Designing Power: Thatcher, Press Photography and a Polarized 1980s England

Keith B. Wagner

King's College London and Hongik University

In *What do Pictures* Want W.J.T. Mitchell famously attributes the power that images hold in society to be made into everything and nothing, sometimes in the same breath, and ultimately how we "over-and underestimate" the impact of these very same images daily (2005: 3). Mitchell's idea that images are deployed and analyzed in a multitude of ways is manifest across the discipline of visual studies: from slides of organisms in the medical sciences, to topographical photomapping of cities, to archives of trick photography, and, more insidiously, codified records for surveillance or political coercion by state institutions. These examples are each the result of a vast and intricate visual culture for photographic image delivery. The Thatcher years exemplify another example and the relationship between the "over-and underestimated" uses of press photography, and this relationship determines the framework for this essay's investigation into this conservative, scopic regime. This article will attempt to trace the following ideas as they are developed in this analysis: Why are press photographs taken of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher worth recovering? Second, were Thatcher's iconic images found in The Times newspaper congenial to the neoliberal economy of the 1980s? And, finally, how successful was the Thatcher image in symbolizing a free market ideology to the British people at this time?

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Nothing, it would seem, is more arduous than to navigate a path between politically transparent modes of photographic representation and the less obvious coercive modes of photographic representation that symbolically work, or, more precisely, provide and support a point of view for a political party. The Thatcher image and the late Margaret Thatcher remain an oft divisive figure from which we judge her public image based on instances and ideological views: her position as ideologue for the Tory party, woman of distinction, wife and mother, and, historically, a key architect for the overhaul of the British Welfare State to free market policies in the 1980s. This neoliberal turn for the British economy developed at a time of great social and economic polarization when many welcomed a new economy, while others usually associated with the working classes, resented the sudden jolt and dismantling of state assistance programs. Writing on this period, Leonard Quart says of the Thatcher years:

> Thatcher vowed to reduce the regulatory role of government and bureaucracy, attacking welfare state dependency by reducing social spending, services (transportation, education, health), and taxes. She also aided the wealthy by easing the capital gains tax and cutting the top tax rate earned on income from 83 percent to 40 percent. She privatized public companies like British Airways, vehemently criticized socialism, espoused an ethic of individual self-sufficiency, and promoted the avaricious pursuit of personal profit as a moral virtue.[1]

Over the course of the 1980s, Thatcher provided a foundational image and voice for free market statehood via speeches, appearances and interviews that composed snapshots of an ideology that audiences associated visually as consensus-building, politically overbearing or harboured serious reservations about the disproportionate nature of neoliberalism. Her conviction to radically move England to a market-driven society is invoked in a series of televisual images, but also in press photography. This politicization of the photographic image is emphasized as a discursive form of representation, one we will begin to locate in this period.

By a transparent mode of representation, I mean an encounter with

1 Quart, p.17.

political photographs that illustrate their obvious ideological function (i.e., a politician's bid for re-election through the distribution of photographic placards or declaring the end to a national emergency via a national newspaper), while coercive modes of representation could be thought of as the images that proliferate through the "everyday" visual economy of particular regions, nations, or global cultures, that endorse concentrations of power (i.e., periodicals, documentaries, television, and the Internet). Through these mediums a politician gains connivance between party and media outlets and an everyday "recognisability" by these image-producing apparatuses. In many ways, photographs seem to eschew polemical or divisive power relations. Instead, everyday photographs triumph in their ideological function through their recognizable qualities and seemingly empty ideological signification to a public.

The ideological in photographic form can perhaps be understood in relation to W.J.T. Mitchell's views, when he addresses Walter Benjamin's writings with the following criticism on the Frankfurt School thinker:

> Thus, Benjamin can mimic both sides of these debates while criticizing them. He can echo Baudelaire's distaste for the levelling effect of photography as an idol of mass culture, and yet see this levelling as an omen of the classless society. He can absorb the dispute between the 'scientific' and 'ideological' views of the photograph in the same way that Marx absorbed the debate between idealism and empiricism in the metaphor of the camera obscura, by treating them as equally partial, equally deluded options in the dialectic of history.[2]

