



# Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War (The Critical Image)

*John F.A. Taylor*

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What compels us to look at shocking photographs or, alternatively, to look away? Should the media use disturbing images to inform, at the risk of offending? How is our sense of politics, morality, and culture affected when we are exposed to gruesome images of accidents and disasters, murder and execution, grief and death?

In **Body Horror**, John Taylor addresses these questions by examining how the media presents unsettling pictures, especially those of dead and injured "foreigners." Drawing on recent experiences in the Gulf, Bosnia and Rwanda, Taylor argues that documentary photography, for all the horror it reproduces, ultimately defines a democracy.

Fully aware of the voyeuristic aspects of photojournalism, Taylor probes the difficulty of applying moral imperatives when separating the utility of showing images of suffering and violence from the risk of either insulting or gratifying public sensibilities. A compelling documentary of photography's cultural and political power, **Body Horror** analyzes the moral responsibility attached to publishing and bearing witness to photographs of violence, and the historical amnesia that arises when such imagery remains unseen.

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