

Chapter 1

REPRESENTING WAR IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Artists, photographers, and the changing battlefield

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I trace the development of the visual reporting of warfare in the pre-cinema era, and follow discussions and debates about artistic and photographic representation. I begin by showing that up to the later nineteenth century, wars were often relatively small in scale; they were fought at close quarters, with cavalry charges, swordsmanship and the like. This kind of warfare was celebrated in the visual media for its heroics and pageantry. The audience for such media representations expanded through the nineteenth century with the development of illustrated periodicals and photography. But warfare was going through a transformation by this time, with weaponry gaining in range and accuracy, so the battlefield was becoming larger and the emphasis shifting from open conflict to concealment and defence. The visual media had some trouble coping with these changes, though in practice a working consensus emerged on the pages of illustrated periodicals in which two types of picture were used: photography to show the background events of the conflict, and artists' impressions to show the heat of battle. Meanwhile debates took place between the exponents of the two forms as to which could best capture and represent warfare: drawings or photographs. These debates were to have parallels in the field of early cinema.

TRADITIONAL WARFARE AS VISUAL SPECTACLE

Early representations of war in the visual media

War is the most extreme kind of human interaction, and arguably the activity which has the most profound effect on human and social development. It has always been an important subject for media representation, no matter what kind of media were available. In the ancient world, war was often portrayed in art and paintings – in Egyptian tomb art, for example – in the form of images glorifying war leaders. Such art was mainly for viewing by an elite, and the same applied to representations of war through the Middle Ages and beyond: one thinks, for example, of the Bayeux tapestry, and in a later age, salon paintings, all of which had a relatively limited viewership. With the proliferation of mass visual media in the nineteenth century (panoramas, lantern shows, illustrated periodicals, etc), representations of wars became more widely disseminated, though conflict was often celebrated in the same glorifying way as in the former age; its seamier sides – of death, destruction and loss – usually being minimised. It is worth taking a moment to examine why this should be so.

‘Enlightened’ and ‘light-hearted’ wars

After the large-scale Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century, the rest of the century was mainly marked by smaller conflicts. While there were major wars – notably, the Crimean War (1854-56), the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71)¹ – through most of the century ‘small wars’ were being waged almost continuously in what was effectively a non-stop low-level conflict. Even if one restricts the discussion to Britain’s involvement, this continuous military endeavour is striking. During Queen Victoria’s reign, from the 1830s to the end of the century, over forty, mainly colonial, wars were waged by British forces, and the country’s military expenditure grew threefold.² Other colonial powers were engaged in their own series of conflicts in this period, and no doubt this pattern of regular low-level conflict and growing expenditure on foreign wars was replicated for some of the other European nations.

Such wars were generally presented as being for the public good: both to increase the wealth and influence of the conquering power, but also to improve the lot of the subject peoples in the countries concerned. The latter point is sometimes overlooked in historical writings on colonialism, but was a strong motivation. British officers considered their colonial adventures as being benevolent, even ‘chivalric’ endeavours, a necessary means of overthrowing fanatics and dangerous powers.³ One commonly finds this belief expressed at the turn of the century, especially by American and British writers. As we shall see, the desire to establish good governance was a principal motive for action in the late 1890s by the Americans in Cuba and the Philippines, and for Britain’s reconquest of the Sudan. It would be hard to find a clearer statement of this view of the beneficence of military intervention (nor one expressed in better prose), than Winston Churchill’s:

‘What enterprise that an enlightened community may attempt is more noble and more profitable than the reclamation from barbarism of fertile regions and large populations? To give peace to warring tribes, to administer justice where all was violence, to strike the chains off the slave, to draw the richness from the soil, to plant the earliest seeds of commerce and learning, to increase in whole peoples their capacities for pleasure and diminish their chances of pain – what more beautiful ideal or more valuable reward can inspire human effort? The act is virtuous, the exercise is invigorating, and the result often extremely profitable.’⁴

While Churchill’s frankness is extraordinary, many others of a colonial frame of mind would no doubt have agreed, if more discretely. However, in practice these apparently noble aims tended to be enacted through considerable violence, the Sudan campaign of the 1890s being a good example, where an overwhelming western superiority in weaponry – ‘scientific war’ it was called – defeated traditional, poorly armed opponents. And while Churchill’s ideals of bringing peace, justice, and learning were achieved to some extent in some regions, it was within a limited colonial context.⁵ But while our modern view would differ markedly from Churchill’s, our theme is the media representation of the events of this era, so the important issue is what people at the time,

especially the public in the west, thought and believed of the actions and wider roles of their own countries.

It was again Churchill who expressed another not-uncommon nineteenth century view about warfare. Through most of the century colonial wars were conceived of by a good section of the military and probably the public, as being almost routine affairs. They were usually modest in scale – indeed were often called ‘small wars’ – and resulted in relatively low casualty figures (among the colonial forces, that is).⁶ For this reason – and unlike today – war was often not regarded as being overly horrendous, and Churchill later noted of these conflicts in the pre First World War era:

‘This kind of war was full of fascinating thrills. It was not like the Great War. Nobody expected to be killed. Here and there in every regiment or battalion, half a dozen, a score, at the worst thirty or forty, would pay the forfeit; but to the great mass of those who took part in the little wars of Britain in those vanished light-hearted days, this was only a sporting element in a splendid game.’⁷

Churchill goes on further to contrast this ‘light-hearted’ game of war with the horrors of the First World War, ‘where death was the general expectation’ among soldiers.⁸ Modern military historians agree with this distinction between the two kinds of warfare. What is called ‘total war’ only appeared in the twentieth century – ‘a truly mass phenomenon’, as Susan Carruthers puts it – in which, as well as the military forces suffering casualties, entire large populations were seriously affected and ordinary citizens suffered injury.⁹ In the nineteenth century, by contrast, armed conflict had been smaller in scale and impact than modern war, with a concomitantly lesser effect on the armed forces and the general population.