Here Mitchell understood Benjamin in terms of his "contradictions" and this appraisal is crucial to this analysis. These contradictions when viewing certain images need to be emphasized in this analysis, if one is to deconstruct the Thatcher photographic image from British periodicals during the mid-1980s. Thus, if a series of select photographs fulfills an ideological function as both "transparent" and "coercive" in their modes of representation—they are also ephemeral and changing pieces of materialist history. It is then impossible—in recognition of earlier attempts by Benjamin and Mitchell's own anxiety about the German

2 Mitchell, "Benjamin and the Political Economy of the Photo-graph," p. 55.

Marxist's dialectical flaccidness—to establish a definitive theoretical template that supports an equal stance of both subjective as well as objective modes of critique. This notion is particularly apt when viewing ideologically charged photographic images. As this article will go on to claim, photography's ideological status remains twofold. This dichotomy acknowledges on the one hand, photography's status as a transparent medium, what art historian Julian Stallabrass posits is the photographic images' ability to be construed as a powerful representation at the service of the dominant ideological group.[3] On the other hand, photography studies scholar Allan Sekula argues that photographs are not clearly connected to political ideologies because they can shift in and out of public perception when deployed at different moments in history.[4] We must then consider photographs as both transparent and coercive objects and these very photographs often instantiate an optimistic/pessimistic shift in function as they pertain to a political party. This binary seems a prescriptive way to analyze the Thatcher press imagery and thus these photographs' representative power.

It may be presumptuous to say ideological control cemented Thatcher's press appearance in the public sphere; instead, it is more probable that a process called "hegemonism" was responsible for the power these Thatcher press photographs symbolically relayed to a British public. Raymond Williams describes the hegemonic as a combination of three cultural processes: "traditions, institutions and formations."[5] These three processes are important in understanding the politicized images of Thatcher in the press. Accordingly, "traditions are constantly invented and reinvented in the nation state" as the individual and family became themes for a policy and party tradition of conservative normality. Moreover, these traditions or nationalist devices are part of a "material production and reproduction of invented traditions which are largely dependent on institutions like the mass media."[6] The third tenet of the hegemonic is "formations" whereby exists a "certain conscious movements and tendencies," for example Thatcher as figurehead to the anti-union movement in Britain during the 1980s which was represented in photographic form by the Thatcher government.[7]

3 See Julian Stallabrass, Gargantua : Manufactured Mass Culture.

4 See Allan Sekula, Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983.

5 Stevenson, Understanding Media Cultures, p.17.

6 Ibid., p.17.

7 Ibid., p.17.

1. Forging the Thatcher image and the rise of Neoliberalism

So where do we begin if political institutions openly use the photographic image as code and rhetoric to transmit an ideology? Perhaps we need to start with the Thatcherite philosophy and interpret its different conservative valences. A central narrative of the cognates in conservatism is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism's political economic set of policies and ideology are best described as based around the following market-driven ideas for investment and life-making processes: entrepreneurialism, efficiency, self-management as well as "promoting the development of modern business methods and technologies, attracting foreign investment, weeding out failing businesses, and ending factory overmanning."[8] Of course, one political figure could never possibly embody all these neoliberal principles at once, however Thatcher's connection to these policies, her advocacy for this new economic reality and her diehard belief in a market-driven society is indistinguishable from the Thatcherite philosophy and her public (even private) persona. Moreover, it was her "sense of moral rectitude and certitude" where she "never exhibited a tinge of self-doubt about her political principles and moral ends" that allows such a designing of the Thatcher image (in televisual and photographic form) for consumption by the British public.

Next we need to ask: how does this hegemonic system relate to the person within these documented realities, and what particular photographs of Thatcher were disseminated to British newspapers? As I will soon begin to show Thatcher's photographs in the press came to appear as constructed and tokenistic in their resoluteness; affirming a type of "acquisitive individualism and aggressive self-interest [that] thrived" in this period.[9] While to many critics the constructed, designed and tokinistic press photography format may be superficially obvious to those familiar with the Thatcher years, yet it is also a novel way to tease out certain photographic images that typify this neoliberal epoch.

