

CHAPTER 14

The Surface and the Soul: Purpose and Politics of the Terrorist Mugshot

Anne Hege Simonsen, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway

When terror strikes, the terrorist is more often than not portrayed in a mugshot, an ID-like photograph with references to police mugshots as well as the passport ID. This has developed into the common iconography where modern terrorists are concerned. But how are we supposed to perceive this visual statement from the media? Is the mugshot a portrait of an individual or a category of anti-social criminals? Through the case of Anis Amri, the Tunisian who drove a stolen truck into a Christmas market in Berlin on December 2016, this article discusses the genealogy of the terrorist mugshot. It evokes the legacy of the physiognomic tradition in photography, as well as the history of the photographic portrait. It further discusses the agency of the photographic frame in the wake of terror and other dramatic events, and asks what the media gain and lose by adhering to this visual convention.

Keywords: ID photograph, photographic frame, portrait, terrorist, iconography

Introduction

On 19 December 2016, Anis Amri became the most wanted man in Europe for a few short days. The young Tunisian had driven a stolen truck into a packed Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 and maiming more than 50 people. Within hours, his face was in every newspaper, on every news web page and on every television screen. His individual physiognomic features were on display

for anyone to see. Yet there was something generic about this exposure, as if Amri's individual features were just a minor modification of the modern terrorist-as-archetype: a young man of Middle Eastern descent. On 23 December, Amri was shot dead by Italian police and his face quickly disappeared from the news.

Amri's trajectory through life may have ended there, but his face has been added to the steadily building terrorist hall of notoriety. He was not the most famous, his crime not the most cunning. In several respects, he was a nobody, and thus easily forgotten by all who were not directly harmed by his actions. In this chapter, I will nevertheless use his story as a point of departure to discuss and develop Mette Mortensen's concept of the photographed face as a symbolic battlefield, exposing the often ambiguous fault lines between the individual as a private person and a political citizen (Mortensen, 2012, p.13).

When the media publishes an ID (or, ID-like) photograph, it may at first glance seem like a case of individual exposure. Yet, the physical shape and form of such photographs contribute to the shaping of a distinct and recognizable terrorist iconography. Regardless of the face filling the frame, and regardless of the origin of the actual photograph, the visual form of the terrorist mugshot has become a familiar and easily understandable image, drawing, as Mortensen points out, on visual references such as the automatically generated ID photo and the police mugshot. It is, of course, not the only way to visualize terrorists, but it may seem as if this particular visual language is reserved for society's most prominent social outcasts. But why do the media frame terrorists in this particular manner? How do these seemingly authorless portraits perform differently from other photographic portraits in the media? What is the purpose and politics of such apparently straightforward and artistically not very challenging depictions? While Mortensen elaborates the genealogy and multifaceted use of the ID photograph at large, my focus is limited to the terrorist mugshot's exposure in the news media. As Kress and van Leeuwen pointed out as early as in 1996, the newspaper (or digital web) page is not primarily a stage where the photograph is allowed to perform, but should be considered a semiotic space where numerous entangled relations simultaneously restrict and enable the way it performs. The processes behind such entanglements are sometimes labelled manipulation, but I will consciously avoid such language because it connotes a level of consciousness that is not necessarily relevant. To communicate quickly and efficiently the media play

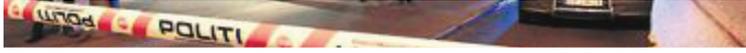
with whatever tropes and conventions that work, or are available to them. It goes without saying that shortcuts and simplifications are part of these processes, still I believe it is interesting to investigate how, and at what expense, a visual convention is formed.

Anis Amri's faces

“Every person’s story is written plainly on his face, though not everyone can read it.” This quote is attributed to the German photographer August Sander, one of the founding fathers of modern portrait photography. Sander worked in the 1930’s and his aim was to create a catalogue of the German people in the Weimar republic (Clarke, 1992). To him, physiognomy meant an understanding of human nature. As quoted in Clarke:

We know that people are formed by light and air, their inherited traits, and their actions, and that we recognise people and distinguish one from another by their appearance. We can tell from appearance the work someone does or does not do; we can read in his face whether he is happy or troubled, for life unavoidably leaves its trace there (ibid., p. 71).