There were therefore two good reasons (and probably others) why most of the publics in western countries were generally not anti-war and were supportive of their militaries: the conflicts being fought were considered to be of some service to the world, and yet these small wars had relatively little impact on the colonising country. This generally positive regard by the public in the west for military forces and their endeavours was reflected in representations in the visual media.

War in nineteenth century visual media

Military achievements in this era were glorified for the public in illustrated periodicals, magic lantern shows, dioramas and panoramas. Battlefield exploits and heroic deeds such as cavalry charges were represented in splendid detail and magnificence, and ‘heroic myths of empire’ were promulgated.¹⁰ Panorama painters were especially prone to celebrate armed conflict, and indeed about half of the surviving examples of panoramas depict warfare [Fig. 1 and 2], as do the printed versions. For example, an extant panorama in Innsbruck represents the battle of the Tiroleans against Napoleon’s forces (Mount Isel, 1809), while another in Belgium depicts the battle of Waterloo. Another example, the Boubaki panorama, shows an event in 1871 from the Franco-Prussian War, and exemplifies the scale and impact

of these depictions: measuring 10 metres x 110 metres, it gives an almost perfect illusion of three-dimensional reality.¹¹ Lantern shows too were often on military themes, with war correspondents describing their experiences, or military men talking about regimental life.¹² [Fig. 3] War-related lantern presentations later became more widespread through mass-produced slides. [Fig. 9]

Box:

Art and war

‘It is a grotesque paradox that war, humankind's most destructive activity, has also been the inspiration for some of its greatest moments of creativity. This paradox is reflected in our personal and societal responses to conflict. War is 'evil', but it can also be 'just'; sacrifice can be 'worthless', but it can also be 'glorious'. War undoubtedly brings out the worst in humankind but it can also prompt episodes of extraordinary courage, compassion and self-sacrifice. War is often regarded as 'the mother of invention'. However, it may equally well be considered to be 'the mother of creativity'. From Homer's *Iliad* to Goya's *The Disasters of War* or Britten's *War Requiem*, our seemingly innate compulsion to destroy each other has been the source of inspiration for some of the greatest works of art. This is not surprising. No activity of humankind engages our emotions as totally as war.’

Colin Harding, NMPFTV website.

It is perhaps no accident that the emergence of such larger-scale depictions coincided with Napoleon's time, for his was an era of increasing public participation in war. The French commander had created a large conscript, citizen army, which therefore touched most French peoples' lives directly, with much of the population having a friend or relative in the army. The country's forces became extremely prominent through public parades in vivid uniforms, and were celebrated through numerous references in songs and in a variety of imagery.¹³ Napoleon's military campaigns inspired many paintings which celebrated his battles (sometimes, interestingly, paying more attention to propaganda and glorious victory than to the actual military outcome).¹⁴ [Fig. 10] This national celebration of the military developed in all western countries to different degrees though the first half of the nineteenth century. [Fig. 4] It expanded further with the arrival of mechanically reproducible mass media, which were truly able to reach the entire public.

Mass media and war correspondents

While newspapers had been published from well before the nineteenth century, their circulation mushroomed in the 1800s, even more so when cheap newsprint became available later in the century. Illustrated periodicals appeared, and swiftly expanded as a new form of journalism which combined the written word with illustrations by artists, often depicting contemporary events. Needless to say, among the most prominent subjects of their reports and illustrations were warfare and the military.

To cover the various distant conflicts for the growing numbers of newspapers and periodicals of the nineteenth century, a new breed of reporter appeared:

the war correspondent and war artist. These correspondents would regularly travel to the world's conflict zones to write reports or make drawings of the largely colonial wars which the western powers were waging. Among them were the Britons, Melton Prior of the *Illustrated London News*, George Steevens of the *Daily Mail*, Bennet Burleigh of the *Telegraph*, Archibald Forbes of the *Daily News*, and there were a host of American and Continental European correspondents too, including Richard Harding Davis, Henri Turot, and Luigi Barzini. They were undeniably brave (Prior as a shell exploded, covering him in sand: 'Never mind, I've got a jolly good sketch'), though frequently chauvinistic (Forbes on the British victory over the Zulus: 'It did one good to see the glorious old "white arm" reassert again its pristine prestige').¹⁵ Indeed, such correspondents made no secret of their affiliations to their own countries, sometimes to the extent of actually taking up weapons to fight when so moved, subsequently reverting to their role as mere reporters.¹⁶

For the newspapers and periodicals concerned, sending war correspondents and artists to the seat of wars was an expensive business, especially given the high costs of telegraphing despatches back – sometimes running into hundreds of dollars for a single telegram – and while the general opinion seemed to be that the costs were justified by the higher circulations that the newspapers achieved, some newspapermen dissented.¹⁷ But whether or not the sums precisely added up, reports of wars were vivid and exciting, and were undoubtedly popular with readers.