My analysis is based on exhaustive archival research through The Times newspaper from 1984 and 1985. Narrowing my search to these two divisive years and by analysing photographs that captured a

8   Quart, p.21.
9   Ibid., p.21.

dimension of political style, judgment and evaluation will be crucial to my argument. Moreover, this analysis will assert that different Thatcher press photographs seemed to have filtered through to the experiences of the everyday as a form of common sense viewing to all Britons. Gramsci's definition of cultural hegemony is seminal to this notion of constructed reality as he states "the entire ideological complex of beliefs, values, and perceptually based attitudes that function for the reproduction and sustenance of ruling class domination comes to saturate every aspect, and particularly the social institutions, of society."[10] For Steven Gill, this saturation is dependant on a particular ideology and later the emergence of a cultural hegemony that is not reductive to a mass audience, but rather a representation of a constructed reality through which sections of society adhere to, and are thus governed by, these conservative beliefs.[11] These Gramscian principles as adapted by Gill are the theoretical cornerstones in this article. Guided by this notion of cultural hegemony, the Thatcher-run eighties photographed via The Times reveal how images and ideology coalesce. Thus, the Thatcher photographs can then be thought of as authoring an impassive condition that allows us to understand a type of cultural hegemony, and to elucidate some of the social, historical and economic events that shaped the long Thatcher decade (1979-1990).

More importantly, my examination of several photographs reproduced from The Times newspaper during the mid-eighties refer to Thatcher's public addresses during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike captured in press photographs. A formal dissection of The Times photographs will take into account their aesthetic style, documentation and text/context, and, finally, those photographs particular effectiveness to sway public opinion during the evacuation of pro-union views in the British press, a strategy adopted by the Tory government. These developments in the media sphere seemed to nullify much public scrutiny or backlash, an environment moulded from Thatcher's journalistic image from The Times; in particular, images that constitute a staunch Tory "aesthetic" in the body politics and iconic status of Thatcher would become more common in this period. It is through this mirroring of conservativeness through the rhetoric of images that establish these press photographs as ideologically significant in their ability to quell union support in the 1980s.

10 Gottdiener, Hegemony and Mass Culture: A Semiotic Approach, p.982.

11 Ibid., p.983.

2. Press photography and Ideology

Increasingly, political ideology and its usurpation of press photography have paved the way in the public sphere the last half of the twentieth century, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. We are now accustomed to newspapers and their particular ideological resolve. For example, in Britain, The Guardian is perceived for having a liberal view on politics while The Times is perceived as having a conservative view on politics. During the 1980s, we find political ideology and visual primacy occupying an arena whereby one cannot escape the other without serious consequence. Walter Lippmann, whose theory regarding ideology and news media suggests a correlation between those two principles, where he admits that media does in fact dictate how we view politics and everyday affairs in contemporary culture. To put it in Lippmann's words, "…News media are primary sources of the pictures in our heads…producing a hardy intellectual offspring, agenda-setting, a social science theory that maps in considerable detail the contribution of mass communication to our pictures of politics and public affairs."[12] One could argue today that ideology is shaped as those "pictures in our heads" that connote and represent a particular political party's vision as tied to a national agenda. Yet, to represent this visuality as a national agenda in political terms, a corpus of photographs must use an aestheticizing practice to transform its subject in the process. According to David Strauss, the photographic image as a form of communication "becomes legible to others," only as these images are "socially and culturally [en]coded," as a function of "aestheticization."[13] This aestheticization, via the Thatcher press photograph is something I shall return to shortly.

Access to press photography undoubtedly increased with the transformation of media in this decade, and because of this it is vital to think of ideology as it worked within the societal constructs of a Thatcherite Britain. I intend to illustrate how the political and economic ideology of neoliberalism was fused to the apparatus of press photography. It is my hope to ratify, in theoretical terms, how when looking at these press photographs from The Times, these very

12 McCombs, Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion, p.68.

13 Strauss, Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics, p.9.

images serve the political-economic arrangement of neoliberalism. This then situates the act of press photography—in all its manipulated and contrived forms during this era—as blurring the line between authentic reportage and a surreptitious politicking through the published press photographs of Thatcher as a "conviction politician."[14]

Figure 1.1 One of the most recognizable photographs of Margaret Thatcher at the height of her political power in the 1980s.