When Anis Amri ran from the crime scene in Berlin, German police released two ID photos of him that were reproduced by European media (fig. 14.1). His ID had been found in the stolen lorry he used to crash into the Christmas market, and it later turned out that Amri had been under police surveillance until he disappeared a few months before he effectuated his crime (e.g. *The Telegraph*, 23.12.2016). These photographs were not meant to represent Amri as a person, but to identify the physical traits of a criminal fugitive. The media all over Europe used them. Yet, in the spirit of Sander, there is something to be learned from these photos. First, there is the obvious physical similarity between the two mugshots. The nose, the mouth and the rounded chin spell likeness. Second, and more interestingly, the person in the two images seems very different. The man on the left keeps his hair short, he has fancy glasses and his gaze may seem a little arrogant. The man to the right looks haggard, his hair is in disarray, he has shadows under his eyes, and he looks tired and maybe disillusioned. The two images obviously show the same man, but do they show the same person? Might his personality have changed over the years?



ETTERLYST: Tysk politi etterlyser den 24 år gamle tunisieren Anis Amri, som mistenkes for å ha stått bak massakren i Berlin.

Identifisert av fingeravtrykk

Politiet aksjonerte flere steder natt til torsdag i håp om å finne den hovedmistenkte etter terroren i Berlin.

► BERLIN

Tyske myndigheter har utlovet en dusør på 900.000 kroner over hele Europa for informasjon som kan lede til en pågrepelse av 24-årige Anis Amri. ID-papirene hans ble funnet i lastebilen som ble styrt inn i en folkemengde ved et julemarked i Berlin mandag, da tolv mennesker ble drept og 48 såret.

Fingeravtrykkene til den et-

Der Spiegel skriver at myndighetene hadde Amri på radaren, men at han likevel klarte å komme seg unna. Süddeutsche Zeitung legger mest vekt på at politiet kastet bort tid.

– Det tok svært lang tid før det føderale politiet mistenkte Amri, heter det i en artikkel onsdag kveld.

Jakten intensiveres

Tysk politi regner Amri som «bevæpnet og farlig». Jakten på Amri foregår over hele Europa, ettersom det antas at han kan ha reist ut av Tyskland i løpet av tiden politiet brukte på å avhøre den tidligere hovedmis-

Figure 14.1. Images of Anis Amri released by German police. Source: *Agderposten*, Norway, 23. December 2016. Facsimile reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

We do not know very much about Amri's life, but a compilation of several media sources tell us that he left Tunisia in the aftermath of the Arab spring, in 2011 (e.g. *BBC World*, *The Telegraph*, *VG.no*, all from 23.12.2016). Some suggest he had already been involved in minor criminal activities and that he may have wanted to escape Tunisian authorities. We know that he was 19 at the time he left his family; from interviews with his siblings it appears that he occasionally drank alcohol and that his dream was to make enough money to "buy a car and start a business". He entered Italy at Lampedusa, arriving illegally by boat, and in October the same year he was arrested for trying to set fire to a refugee reception centre. The circumstances behind this action are not clear, but he was sentenced to four years in jail. According to Italian authorities, he did not behave well in prison. He had a reputation for being a bully, although not a particularly religious one. When he drove his stolen truck into the Berlin Christmas market, he had been released from prison for about one year, and he had moved to Germany where he applied for asylum in the wake of the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. This was denied and at the time of his crime he was facing expulsion.

One of his brothers stated to the media that there were no signs that Anis Amri was about to commit violence. Another brother, however, claimed that prison had changed him. "He went into prison with one mentality and when he came out he had a totally different mentality," he said to the BBC. Then he denounced his brother: "He doesn't represent us or our family" (*BBC World*, 23.12.2016).

The family further released their own photograph of Amri to the press (fig. 14.2). In this picture, he is visibly younger, more slender and he looks less certain of himself, like someone who does not like being photographed. His eyes meet the camera straight on, but his mouth is half open and a little twisted, as if he is about to say something or is considering a faint smile. But he also has a more open, attentive appearance; partly due to his half open mouth. This photo is not dated, but must have been taken before Amri left Tunisia.

Even a fourth photograph was circulated (fig. 14.3). It shows the young man in a tank top, displaying bulging shoulder muscles and sporting something that may look like a faint smile. The image is taken from below; it may actually be a smart phone selfie, to include not only the body but also the folded black cloth in a triangle shape with Arabic gold letters on the wall behind him, probably a quote from the Qu'ran.

Familien til den hovedmistenkte tunisieren Anis Amri (24) ber ham overgi seg.

– Hvis broren min hører på meg nå, vil jeg be ham om å overgi seg. Om ikke annet for familien, som vil bli lettet, sier Abdelkader Amri, broren til den mistenkte, til reportere ved familiehoffetmet i Tunisia, ifølge BBC.

Broren legges imidlertid til at han ikke tror broren står bak. Men dersom han er gjerningsmannen, vil det bringe vanære over familien.

