank you for your email. Please note that you still have to get CAPMAS approval,” which did not provide any justification or offer support.
13. The researcher replied to this Ghada Fawzy’s email on March 27, 2019 inquiring if CAPMAS approval was necessary if no Egyptians were interviewed. The researcher received no reply to this email
14. On April 3, 2019, the researcher emailed again and expressed frustration with the CAPMAS approval process because no individual or organization (e.g., CAPMAS, JRMC, AUC IRB or AUC's Office of the University Counselor) was able to provide a definitive answer to the researcher’s questions, nor was any assistance offered regarding the researchers particular situation.
15. On April 8, 2019, the researcher received an email from Ghada Fawzy stating, “Please note that you still have to wait for the CAPMAS approval,” which did not provide any justification or support.
16. As of May 11, 2019, almost eight months after initiating the CAPMAS approval process, the researcher has received no approval, nor any justification for the lack of approval. The researcher received no justification for needing CAMPAS approval from any individual or organization within AUC (e.g., JRMC, AUC IRB or AUC's Office of the University Counselor). Moreover, the researcher received no assistance from any of the aforementioned individuals or organizations throughout this process.