Ideology in photographic form can be found via an aesthetics of subversion if we look closely at Figure 1.1 taken on February 11, 1985 by a staff photographer of The Times. This photograph constitutes many of the conservative principles associated with a Thatcherite neoliberal mentality, yet from an aesthetic perspective, as one comes in contact with this photograph, one is struck at how the image configures an abstract language of political discourse all its own. Indeed, Figure 1.1 establishes a new political vision for conservative politics in the 1980s—a female form that seems less feminine and more androgynous and a form that also serves Thatcher's personal view to privilege polemic over gender. One could say that Thatcher's outstretched arm in The Times photograph is an affirmation of power to the conservative crowd, yet more crucially, a political code in the movement of her body for the camera. Of particular note here is Thatcher's stagecraft which is signaled in the conspicuously romantic spirit of political oration—as The Times article states "Young Conservatives mark decade of Thatcher"—whereby, Thatcher in this particular photograph recognizes her power as a new archetype image for the Tory party; but more discursively, her own political power.   In

14 Marianne Stewart and Harold Clarke, p.14.

other words, Figure 1.1 connotes an ideologue's recognition and sensory understanding of the public in Bournemouth at the Tory Conference (as the Figure 1.1 states) but also the larger constituency of Britons that view this image nationally (by way of subscription to the newspaper or casual glance when this issue was on newsstands in 1985).

Figure 1.2 The iconic image of Che taken in Cuba after the revolution.

By guaranteeing a politicians image in daily media, the camera plays an important role in the visualization of political figures at moments of this kind. Via the camera's mechanical (now digital) ability to reproduce photographs one could say such images shape our understanding of political culture because these photographs testify to how a party wishes its citizens to live. For instance, another way to look at this Thatcher image is if we turn to an analysis of the now famous photograph of Che Guevara. We see in Figure 1.2, shot by Alberto Korda on March 4th 1960, an image which connotes a universal notion of revolution and communist rectitude that is associated with Che's stoic posture (military garb, the Communist symbol emblazoned on his beret), its historiography (the successful rise of the Cuban revolution and the image of Che Guevara in Cuba at the time of this photograph's publication), and more importantly, the later iconic status ascribed to this Argentine revolutionary (martyr to Third World colonial struggle and figurehead for anti-capitalism). Many in our contemporary epoch now see this photo as popular and iconic and thus a recognizable tool of mainstream media as well as an image that elucidates meaning to an audience through its

14 Marianne Stewart and Harold Clarke, p.14.

visual properties as discussed above.[15]

It thus becomes emblematic of a revolutionary cause, as much as it now becomes a commodity in our visual culture (i.e., tee-shirts, posters and commercial films such as *The Motorcycle Dairies and Che*). Moreover, the point of the Korda photograph sets up the values associated with the creation of political photography: Che as communist revolutionary within our mainstream visual culture, but also a fetishized icon in today's image-conscious, "ocularcentric"[16] world. A parallel can then be made to the Thatcher administration and its media apparatus, positing her photojournalistic image as the identity of an eighties conservatism, and in diametric opposition to the leftist-spirit found in this iconic Che photograph.

David Harvey, a leading expert on neoliberalism has claimed that this economic ideology and its visual projection "also appealed to the cultural nationalism of the white working classes and their besieged sense of moral righteousness (besieged because this class lived under conditions of chronic economic insecurity and felt excluded from many of the benefits that were being distributed through affirmative action and other state programs)."[17] This conceptualization is articulated by certain vernacular compositions (Thatcher defending Britain in the 1983 Falklands War off the coast of Argentina to later attacks on the so-called corrupt unions). Because of the localization of British photographic images, a sense or pulse to a particular national group, community, or class was perceived as a manifestation of Tory culture during the Thatcher administration. Therefore, the practice of press photography gives us a visual account into these social situations, events and differing political movements, not necessarily proclaiming truthfulness in the manner in which those realities appear outside the documentation of a set of photographs, but a reality nonetheless.