Jeg er sikker på at han er uskyldig. Jeg vet hvorfor han forlot hjemlandet, det var for økonomiske grunner. Det var for å arbeide, og for å hjelpe familien. Han dro ikke dit for å utføre terrorisme, sier Abdelkader Amri.

Fingeravtrykk

Tysklands innenriksminister Thomas de Maizière bekreftet på en pressekonferanse i går ettermiddag at etterforskere har funnet fingeravtrykk av den hovedmistenkte Anis Amri.

Süddeutsche Zeitung siterte tidligere på dagen anonyme kilder på at fingeravtrykene til den etterlyste tunisieren er funnet på semitraileren

– på døren på førersiden. Thomas de Maizière fortalte videre at tyske myndigheter anslår det for å være «høyst sannsynlig» at den mistenkte tunisier-

– HAN ER USKYLDIG

ren er gjerningsmannen.

Fox News melder at Amri i flere måneder for angrepet har blitt nektet å fly inn til USA.

Eneste mistenkte

Mandagens terrorangrep drepte tolv mennesker og såret 56 da en semitrailer stuste inn i et julemarked i Berlin. Blant de sårede er tolv regnet som hardt skadd. Flere av dem er i kritisk tilstand.

Anis Amri har så langt vært den eneste kjente mistenkte, for-

di oppholdstillatelsen hans ble funnet under førersetet i semitraileren. Politiet har ikke kunnet bekrefte om en eller flere personer kapret lastebilen, og hvem som faktisk kjørte den.

Det har blitt utlovet en bidrags på 900 000 kroner for dem bidrar med informasjon som gjør at Amri kan bli tatt.

Ifølge en anonym tjenestemann skal Amri ha kommunisert med terrorgruppen IS minst én gang og ha vært på flyforbudsliste i

USA. Han hadde i tillegg bånd til noen av Tysklands mest kjente islamister.

IS har tatt på seg skylden for angrepet.

Bevæpnet

Politiet beskriver Amri som bevæpnet og farlig. Han skal være 24 år gammel, men ifølge politiet har han operert med flere forskjellige nasjonaliteter og fødselsdatoer.

Han er rundt 178 centimeter høy, veier cirka 75 kilo, har svart hår og brune øyne.

I går morgen skal det ha foregått en stor politisjåson i Danmark etter tips fra noen som mente de hadde sett Amri. Letingen ga ikke resultat.



KLAPPJAKT: Anis Amri (24) er gjenstand for en enorm politijakt. Dette udaterte bildet er gitt AP fra 24-åringens familie. Foto: PRAWATAP

... men familien ber mistenkt terrorist melde seg for politiet

Figure 14.2. Anis Amri as a young man. Photo released to the media by his family. Source: VG, 23 December 2016. Facsimile reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

This image includes more detail and as a case of self-representation it suggests that Amri wished to be remembered as a jihadist. Passport style photographs have a more limited purpose. They only register the physiognomic features, and are supposed to be void of emotions or other signs of personality. Interestingly, the photographs that are supposed to represent our truest self on our most important personal documents reveal very little about us, apart from the most prominent physical features. As Mortensen states (2012, p. 177), the security aspect in passport photographs is based solely on the relation between image and body, and a supposed correspondence between the two. Yet, it is illusory in today's globalized society to assume that a person's identity stays fixed when the body is mobile (ibid., p. 178). Actually, it is ancient knowledge that this relation is far from stable. Even Louis Bertillon, one of the founding fathers of physiognomy realised that resemblance is a fluid category somewhere between physical correspondence (the geometry of the face) and physiognomic correspondence (the face as an emblem of the character/type) (ibid., p. 265).

Together, Amri's faces document a change, from young man to adulthood. They might also document his transition from petty criminal to jihadist, but they do not provide enough information for us to be able to connect the dots. What happened to the young Anis' dreams and ambitions is, however, a

Dagbladet FREDAG 23. DESEMBER 2016 FREDAG 23. DESEMBER 2016 Dagbladet

TERRORANGREPET I BERLIN



KLAPPAJAKT PÅ AMRI: Siden terrorangrepet i Berlin mandag har politiet jaktet på den skyldige. Tyske myndigheter mistenker 24 år gamle Anis Amri.

FOTO: REX / SHUTTERSTOCK / NTS SCANPIX

EUROPAS MEST ETTERSØKTE

Fengslet i Italia, avvist i Tyskland. Slik var den mistenkte Berlin-terroristen Anis Amris (24) vei fra Tunisia til hatpredikantene i Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Breitscheidplatz vest i den tyske hovedstaden. Lastebilen kjørte rett inn i folkemengden. Tolv ble drept, 48 ble skadet. På mandag kveld rundt klokka 20.00 nådde terroreren Berlin. Bak rattet satt trog 24 år gamle Anis Amri, en tunisiask asylsøker, mener politiet.