Photographic war reporting

At about the same time that illustrated periodicals were gaining in public favour, another medium was also growing in importance. Photography had appeared in the late 1830s, and though this new visual medium initially involved complicated equipment and processing, it soon found a role in news and war reportage.¹⁸ The Crimean War (1854-55) was the first conflict to be extensively covered by photography, notably by Roger Fenton, whose images were in effect semi-official propaganda, offering a reassuring view of the war (in contrast to the written reports of the iconoclastic William H. Russell). Fenton's photographs avoided the grimmer sides of war: the surviving examples, while they show much destruction wrought by the fighting and damaged buildings etc., there are no dead bodies.¹⁹ The American Civil War (1861-65) was covered by many camera-reporters, and the war was treated by some of these photographers in a more varied and critical fashion than had been the case in the Crimea.²⁰ The next major conflict to be recorded by cameras was the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), and a number of images survive depicting the circumstances of the war, though little which indicates the human conflict.

Due to the ponderous nature of cameras of the time, these early photographs of wars rarely captured battlefield action, and whatever there was tended to be distant and fuzzy. These images showed, rather, soldiers en route to the front, camp life, refugees departing, general pictures of the location of the conflict, and so on. They offered, one might argue, a more palpable and authentic impression of the circumstances of the war than a drawing could do.²¹ Thus within the space of some fifteen years, a tradition of photographic

war reporting had been established, alongside the existing practice of the war artist.

The actual dissemination of photographs, however, lagged some way behind, for, until later in the century there was no way to mass produce photographs as half-tones in print. At this early stage (say in the 1870s) images could only be reproduced in publications in the form of line drawings. So the photographs of the wars that I have mentioned had a relatively small audience, restricted to the limited number of actual prints which could be made and distributed (though sometimes photographs were traced as line drawings for publication). Even so, souvenir (and some other) photographs depicting soldiers were circulated quite widely, and had some impact: an overview study by Henisch suggests that through such images, the status in society of ordinary fighting men seems to have improved.²²

By the 1890s, though, the technology became available to reproduce half-tones in print, and some publishers took up the challenge to illustrate their magazines with still photographs. In this way the dispersion and impact of such images, including images about wars and conflicts, expanded greatly.²³ However, the ability to reproduce photographs on the page did not mean that there was a sudden transition to conflicts being exclusively illustrated by photography. Drawings by artists continued to appear for many years (indeed, right up to the present day in some publications), for it soon became apparent that artists' impressions could represent some types of incidents which photography could not. This applied to news in general, but especially to military conflict.

A NEW KIND OF 'INVISIBLE' WAR

'Prosaic' warfare on the expanding battlefield

For most of history warfare has been a highly visible activity, fought hand-to-hand, eyeball to eyeball. There was no call for concealment. Indeed, in Roman times soldiers deliberately made themselves conspicuous in battle through accoutrements, gilded helmets, even jewellery, because the system of battle honours encouraged individuals to enhance their own visibility so their courageous actions would be noticed.²⁴ Aspects of this visible style of warfare were maintained through to the early nineteenth century, with brightly coloured uniforms and even musical accompaniment as soldiers went into battle. Great emphasis was placed on individual courage and valour, and skill in close-order combat.

But the nature of warfare was going through a transformation in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, some historians trace the change from as early as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Revolutionary new equipment had been developed, including longer-range rifles and artillery, thereby reducing the need for open, close-order, man-to-man combat, and effectively stretching out the combat zone; for a small force could now hold off a much larger attacking force than heretofore.²⁵ The battlefield had been growing in size from antiquity; the expansion was particularly pronounced in the modern era. Dupuy

calculates that just from the American Civil War to World War I the 'dispersion pattern' increased such that the same number of soldiers occupied about ten times the area of ground.²⁶ Tactics were changing too, and while many still hung on to the doctrine of the offensive – arguing that aggressive, spirited attack (the glorious cavalry charges etc of old) would prove decisive – in general the emphasis was shifting to a belief in the greater value of unglamorous concealment and defence.

Opposing forces were soon at hundreds of yards distance from one another, concealed from view while exchanging sniper and artillery fire. The change surprised some observers. One correspondent at the Greco-Turkish War in 1897 noted with some disappointment that: 'Of hand-to-hand fighting it is impossible for me to speak, as I witnessed none. There was scarcely any if indeed there was any at all, during the whole war'.²⁷ Most of the action, he said, consisted of exchanges of long-range artillery and rifle fire.

As the range and accuracy of weaponry increased, so it became more crucial to conceal one's forces from the opposing fire, and at this time therefore many of the previously visible elements were being taken out of warfare. Bright uniforms were giving way to camouflage and khaki (during the Boer War the entire British military changed to 'Khaki Drill').²⁸ The military theorist Jean de Bloch remarked in 1901 that:

'The romance of war has vanished into thin air with its gaudy uniforms, unfurled banners, and soul-stirring music. Military operations have become as prosaic as ore-smelting, and far less respectable'.²⁹

No-one noticed this change in style of warfare more than the war correspondents. Veteran Frederic Villiers had been reporting on wars since the 1870s (and, as we shall see, played a crucial role in pioneering the filming of warfare). He had his first glimpse of 'the modern style of warfare', while reporting on the Japanese march into Manchuria in 1894 during the Sino-Japanese war. Most of all he noticed that the display and ritual which he had formerly seen were now lacking:

'...there was no blare of bugals [sic] or roll of drums; no display of flags or of martial music of any sort... It was most uncanny to me after my previous experiences of war in which massed bands cheered the flagging spirits of the attackers and bugals rang out their orders through the day. All had changed in this modern warfare: it seemed to me a very cold-blooded, uninspiring way of fighting, and I was mightily depressed for many weeks till I had grown accustomed to the change.'³⁰