According to Hariman and Lucaites, the ideological importance of the photographic image to the public consciousness is to frame it as a type of "direct audience response"[18] in order to comprehend it or understand it as a political event. In applying this theory to the Thatcher photographic image, these photographs are then representations or symbols of a conservative ideology on film that is then transferred to The Times newspaper. Hariman and Lucaites focus on the photographic image as

15 The schematic history of the Korda photograph of Che should be viewed as a hegemonic tool to its twentieth century audience because the dominant meaning is consistently evolving in the political sphere of capitalist media.

16 See Martin Jay, "The Rise of Hermeneutics and the Crisis of Ocularcentrism," pp. 307–326.

17 Harvey, Neoliberalism: A Brief History, p.50.

18 Hariman and Lucaites, p.38.

summoning the attention of the audience through the smallest of details, or as they call it, gestures:

Because the camera records the décor of everyday life, the photographic image is capable of directing attention across a field of gestures, interaction rituals, social types, political styles, artistic motifs, cultural norms, and other signs as they intersect in any event. As a result, photographs are capable of aesthetic mediations of political identity that include but also exceed ideological control.[19]

The next photograph (Figure 1.3) seems to include but also exceed ideological control. Here, Thatcher's presence as a courteous politician is disseminated through an aesthetically-conscious manner, made-up of typical images like this one, known for the following styles: talking-points, head-on snaps-shots, coddling and ultimately manipulating public opinion through staged appearances and pictured opportunities to purport a conservative reality.

Figure 1.3 The Prime Minister placating to the working class community.

By scanning the details of this typical photograph—through its vernacular presence (photographed on a street in Lincolnshire), its temporality (winter in 1984), its political resonance (Tory party meet and greet)—the implied message here is pacification, with Thatcher as deliver of such a message. Figure 1.3 seems to shape the idea of conservatism

19 Hariman and Lucaites, p.38

through body politics—that is, one constituted via physical appearance, mannerisms, even clothes—all indicative in the aesthetic displays of this Times photograph. The second layer granted in Figure 1.3 is the demonstrability of Thatcher as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. We see a blue-collar man eagerly greet the Prime Minister, and whether this was a staged photo opportunity or not, her position of power seems to override any currency or context this photograph might have come up against: for example, the 1984-85 Miners' Strike and the then waning left-wing opposition to Tory power.

The development of these photographic aspects can be attached to the reading of the Thatcher imagery in a Gramscian sense—positioning consent as it is visible in Figure 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4. Clearly this happens through forms of cultural hegemony as the image continues to represent these principles discussed above. This is not to say that exposure to Thatcher press imagery in the 1980s mandated a conditioning by these images. Nor is this to say that images are incapable at some levels of shaping people's particular consent to issues or proclivity toward a prescribed ideology. I believe there is an association of the two, as the cultural hegemony of press photography further develops the iconic elements of Thatcher as politician and makes possible the power of these images.

In Diane Antonio essay, "Virgin Queen, Iron Lady, Queen of Hearts: The Embodiment of Feminine Power in a Male Social Imaginary" it becomes important to extrapolate some of her ideas to better analyze Figure 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4. Important here is Antonio's theory of the female body that she argues constitutes what the image might have meant to the public during Thatcher's rule. She goes on to claim with an assertive tone that the "social imaginary also contains culturally-specific models of political vision and rationality."[20] Similarly, the social imaginary delineates a gendered anatomy or "culturally shared phantasy about male and female biologies."[21]

We find in the aesthetic features of the Thatcher "body" in Figures 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4 the presence of the Prime Minister as a woman is secondary to the power of her persona as the "Iron Lady." The Iron Lady image connotes her female status, a phrase coined by the Soviet media in 1974, but one that also acts as a cultural signifier, empowering a public statecraft

20 Antonio, pp.199–200.
21 Ibid., pp.199–200.

and shrewd aristocratic hauteur. This "put on" ideological mannerism by Thatcher was newly made for the British public.[22] In other words, this neoliberal project compounds together Thatcher's personal conviction and belief in a radicalized vision of Britain (through free market policies), while subsequently lessening her feminine traits and sexual appeal for the power of one's political appearance (a business woman/European leader bedecked in power suits and cropped hair). Thus Figures 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4 can be interpreted as adopting the empty manifestation of an officiator of power, whereby her personality was transformed by a type of detachment toward feminine and egalitarian sensibilities; here Thatcher lacked a distinct sexuality as much as she lacked a distinct sense of charity.[23] This detachment on the surface is again secondary to her "affected" disinterest in the working class Briton. In other words, Thatcher's press photos were no more a political ornament than they were a mediator to profound economic change brought out to serve the neoliberal project.