Onsdag kveld ble han Europas mest etter søkte mann.

Italia. Dit kom han som asylsøker i 2011, ifølge CNN, etter at Den arabiske våren veilet regimet i Tunisia. Han skal ha vært fengslet i Italia i fire år for sin rolle i voldelige opprør ved et asylmottak på øya Lampedusa. Opprytning satte fyr på mottaket og flere personer ble skadd.

Da han i 2015 ble løslatt, forsøkte Italia å utlevere ham til Tunisia. De var ikke interessert

kunne endelig bekrefte, ifølge Stephan Mayer, talperson for det tyske regjeringsspartens CDU's parlamentariske gruppe.

Amri skal ha oppholdt seg både i Berlin og ulike steder i den tyske delstaten Nordrhein-Westfalen vest i Tyskland.

På onsdag og torsdag gjennomførte tysk politi en rekke aksjoner mot flere adresser i delstaten, deriblant et asylmottak i byen Emmerich som gren-

ser til Nederland.

Her skal han ha hatt kontakt med hatpredikanten fra byene Hildesheim og Duisburg, ifølge Bayerischer Rundfunk.

Begge byene ligger rett utenfor Düsseldorf, hovedstaden i Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Et om bombing

Deler av denne kamptaken skal ha blitt overvåket av tysk sikkerhetspoliti, ifølge

fra offisielt hold.

Terrornettverket IS har påkatt seg ansvaret for angrepet. Amri hadde, ifølge tyske medier, kontakt med noen i terrornettverket. Han skal også ha søkt etter bombeoppskrifter på nettet, ifølge The New York Times.

På terrorliste

Mens Amri oppholdt seg i Nordrhein-Westfalen ble han kartlagt av tyske sikkerhets-

Figure 14.3. Anis Amri representing himself as a jihadist. Source: *Dagbladet*, 23 December 2016. Facsimile reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

question not only of academic (or human) interest, it may also be considered relevant from a security angle. It makes a significant political difference if we choose to understand Amri as inherently evil, if we blame his Christmas market terror act on potential Islamist radical forces he met in prison or after, or if we bear in mind that the obviously harsh confrontation with the European border regime in Italy may have been a catalyst in this young man's life.

It should be noted that to be open to such questions is not to relieve Amri or other terrorists of the responsibility for their actions. It is rather to acknowledge that a personality is not something that develops in a vacuum, and that

even extreme actions have relational aspects. The media's choice of imagery, however, signals to the public that we are not going to go down that road.

The surface and the soul

In this article, I choose to discuss the terrorist mugshot as a portrait, simply because it displays a person's face. But how does it differ from other portraits in the media? To answer this question it is worth taking a brief look at the history of the portrait. Central to this discussion is the heritage from the physiognomic works of Johann Caspar Lavater and his *The art of knowing man by means of physiognomy* from 1783. This was a pivotal work in the European history of ideas and it came to influence (among other things) our understanding of certain aspects of the photographic portrait. Lavater saw physiognomy as a way to systematically decode human nature. As an example, he believed that the shape of the eyes could reveal genius. According to Mortensen, Lavater was not as certain about his theories as it may appear from modern historical accounts, and he was also contested in his own time. Yet, with the advent of photography in the early 1800s his thoughts were revitalised in particular in police work, physical anthropology and colonial thought, because the mechanical photograph was considered a superhuman documentary tool (Mortensen, 2012, p. 38–43).

As Sigrid Lien points out, the belief in physiognomy as a science in its own right also came to influence the art world, in particular the modernist portrait with its ambition to unravel a person's authentic self (1998, p. 24). Photography played an influential role in this development, because of the photograph's ability to record the human body accurately. In art, however, the focus gradually shifted away from this fascination for the surface and was replaced by the idea of the human self as something hidden, something that needed uncovering in a more complex manner. According to photography critic John Tagg: "The portrait is [...] a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity" (1988, p. 37). Little by little, the understanding of the portrait as a representation not only of the object in front of the camera, but also the person behind it, emerged.

Today's photojournalistic portraits belong to this latter category. We may distinguish between type portraits and psychological portraits (Lien, 1998, p. 24–51), but the portrait is probably the photojournalistic genre where the distinction between art and journalism is the most blurred. Several

photojournalists are conscious and deliberate about leaving their personal mark on their portraits, as auteurs or even artists. The ID-portrait, on the other hand, is where the physiognomic tradition has survived. Also, physical features are almost overstated in such photos, thus creating a deficit of meaning left for the spectator to fill. Returning to Mortensen's study, she makes a point about the ID photograph being without an author. The lack of an interpreting agent *behind* the lens has provided the ID photo with its aura of "true objectivity" when it comes to representing the person *in front* of the lens. It is worth noting, however, that the ID photo does not really transcend other contextual cultural codes, it has become a cultural code in its own right.