Smokeless powder and visibility

One of the main developments – though often overlooked – which changed the 'look' of the battlefield at this time was smokeless powder, for this reduced the clouds of smoke formerly obscuring the air. A leading British military analyst wrote at the turn of the century of the change brought about by the

combination of long-range rifle fire (the 'Mauser-swept battle-field') and this powder, stating:

'...the flat trajectory of the small-bore rifle, [i.e. its accurate aim] together with the invisibility of the man who uses it, have wrought a complete revolution in the art of fighting battles'.³¹

The military forces of several powers were using smokeless powder by the 1890s, including British troops in the Boer War. Again this development was not to the liking of the correspondents, and Villiers complained – during the campaign in South Africa – that war was now 'altogether different' from the style he had seen in the 1870s, and that one of the main changes came from the use of the new powder:

'This was the first time I have ever been in a campaign with smokeless powder on both sides. The sensation was most uncanny. One never knew whether one was under fire or not till the actual whistling of bullets in one's immediate vicinity notified the fact. In the old days one could get quite near to the enemy by waiting till the two forces were hotly engaged, and advance on either flank, having located the enemy by the puffs of smoke from their rifles. Now it's all changed, and is very demoralising even to the hardened war correspondent.'³²

Villiers' remark that formerly one could locate the enemy by puffs of smoke was of course the reason that black (smoky) powder had been replaced, for if a war correspondent could locate a rifleman's smoking gun, so surely could the opposing gunmen. As one writer vividly put it, in firing a gun using black powder, one might just as well hoist up 'a big flag with the words, "Here we are!"'³³ There was another visibility issue with smokeless powder, for it not only served to hide one's own positions during battle, it also kept the air clearer for troops and commanders to see the increasingly distant enemy positions more clearly.³⁴

But the new smoke-free battlefield was not visually pleasing, to some peoples' eyes. An American correspondent stated of the battle of El Caney in the Spanish-American War (1898) that, 'The use of smokeless powder takes all the picturesqueness out of an infantry battle'.³⁵ Interestingly, early filmmakers too did not like this innovation, and frequently ignored this military development in their depictions. For example, in the fake films of the Boer and Philippine-American wars the filmmakers used very smoky powder so spectators could see the rifle fire. In later years, cowboy and war films would also use such smoky powder. Clearly the needs of the real battlefield and the needs of media people and filmmakers were diverting sharply even before the nineteenth century was over.

REPRESENTING THE NEW WARFARE

Photographs versus drawings

If this new 'invisible' warfare made the battlefield less picturesque for war correspondents and artists, the new weaponry also had the effect of making their work more dangerous. Bloch predicted in 1899 that, due to more accurate and longer range weapons with faster rates of fire, henceforth in warfare, 'there will be a belt a thousand paces wide... swept by the fire of both sides, a belt in which no living being can stand for a moment'.³⁶ Bloch's prediction came to pass in that same year, on the open veldt of South Africa during the Boer War, where forces were often separated by large expanses of 'Mauser-swept' no-man's-land. This was as deadly an area for correspondents as for combatants, especially for photographers who needed to be relatively close to their subjects. Of course even in traditional warfare, photographers would have hesitated from going onto the actual battlefield, but at least some elements of the fight could have been perceived from the sidelines. Now, with this kilometre-wide belt of deadly fire, almost nowhere was safe, anyone present in the war zone was at risk. A writer, C.G. Paul, put the problem succinctly in July 1900, stating that taking photographs of fighting in the South African War was impossible 'owing to the probability of the photographer himself being "sniped" by some Boer sharpshooters'.³⁷ From now on they would mainly be confined to positions behind their own lines. And, as telephoto lenses for cameras were still a rarity in the late 19th century, photographers couldn't yet peer very far into the expansive battlefield.

The writer just quoted, Paul, believed that, because of the danger of accurate, long-range gunfire, if combat in South Africa were to be depicted it would be by draughtsmen in the form of artists' impressions, not cameras.³⁸ This is indeed what transpired, for artists were not restricted by the optical limitations of the cameras of this era. Their task in depicting the new warfare was challenging rather than impossible, for they constructed their imagined images based on more than what was immediately visible. Artists could effectively meld several sources together: they could see troop movements in the distance using field telescopes, and could follow such developments over time; they might later find out what had taken place in battle from talking to soldiers; then they would draw their artistic impressions using a combination of this data and their previous experience of warfare.

So were the photographers therefore redundant at the front? Actually, no, for they too found a role, taking more general, complementary views of the war zone, showing the *background* to the war: troops on the move, daily routine in camp, commanders in the field, the landscape or inhabitants of the war zone. And both these forms of depiction – the photograph and the drawing – found a place on the pages of illustrated periodicals, both during the Boer War and in the depiction of other conflicts in this period (and indeed for some other news stories). Sometimes these different 'genres' of images appeared on adjacent pages or even the same page, in a kind of 'montage': the photographs provided the authentic context, while the drawings or artists' impressions showed the actual heat of the event, of battle, in dramatic style.