More specifically, perhaps, is Antonio's characteristics of the Iron Lady as seen in a form of body politics. Antonio's identification of these traits in visual form can be linked to The Times' photographs like Figure 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4.

> As with Elizabeth I, Margaret Thatcher, too, came to wield impersonal power through her transcendence of the vulnerable female Personal Body. She appears stoic in crisis, affectless on camera, during addresses, hence the 'Iron Lady' epithet. She does not 'seek to bring her personality into the nation's living rooms, as her hero Winston Churchill had done. Besuited like a businessman, she presents herself without the cultural baggage of female sexuality, although we know she was a wife and mother. She sacrifices her Personal Bodily characteristics to achieve masculine-type impersonal power. To be more specific, the 'Iron Lady's body is no longer identified with an individual and fluid corporeal situation, including breast-size, shapeliness, or personal, passional history with its flux of messy relationships and commitments. Her body is now self-and-other identified with an overarching cultural situation.[24]

The aestheticization of the Iron Lady image and the use of Thatcher's

22 Quart in "British Film in the Thatcher Era," p. 221.
23 Hunt, p.270.
24 Antonio, p. 207.

body as a form of impersonal power is also a demagogic tool. Demagogy refers here to a political strategy of obtaining political power by appealing to the popular prejudices, fears and expectations of the public through impassioned rhetoric and propaganda, using nationalistic and populist themes. In Antonio's formulation then, media is able to document and visually concretize a form of impersonal power that serves as axiom, to Tory hegemony.

Rodney Tiffen holds a similar understanding of the hegemony of Thatcher's power visually, as the hegemonic image creates a public interest and opinion, leading to a consented top-down process. Regarding conflict, Tiffen's goes on to say that a critique of this type could be linked to the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. Tiffen makes a valuable point concerning the appearance of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike to the British public with the following: "each conflict has different types of relationships between the contenders, different stakes and different modes of resolution for allocating the outcome."[25] The stakes in this sense for the Thatcher administration were to convince the British public, with its already waning opinion on the "troublesome" union lobby, that distancing themselves from a pro-labor economy was crucial to further stabilizing the new (neoliberal) economy. Any support or cooperation with the strikers of the North was therefore against the status quo during conservative rule. Thus, the proliferation of images illustrate trade union unrest, picketing and violence while the passive, "impersonal"[26] and stalwartness nature of Thatcher as the Iron Lady shows Britons how she was able to stabilize the situation at this time. Inevitably, however, a large portion of the British population was swayed to one point of view as political and social circumstances developed. These two principles of personal/impersonal connection to the 1984-85 Miners' Strike coupled with the power of the text and image will be discussed in the next section.

25 Rodney Tiffen's contribution to Tumber's Media Power, Professionals and Policies in a chapter entitled "Conflicts in the News: Publicity Interests, Public Images and Political Impacts" p.191.

26 Antonio, p. 207.

3. Representative power of the Thatcher press photo

Sturken and Cartwright intelligently define representation as "the use of language and image to create meaning in the world around us."[27] Often representation in news media is constituted in such a way. In Figure 1.4, we see just that, as Thatcher's image seems to be imbued with an unshakeable visual rhetoric that works more as an ideological projection than a type of propaganda. Taken on September 10th 1984 by a Times staff photojournalist, Figure 1.4 has signs of a photo-opted moment. The evidence is on the faces of the Yorkshire police officers, uneasy with Mrs. Thatcher's presence, as they gather around the Prime Minister to listen in on her stance on the strike and how to handle the day's demonstration. One officer, second to the right of Prime Minister seems despondent as he, and his fellow officers are coddled and patronized by the "police pep talk," (as captioned below the photograph).

But to look more closely at the photograph one is immediately struck by Thatcher's seated position, as she assumes an informal and confident round table conversation with the local police constables.

Figure 1.4 The power of text and image constituted by The Times.