Terrorism as a battle of images

With more and more biometric technology available, the days of the ID photo may very well be numbered as a favoured guarantor of a person's identity. In the media, however, this photographic genre is not likely to become obsolete any time soon. On the contrary, the ID-like photo resembles a so-called "kinder egg", providing one solution to three different problems. It identifies a perpetrator, it symbolically contains him/her in a visual form that spells deviancy and, as Lashmar (2014) points out, it humiliates the deviant *other* in a way that is calming and satisfactory to the public.

As a general rule, the role of the (Western) media changes when faced with major dramatic events that may tear society's fabric apart (e.g. Dayan and Katz, 1992; Kitch, 2000; Sumiala, 2013; Simonsen, 2015). Terror attacks belong to this category. Instead of contributing to rupture, it becomes vital for the media to perform damage control, to contain danger and insecurities, and to frame events in a way that signals that society, as we know it, is still in place and that the forces behind the attack can be controlled. Critical journalism kicks in in the later phases, when order has been restored. In the first phases it is more common for the media to concentrate on comforting the community, often by invoking easily understandable stereotypes of the deviant other.

In the case of terror attacks, visual strategies are particularly interesting as terrorism is usually strongly iconoclastic (e.g. Mitchell, 2005). Whether they are religiously motivated or not, what distinguishes terrorists from other murderers is that they kill people-as-symbols, while most killers have a personal

relationship to their individual victims. Al Qaida did not target individual people working at the World Trade Center in 2001, their aim was to hit powerful representations of American supremacy, global capitalism and the (conspiratory) idea of Jewish world leadership. When the Islamic State (IS) beheaded James Foley in 2014 they were more concerned about the symbolic effect of killing an American journalist than who Foley was as a person. It should be noted, however, that strategic targeting of victims is nothing new in warfare, and it is not exclusive for Islamic terrorists. To the Norwegian right wing terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, it did not matter so much who was present at Utøya youth camp on July 22, 2011. He cared more about their Labour Party politics, their interest in multiculturalism, feminism and humanism, than their individual identities (e.g. Borchgrevink, 2012; Simonsen, 2015). Terrorism may thus be blind and arbitrary, but terrorist acts are seldom devoid of emblematic meaning.

From this angle, the terrorist mugshot may be read as a symbolic counter attack. In this form and shape, the terrorist is identified, but simultaneously reduced to a poster character. According to Mortensen, this legacy was accentuated in its modern form by the massive suicide attacks on 11 September in 2001 where 19 Al Qaida jihadists crashed two hijacked passenger airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York, a third into the Pentagon and a fourth, meant for targets in Washington DC, ended in a field in Pennsylvania. The media printed their ID photos side by side and, according to Mortensen, there is a certain irony in the fact that the same portraits that secured the terrorists entrance into the US were the ones the media used to distinguish them as outsiders. One by one, each terrorist did not look deviant, and research has shown that they were actually conscious about not drawing any unwanted attention from border authorities. With their shaved chins and short hair, these 19 young men basically corresponded to American authorities' physiognomic ideas about what a good citizen should look like (Mortensen, 2012, p. 173–177). Yet, as a group, these images shaped the visual stereotype of the modern terrorist, based on what they had in common; their gender, age and (more or less visible) ethnicity.

The media did have access to other photographs, but still preferred the ID photos. Mortensen explains this partly with reference to the visual legacy of the “Wanted Dead or Alive” posters in US popular culture, particularly American Western movies, but also to the ID photograph's many

similarities to the police mugshot. The ID photo thus symbolically merged the police's formal registration of a criminal's physical appearance with the Wanted Poster's not very subtle insinuations about the vile criminal personality. One may even argue that the form has become the emblem and thus more important than the content in these cases. In later terror attacks, real ID photos have not always been accessible. In such cases, it has not been uncommon to crop portraits and to adjust their frames so that they look ID-like. In this way, the same effect is accomplished, and a similar visual statement is provided.

Offending and non-offending images

We know from the literature that the murderer is the ultimate "other", and the more horrid the actions, the more the killer must be separated from society's "us". As John Taylor notes, "Murder is essentially uncivil" (1998, p. 125). Concerning media images of murderers, it is not new that they are presented in headshots (e.g. police mugshots, entering or leaving a trial or private snapshots). According to Taylor, this is another remnant of the nineteenth century physiognomic fascination for the relation between inner evil and its outward features:

Killers' faces still stand for "evil", as if killing is foretold in the shape or tilt of the head, or leaves its mark on brows or eyes. But these photographic revelations appear only after the events of murder detection or conviction (*ibid.*, p. 116).