Some examples from the Spanish-American War show how this worked in practice. Shortly after Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet in the Philippines in 1898, *Leslie's Weekly* published both types of image. A dramatic artist's impression of the naval battle itself, which depicted a Spanish ship exploding and burning (actually a quite brilliant image: not of course entirely realistic, but very effective). And further on in the magazine the reader could see a page of general photographic views of the Philippines, which established a backdrop for where the battle had taken place.³⁹ [Fig. 7 and 8] Later in the campaign, when US troops were in Cuba, the photographers took views of soldiers in their daily routines and so on, but generally failed to capture moments of action. So again, dramatic drawings filled the gap, in the form of Howard Christy's glorious and dramatic drawings of US troops advancing under fire. [Fig. 5 and 6]

Already by the 1890s publishers well understood the complementary value and use of the two different kinds of image. One authority at the time of the Spanish-American War opined that photography was best for men in repose, landscapes etc., but that the draughtsman had proved his value during the war with such fine depictions of military action and combat that no photographer could ever equal.⁴⁰ Photography might provide veracity but lacked drama.

But the simultaneous presence in magazines of both photographic and drawn depictions was not a stable consensus, and was accompanied by an intense debate about the relative merits of each medium: the argument being broadly whether the artist or the camera could best capture/represent warfare. I will describe this debate between media in some detail, for I suggest that it has some analogy with a parallel distinction and debate which was to arise in the early filmic coverage of warfare, between actuality films and fakes. What's more, the debates in both film and photographic circles were taking place at about the same time, most intensively in 1899 to 1900, at the time of the Boer War.

The 'intelligence of the artist' versus 'unintelligent photos'

Part of this debate, amazingly, took place in the midst of the Boer War itself. In April 1900, as the British Army and the correspondents waited in Bloemfontein for the next push forward, the bored scribes started up their own newspaper called *The Friend*. The artist W.B. Wollen published a forthright essay in one issue entitled, 'The war artist of to-day', in which he reiterated the, by now, familiar argument that the stills camera could only effectively depict scenes 'which are more or less peaceful'.⁴¹ It could not successfully represent – 'unless it is a cinemetograph' [sic], he added – scenes during actual conflict, such as an artillery battery in action with its panicking horse team as an enemy shell drops nearby.

A couple of days later the distinguished photographer H.C. Shelley, also present in Bloemfontein, put the opposing point of view, with more originality and not a little spleen. The camera could indeed capture scenes like the battery in action, he wrote, and what's more it would depict it correctly, whereas artists sometimes got the details wrong in their pictures, and worse,

imposed their point of view on their picture. This latter was Shelley's crucial point. As he put it:

'Try as he may after the actual, the man with the pencil thrusts his personality between the event he sees, and the people at home for whom he wishes to reproduce it...'

But while Shelley saw this point of view of the artist as a shortcoming, the artists themselves and their supporters considered 'attitude' to be a positive virtue. One pundit in the UK, C.K. Shorter, addressed this issue just before the war: he denied that for news reporting, photography would triumph over the artist, purely because it lacked this personal vision; it was unselective. Photography was no good, he wrote, at stressing the *significant* points of a conflict, most notably the success of our side versus theirs. The camera could give no prominence, for example, to the number of enemy dead, for it 'minimises the enemy'. By contrast the artist-correspondent of former times, 'never failed to cumber the foreground with the bodies of the foe'. Moreover, Shorter claimed, photography 'absolutely ignores personal valour, or depicts it in so tame a light that the spectator is left stone cold'. Indeed, he considered that, for depicting any kind of news, the medium of photography was unsatisfactory and too literal compared to the draughtsman:

'In the old time one found the news of the day transfigured by the bright intelligence of the artist, quick to seize the essentials only; today one finds the pages black with unintelligent photos, each a mere accumulation of irrelevant and dead-alive details, hopelessly out of proportion to the facts which they would chronicle.'⁴²

Yet Shorter was losing the argument, for such pages, 'black with unintelligent photos', did seem to interest the public. Even some people from the art world acknowledged this, and backed away from Shorter's somewhat extreme position, especially as the human impact of the Boer War hit home. One writer, a regular columnist on the arts, considered that 'the public want the facts' and not a melodramatic, drawn version. He thought that, for example, a battle painting of a charge of the lancers 'has no chance against the much more prosaic picture by the photographer', showing the relatively humdrum activities of troops in the war zone.⁴³

Certainly, however the proponents of the artist's vision, such as Shorter, would protest, the dual system of illustration in periodicals – photography and drawings – was changing, with the former slowly gaining the upper hand. This evolution was of course noticed at the time, but was also perceptively seen in historical context by the critic André Bazin. In an aside in one of his essays he refers to the dual system of illustration, and suggests that this was not a stable state:

'It would be interesting ... to study, in the illustrated magazines of 1890-1910, the rivalry between photographic reporting and the use of drawings. The latter, in particular, satisfied the baroque need for the

dramatic. A feeling for the photographic document developed only gradually.⁴⁴

This 'feeling' for photography did develop over the following years and decades, or at least it became a dominant form, and the artists' impression slowly disappeared from magazines. What's more, the photographs which now filled the pages had gained in immediacy and 'drama' thanks partly to the introduction of more mobile miniature cameras. As Bazin suggests, 'the photographic document' was increasingly seen to have an intrinsic value, a value born of authenticity.

Photographic deception

However, let us return finally to the debate between artistic and photographic representation. There has been in our discussion till now an important element missing: the element of photographic manipulation and deception. This is a theme which, also, the Bloemfontein debaters, Wollen and Shelley, had ignored. The difference between the two men was mainly about art rather than photography. The essence of their disagreement was that, while Wollen valued the point of view in artistic illustration, Shelley thought that this was a weakness of art in relation to war. But both seemed to assume that, by contrast, photography was *objective* and free of point of view (they just differed as to whether this was a good or a bad thing). This objectivity was a 'given', an assumption, by both debaters. Photographs were believed to depict an accurate and 'true' state of the events which they recorded.