Figure 1.4 is also a formal display of power as one could say there is a constructed calmness to the composition in this Times press photograph. It functions ideologically in its use of visual rhetoric to convey orderliness as Thatcher appears both curt to the officers as she addresses the day's

27 Sturken & Cartwright, p.12.

logistics for the strike, but also plays witness to the day's events as the message above suggests. In another sense, Thatcher has localized herself (through her photographic appearance) as someone who can be visually credited with handling the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. On this particular day she travelled up from 10 Downing Street in London to handle the crisis. Thus her involvement is further concretized by Figure 1.4, where she coordinates policies not just from the South of the country, but also was willing to roll up her sleeves and takes part in the quelling of the strike, as these images in a certain way come to reduce the labor power previously possessed by the Northern miners.

Aesthetically speaking, the uneasiness between control of and witness to the political situation in the 1984-85 Miners' Strike helps the ideological supremacy of the Thatcher's photographic image. Figure 1.4 shows Thatcher as both dominant political figure in the everyday political scenario—drafted together by The Times—but also a political figure with an underlying discourse in stopping the union purges in the then growing British economy, with growth mostly occurring in London (or the South); though, we must also remember she came up against staggering unemployment in the North of the country, where deindustrialization hit hardest. This was the larger political motivation for representing Thatcher in this light, alluding to the hierarchy and strength of Tory political power as embodied in Figure 1.4 and countless other photographs; calmly allowing government order to prevail (via anti-union laws, police monitoring and mass arrests). In other words, it is paramount that Thatcher be seen leading her low-level subordinates because it connotes at this time a political and social order. Functioning much like stage props in a theatrical production, the police apparatus was documented to show support and thus protect its public from the supposed union peril. In this way, Thatcher's policy inevitably wins by default as the sheer volume of households that saw such imagery and came to be affected by the purported reality of these press photographs was staggering, and more importantly engineered hegemonically.

In diametric opposition to Figure 1.4, we see on other days there is union and police conflict at northern pits in Durham, Sunderland and York. This type of press photography shows violent groups of miners which then mediates this domestic conflict as unruly and generally linked

to thug-like activities in the Northern outlying areas. This sentiment and stereotype of "rough men" is espoused as these strikers are covered in a sensationalized and in an unflattering light, typical of the daily periodicals like The Times. To be sure, these press photographs helped to legitimize why the pit leaders and unionists were often considered a disruptive element in society, and indeed, why the larger mining community, according to the conservative point of view, had delayed progress in Britain.

Returning to the image and text in Figure 1.4, the caption below the image reads "Derbyshire drifts back to work and Opencast producers moving excess coal." This caption juxtaposed to Thatcher's image paints an all together different reality than the tensions the working class Briton still faced. Due to de-industrialization and the move from material production to more immaterial and service oriented society, the silver lining or optimistic forecasting by the text and graph seen in Figure 1.4 only re-enforces that the union actions only delay such progress.

I also am aware of The Times' conservative angle and how this political and editorial stance impacts on one's critical capacity to interrogate this material. However, I find press photography and the photographers themselves either willing accomplices, or forced to submit to a conservative orthodoxy in the 1980s. According to photography critic A.D. Coleman this was a common professional criteria, as photographers found their contracts by major media agencies subject to the ideological parameters of the media corporation. He continues:

> The press photographer is not engaged in a delimited project, in any sense, but instead providing an ongoing service—the rapid production of specific images whose use is largely predetermined. Such use is largely oriented toward the single image; a three-or-four-image cluster is as close as the press photographer is likely to come to extended form. The image is almost undoubtedly accompanied by text; indeed, its meaning will almost entirely constructed by that text…Moreover, the human subject or subjects of the press photographer's work increasingly determine not only what the photographer will be allowed to see but the vantage point from which she or he will be allowed to observe it; the carefully orchestrated 'photo opportunity' has become the norm.[28]

28 Coleman, pp.38–39.

These details by Coleman remain important to this analysis—what is a conservative vantage point—whereby The Times systematically denounced the workers' right to strike. It is not merely a "problems in news coverage of industrial conflict reflect not only editorial weakness, willful or inadvertent, but stems from genuine difficulties in reporting occasioned partly by the publicity strategies of the contenders."[29] Thus, Thatcher's delivery of speeches like the one exemplified in Figure 1.4 replaces any journalistic integrity and imbues an "editorial weakness" gripping Britain at this time. Seeing the plight of the unions, from the other side of the political spectrum, indeed where the working class (miners and their families) and their leading organization the Trade Union Congress (TUC) were silenced, not given the press coverage they deserved, is attributable to media outlets like The Times inconsistently and thus disproportionately influencing events; in this case, the Tory party's determination to discredit and disavow their union opposition, at all costs.