The terrorist is the worst of criminals. Criminal actions, and in particular terrorism, make the criminal less entitled to a soul, and as a consequence they are less entitled to a true portrait, exploring their personality and psychology. The terrorist mugshot thus becomes part of their symbolic punishment. As pointed out by Foucault, crime, spectacle and punishment are historically interconnected, and public humiliation often constitutes part of the punitive process (Lashmar, 2014, p. 66). We may ponder a terrorist's human capacities, but in the wake of a brutal attack on innocent people, mostly as an anomaly. The ID photo coldly and mechanically focuses on a person's surface, and as such it is reductive, compared to other types of portraits. This reductionist process is part of the punishment as it reduces the complexity of the perpetrator's person-hood.

If the media act differently, they risk offending their public. This was the case in Norway in 2011, after the terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya, where the Norwegian right wing terrorist Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in a few hours. When his identity was known, there was no ID photo of him, apart from an airbrushed version on his Facebook profile. The media had to choose between the staged and idolized images he had left in his so-called political manifesto and a snapshot of him in a police car photographed a few days later. In this photo, he sports a curious Mona Lisa smile and it looks as if he is pleased to be photographed. The Norwegian news media, and in particular the tabloid *Dagbladet*, used this picture again and again to the growing anger of the public (Simonsen, 2015, p. 214–255). Several people complained that showing Breivik's face was equivalent to promoting his ideology, and part of the audience launched a campaign against newspapers showing his face on the front page. They turned the papers in the newspaper stands with their backs to the public, as if they could punish the terrorist by way of punishing the newspapers.

The photograph of Breivik's face was a case of what the iconologist WJT Mitchell calls 'offending images' where the image seems to be "transparently and immediately linked to what it represents" (2005, p. 127). According to Mitchell, people often respond to images instinctively rather than rationally and imbue them with magical thinking. When people react physically to an image (like destroying them, mutilating them or turning from them), they react as if the image may experience whatever is done to it, as if it is what it represents. Mitchell further states that people respond to offending images as if the image was a pseudo-person:

...the image possesses a kind of vital, living character that makes it capable of feeling what is done to it. It is not merely a transparent medium for communicating a message, but something like an animated, living thing, an object with feelings, intentions, desires, and agency (ibid.).

For some, Breivik's face was thus not properly contained. Whether the classic terrorist mugshot would have been more acceptable is, of course, hard to know. Breivik was Norwegian, blue-eyed and homegrown. He did not fit the established terrorist typology simply because he threatened society from the inside, and not from the outside. An ID photo may not have been enough to symbolically reduce and control him. With immigrant or foreign-born terrorists this process seems much more automatic and tacit.

The communal reflex and the ultimate other

What, then, is the purpose of the terrorist mugshot? According to art historian Michael Baxandall (1985), any image (or visual artefact or product for that matter) is the answer to a question. Somebody produced it and/or displayed it in a certain manner within a certain context for a reason, no matter how seemingly insignificant it may be. In Baxandall's wording this creates a "pattern of intention" that the analyst may explore. To find the correct question is not a straightforward process, since cultural production consists of entangled matters, and is continuously in transit and transition (see e.g. Svasek, 2007). Baxandall developed a method where he looks at three intertwined levels that he has labelled *charge*, *brief* and *troc*. Put in a rather simplified way, *the charge* refers to the overall purpose of the product, or even the family of products. One could claim that the intention of news photography is to convey timely visual material appropriate to the journalistic situation (e.g. Simonsen, 2015, p. 38–40). This transcends photojournalism, since plenty of news images were never photographed by a photojournalist, nor commissioned by a newsdesk. Yet we may deduce that an image we find in the news is considered newsworthy, and that it fulfils one or more of photography's classic roles within news journalism, as illustration, documentation or proof. The charge behind the terrorist mugshot, then, is that it provides some element that suits the journalistic convention labelled as news, and that media audiences will understand it as such.

The brief asks for a closer scrutiny of the circumstances that justify a concrete image in a concrete situation. In this case, the terrorist mugshot answers to the need to document the features of the antagonist's face. This need has several layers. While Anis Amri was on the run, the police investigation and the different authorities searching for him, of course justified the image. But there are also other needs involved. As humans, we have a deep psychological need to identify potential and real threats, and as media consumers we need to be informed (e.g. Shoemaker, 1996). As mentioned above, when it comes to dealing with an abrupt crisis, like a terrorist attack, the media play a soothing and repairing role in the initial stages. In this context, the ID-like photos seem to signal control over the situation, containment of the perpetrator as well as symbolic banishment.