I suspect that this was the general opinion about photography in the 1900 era. Of course most people by this time understood that photographs could be faked and manipulated, but this was probably considered a minor aspect of the medium. It was widely believed that the photographic document should be, and normally was, objective. This authentic document had an intrinsic value and importance to it: an 'aura' (to borrow and slightly modify Walter Benjamin's term).⁴⁵ Therefore any attempt to subvert it was regarded with great disapproval, and when manipulation of photographs did occur – unlike with artists' drawings – this was almost never seen as praiseworthy. Wollen named as one of the great advantages of drawings, that they could bear the personal mark of the artist.

But as far as photographs went, any such personal mark, intervention, or manipulation was not seen as a means to improve the image; it was seen as a form of deception. And any deception regarding the representation of a war in particular was likely to be resented, for it carried the implication that life or death moments were being manipulated for frivolous artistic effect or (worse) for pecuniary advantage by the photographer.⁴⁶ As photographs became disseminated more widely, and increasingly appeared in magazines, finally predominating in these publications, photographic manipulation eventually became a fact of media life, though, I would argue, was never accepted as legitimate. (See Appendix on 'Deception in nineteenth century war photography').

I would further argue that photographic manipulation was to be an even more controversial issue with regard to the early cinema than it had been in the illustrated magazines. As we shall see in the following chapter, early filmmakers seem to have adopted some of the traditions and practices employed in illustrated magazines in the reporting of warfare. These practices, I suggest, included the idea of using two different genres of films – actuality and staged – to represent conflicts. But the complicating factor in cinema was that both genres of images (actuality shots and staged/faked films) were recorded photographically. So in addition to the controversies about which of the two genres was best for representing war, there came a whole new layer of controversy about the deceptive use of photography as such.

Notes:

¹ One might also add the Russo-Turkish War (1877), Prussia's war against Austria and Denmark in the 1860s and the Mexican War (1846-48).

² 'Wars of the Queen's reign', in Henry Sell, *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press... 1900* (London, c1900), p.403, which lists 43 wars for this period.

³ John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). In his introduction MacKenzie discusses this perceived 'chivalric' mission.

⁴ This was written following the Sudan victory. Winston Churchill, *The River War : The Sudan, 1898* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899-1900), vol. 1, p.18. One might see similar motives for war persisting even into recent times, with the interventions in Bosnia and Iraq, most notably.

⁵ The colonisers often had patronising views about the peoples they ruled and their societies. For example, as far as Egypt was concerned (and the Sudan too, one imagines) a recent historical study confirms the British disbelief in the colonial era that Egyptians could run their country for themselves. See P.J. Cain, 'Character and imperialism: The British financial administration of Egypt, 1878-1914', *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 34, no. 2, June 2006, p.177-200.

⁶ There was considerable discussion of 'small wars' and how to fight them (notably in Callwell's 1896 book, *Small Wars*). Incidentally, a phrase used to describe the rash of small wars in the last decade of the century was 'the wars of the '90s'. (e.g. Andrew Atteridge's book of 1899, *The Wars of the 'Nineties*).

⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Mandarin, 1991 [orig 1930]), p. 195. In the same book (chapter 9) Churchill displayed a similar 'light-hearted' attitude to the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, which he planned to cover as a war correspondent, to 'see the fun and tell the tale', as he put it.

⁸ Ibid. Churchill stated of the First World War, in contrast to the earlier type of warfare: 'Most of us were fated to see a war where the hazards were reversed, where death was the general expectation and severe wounds were counted as lucky escapes, where whole brigades were shorn away under the steel flail of artillery and machine-guns, where the survivors of one tornado knew that they would certainly be consumed in the next or the next after that.'

⁹ Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p.1-3. Jean de Bloch wrote in 1901 (see source below) that war was no longer an isolated action as of yore: armies were now composed of entire populations, war affecting whole economies.

¹⁰ On such visual representations and celebrations of warfare, see essays in MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, including chapter 5, 'Heroic myths of empire'.

¹¹ See Mike Smith note in *MLS Newsletter* no.85, Sep 2006, p.9. My figure of about half comes from a rough count of the list of the world's surviving panoramas at www.panoramapainting.com

¹² For example, see Ian Mackley, 'More on Harry Bow', in *New Magic Lantern Journal* 10, no. 2, Autumn 2006, p.30-32: a spectator's account of attending two military-related magic lantern shows in 1893.

¹³ Richard Thomson, *The Troubled Republic : Visual Culture and Social Debate in France, 1889-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Quoted in Pat Hodgson, *The War Illustrators* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1977).

Incidentally, the term, 'white arm' is not quite as racist as it sounds: it is a translation of the French, 'arme blanche', which can mean sword or cavalry lance or cavalry in general, or even a fight with knives (Collins/Robert); in its English translation in the 19th century it tended to refer to colonial conquest by cavalry.

¹⁶ For example, several American war correspondents in the Spanish-American War intervened in the fighting on their country's side. See Charles Henry Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967), p. vii; and other instances which I mention in the course of the thesis.