The hegemony of these Times photographs never answer the more serious questions: Why had the violence between police and union members escalated, and what did the unions want from the solidarity of their actions? Instead, this dialogue was subverted for the pacification and the photographic presence of Thatcher in The Times, particularly how these images exemplify the conservative party's interest in ending public support for the trade unions. The Thatcher administration goes on not answering the difficult questions at this time. Thus content is jettisoned for the image's repeated power to produce an ideology, or as Victor Burgin calls it "ideology is [of] a system...endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society, which acts on men and women by a process that escapes them".[30]

Margaret Scammell has argued elsewhere that the "successes and failures of marketing under Thatcher" are based on the Tory machines ability to reconcile the superficially contradictory couplet of marketing and political conviction which this Thatcher iconography ultimately elicits.[31] This collusion of marketing and political engineering was contrived under the careful eye of the Saatchi and Saatchi media firm based in London, now known to have designed the Iron Lady iconography that led explicitly to the perpetuation of Tory power and

29 Tiffen, p.197.
30 Burgin, p.5.
31 Scammell, pp.114–126.

more implicitly, the championing of a neoliberal philosophy in the 1980s. England. Their strategic ad campaigning in major periodicals, dailies and contemporary magazines normalized the Thatcher ideology by its accompanied iconographic press photography.

According to Colin Seymour-Ure, the Thatcher political image and its perception to the public rose by "47 per cent, demonstrating one of many samplings of empirical evidence towards Tory media hegemony."[32] This increase in media attention went for the photo-opportunity, press outing, parliamentary appearance, national or international conference— all in regard to the Tory administration's use of Thatcher's iconic image in front of local sites such as mining communities in York, and even more recognizable national sites such as Downing Street in London. However, many of these photo opportunities were quick question-and-answer sessions, as the image became an opportunity, more conclusively, to surmise political explanation to the current events in Britain rather than foster public debate.

Images such as Figure 1.4 mediate a consonance, or as one of Thatcher's political aids later recalled, an intimate closeness and an integral part of photographic policymaking in the 1980s. Ostensibly, this is another of the Conservative party's means for creating a visual ideology through the performative styles of these images, as they came to influence public opinion. Equally, Squiers suggests that the notion of the pre-planned news ready images thus "served to naturalize and domesticate without providing a true picture of its visual and political manipulation" as Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 conjugate the political and economic forces of Thatcherism.[33]

4. Conclusion

This essay sought to recover Thatcher's iconicity—not to legitimize or misinterpret her political reign, but rather to analyze how her images affected and influenced a British public in the 1980s. Through an

32 Seymour-Ure, pp.182–3.
33 Squiers, p.121.

interdisciplinary approach, there was an attempt to open a new line of investigation into the intentions of The Times' reportage that captured Thatcher in public, and the relationship between image and ideology as endorsed by this British newspaper. In another case, the paradox of transparency in regard to press photograph was both argued for and against using various interlocking concepts and theoretical models to determine how these photographic representations carried out a function in British society. More importantly, this analysis showed how the Iron Lady moniker served an aesthetic design that shaped a political party's and institution's message to its consuming public. From this Iron Lady persona, I also introduced the idea that a Thatcher ideology was connected to this very visuality that found its base in the form of press photography: through her physical appearance in news media, to the more theoretical interpretation of her "body" as political tool in her mannerisms for the camera. Most importantly, this analysis purported that Thatcher's appearance conveys an uncanny stagecraft and this stagecraft further illustrated the administration's benefiting from certain political moments, a catalyst for their neoliberal agenda. As the latter section in this essay made clear—the 1984-85 Miners' Strike covered by The Times newspaper best demonstrates such an agenda, concretizing a new, neoliberal culture.

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