To understand why this is, we have to search within what Baxandall calls *troc*, which corresponds to a broader context of culture and ideology, and

their conventions. In this particular case, the aesthetic conventions at play provide an interesting set of paradoxes that may help us deepen our understanding of the mugshot's purpose on a larger cultural scene. I have already mentioned some active elements of the genealogy of the modern terrorist mugshot: the physiognomic heritage and the legacy of September 11th in creating a modern terrorist iconography. I also suggested that the frame (understood as shape and form, not the process of framing a news story) plays a central role as the prime visual convention. We know from the literature that the frame is a vital element in photographic agency. To quote Hariman and Lucaites on the subject:

Framing [...] whether by the theatrical stage or the rectangular boundaries of any photo, marks the work as a special selection of reality that acquires greater intensity than the flow of experience before and after it. As they are framed, photos become marked as special acts of display (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, p. 31).

Hariman and Lucaites study photography as icons of public culture and thus as a means to define the relationship between citizens and the state. Their focus is on photojournalistic images, but I would suggest that even the apparently authorless terrorist mugshots are interesting in this respect. According to what I suggested above, that the terrorist mugshot is a way to symbolically punish, reduce and contain the terrorist, it is the frame, not the face, that is the active agent. It is the frame that creates the theatrical effect and the frame is not without an author; it is an editorial tool of high efficiency.

As a telling example, let's look at a Norwegian front page showing the so-called "terror brothers" Said and Cherif Kouachi, responsible for the massacre of 12 cartoonists and journalists at the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 (fig. 14.4).

Both images have been highlighted with a thick, black frame, much thicker than the ordinary picture frame. This accentuates the images' status as terrorist mugshots and is confirmed by the headline ("The Terror Brothers"). What is particularly interesting in this case is that the sub-headings underneath the images invite us to read about the men's childhood, their youth and radicalisation. The photographs, on the other hand, have already locked them into one particular interpretation that will affect whatever the text may tell us. This is theoretically interesting because it turns Roland Barthes' observation

about how the rational, unilinear text anchors the multivocal and polysemic image upside down (Barthes, 1964). Barthes is one of the most influential photo theorists, and one of his main claims in his early investigation of photography was that text anchors and “violates” the polysemy of the image. However, the linguistic violence Barthes describes as imposed on the photo seems not to apply in cases like this. On the contrary, these images anticipate and anchor the text.

Another theoretically interesting point is that it is the frame that imbues the image with a kind of “repressive” agency. The frame has robbed the original photograph of its potential polysemy, and the image is left with repeating only one thing: “Look, these are terrorist faces.”

The mugshot as anti-portrait

Maybe the terrorist mugshot should rather be seen as an anti-portrait than a portrait. The mugshot, whatever its origin, invokes, through the frame, the aesthetics of the photo booth image. It is a response to what Mortensen calls “a portrait hunger” that develops in the wake of a dramatic event, because we need to know who did it. Yet, the preferred iconography is reductionist, stripping the perpetrator of individuality. As mentioned above, this is an understandable response, but it comes at a price.

Even if they may share some commonalities, every crime is unique. There is no evidence to suggest that Anis Amri carried any personal grudge against anyone present at the market he crashed into in Berlin. The target must thus be understood symbolically, as an act of iconoclasm, linking him to other acts of terrorism. But he was also a person, and it would have been interesting to know how Amri interpreted the Berlin Christmas market as a symbol. His act may be interpreted in religious terms, since Christmas is a Christian holiday and Amri was a Muslim, or sociologically, as an attack on a society that explicitly did not want him. Or it might have been a combination. We may never know the full story, yet it does matter why people do what they do. In any court case, motive is vital to understanding the logic behind a crime. Understanding the “why” is not to excuse, but it may serve to prevent further criminal activity of the same kind. To do so, we need more images, not less.



Figure 14.4. Photographs of the Kouachi brothers, highlighted as terrorist mugshots by a thick, black frame. Facsimile of the Norwegian tabloid VG, 9 January 2015. Facsimile reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Conclusions

In this article, I have tried to untangle some of the codes and paradoxes that become apparent when we begin to investigate the terrorist mugshot, the way it is used and its aesthetic genealogies. It is a portrait, yet not. It denotes a fellow human being, yet not. As mentioned in the introduction, the ID-like mugshot

has become a favoured iconography for depicting modern terrorists. It has become a visual convention, a trope, and maybe a cliché. It does not tell us much about the terrorist as a person. We, the society, need it for other purposes.