¹⁷ Editors and proprietors had mixed views on whether the costs of war reporting were worth it. The question arose with particular force during the Spanish-American War when some newspapers spent heavily to cover the action. The *New York Journal*, for example, chartered ten boats to transport its several correspondents to the front, and issued as many as 40 editions in a day; altogether the paper was spending \$3,000 daily to cover the war. Journalist Arthur Brisbane concluded that wars were bad for newspapers due to the huge cost of covering them. See Arthur Brisbane, 'The Modern Newspaper in War Time', *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 25, 1898. Alfred Harmsworth, the British press baron, agreed, stating to his stockholders that the costs of reporting this war were 'enormous', and adding that 'the circulation of the papers did not run up sufficiently high to pay the expense.' Reported in *The Critic*, 34, Jan 1899, p.16 as a recent statement. See also on the costs of war reporting: Ray Stannard Baker, 'How the News of the War Is Reported', *McClure's Magazine* 11, Sep 1898; Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p. 445-6; and Nicholas Hiley, 'Making War: The British News Media and Government Control, 1914-1916', Ph.D., Open University, 1984. War news did boost circulation, according to Kennedy Jones in 1920, and a historian, Roger T. Stearn, suggests that the Franco-Prussian, Sudan and Boer Wars all increased circulation, though the telegraph companies were the chief financial beneficiaries of foreign wars. Stearn's essay 'War correspondents and colonial war, c.1870-1900' is in MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, p.141. In any case, this high expenditure set something of a precedent, so when film companies proposed to send cameramen to cover wars from the late 1890s, they were aware that the business of war reporting was an expensive one.

¹⁸ For information on early war photography, see: Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, rev. and enl. ed 1964), p. 67-8; André Barret, *Les Premiers Reporters Photographes : 1848-1914* (Paris: Andre Barret, 1977), p. 48-76; Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene : A Social History, 1839-1889* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), p. 223-47; Gus Macdonald, *Camera : A Victorian Eyewitness* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1979), p. 80-90. A good summary of this subject is provided (in German) in Gerhard Paul, *Bilder Des Krieges. Krieg Der Bilder. Die Visualisierung Des Modernen Krieges* (Paderborn etc; München: Ferdinand Schöningh ; Wilhelm Fink, 2004).

¹⁹ Alison Gernsheim and Helmut Gernsheim, *The History of Photography - from the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 267-74; Claire Bustarret, *Crimée, 1854-1856 : Premiers Reportages de Guerre* (Paris: Musée de l'armée, 1994).

²⁰ One historian, William C. Davis, has calculated the extraordinary number of people involved in this visual documentation: 'More than 2000 photographers plied their varying processes from 1861 to 1865, covering almost every aspect of the war in every theater.' William C. Davis, *The Civil War in Photographs* (Carlton Books Ltd, 2002). However, rather than being journalist-photographers, many of these were commercial photographers, taking pictures of soldiers for mementoes.

²¹ For example, many of the photographs of the US Civil War show the aftermath of battle; few were taken during the battles themselves. See Arthur Goldsmith, *The Camera and Its Images* (Italy: Ridge Press, 1979), p. 80-87.

²² Souvenir photographs therefore gave a rather positive image of the military, whereas other forms of photography were less predictable in their attitudes, with war itself being alternately glorified or reviled. Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, *The Photographic Experience, 1839-1914: Images and Attitudes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 388, 393. One study finds a similar change in attitude to ordinary soldiers in paintings, with a major change occurring in the 1870s to a type of painting in which the conduct of the ordinary soldier on campaign was the focus, and the authority of the officer no longer imposed, but articulated by the soldiers themselves. See essay by Paul Usherwood on British battle painting in Mackenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, p.162 and 176.

²³ A distinction must be made here between the relative swiftness with which magazine publishers took up photography and the hesitation among their newspaper cousins. While the first halftone photograph appeared in a newspaper in 1880, photographs caught on slowly, and only from 1904 was a paper (the *Daily Mirror*) exclusively illustrated with photographs, and some other papers only changed to all photographic illustration much later. Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston, Mass.: David R. Godine, 1980), p.103-08.

²⁴ See Kate Gilliver, 'Display in Roman Warfare: The Appearance of Armies and Individuals on the Battlefield', *War In History* 14, no. 1, January 2007, p.1-21. Sculptures and commemorations in Roman cities were a means of bringing distant, invisible war to the attention of the population. See Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch, *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁵ 'Is the art of war revolutionised? 1. Infantry', *The Friend*, 24 Mar 1900.

²⁶ Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare* (London: Jones Publishing Co., 1980), p.312. He calculates the number of square meters of battlefield per man in the Civil War era at 257.5 and for World War I at 2,475. Dupuy also finds that percentage casualty rates per day also have fallen from the 17th to 20th centuries: see p.314.

²⁷ Wilfred Pollock, *War and a Wheel: The Græco-Turkish War as Seen from a Bicycle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897), p.107. Pollock observed that in general the Greeks retreated as the Turks advanced.

²⁸ 'Khaki' (drab) uniform had first been introduced in British units in India in the middle of the 19th century to 'make them invisible in a land of dust'; by 1885 the rest of the army in India followed suit, and for the Boer War the entire British military changed to KD (Khaki Drill). S. Hodson-Pressinger, 'Khaki', *MI*, no.122, 1998, p.7. A Major Hodson had been the pioneer of khaki in India in 1848. Queen Victoria was not a fan, describing 'kharkee' clothing as 'hideous' and hoping never to see it in England. (Reported in a letter from Sir H.F. Ponsonby, 16 Jan 1884, in Wolseley Collection, Hove Library.) This quest for invisibility even affected naval forces. In the late 1890s, the US Navy Department directed that all vessels should be painted a dull gray 'to diminish as much as possible their visibility'. (*Harper's Monthly*, 37, Jan 1899, p.175.)

²⁹ Jean de Bloch, 'Wars of the Future', *Contemporary Review* 80, Sep 1901, p.305-332.

³⁰ Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1920), vol. 2, p.134.

³¹ Lt. Colonel Henderson, an intelligence officer on Roberts' staff during the Boer War, as quoted in: Jean de Bloch, 'Wars of the Future', op. cit. Henderson believed too that the cavalry were played out, being, in his words, 'as obsolete as the Crusaders'. Bloch notes that British officers had been alerted to the radical impact of Mauser fire during the Tirah campaign in the mid 1890s.

³² Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the Front... a Talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', *Daily News*, 19 April 1900, p.7. Villiers went on to say he had sometimes been astonished at the reckless bravery of photographers at the front.

³³ George F. Kennan, *Campaigning in Cuba* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1971 [1899]), p. 145. Speaking of big flags, some officers wanted to retain 'visibility' for some aspects of the battlefield, and at the battle of Atbara in 1898 General Gatacre took a hands-on role at the centre of his regiment, 'his position indicated by a large Union Jack'. Churchill, *The River War*, vol. 1, p.430.

³⁴ Whissel discusses the issue of visibility on the battlefield. Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: The Battle Re-Enactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 3, Aug 2002, p.225-243.

³⁵ He could, though, see its advantages, and was indignant that some American troops had rifles firing the old black powder while some Spaniards possessed the smokeless variety (and the Spaniards used the best rifle in Europe, the Mauser). He called it 'governmental murder' to supply the US forces with such outdated gunpowder. See H. Irving Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba* (New York: Street & Smith, 1900), p. 82, 100. It was the most important innovation of this war, states Jerry Keenan, *Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American & Philippine-American Wars* (Santa Barbara, Calif. ; Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2001), p.402-5. While some American soldiers in the Cuba and Philippines campaigns still used the old smoky powder, the British used smokeless powder in the Sudan campaign at Omdurman and in the Boer war. Regarding its use at Omdurman, and its advantages, see Owen Spencer Watkins, *With Kitchener's Army : Being a Chaplain's Experiences with the Nile Expedition, 1898* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1899), p. 165.

³⁶ Bloch, p.xvi in his 1899 *Is War Now Impossible?*, quoted in John Gooch, 'Attitudes to War in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', in *War and Society*, edited by B. Bond and I. Roy (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p.88-102. The process that Bloch delineates would culminate in the trench warfare and no man's lands of the Great War.

³⁷ Cited in Peter Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', in *Sudan : The Reconquest Reappraised*, edited by Edward M. Spiers (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 83.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ For the artist's impression see LW 12 May 1898, p.304-5, and for the photographs (showing a Philippine village, etc) see p.306 ('Views in the Philippine Islands, where brave Commodore Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet').

⁴⁰ Cited in Harrington, *ibid.* It is worth adding that one writer of the time, Robert Machray, made a distinction in modes of representation of war by artists. He distinguished between the *war artist* who had actually been at the war, and the *battle painter* who had not. While the former 'sends us pictures of incidents at the front', the latter 'puts on his canvas battle-scenes not actually observed with his own eyes'. Robert Machray, 'A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists', *Windsor Magazine* 12, Aug 1900, p. 264. Interestingly, two historians of war art make a similar distinction, dividing artists of the Boxer events into those who did their drawings on the spot and those who did them back home. Frederic Alan Sharf and Peter Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective* (London: Greenhill, 2000), p. 20.

⁴¹ 'The war artist of to-day' in *The Friend* 11 April and 13 April 1900, and reply by Shelley on 16 April. Wollen claimed too that the camera can't give a bird's eye view of a battle, which Shelley also refuted. The bound copies of *The Friend* in the British Library (at 'File 565') were originally the property of Rudyard Kipling, who was in South Africa as a correspondent during the war. (There were only 27 issues of *The Friend* in all).

⁴² Shorter also noted two other shortcomings of photography: that the camera was both untruthful and incapable of capturing the key moments of a battle, which he summed up in this way: 'For action of any kind the camera is impossible, not alone because it lies, but also because it can never be used at the critical moment'. The article by C.K. Shorter was reprinted in *BJP* 28 April 1899, p.264, citing the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Contemporary Review* for April. This debate about the different types of representation is here seen to apply to general news stories as well as to war news, though war is usually the most urgent and important type of news story.

⁴³ See 'Art notes', *Pall Mall Gazette* 31 Jan 1900, p.1. He mentioned photographs of such subjects as troops preparing their meals in the war zone, or starting to advance against the enemy. Another writer suggested that the more realistic depictions due to photography were themselves exercising a useful influence on war art, by taking some of the melodrama out of it. Though this writer also saw the drawbacks of photography in that the camera has no power of selection, a particular drawback when the battle is in a huge open area. *BJP* 9 Nov 1900, p.705-6.

⁴⁴ André Bazin, in a chapter entitled 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p.11. This comes a small aside in Bazin's discussion of spiritual versus psychological reality in painting. A similar dramatic style was seen in drawn lantern slides of battles or in salon paintings/drawings.

⁴⁵ See Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

⁴⁶ The writer Brugioni has made a study of this field, and lists four types of 'faked' photographs, distinguished by the different techniques to accomplish them: removing details, inserting details, photomontage and false captioning. Strangely he only covers post-production manipulation in this categorisation, and doesn't consider the issue of 'arranging'. Dino A. Brugioni, *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 1999).