News photography is supposed to talk to the public as citizens, and to provide us with relevant visual information (e.g. Hariman and Lucaites, 2007). In this respect, what Baxandall calls *the charge* is identical for all journalistic images, whether they are the product of a photojournalist or a layout person on the newsdesk adding a particular frame to a young man's face. To understand the politics of publishing news images it may be worthwhile to note that the terrorist mugshot has at least one thing in common with other portraits. The similarity is that the photographic representation (frame included) does not belong to the person in the picture, but to society. This is not always evident. Ariella Azoulay has written interestingly about how Florence Owens Thompson, the woman depicted in Dorothea Lange's iconic "Migrant Mother", felt misrepresented by it. To Lange, the photograph described the harsh conditions for US migrant workers in the 1930's, but Mrs. Thompson saw in it someone that was not *her* and subsequently tried to have the photograph put out of circulation. To paraphrase photo theorist John Roberts, Thompson failed to recognize "how this *image* of herself (not *herself*) has entered world history, and thus now functions well beyond her own control, or anybody else's, as a space for the reconstruction of historical consciousness" (Roberts, 2014, p. 7).

Lange's photo was a photojournalistic piece, openly and unambiguously published as a political commentary. The terrorist mugshot has no identifiable author and its political tendency is tacit, as expressions of power often are. To compare these photographs may thus seem like a case of apples and pears, but the point here is not the content of the images, but the politics of how and why photographs are put on display. It is to remind us that ultimately, news journalism relates to ideas regarding "the greater good", democracy and the needs of society.

To return to the framing of Anis Amri, we see that the ID photographs minimize empathy with the perpetrator as an affective option. We may be interested in his motives, but not in his individual psychology. It is always easier to seek refuge in stereotypes (e.g. "the foreign villain in Europe") than to embark on the more complicated journey of analysing whether or not his character was shaped in relation to his experiences in Europe. As argued above, the modern terrorist iconography not only identifies a criminal, it helps us to symbolically contain evil. As such it contributes to dodging the

epistemological claims on news journalism; the who's, what's, when's and why's. However, in today's complex and entangled reality, there might be a need to address the terrorist mugshot as an epistemological problem: When we visually group a multitude of individuals within the same frame, we symbolically make Tunisian migrants (Amri), frustrated young men from Europe's urban centre's suburbs (the Paris perpetrators in 2015) and upper middle class Saudis (Mohammed Atta and his September 11th co-terrorists) one and the same. The problem is that even if the mugshot corresponds to the immediate need of the public in the direct aftermath of an abrupt crisis, this politics of the visual may also easily develop into intellectual laziness. It is not wrong for the news media to use rapidly understandable forms, but we need to follow up with more complex material to better investigate the underlying causes of the problem. More challenging imagery should be part of this process.

References

- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, Music Text*. London: Fontana press.
- Baxandall, M. (1985). *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*. London: Yale University Press.
- Clarke, G. (1992). *Portrait in Photography*. London: Reaction Books.
- Dayan, D. & Katz, E. (1992). *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hariman R. & Lucaites, J. L. (2007). *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kitch, C. (2000). 'A News of Feeling as well as Facts'. Mourning and Memorial in American News Magazines. *Journalism*, 1(2), 171–195. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/146488490000100202>
- Lashmar, P. (2014). How to Humiliate and Shame: A Reporter's Guide to the Power of the Mugshot. *Social Semiotics* 24(1), 56–87, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2013.827358>
- Lien, S. (1998). "Slap-dash" og sterke bilder. En studie i punk- og postpunkperiodens portrettestetikk. PhD dissertation. University of Bergen.
- Mitchell, J. W. T. (2005). *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mortensen, M. (2012). *Kampen om ansigtet. Fotografi og identifikation*. Copenhagen: Københavns universitet. Museum Tusulanums Forlag.

- Sumiala, J. (2013). *Media and Ritual: Death, Community and Everyday Life*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Svašek, M. (2007). *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production*. London: Pluto Press.
- Roberts, J. (2014). *Photography and Its Violations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Shoemaker, P. (1996). Hardwired for News: Using Biological and Cultural Evolution to Explain the Surveillance Function. *Journal of Communication*, 46(3), 32–47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1996.tb01487.x>
- Simonsen, A. H. (2015). *Tragediens bilder. Et prosessuelt perspektiv på nyhetsfotografier fra 22 juli*. PhD dissertation. University of Bergen.
- Tagg, J. (1988). *The Burden of Presentation. Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Taylor, J. (1998). *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.